

08 June 2005

Transport policy

By Anders LUNDQVIST, Swedish Road Administration

Sweden is a large country in terms of area, but with a small population. We are situated far in the north of Europe and long distances are characteristic for our country. This places considerable demands on all areas of policy. We need to shrink the distances and reduce regional discrepancies. We need to create conditions that stimulate growth and vitality throughout our country. We want people to be able to live and study in both large and small communities, in metropolitan regions and in areas that are less densely populated.

It is this perspective that serves as the basis for transport policy's objectives – transport policy is to promote an economically efficient, sustainable transport system for individuals and businesses throughout the country. This entails actively and purposefully working to develop efficient, energy saving, safe and clean transport solutions. By road, rail, air or water alike.

This is the background why the Swedish Parliament (Riksdagen) in 1998 adopted a transport policy decision based upon a Government Bill (1997/98:56), called “Transport policy for sustainable development”, which replaced the previous traffic policy decision from 1988. The underlying concept is that transport policy is a mean of achieving important goals in society. It should contribute to socially, culturally, economically and ecologically sustainable development.

Objectives of transport policy

The overall objective of transport policy is to ensure an economically efficient, sustainable transport system for citizens and businesses throughout the country.

The overall transport policy objective is defined more precisely in six sub goals:

1 An accessible transport system

The transport system is designed to meet the basic transport needs of citizens and businesses.

08 June 2005

2 High-quality transport

The design and function of the transport system permits high quality transport for citizens and businesses.

3 Safe transport

The long-term objective of traffic safety is that there should be no fatalities or serious injuries as the result of traffic accidents within the transport system. The transport system's design and function are to be adapted to the requirements that follow from this.

4 A good environment

The transport system's design and function is to be adapted to the requirements for achieving a good living environment for everyone, in which nature and the cultural environment are protected from damage. The proper and healthy management of land, water, energy and other natural resources is to be encouraged.

5 Positive regional development

The transport system promotes positive regional development, in part by means of reducing inequities in the potential for various sections of the country to develop, in part by counteracting the disadvantages of long transport distances.

6 A transport system that serves the interests of women and men equally

The transport system is designed so that it meets the transport needs of both women and men. Women and men will be given the same chance to influence the initiation, design and administration of the transport system and their values will be given the same weight. In the long-term, all six sub-goals must be achieved. In the short-term, however, it may be necessary to prioritise among the sub-goals.

Intermediate objectives for better follow-up

The long-term objectives are to remain in effect for an extended period of time. They are to stand for continuity and a long-term perspective in transport policy. There is no internal order of priority between the long-term objectives. Ultimately,

08 June 2005

all sub-goals are to be achieved. In the short-term, it will sometimes be necessary to prioritise among the sub-goals.

Accessibility objective

1. Public transport should be accessible to the disabled no later than 2010.

Quality objective

2. The quality of the Swedish transport system should be steadily improved in terms of predictability, safety, flexibility, comfort, navigability and access to information. Intermediate objectives for better follow-up

Traffic safety objective

3. The number of fatalities as a result of road traffic accidents should be reduced by at least 50 per cent as of 2007, counted from the level in 1996.

Environmental objective

4. In 2010, carbon dioxide emissions in Sweden should be stabilised at the same level as in 1990.

Objective for accessibility and positive regional development

5. Accessibility for citizens and businesses between sparsely populated areas and regional centres as well as regions and the world at large should be steadily improved.

Objectives for a transport system that serves the interests of women and men equally

6. The Government intends to establish the intermediate objectives during this term of office. The Swedish Institute for Transport and Communications Analysis (SIKA) is the agency responsible for developing and proposing intermediate objectives and indicators. An undertaking of this kind is in progress.