



GREEN TRANSPORT



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The Danish government has a long-term vision of making Denmark completely independent of fossil fuels. The first step has been taken, introducing a new strategy for sustainable transport, designed to ‘break the curve’ of emissions. Transport policy is to be underpinned by an ethos of sustainability, under which a world-class system will be developed and sustained — an enormous task, but necessary if our ambitious goal is to be achieved. Denmark’s green transport policy has been formulated with the overall objective of improving mobility while reducing transport-related CO₂ emissions in a cost-effective way.

We are facing a serious challenge. We cannot ignore the fact that transport is responsible for some 25 per cent of Denmark’s CO₂

emissions, a figure expected to rise in coming years. We intend to reverse this trajectory. But as we endeavour to do so, we must not lose sight of the contribution transport makes to our quality of life — connecting people, families and businesses. We all depend on a well-run, efficacious system: it is a key element of the basis on which our welfare and well-being are founded.

Green Transport Vision DK is a far-sighted, integrated plan for a green transport system, with three fundamental components: adjusting vehicle tax to greener vehicle levies; more and better public transport; and new sustainable technologies. It will bring down the rising CO₂ emissions from transport as we approach 2020.

Judicious restructuring of vehicle tax to greener vehicle levies will accelerate the development of a more energy-efficient national car fleet and the phasing-in of cleaner technologies — not least using electricity for fuel. Cars are essential to many Danes, for the smooth running of their

daily lives, and they will remain important in the future. But we are now making energy-friendly cars cheaper to buy and introducing smart road pricing to motivate people to drive when the roads are at their emptiest and to consider when it might be wiser to go by bicycle or public transport. This, combined with such measures as smart traffic control, will reduce pressure on the roads. Congestion is already a problem on some stretches, with inevitable loss to the economy. There will be substantial investment in Denmark’s road network where the need is greatest in coming years and this, together with green road pricing, will promote progress towards sustainable mobility.

Increased uptake of public transport is essential — we intend it to absorb most of the forecast growth in traffic — but this requires it to be seen as an attractive alternative to the car. Denmark will, therefore, significantly extend and improve its public transport, providing more trains, at more regular intervals and with shorter journey

times. This massive investment in public transport will go hand in hand with the green re-adjustment of car taxation.

The transport system must also be sufficiently geared up to implement other cleaner fuel technologies expeditiously and efficiently. The ‘big picture’ envisages efficient electrical cars within a few years. Hydrogen and electricity-powered cars are exempt from tax until 2012, and in the period 2012-2015 an advantageous registration fee will apply to electricity-powered cars, commensurate with what is needed to maximize their take-up.

In the long term, we envisage a major restructuring of the transport system, so that people will both make the best possible use of the cleanest available fuels and have recourse to a much more varied combination of private cars, bicycles and public transport as appropriate in a day-to-day context. If enough drivers make environmentally friendly choices both when buying and driving cars, we shall have made great strides as a society towards ceasing to be dependent on fossil fuels.

I have recently set up a Centre for Green Transport in the Danish Ministry of Transport to inject momentum into the process and start up some concrete initiatives to reduce transport-related CO₂, where warranted by economic conditions. A series of such initiatives is currently being put under way, designed to have an immediate effect and use existing means of transport more effectively.

Denmark is also to act as a ‘laboratory’ for developing sustainable transport technologies, that they can feed into — and play

a major role in — the transport system in the long term. It is important that international partners see the country as an attractive place for trialling new technologies, so pilot projects will be set up over the next few years to identify opportunities for, and obstacles to, disseminating new technologies and making them marketable. These will test the deployment of energy-efficient transport solutions, such as energy-efficient buses and sizeable publicly or privately owned fleets of vehicles.

I set great store by building partnerships with commercial organizations and municipal authorities to develop transport plans and system solutions. We need to disseminate new technologies and ensure that they are taken into everyday practical use.

But we also need to take a long-term approach to research, development and innovation if we are to achieve far greener transport without resorting to extremely costly restrictions on mobility. Not the least of

our responses must be to boost research both into finding completely new instruments to deploy but also into developing existing resources to fit them to a more modern transport system.

Neither Denmark nor any other country can tackle this challenge alone. The EU-wide adoption of norms for private cars and heavy goods vehicles has significantly improved their environmental attributes, considerably exceeding our expectations. This emphasises the crucial importance of rising to the CO₂ challenge not just nationally, but through cross-border action. We must work systematically and internationally towards requirements for the energy-efficiency of vehicles, standards for electric cars, new fuel technologies and knowledge-sharing.

We still have some way to go before we can justifiably claim to have broken the curve of transport-related CO₂ emissions but, equipped with our green transport vision for Denmark, I believe that we are well on our way.

