



MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT
AND COMMUNICATIONS FINLAND

Finnish transport policy Challenges and guidelines



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Challenges and guidelines

Ministry of Transport and Communications

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The Finnish Government Programme 2007

www.government.fi

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Anu Vehviläinen
Minister of Transport

Travel and transport are particularly important in Finland which is a sparsely populated country with long distances both between built-up areas and to the core market areas in Europe. Our geography as well as difficult weather conditions pose major challenges in the transport sector.

I believe that there are three main elements to good transport policy. First, we must provide everyone across the country with opportunities to smooth and safe everyday travel. Second, we have to strengthen the conditions for economic life and entrepreneurship. Third, we must create a transport system that gives due consideration to ecological viewpoints and the climate change.

Much is expected from transport policy. We want to meet the expectations, and I am confident that these government guidelines for long-term transport policy will benefit citizens, the economy and the environment alike.

Long-term **but flexible**

Finnish transport policy is facing major challenges, the most important of which is controlling climate change. Other critical challenges include preserving the competitiveness of Finland's logistics sector and providing people with opportunities to efficient and smooth daily travel.

The objective of transport policy is well-being for Finland. Travel and transport should be safe and the transport system ecologically, socially and economically sustainable. Achieving this objective will require long-term approach, innovation and cooperation.

Transport policy should be customer-oriented in nature. Transport policy choices are intended to ensure smooth travel in both professional and everyday life. The transport system will be planned and developed as an overall concept. The sensible and efficient use of limited resources means using a broad range of mechanisms.

Although transport system development aims at long-term sustainability, there must also be flexibility in terms of solutions and operating methods. It is important to forecast changes in the operating environment, influence the direction of development, and take advantage of the opportunities offered by new technology when improving the transport system.

The Government of Finland sets the long-term guidelines for transport policy in a report to be submitted to Parliament at the start of each electoral period. The report of 2007 will include the Transport Infrastructure Investment Programme for the 2007–2011 electoral period and an overall programme for long-term transport system development. Simultaneously, the implementation of financing models to supplement budget financing for infrastructure investments will be examined.

Finland intends to be active in developing European Union transport policy, and to promote internal markets in the transport sector. Finland supports the development of open and unbiased transport markets and actions that limit the environmental hazards of transport, improve environmental safety and develop counter-terrorism measures.





Investing

The Government's aim during the electoral period is to allocate sufficient financing for the service and maintenance of the transport infrastructure in order to ensure traffic safety and the service level of the infrastructure network. The Government will take account of the inadequate funding provided for the basic infrastructure maintenance and the general condition and maintenance of the lower-class road network.

Long distance transport of goods and people in Finland are concentrated on specific routes. The Ministry of Transport and Communications has written a plan concerning the most important infrastructure, or the so-called trunk network. The plan is currently being discussed at political level. The objective is a reliable and safe trunk network with a consistent standard of service.

According to the plan, the trunk network would comprise about 3,000 kilometres of main roads and about 2,800 kilometres of rail connections. The total length of Finland's road network is about 78,000 kilometres and the length of the rail network is about 6,000 kilometres.



in transport infrastructure maintenance



Greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced substantially



Alternatives to private cars

Nearly half of all Finns live in the ten largest urban areas. The community structure is becoming fragmented as growth focuses on the suburbs, increasingly distant from workplaces and services. Trips are getting longer and the need for private cars is increasing. The objective will be to establish a sound community structure. When services are close by, trips can also be made by public transport, bicycle or on foot. Bicycle and pedestrian traffic can be increased by means of attractive and safe paths for walking and cycling.

Demand management through pricing

The Ministry of Transport and Communications has studied various models for road pricing. Car use pricing based on intelligent technology and satellite positioning can be introduced in Finland in 2015 at the earliest. The introduction of usage-based traffic pricing models and testing of intelligent road pricing systems will be examined during the Government period 2007–2011.

Transport accounts for about one fifth of Finland's greenhouse gas emissions. The intention is to reduce emissions quickly and systematically. Growth in traffic must be curbed, energy efficiency improved and fuels developed in a low-emission direction. The aim is to increase the share of public transport.

Halting the growth in traffic volumes will not be successful through mere transport policy; measures related to land use and economic steering will also be needed.



More energy-efficient modes of transport, more ecological fuels

In terms of passenger traffic, the competitiveness of energy-efficient rail transport should be improved. Strengthening the market position will require improved feeder traffic, information and train services.

The aim in freight transport is to increase the share of railway and water traffic by increasing their competitiveness. One requirement for achieving this target will be efficient intermodal terminals. Nearly 90% of the cargo in Finland is transported

on roads, while about 80% of foreign trade are carried by sea.

The objective regarding biofuels is to switch to cost-effective, second-generation biofuels made from forestry or waste raw materials as soon as possible.

Biofuels must account for at least 2% of fuel sold at gas stations by the beginning of 2008. The corresponding shares for 2009 and 2010 are 4% and 5.75% respectively, figures that were originally specified in the EU's Biofuels Directive.

Maintaining competitiveness in logistics

In order to be competitive and maintain employment, efficient and reasonably priced logistics is needed. Logistics costs for Finland's businesses are greater than in other European countries because of the structure of production, long transport journeys within the country and Finland's isolated location.

However, Finland has good air freight connections to Asia and daily links to Central Europe. Russian transit traffic increases the number of maritime connections from Finland to other countries. The Government is working actively to solve the problems in cross-border traffic with Russia.

The Government is drafting a programme to improve maritime safety on the Baltic Sea. The vessel traffic safety will be promoted through international cooperation aimed at developing transport monitoring systems, the reliability of the ice classification system and safe navigation. The competitiveness of Finnish shipping will be improved to the level of its most important competitors by subsidies allowed by the EU and by reforming the taxation of shipping companies.



High-quality logistics services

Maintaining the competitiveness of logistics will require investment in competence, research and development. Full advantage should be taken of the opportunities provided by information and communications technology.

Automatic vehicle identification systems will be taken into use to ensure security of transports. Electronic customs procedures will also enhance transport security ensuring reliable delivery of goods.



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Smooth daily travels

Daily work and leisure trips should go smoothly – without delay and safely. The transport system has to be suitable for as many people as possible irrespective of age or capacities. Due consideration must be given to accessibility already in the design phase.



A safer transport system, more responsible attitudes

Finland has an ambitious target regarding road safety: to reduce traffic fatalities to less than 250 by 2010 (in 2006 the figure was 330). It is mainly people's behaviour and choices that determine the pace of improvement. The aim is a responsible traffic culture in which people observe the traffic rules. New types of training and more effective campaigns will help achieve this goal.

Head-on collisions on main roads will be reduced with median barriers. Accidents involving pedestrians and cyclists will be reduced by calming traffic in residential areas and residential centres and building pedestrian and cycle paths. Driving speeds will be controlled by means of intelligent speed adaptation, speed limits and speed surveillance.

Use of the alcolock system will be encouraged in order to prevent accidents involving drink driving. Accident prevention systems, driving stability systems and eCall emergency messaging systems will be implemented extensively.



Making public transport attractive

The objective in urban areas is to develop competitive public transport as an alternative to the use of private cars. The travel chain should be functional, of good quality and accessible. The State will contribute to the financing of public transport in large cities for the first time during the Government period 2007–2011, provided that such funding increases the use of public transport services and improves their competitiveness. The cities themselves must also increase their investment in public transport.

The planning, arrangement and financing of public transport in large and medium-sized cities will also have to be reformed. Information technology will be used to provide citizens with real-time information and route selection services.

The Government will develop the terms of the employer-subsidised commuter ticket system, regional planning and the principles of public service procurement.

A reasonable level of public transport must be ensured in rural areas and small cities by means of more cost-effective public service procurement. Decreasing scheduled traffic will be supplemented by demand-responsive public transport.

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