

FOURTH UNECE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

GENEVA, 1-2 December 2009

Agenda item 5. Transport

Intervention by Israel¹

Chairperson, Distinguished delegates and participants

Recent decades have seen a major increase in private car use in Israel. A survey has revealed that most commuters choose to use a private car for their daily commute to work, thus significantly contributing to traffic congestion. In fact, some 62% of all employees use private cars to get to work and only 17% use public transportation.

Commuter transport cause air pollution in large cities and economic damage caused by loss of working hours, morbidity and inefficient use of infrastructures.

The MoEP joined forces with Transport Today & Tomorrow (an NGO) to review the current situation in Israel and abroad and to suggest solutions. 20 policy steps for restraining the use of private cars for work have been suggested, transferring responsibility for the employees' transport mode to the employers.

The policy paper focuses on two main areas:

- 1) The first is balancing the tax system - reducing or eliminating benefits related to company leased cars and workplace parking, tax benefits to employers who purchase public transport tickets for their employees and tax incentives to stimulate carpooling.
- 2) The second is encouraging Employer Transport Plans (ETP). These plans consist of measures, taken at the company level, to enable employees to choose among several sustainable transportation options (carpooling, cycling, public transport or working from home).

In addition, a "Green Taxation" reform is under implementation in Israel. Tax incentives are provided to encourage the purchase of less polluting vehicles by imposing a differential purchase tax, according to pollution performance. Also, tax levels on the use of company cars will be raised at a graduated rate over the next few years.

The Ministries of Transport and Environmental Protection have invested in cycle paths in cities and in areas of recreation and landscape value. A government decision allocated a budget to encouraging non-motorised transport.

The Ministry of Transport has also devoted a major part of its budget in recent years to improving public transportation systems (efficient interurban rail system, mass transit systems in the major cities, including light rail, underground rail and Buss Rapid Transportation systems).

Rotem Shamay
Environmental Policy Coordinator
Ministry of Environment Protection

¹ The text is presented as received from the author.