Economic and Social Council

Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Transport Statistics

Seventy-fourth session
Geneva, 15–17 May 2023
Item 6(d) of the provisional agenda
**Data collection, methodological development and harmonization
of Transport statistics: Transport Data Commons**

The Transport Data Commons

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document sets out the concept of the Transport Data Commons Initiative, which aims to bring together transport and emissions data from multiple sources into a single location. The secretariat of the Working Party on Transport Statistics and The Working Party on Pollution and Energy have been involved since the start in May 2022.

I. Background

1. Quality data are a prerequisite for achieving sustainable mobility, and thus the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement. However, in most low- and middle-income countries, transport data are difficult to access, the quality of the data may be poor, or the data may not even be collected at all.

2. To address this problem, international development organisations, alongside their partner governments, regularly need to commission experts and consultants to collect transport and emissions data. But in many countries, statistical systems are not yet fully developed. As a result, most international organisations collect data for the specific objective and sub-sector together with their partner governments, resulting in a variety of indicators and data in different places. Information may be published in diverse forms, often PDFs, and uploaded to different websites, if made publicly available at all.

3. This makes it difficult to cross-check data and compile consistent time series. Extensive resources are spent on extracting, adjusting, checking and using data, and sometimes efforts are duplicated. A common, shared and frequently updated global database for the transport sector is not yet publicly available.

4. International development organisations, governments, cities, research and data managers and civil society would benefit from data that is accessible and regularly updated

and verified. There should be a mutually beneficial exchange of information between those collecting and providing data.

5.   The vision of developing a common data platform where all participating organisations can both contribute and extract transport and emissions data for modelling greenhouse gas emissions and other impacts. Such a 'transport data commons' would create a shared value that the participating organisations could not achieve on their own. In the medium term, it would save money, reduce data gaps and improve the quality of modelling, evaluation, impact assessment and reporting of transport projects.

II.   Project initialisation

6.   To start the conversation, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) hosted a co-creation workshop on the side lines of the International Transport Forum Summit in May 2022. A diverse group of 25 people from 21 international organisations and initiatives, as well as representatives from civil society, attended the workshop and created a shared vision for a Transport Data Commons (TDC).

7.   Since May 2022, the initiative has grown and welcomed additional partners. Three working groups have been established, covering strategy, data architecture and user perspectives. The group coordinates its activities through regular virtual meetings of the full group.

8.   The aim of the initiative is to create a common, accessible and meaningful database that can be used by stakeholders to provide more effective support to developing countries and to design projects. Participating organisations would benefit in a number of ways:

- Existing data could be easily used for modelling and cross-checking. Time consuming data extraction and collection processed could be reduced.
- Newly collected data could be uploaded and made available in an easy-to-use format.
- The platform could direct users to other databases and connect data that are currently fragmented.

9.   The primary objective of the initiative is to cover the transport-climate nexus, so the initial focus is on reporting data from the transport sector needed to derive greenhouse-gas emissions estimates. Relevant data include vehicle fleets, distance travelled, energy consumption and carbon content of fuels for all modes of transport.

10.   Air pollution and potentially road safety are also topics of interest to the initiative and the scope could be expanded over time following successful implementation of the first phase of the initiative focusing on transport and climate. Since the initial workshop, the main workflows have been to

- Prototype the database;

- Institutionalise the initiative; and

- Identify funding opportunities.

III.   Involvement of the Working Party on Transport Statistics

11.   The involvement of the WP.6 secretariat has so far been to discuss different input data sources, as well as consider the architecture of the database, under the prototype the database workflow.

12.   UNECE was chosen to host the prototype in December 2022. It may also be that the database can be hosted by UNECE on a permanent basis, depending on IT infrastructure availability and specifications required.

13.   It should be noted that the initiative does not aim to replace existing collation of official statistics at the international level. WP.6 will continue to collect data through the common questionnaire and other data sources. The role of the TDC would be to collate this

collected data with other sources of relevance to transport, with a particular emphasis on data outside of the ECE region.

IV. Future Plans

14.   The TDC team is now considering how to bring the initiative forward. The initiative aims to be inclusive, and involve as many organisations and individuals as possible that are currently facing the same challenges. Those who are interested would be included in communication channels, regular meetings and workshops. Contributions could include data provision, funding, IT infrastructure or in-kind efforts of staff.

———————