

Transport situation in Sweden in 2004

1. Traffic trends

The total number of private cars in Sweden has increased with approximately 1 percent in the first half of 2004. The number of buses and lorries in use has also increased in 2004.

The total amount of travel has increased for a very long time in Sweden and this trend is expected to continue in 2004. Private cars accounts for a substantial part of the growth but in recent year's public transport, and especially railroad trips, have increased its shares of person kilometers. Air transport, and especially domestic air travel, has been stagnating since the millennium shift. However, there are clear signs that the figures are beginning to pick up again this year.

As far as freight transport is concerned, road and sea transport is about equally important in Sweden, measured in tonne-kilometres. Railroad accounts for approximately half the transport volumes compared to other modes of traffic. Road transport has been the fastest growing mode for a long period of time, while the transport volumes in railroad and sea transport have been fairly stable. These trends are not expected to change in 2004.

As far as road traffic is concerned, the person kilometres performed by private cars are estimated to have increased with 1,4 percents the last twelve months (to October 2004). The corresponding figures for lorries are 1,1 percent.

2. Obstacles to the development of transport

The Swedish transport system is functioning reasonable well in most of the aspects mentioned.

Travel times in road traffic on the national roads are decreasing. The services offered by public transport are increasing and more and more footpaths and cycle paths are being built. For the great majority of people, access by car to the nearest accident and emergency hospital and airport is good. An increase in the number of train services has also led to improved access in the rail transport system. However, there has been a further decrease in access for domestic air services. This deterioration is primarily due to changes in departure and arrival times and closure of air routes. Access for the disabled has been improved and many disabled people state that they are able to travel, although with difficulty. Many still opt to refrain from travel. The biggest reason for this is that they need to be accompanied during the journey. There is a subsidiary objective that public transport is to be available for the disabled by 2010.

It can be noted that men, as in previous years, predominate in boards, higher posts and working groups throughout the entire transport sector. Women's perspective and values thus continue to be poorly represented in planning, decisions and administration.

The development of transport quality has been predominantly positive in 2004. Roads are of an increasingly high standard and thus access and comfort are increasing. A number of measures have been implemented to provide correct information to a greater extent to travellers, transport providers and the public. The perceived terrorist threat has been followed by security measures that have entailed an increase in the level of security for transport compared with previous years. Delays have increased both for rail goods transport and for air transport, which means that predictability can have declined somewhat. Congestion has also increased on the roads in larger cities, leading to delays and reduced predictability for all those using the system.

As regards the subsidiary objective for safe traffic, developments in road traffic continue to cause concern. Preliminary figures indicate that the number of fatal road accidents will end up at approximately 500 in 2004. This is about the same number as last year, but lower than previous years (2000-2002). The number of seriously injured persons in road accidents seems to have dropped considerably compared to last year. It is considered that further measures are required, including more traffic surveillance and demands for alcolocks to achieve the transport policy objective for road safety. Safety on the railways, in air and sea transport has, however, been high for a number of years.

Emissions of carbon dioxide by the transport sector have increased by almost six per cent in 2003 compared with emissions in 1990. The increase in emissions is above all from heavy lorries. An additional explanation is that cars are becoming increasingly heavy with an increase in engine power, which counteracts the more efficient use of fuel in recent year. The number of persons disturbed by noise continues to increase due to increased traffic. Moreover, an increasing number of municipalities have granted planning permission to build housing adjacent to roads affected by noise. The air quality in built-up areas in Sweden has improved in recent decades due to decreased emissions from traffic, industry and households. However, no further improvements have taken place in the most recent years.

3. Best practices in transport and infrastructure regulation

We have already tried to describe the general development concerning efficiency, safety and environmental performance under question 2.

In 2004 investments, maintenance and management of road infrastructure is expected to amount to approximately 15,6 billion SEK. This is an increase with almost 10 percent compared to 2003. The corresponding figure for railroad investments, maintenance and management is expected to amount to approximately 8,6 billion SEK. It's an increase with almost 25 percent

compared to 2003. The total infrastructure investments can be estimated to be equivalent to 1 % of GDP in 2004.

The Swedish Parliament has passed a bill on the long term development of road and railroad infrastructure in 2004. The bill states that the planning authorities should plan road and railroad measures for a total amount of 381 billion SEK in the period 2004-2015. Investments in roads and railroads within the transeuropean networks (TEN) have been assigned an especially high priority by the Government.

In the area of regulatory developments it could be mentioned that the Swedish Parliament has passed a new and comprehensive law on regulation of the railway system (rules and principles for accessibility to the network, fees, regulation of competition, etc.). The establishment in July 2004 of a new regulatory body – a separate railway authority – is a part of this reform.

The Civil Aviation Administration will be divided into two separate organizations at the turn of the year, one with regulatory responsibilities and one responsible for the flight control and the management and development of the national airports.

Some major infrastructure developments that have taken place are:
On national roads, investments have been focused on traffic safety measures, especially installation of steel cable guards. Big investment projects under construction in 2004 are E4 Uppsala-Mehedeby (north of Uppsala) E4 past Markaryd (southern part of Sweden), E6 Torp-Håby (western part of Sweden) E6 the cross-border connection between Norway and Sweden including the construction of a new “Svinesunds” bridge, the “Södra Länken” tunnelsystem in Stockholm which opened for traffic in October and “Götatunneln” in central Gothenburg.
On railroads, two big projects that are currently under construction are the railway “Botnia link” between Härnösand and Umeå in northern Sweden and the “Årstabridge” in central Stockholm.