

Expert Group Meeting on Sustainable Urban Transport: Policy Options for Modernising and Greening Taxi Fleets in Latin American Cities

Co-Organized by:

**COPPE -Transport Engineering Programme
Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ)**

and

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

Venue:

Auditorium Reginaldo Treigo

National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES)

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

18-19 May 2011

Aide-Mémoire

A. Background

Taxis play an important role in urban transport systems. Commercial taxis are typically available 24 hours per day to provide point-to-point or door-to-door transportation services. Taxis are used by persons who do not have or do not wish to use their own car, as well as by the elderly and disabled persons, unable to use other public transportation modes. The taxicab got its name from the invention of the taximeter which measures the distance and the time a car has travelled.

The taxi industry has been constantly growing over the past two decades, in particular in cities with rapid growth of population and economic activity, including in many of the metropolitan and commercial cities in the Latin American region.

The taxi service industry is a major contributor to national economies by creating job opportunities and tax revenues for local authorities through distribution of specific licenses and other sources. In Europe, more than one million taxis exist which represent 10-20 per cent of urban traffic in major cities.¹ Many of the Latin American cities are also serviced by large taxi fleets, often comprising 8,000 to 10,000 or even more company-owned and individually-owned vehicles.

¹ International Road Transport Unit (IRU): “Facts and Figures on Taxi Transport in Europe”, 2009

Taxis have the ability to substitute private vehicle ownership and/or to complement public transport systems. However, taxis are also driven practically all the time which can give rise to environmental concerns. In many cities, taxis drive on average more than 50,000 miles (80,000 kilometers) per year mostly in inner-city areas. Therefore, inefficient use of fuels in taxis can have a significant negative impact on the urban environment and local living conditions including through air and noise pollution. Taxi vehicles also contribute to CO₂-emissions more than any other personal vehicle simply because they are operating on a continuous basis. There are also social concerns because not every member of the society can make use of taxis due to affordability issues.

The Expert Group Meeting will address the question of how taxi systems can be implemented in order to ensure environmentally sound mobility, while being safe, reliable, accountable, customer-focused, commercially viable and “green” (or environmentally sustainable). A growing number of cities are undertaking massive efforts to become more environment-friendly and more sustainable, among others by reforming their current transport systems. Which transport planning and transport management models exist and have been successful in respect to taxi fleets? Which impact does customer behavior have in this respect? How important is stakeholder participation in the transport planning and policy making process? Which role can regulators play? Are there best practice examples? Can the use of new technologies and alternative fuel choices offer emerging opportunities for a “greener local urban economy”? How can this support combating climate change? How can greater international cooperation facilitate sustainable development?

B. Objectives of the Expert Group Meeting

The *Expert Group Meeting on Sustainability in Urban Transport: Modernising and Greening Taxi Fleets in Latin American Cities* is co-organized by the COPPE Transport Engineering Programme of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in collaboration with other concerned institutions.

This meeting will provide a platform for wider information and experience sharing, in particular among experts and policy makers from the Latin American region, as well as a limited number of visiting international experts from other regions.

The meeting will draw on the expertise of experts from both the public and private sectors. Interdisciplinary in nature, this activity intends to provide an independent assessment of taxi schemes and related transport policies.

The meeting will enhance on-going efforts in the Latin American region to develop sustainable transport schemes and combat climate change in major cities (e.g. C40 initiative).

Specifically, the Expert Group Meeting aims to:

- identify and discuss sustainable development issues related to taxi systems, including economic, social and environmental aspects;
- consider the potential contribution to regional/national sustainable development and related policies that can enhance investment, employment and income generation;
- discuss opportunities for improving the sustainability of existing taxi schemes and for mitigating environmental impacts, including on urban air quality and GHG emissions;
- provide proposals for improved regulatory and legislative measures in the sub-region;
- create an expanded informal consultative network, bridging the gaps between policy-making, science, academia, and the private-sector;
- identify possible future projects and partnerships for international cooperation.

C. Technical background information for United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development (UN CSD-19 and Rio 2012 Conferences)

As a part of its forth implementation cycle (2010-2011), the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) is currently reviewing implementation of its decisions with regard to the thematic cluster including transport, chemicals, waste management, mining, and the Ten Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production. The proceedings of the expert group meeting are expected to provide inputs and relevant additional background information for the currently ongoing sustainable transport policy debate at UNCSD.

In accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/64/236 of 31 March 2010, the United Nations will also organize the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Brazil in 2012. One of the two main themes of the UN CSD (Rio+20) is “a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication”. The outcomes of the *Expert Group Meeting on Sustainability in Urban Transport: Modernising and Greening Taxi Fleets in Latin American Cities* may, therefore, also provide useful background information for the Rio-20 preparatory process.

D. Provisional programme and main topics for discussion

The provisional programme is currently under preparation. It is expected to cover, inter alia, the following topics for discussion:

Day 1

Opening session

Session I: Introductory overview: Policy options and best practices in regulating urban taxi systems

Session II: Integrated urban transport planning and the role of taxis

Day 2

Session III: Alternative vehicle technologies and fuel choices for mitigating urban air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from taxis

Session IV: “Taxi of tomorrow”- Newest developments and future trends

Session VI: Roundtable discussion on conclusions and recommendations

Closing session

A detailed annotated provisional programme will be circulated to participants in advance of the Expert Group Meeting.

E. Co-Organizers and Supporters

The Meeting is co-organized by the COPPE Transport Engineering Programme of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) with additional technical and financial support provided by various partner institutions, including the Korea Energy Economics Institute (KEEI) and the Korea Energy Management Corporation (KEMCO).

F. Participants

Participation in this meeting is by invitation only. It is expected that some 50-60 experts, officials and other participants from the Latin American region and from around the world will attend this event, including:

- Senior government officials and policy makers, including city and other local government officials (e.g. city taxi commission etc);
- Distinguished transport, environment and industry experts;
- Representatives and experts of civil society, academia and the private sector;
- Representatives of national and international professional associations;
- Experts and representatives of relevant UN and international organizations (e.g. United Nations Environment Programme – UNEP; United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean –ECLAC, etc.) as well as national, regional and international financial institutions.

Participation in the meeting is free of charge, but participants are expected to cover their own travel costs. A limited number of travel cost sponsorships will be available for invited experts/resource persons from developing countries.

G. Submission of Papers and Presentations

The co-organizers are inviting a number of technical background information papers to be prepared for presentation and discussion at the meeting. The co-organizers also welcome the presentation of background information papers and similar reports from participating experts, city representatives, non-governmental institutions and other independent researchers.

Participating experts interested in making presentations are invited to submit in advance of the meeting brief summaries of their suggested presentations.

All invited presentations should be limited to 10-15 minutes presentation time (e.g. a maximum of 10-15 slides). All invited speakers are requested to submit advance copies of their papers and presentations in electronic format to the secretariat for circulation among participants.

The co-organizers will engage some research assistants to collect and analyze relevant background information, including data on taxi systems in selected developing countries.

The proceedings of the Forum are intended to be published on the webpage of UN-DESA: http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/susdevtopics/sdt_transport.shtml.

H. Languages

The Expert Group Meeting will be conducted in English, Spanish and Portuguese, with simultaneous interpretation provided between these three languages.

I. Logistics

Detailed information on logistics, including registration, visa requirements, travel details and hotel accommodation arrangements are contained in a separate *Information Note for Participants*.

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