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Developments in Transport: Passenger transport will grow only half as fast as the population by 2050

Bern, 16.11.2021 - Transport use will continue to grow in the future. However, it will grow more slowly than the population due to social and economic trends such as the increase in working from home, continuing urbanisation and population ageing. These are the findings described in the Transport Outlook 2050, a report by the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC).

Transport use will continue to grow in the future, according to DETEC's Transport Outlook 2050, but at a slower rate than the population. In Transport Outlook 2050's 'Basis' scenario, travel volumes (in person-kilometres) will increase by only 11 per cent by 2050 compared to the reference year 2017, while the population is expected to grow by 21 per cent. This development is mainly due to the impact that various social and economic trends will have on mobility.

According to the Basis scenario, the trend towards working from home will continue. This in turn will lead to a fall in commuter trips. In addition, the ageing of the population is leading to a fall in the proportion of people in employment, which in turn means that there will be fewer trips to and from the workplace. Spatial development will also have an influence on transport, as more densely populated areas have recreational and shopping opportunities close by.

The results of the Basis scenario follow the assumption that the transport and spatial planning strategy decided by the Federal Council in “Mobility and Space 2050” will be consistently implemented. This includes measures such as inward urban development in locations that are well connected to public transport. In addition, the Basis scenario assumes that transport policy measures will be introduced, such as the increased internalisation of external costs from 2035 onwards. The transport policy measures nevertheless have a secondary influence on transport development compared to social and economic trends.

Under these conditions, the modal share of public transport (in terms of person-kilometres) will increase from 21 to 24 per cent in the Basis scenario, while the share for cycling will double. The modal share of the car remains significant, but falls from 73 to 68 per cent.

Social and economic trends also have an impact on freight transport. Under the Basis scenario it rises significantly by 31 per cent, but not as strongly as economic development and the corresponding increase of 57 per cent in GDP. Decarbonisation and increasing electromobility mean that in future less fuel and heating oil will be imported. Freight also increasingly consists of small loads, and less of bulk cargo. The rise of online retail will lead to an increase in delivery van trips. Increased bundling of goods at transloading points favours rail transport, for example of general cargo. Overall, goods are increasingly transported by rail; with the share rising from 37 to 39 per cent.

Transport Outlook 2050 provides a new basis for the federal government's transport and spatial planning. The report was drawn up by the Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE) in cooperation with the Federal Offices for Roads (FEDRO), Transport (FOT), Energy (SFOE) and the Environment (FOEN). They discussed and consolidated the assumptions underlying the scenarios (see box) both within the federal government and with external partners, such as transport planning offices or stakeholders from transport and business.

The four scenarios

The Basis scenario is based on the principles of “Mobility and Space 2050”, the sectoral plan for transport, program part, and thus reflects a development towards resource-efficient mobility of people and goods. The other three scenarios are alternative development paths. All scenarios are based on different assumptions, such as how quickly environmentally friendly technologies become established. The Business-as-Usual (BAU) scenario envisages proceeding as now within the current regulative framework, with little change. The two scenarios Individualised Society and Sustainable Society assume that transport is strongly impacted by technical innovations, such as the automation of passenger vehicles. However, technologies are used for different purposes – either for individual comfort (Individualised Society) or for sustainability and resource conservation (Sustainable Society).

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Links

Transport Outlook 2050 (ARE)

Publisher

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Federal Office of Transport
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Federal Roads Authority
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