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IRU Position on urban vehicle access regulations in EU cities

Consolidated IRU Position on urban vehicle access regulations in European cities.

I. ANALYSIS

An increasing number of European cities are unilaterally introducing urban vehicle access regulations (UVARs) which restrict entry. These restrictions can take the form of entry taxes or traffic bans (including the so-called “diesel bans”). Road freight and passenger transport companies active in several municipal areas are facing increasing challenges to meet these highly divergent unilateral measures.

At EU level, the European Commission (EC) is currently preparing several important initiatives concerning UVARs, notably the [review](#) of the 2013 urban mobility package.

Too often, UVARs have a greater impact on commercial road freight and passenger transport companies than on individual passenger car movements. These regulations create barriers to the provision of cross-border and domestic commercial road transport services with no guarantee of solving the challenges they are aimed to address. Additionally, the absence of a harmonised framework for the introduction and operation of UVARs at EU and national level increases costs, creates legal and administrative uncertainty and casts doubt over the economic returns of the investments made.

The commercial road freight and passenger transport industry recognises the major challenges facing European cities in terms of meeting the EU air quality standards, but this should not necessarily lead to restricting commercial road transport movements. Less restrictive measures should be contemplated such as the wider deployment of ICT and ITS tools to allow optimised itineraries for commercial vehicles, priority at traffic lights and real-time information on infrastructure availability. Such measures have proven to have a potential to reduce the negative environmental impacts of commercial fleets.

Moreover, the introduction and implementation of UVARs is often done without proper prior consultation of the economic stakeholders or their representative associations. Decisions are frequently made without a sound and objective impact assessment and are therefore often disproportionate compared to the objectives to be achieved.

Commercial road freight transport is a key component of efficient logistics chains and is often the only option for urban delivery. The fundamental role of collective passenger transport, namely buses, coaches and shared mobility by taxi, in providing viable, safe, inclusive and environmentally friendly alternatives to the private car and in solving congestion problems must be recognised.

The proliferation of UVARs can no longer be considered a purely local issue. UVARs inarguably have a cross-border impact on the freedom to provide services, they affect traffic on the EU core network corridors and they are usually legally based on national legislation intended to comply with the EU air quality directive. Moreover, the EU is already competent for local matters in terms of air quality and the cross border recovery of unpaid local congestion taxes and the European Commission is

competent to approve national and local support schemes to better meet air quality standards, including for the retrofitting of municipal fleets.

Streamlining the process leading to the adoption and implementation of UVARs by individual cities at EU level could contribute to more legal certainty for road transport operators who are active in several municipal areas across Europe and could encourage the deployment of more cost efficient solutions.

In considering potential EU level action it will be important to reflect on cities which already have UVARs and cities which plan to evaluate existing or plan to introduce new regulations.

II. IRU POSITION

IRU supports the establishment of a legally binding EU framework for the introduction of new UVARs and the operation of existing ones by public authorities.

Considering that the use of UVARs is only expected to increase in the future, EU action is urgently needed in order to ensure compliance with a number of fundamental principles and prevent distortions of competition between transport modes, public and private service providers, or between companies based on their country of establishment.

Therefore, IRU proposes that EU Member States should take the necessary measures to ensure that the framework is adhered to and implemented by the relevant competent authorities at national, regional and local level. New and revised UVARs should immediately comply with the framework, while existing UVARs should gradually be brought in alignment after a reasonable transitional period. Such a future EU legislative framework should include the following principles:

- **Impact assessment:** before taking any administrative decision, local authorities planning to introduce UVARs should undertake a proper impact assessment involving a cost and benefit analysis from an environmental, social and economic perspective, including the impact of the proposed measures on the local economy, businesses and visitors. Impact assessments should be reviewed at regular intervals in order to assess the effectiveness of existing UVARs.
- **Consultation, information and notification:** before taking any administrative decision, local authorities planning to introduce UVARs should organise consultations with representative stakeholders at all levels (local, regional, national and international). Decisions to introduce UVARs should be notified to the European Commission. Harmonised standards for information and vehicle registration should be developed by the European Commission. Information about new and existing schemes, the related administrative procedures and the transition periods should be available in a standardised, multilingual format via an “EU single window”.
- **Proportionality:** UVARs should be proportionate and fit for purpose without disproportionately disrupting the freedom to provide mobility and logistics services. Before taking any administrative decision affecting collective passenger transport and urban logistics by road, municipal authorities should justify that the envisaged restrictions are necessary, measured and appropriate to solving the identified problems, and show that all other less restrictive alternative measures have been considered and proven inadequate. When restrictive measures can be justified, they should be accompanied with alternatives to ensure that the transport services concerned are not discontinued.
- **Technology neutrality:** the recognition of alternative and renewable fuels will be key in the foreseeable future. Vehicle access standards should be based on performance standards rather than on vehicle age or the prescription of a given technology. Sufficient economical lead times that take into consideration the

rate of depreciation of vehicles used in commercial road transport should be set.

- **Unrestricted access to cities:** unrestricted access to cities should be granted to commercial vehicles which comply with the latest European norms and standards, supply collective or shared mobility services (coaches and taxis, in particular when they are used to service vulnerable users – schoolchildren, older people, persons with reduced mobility), use alternative and renewable fuels or load and unload during off-peak traffic periods.
- **Mutual recognition:** all official documents issued by a duly authorised public or private body to certify the vehicle compliance or conformity with relevant EU or national standards should be recognised by the enforcement authorities of any other EU Member State. This includes evidence documents for retrofitting and tailpipe emission tests, periodic roadworthiness testing certificates and entry permits.

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