



To: info@ertrac.org

Public consultation on the ERTRAC SRA2010

“Towards a 50% more efficient road transport system by 2030”

Executive Summary

ECTRI's comments

August 2010

The European Conference of Transport Research Institutes (ECTRI) is an international non-profit association that was officially founded in April 2003. It is the first attempt to unite the forces of the foremost multimodal transport research centres across Europe and to thereby promote the excellence of European transport research. Today, it includes 27 major transport research institutes or universities from 20 European countries. Together, they account for more than 3,800 European scientific and research staff in the field of transport. ECTRI is committed to provide the scientifically based competence, knowledge and advice to move towards its vision to have “an efficient, integral European transport system that provides completely safe, secure and sustainable mobility for people and goods”.

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1. The European Conference of Transport Research Institutes (ECTRI) as member of the ERTRAC Technology Platform welcomes the draft Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) and is grateful for the possibility to give its view to further improve the framework for road transport R&D towards 2030.
2. ECTRI acknowledges that the draft Strategic Research Agenda is well structured and provides a thorough analysis of the developments in the transport system and of the necessary adaptations, in particular with respect to safety issues, climate change and the implications for the automotive manufacturing and energy industries. From our point of view, most of the important issues for research are part of the draft. We also appreciate the policy framework introducing the new services and technologies, standardization and regulations. The guiding objectives definitely represent core challenges for the road transport sector. Having in mind the high quality of the SRA, ECTRI would nevertheless like to make some comments and reflections on the document. These remarks are made from the perspective of a research organization addressing multi-modal issues and are therefore, perceiving road transport as part of an integrated transport system.
3. Firstly, as a general remark and as regards to the ambitious targets proposed, the document could be strengthened by providing more concrete arguments and more practical tools to achieve the desired transport evolution. In this perspective, we feel that the proposed SRA could also integrate some references to the other existing SRAs in order to have a more complete analysis. The research program could also focus more directly on the targets proposed.
4. Referring to the 'Guiding objectives for 2030', we feel that under 'decarbonisation', the areas linked to the energy efficiency could be better defined. The figures given as guiding objectives (see table 1, p.4) would need to be better explained as depending of their understanding, the implications of the figures mentioned can differ significantly. When it is advised to increase the energy efficiency by 80% or 40%, does it refer to the reduction of the total energy consumed in the sector concerned or of efficiency targets (e.g. passenger x km, tonne x km)? Furthermore, for the first case, does the figure given mean that we should reach an overall energy consumption, which would be 20% of its 2010 level or that we should improve the 2010 energy efficiency by 80%? We would also recommend to address the issue of long-distance passenger transport and urban delivery to better complete the topics of interface of (or between) transport modes and regions (urban and rural). On the whole topic, the concepts of "land use" and "liveability" should be inserted.
5. The future vision in this document follows a path of continuity; the transport growth is coupled with economical growth but it does not address possible technological and behavioural trend changes. In this sense, the report could be more comprehensive by exploring alternative scenarios. Although, as mentioned above, this SRA sets ambitious goals, the issues remain rather general and most of them are already addressed in several EU projects and research programs from the car industry. To overcome this, we would like to propose to create a road map of ongoing research to identify the missing topics to be included in research for the next ten to twenty years.
6. We would also welcome a stronger inclusion of the human factor. The 'consumer' in relation to his/her behaviour, his/her attitudes towards new technologies and his/her evolution should be included in the scheme in addition to the four domains mentioned, i.e. vehicles, infrastructure, logistic and services, energy and resources. Likewise, the social costs of the road (transport system) would need to be further developed.
7. On the systems approach for road transport applications, we regret that the draft does not address the possible need for modal shift and does not take into consideration a broader context including other modes, in particular when addressing freight logistics and inter-modality. The research issues linking road transport to other modes are not limited to (physical) "transport interfaces", but include shared problems, where technology transfer and knowledge transfer between modes could contribute to solving the 'grand challenges'. They include R&D issues (life cycle management, modular production, maintenance, new materials, deployment of/transition to new technological concepts...) but also more policy oriented themes (security, regulatory aspects, seamless transport/logistics, standardization, decision support tools, training of professionals...).

8. From an energy and climate change perspective and in particular to describe the impacts on climate change and the environment, only focusing on CO₂ and energy seems to be insufficient. On these issues, we would advise that economical growth, transport demand and reduction of CO₂ emissions are analyzed separately. Furthermore, the other local air pollutants and their impacts should be inserted. The concept of green growth also deserves more consideration in our opinion.
9. As regards the specific issue of health and quality of life in urban areas and considering the continuing growth of road traffic as well as the number of people exposed, reducing road traffic and noise and air pollution exposure is a real challenge. Therefore, a better insight in the impact of road traffic as well as development and refinement of dose-response relationships is required. In this respect, more practical tools and indicators are necessary to evaluate the impacts of mitigation measures, minding the exposure but also their adverse effects.
10. On the safety and security issues, most of the important research issues are integrated in the SRA. The goal set to reduce fatalities and severe injuries is quite ambitious considering the current and persistent difficulties to decrease the number of serious injuries in Europe, especially for the vulnerable road users. Next to this, the safety strategy should also reflect on issues like public friendliness, spatial planning, politics and network planning. Moreover, the solutions proposed should go beyond technical solutions. Vulnerability of complex systems in the road transport sector (highly automated vehicles, car2infrastructure communication...) does not seem to be addressed.
11. Concerning the new vision on transport for the future, the research program proposed in the SRA is based on existing infrastructures but lacks other solutions/alternatives for the future. The inclusion of a program looking at other solutions for the future, like the possibilities of digital networks, should be considered as well.
12. As regards the research priorities described in the document and in relation to the objective set towards a 50% more efficient road transport, we suggest that the topics of environmental protection and health are covered in a more comprehensive way. The numerous greenhouse gases and other environmental impacts should also be pondered. In the case of the proposed research and demonstration of biofuels, a system assessment looking at all aspects linked to their production and use is of crucial importance. In general, to assess the different measures mentioned in the list of research priorities, robust methodological approaches for evaluation purposes are to be developed, as this is a weak point of today's decision making.
13. To understand the overall context of mobility, all modes and their interactions need to be included in the research priorities. This would prove to be extremely helpful to better understand and monitor user's mobility behaviour. The opportunity to study possible matching of the vehicles and the users would be worth considering. Urban management and transport management are issues to be included as well in the research priorities.
14. Finally, the list of research priorities is rather compact and not always easy to grasp. The SRA will most probably have a greater impact with a more developed list of concrete deliverables.