

## Summary:

# Transport planning: County Level Involvement and Influence

This report examines the regional work done on the Transport Planning Programs of the four transport agencies in Norway. This work started after the white paper on the National Transport Plan was submitted to parliament. The Ministry of Transport and the Ministry fisheries presupposed that the counties were ensured influence. The Ministries also encouraged co-operation between the different agencies, so that the necessary co-ordination between the different projects and schemes would be achieved. Therefore separate steering committees in each county were set up, consisting of representatives from the four transport agencies, from the counties, and the state's representative (governor).

The report is analysing i) to what degree the counties did participate and where given influence in the planning process; ii) to what degree the four transport agencies; the Norwegian Air Traffic and Airport Management; the National Coastal Administration; the National Rail Administration, and the Public Road Administration did manage to coordinate their measures and Transport Planning Programmes.

We have conducted interviews in three counties with those representatives – both from the administration and the political council in the counties, as well as representatives from the regional road agencies – who were the most central in the transport planning process.

## Variation between the agencies

The Public Road Administration, through their regional agencies, has administrated the steering committees. The participation of the Norwegian Air Traffic and Airport Management, the National Coastal Administration and the National Rail Administration has varied across the counties, the Norwegian Air Traffic and Airport Management being the most laid back. Consequently, road planning has dominated the discussions in the steering committee.

The responsibility for the regional road planning is given to the regional agencies, while in air, coastal and railroad planning it is given to the central agencies. Due to this, the regional road agencies have more influence

than the regional agencies of the other transport sectors, causing an imbalanced co-operation situation.

## Variation between the counties

A minimum amount of steering committee meetings is set in the guidelines from the ministries. In Hordaland county, more meetings than this amount were held. Work groups within road transport planning were also set, where both the county, the National Rail Administration and the Police participated. In the other two counties that were interviewed (Nordland and Vestfold), only the minimum number of meetings was held. The contact between the counties and the agencies in this two counties was more ad hoc.

In Hordaland, the county's expectations related to the planning programmes were explicitly formulated, and the county was more active in the promotion of its transport views than the other two counties. We think this could be related to the fact that Hordaland has more well defined transport policy, and also has the resources to promote it. The following should be noted:

- Bergen municipality and Hordaland county had already discussed the objectives and challenges of their transport politics before starting their work on the planning programme. Separate scheme-plans were set up, as the Bergen Programme, the plan for the fishery harbours, and the regional coastal plan.
- More resources are available for transport planning in Hordaland county than in the other two counties. This is due to the county's size and the great transport challenges it faces. In addition, Bergen is the country's second largest city resulting in even more resources.
- The Bergen Program and different toll road projects give Hordaland more "fresh money" to spend on transport schemes compared to the other two counties.

### Influence despite of no participation

None of the counties interviewed felt that they had been involved in or had influence on the work with the Transport Planning Programmes. Instead the counties feel that they were served solutions, and did not participate in substantial discussions about actual priorities. *Even though the counties' participation and influence has been minimal, there experience a consistency between the counties own priorities and the priorities of the agencies.*

The main reasons how it is possible to obtain consistency without participating are:

- The steering committee is not the most important channel for a county's influence in transport planning. The counties influence the agencies through the resolutions that were passed ahead of the work with the Transport Planning Programmes. Therefore, counties that are change oriented and focused on transport politics, will then also be able to influence the direction of transport planning development, as is seen in Hordaland.
- Years of planning and county resolutions form the basis for the priorities that the regional road agencies' make. This puts limitations on both the agencies' as well as the counties' freedom of action in the TPP process. The means are earmarked to the different transport sectors for specific schemes and projects already in process and there is always a long pipe line of projects waiting to be initiated. As long as the economic framework does not increase significantly there is little space left for innovation and new prioritisations.
- The counties and the regional road agencies are mainly consistent in their priorities, making it difficult to determine which of the parties influences the other. Still, we find reason to believe that it is difficult for the counties to make a totally different priority than the one recommended by the road agency. Cooptation may explain why the counties feel they have no influence, but yet agree with the road agency's proposal.

This mainly concerns road planning. For the other agencies, the counties were mainly concerned with ensuring that their county was prioritised in the transport planning. The counties were not concerned with re-prioritisation within each county.

The contact between the counties and the transport agencies has varied.

### No more co-ordination than necessary, but still a step forward

None of the counties that were examined, reported extensive co-operation between the agencies, each TPP was drawn up separately. None of the parties involved mean that the TPPs promotes the ability to see the different sectors in relation to each other, so as to be able to create an overall planning programme. Little has been achieved regarding this.

The counties are concerned with junctures, station areas and terminals, but it is difficult to find the means for such schemes and they have not managed to influence the agencies to prioritise this. *Despite of the guidelines for the agencies' work with TPP, schemes that improve the co-ordination between the different sectors as well as schemes for improving public transport, are in fact not feasible.*

According to the interviewed parties, this may be due to the following:

- All the agencies have separate budgets and have to follow central instructions. This results in limited ability to accommodate other agencies in their planning. The agencies are more or less "locked" at the regional level.
- No ways of co-ordination or goals of achievement are defined prior to the work on the TPP.
- In order to perform realistic assessments of the effectiveness across the sectors, traffic and transport analysis of i.a. regional segments of competition are necessary. In addition, the planning competence varies between the sectors

### Few changes in the treatment of the counties

Treating the different TPPs as a whole gives the FYLKESTING(FT) the opportunity to see the connection between the transport politics in different sectors. A disadvantage, as is pointed out by some, is that the caseload will be too large for one council meeting to handle. Due to the increased concern of county politicians for comprehensive transport policies, a more co-ordinated presentation would be an advantage. However, there are in fact very small changes in the concerns of the council – road investments are still of greatest importance.

We believe this can be explained by the following:

- The decision framework given to the counties, does not induce a comprehensive view of the different sectors. The counties themselves lack competence and resources to do so.
- The Norwegian Air Traffic and Airport Management have had no contact at all with the counties during the planning process. This also partly counts for the

Coastal Administration, though the contact has increased lately. The National Rail Administration has also improved their contact, but this has not affected the Transport Planning Programme itself.

### The counties wish to lead the process

All over, the counties wish to lead the TPP process. There is also a concern regarding:

- the allocation of functions between the agencies and the counties
- administrative boundaries between counties
- administrative boundaries between counties and municipalities
- division between maintenance and investments in the budgetary system.

In this study, there was no room for discussing such reforms further.

However, our main impression is that it is of greater importance that the counties have well defined objectives and priorities than alternative ways of organizing the steering committee. The work on the National Transport Plan should be more of a continuous process, where the

counties should strive towards a more central role through their own planning and policy design.

Finally, the following should be noted:

- The counties and the agencies should seek to identify specific transport problem areas demanding inter-sectorial co-operation. Regional strategic analysis that will be carried out in connection with the upcoming rolling of the National Transport Plan, may contribute to finding the areas that demand this type of co-operation.
- It is not sufficient that the ministries stress the importance of junctions and terminal plans. They should point out central and concrete problem areas, and design tasks for the regional parties based on those already identified by the parties themselves. One should also learn from the attempts on alternative administrative organisation of transport systems in greater city areas that are now in process.
- The inter-sectorial co-operation should receive more flexible means that are not limited to one certain sector. A share of this money can be spent on a follow-up on the problem areas themselves, instead of being distributed in each sector separately.