Session Summary: MOBILITY

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INTRODUCTION

With three billion more people living in cities by 2050, geometry proves that the current model of urban mobility, based on the preeminence of the automobile, cannot last, said Timothy Papandreou, Founder of Emerging Transport Advisors (US). “You can only fit so much.” Incessant road building “is destroying cities,” he added.

Cars produce three-quarters of urban air pollution and are responsible for 1.2 million deaths every year, according to Papandreou. “We accept these deaths,” Papandreou said. “But it is not acceptable.”

“Air pollution kills as much as cigarettes,” said Frédéric Flipo, Co-Founder and General Manager, Evergaz (France).

How can transportation be made safe and ecologically-friendly?

MOBILITY DISRUPTION

“The California model shows that the world can improve the viability of the economy while reducing carbon emissions,” according to Papandreou, former Chief Innovation Officer for San Francisco’s transportation agency. “The most difficult challenge is transportation.”

Papandreou believes that “We can fix all these problems with political will.” One quick-fix to peak traffic jams would be to let people work from home more often. “It is not a technological issue,” he said. “It is a human behavioral issue.” Governments, companies and communities will need to work together.

To get people out of their personal vehicles, effective solutions must be “easy, cheap and fun,” he added.

A viable future would involve multimodality. It is propelled by three trends: (1) sharing – whether fleets or rides; (2) electric vehicles; and (3) automation. “It would be an incredible opportunity if we can stitch it together,” he said. The last kilometer could be left to things like scooters, while ride sharing schemes akin to BlaBlaCar could fulfill needs for longer tips. Autonomous vehicles may be just around the corner. The whole shebang would be worth USD 10 trillion by 2035, he predicted.

Current systems “are going to see a lot of disruption,” he suggested. For example, land use and urban planning will be upturned by the reduced need for parking on city streets. Drive through fast-food joints will fade away. ”If you are a company, what is your pivot point?” he asked. “Nobody wants to have a Kodak moment.”
THE EVOLUTION OF MOBILITY

Good data and analysis are essential to help policymakers turn things around, agreed Isabelle Duvaux-Béchon, Head of the Member States Relations and Partnerships Office for the European Space Agency (ESA), and Laurence Rouil, Head of Environmental Modelling and Decision Making for Ineris (France).

Local communities and the private sector hold many of the cards, according to Sylvie Perrin, Partner, De Gaule Fleurance & Associates and Founder, La Plateforme Verte (France). “Sustainable mobility needs private investment, not just in cars and scooters but also in IT,” she said. “We need to make sure that local communities invest in the right infrastructure.”

Biogas-fueled vehicles can help reduce particulate matter in the air, said Flipo. Urban gondolas are becoming increasingly popular, especially in South America, noted Denis Baud-Lavigne, Head of Business Development, POMA (France).

“Local officials need to move much faster,” said Rouil. “They must offer clean, reliable and efficient public transportation as an alternative to the automobile. They can’t let it become more fragile. There is a cost, but change is needed.”

INNOVATION IN MOBILITY

Start-ups made presentations about their efforts in this area:

- ORYGEEN – Solar-powered charging stations for electric vehicles.
- EnRoute – Online shopping for passengers on public transportation.
- Urbismart – Optimal delivery systems based on “micrologistics” using Artificial Intelligence.
- Bovlabs – Energy trading in tandem with the charging of electric vehicles.
- LANEVA Boats – Electric boats.
- Electric 55 Charging – A consumer-based revenue model for the charging of electric vehicles.