As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, many cities suspended the operation of their low emission zones (LEZs) in order to help essential workers travel to and from their jobs. Now cities are beginning to reinstate these zones. Antwerp is one of those cities, meaning that vehicles entering their LEZ will have to meet the required Euro emissions standard and parking will no longer be free. Rather than fully reinstating its LEZ, Brussels has decided to permanently exempt people with disabilities from any LEZ fees.

Whilst LEZs in the UK are still suspended, authorities have fast-tracked trials of e-scooters. The trial will now start next month, a year earlier than planned. This trial will help authorities gauge the
requirements for ensuring the safety of e-scooter use on the roads.

In order to help guide people in remaining safe, ICLEI has released multiple resources, including one on measures that have been implemented around the world. This includes information on the restrictions that individual countries have put in place, along with webinars on good practice from China. A full list can be found here.

The World Health Organization has created a poster with guidelines on how to stay safe while moving around, such as riding bicycles or walking whenever feasible. Although UITP secretary general, Mohamed Mezghani, has noticed that the guidelines state: ‘physical distancing in public transport is limited to the following situations: purchasing tickets, waiting to board vehicles, moving around stations... But not on-board vehicles.’

Brussels mobility minister, Elke Van den Brandt, is thinking about relaxing rules on working hours to reduce the burden on transport. She said: ‘We need to change the mentality in Belgium... spreading out these peak hours will have a very positive effect, as well as more teleworking.’

The German Advisory Council on the Environment are also trying to change attitudes. They believe that urban transport made up of public transport, pedestrians and cyclists, would benefit the majority of the population. They believe that parking is far too cheap and that sustainable urban mobility should be at the heart of future traffic development planning.

An open letter has been sent to the United Nations Security Council with two key recommendations for mobility. One is to favour active transport as it allows for physical distancing and has a positive impact on physical and mental health. The other is to develop transport networks that allow for physical distancing, such as increasing the capacity of cycle lanes, as well as creating car parks on the outskirts of cities, so that workers from outside the city can still safely commute.

Belgium-based company Espaces-Mobilités has released results from a public survey on mobility behaviour after COVID-19. They found that 43% of respondents said that their mobility patterns would change moderately to completely after lockdown, and that 42% plan to work from home more often. In addition, 34% said that they would ride bicycles more often and 22% would use their car less often, while 75% believe that the crisis is an opportunity to change mobility and public space policies. To see the all the information discovered click here.

European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, has given a speech on the EU’s Recovery Plan. She noted that money will be spent across three pillars:

- The first pillar will focus on supporting Member States to recover, repair and come out stronger from the crisis;
- The second pillar is about kick-starting the economy and helping private investment to get moving again;
- The third pillar is about learning the most immediate lessons of the crisis.

To see her full speech click here. Don’t forgot to look at our own articles on the Commission’s guidance on safely resuming travel here and here.

For more in-depth information see the original articles on the following websites:

- Restart of the low emission zone and paid parking in Antwerp;
- People with disabilities exempt from Brussels LEZ;
- The UK fast-tracks e-kick-scooter trials;
- ICLEI Resources;
COVID-19 transport resources: Keeping cities moving;
Mohamed Mezghani UITP Secretary General;
Moving around during the COVID-19 outbreak;
Can coronavirus cure Brussels of its addiction to driving?;
Environmental council calls for car tolls and more vigor in climate protection;
Speech by President von der Leyen at the European Parliament Plenary on the new MFF, own resources and the Recovery Plan;
A new roadmap for new mobility;
Flatten the mobility curve;
Urban Access Regulations in Europe.

Also, see these COVID-19 related events:

COVID-19 Webinar: Impacts on transport emissions and air quality.

For a detailed list of online resources, guidance materials, and COVID-19 related transport and mobility discussions, please see links in the Eltis article Maintaining essential mobility during a pandemic.

See also the previous weekly summaries produced:

- 18 May 2020 - Weekly Summary
- 11 May 2020 - Weekly Summary
- 4 May 2020 - Weekly Summary
- 27 April 2020 - Weekly Summary
- 20 April 2020 - Weekly Summary
- 13 April 2020 - Weekly Summary

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