

Transport Forecasts since 1975

A Follow-up Survey

Preface

The tasks of the Swedish Institute for Transport and Communications Analysis (SIKA) include making regular descriptions of the Swedish transport market and producing forecasts of the future development of transport.

As part of this work, SIKA has now produced a follow-up survey of the national forecasts for passenger and goods transport published during the past thirty years. The survey focuses primarily on describing how well the forecast development of passenger and goods transport coincides with the development that actually took place. The author of the report is Inge Vierth at SIKA.

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Kjell Dahlström
Director-General

National transport forecasts

Long-term national passenger and goods transport forecasts serve as a common platform to determine the direction of infrastructure investments and for other transport policy positions. The forecasts are also used for consequence analyses concerning accessibility, regional development, environment, safe traffic etc. and by private actors.

This report is intended as a survey to follow up the national transport forecasts published by the former Ministry of Transport and Communications, the former Transport Council (TPR), Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute (VTI) and SIKA/Samplan¹ during the past thirty years.

We give an account of the explanatory factors and correlations used and how various uncertainty factors were clarified. In our comparison between forecast and outcome, transport performance in Sweden is presented for the respective base year and forecast year. The follow-up survey focuses primarily on describing how well the forecast development of passenger and goods transport coincides with the development that subsequently took place. We concentrate mainly on giving an account of large evident discrepancies between forecast and reality.

The follow-up survey should be regarded as an initial step. More and more penetrating follow-ups of the explanatory factors are needed to increase understanding of correlations, structures and the development of the passenger and goods transport market in both the short and long-term.

At the aggregate level, our follow-up indicates that passenger and goods transport forecasts, disregarding individual exceptions, coincide quite well with the development that subsequently took place. In the cases where there are substantial discrepancies, they are on the other hand so large that they are not covered by the alternative scenarios and sensitivity analyses produced within the framework of the forecast work.

The expected development of transport performance is clearly affected by the historical development. Our survey illustrates the difficulties of capturing trend reversals. Part of the picture is also that the development of the volume and structure of transport performance is to a great extent controlled by the assumed structures in the macroeconomic forecasts and by other assumptions on conditions outside the transport sector.

¹ SIKA and the transport agencies, i.e. The National Rail Administration, the Swedish Civil Aviation Administration, the Swedish Maritime Administration and the National Road Administration.

Taking into consideration the long-term nature of the forecasts, it is difficult to predict how different political and structural changes affect passenger and goods transport. Furthermore, the main aim of the forecasts has not been to “get it right” but rather to serve as a clarification of the consequences of different economic scenarios, different transport policy alternatives for action, etc.