

National Action Plan for Walking and Cycling 2020

SUMMARY



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The National Action Plan for Walking and Cycling 2020

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Summary

Published in the spring of 2011 by the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the National Strategy for Walking and Cycling is designed to enhance the political status of walking and cycling to the point that they will be recognised by policymakers as equal to other modes of transport. Together that strategy and this Action Plan target an increase in the number of journeys undertaken on foot or by bicycle by 20% by 2020 and a corresponding decrease in the number of car journeys. This target can be met only with the aid of a wide range of measures and through co-operation between the central and local government and the private sector. Walking and cycling must be recognised as the primary modes of transport in urban planning and transport policy, and their promotion must take concrete shape in the development of communities and transport systems.

The objective of this Action Plan is to encourage and enable people to opt for walking or cycling at least for a portion of their journeys. Potential for this modal shift can be found in municipalities of all sizes, in every population group, and for a number of types of journeys.

Promotion of walking and cycling has traditionally focused on traffic safety and the infrastructure. However, a major shift in transport habits cannot be effected through new walking and cycling routes alone. A shift in attitudes and improvement of the existing route network, along with community structures and service networks favourable to walking and cycling, are needed too.

The Action Plan has been drawn up by a number of stakeholders seeking to introduce common policy guidelines for promoting pedestrian and bicycle traffic. The measures proposed are to be employed in the central and local government plans, guidelines, and implementation procedures. The implementation of the Action Plan will be subject to regular assessment.

The Action Plan sets out four priorities: 1) a shift in attitudes, 2) infrastructure, 3) community structure, and 4) administrative structure and legislation. These priority areas comprise 33 measures, responsibility for which is assigned to competent authorities. Each priority involves the central strategies described below.

Key choices

The proportion of walking and cycling can be increased only if those people who currently undertake most of their journeys by either driving a car or otherwise travelling in one change their habits. The objective is to change their choice of transport such that walking or cycling offers a viable, practical, and desirable alternative. Small changes made by a large group of people can make a great impact.

Motivation and the dissemination of information to members of the public, decision-makers, and planners alike constitute the essential elements of this strategy. Plenty of information about walking and cycling – for example, about the concrete benefits they bring – is available, but it fails to be picked up by the relevant decision-makers.

The key methods for bringing about a modal shift include:

- Measures for marketing walking and cycling, and other instruments designed to guide mobility
- Development of walking and cycling equipment and services, alongside promotion of their use

Clear routes

Both international and Finnish experiences show that the popularity of cycling depends on the ease and practicality of undertaking daily journeys by bicycle. Health benefits, environmental impact, and avoidance of traffic congestion are welcome side effects but rarely constitute the main reasons for cycling. The right conditions must be created for pleasant, safe, and fast cycling, along with a smooth flow of traffic.

The popularity of walking depends largely on similar factors. However, a pleasant urban environment that meets people's needs is even more significant for pedestrian traffic. A journey undertaken on foot is an experience. We need environments that encourage people to take up the walking experience.

The key measures for improving conditions for walking and cycling include:

- Drawing up local guidelines to address the status of walking and cycling, and revising the planning principles for bicycle traffic
- Building an attractive environment for pedestrian traffic and introducing traffic-calming measures for motor vehicles
- Improving the quality of cycling routes and adding the missing route links
- Providing appropriate bicycle stands and similar facilities
- Ensuring proper maintenance of pavements and cycle paths

Short distances

Distance is a key factor in the choice of a mode of transport. Current development trends, urban sprawl, and the decreasing availability of services are making distances longer and weakening conditions for walking and cycling. Simultaneously, increasing car ownership – families having a second car is particularly common in towns where urban planning is based on car use – significantly reduces the use of other modes of transport.

Ensuring that the right conditions are created for walking and cycling must become a key factor in land-use planning. In this respect, housing and business premises built

in the pedestrian and bicycle traffic zones in urban areas and near the centres of small towns can make a real difference. The development of public and private service networks must be steered toward ensuring access on foot and by bicycle.

The key measures for safeguarding the opportunities for making daily journeys on foot or by bicycle include:

- Improving and extending the pedestrian and cycling zones on the basis of short distances and mixed functions
- Strengthening the public and commercial local services
- Outlining and demonstrating the provisions for property-specific bicycle facilities and a walking and cycling network appropriately linked to land use in planning at different levels

Working systems

In the promotion of walking and cycling, objectives must be transformed into concrete measures that make a difference for the development of communities and transport systems. Good will is not enough on its own. Choices that facilitate walking and cycling are called for when decisions are being made and resources allocated for the development of communities and transport systems.

In the transport sector, both financial and human resources should be allocated to the various modes of transport in accordance with their target share of overall use. Individual measures to promote walking and cycling are simple and inexpensive in comparison to large transport projects.

Motivation and commitment are striven for also when the promotion efforts call for financial incentives to encourage commuting to work on foot or by bicycle, or introduction of measures that restrict motoring, such as lower speed limits or reapportionment of traffic space.

The key measures for improving the conditions for walking and cycling include:

- Making walking and cycling an integral part of central- and local-government transport policies
- Introducing financial incentives to support commuting to work on foot or by bicycle
- Providing adequate and skilled human resources for the planning and promotion of walking and cycling, and monitoring the walking and cycling statistics
- Introducing and monitoring traffic regulations that support the growth and safety of walking and cycling, and providing information about these