A general shift towards sustainable modes of travel is taking place. Children are using more sustainable modes to go to school and workers are using cars less. Developing and implementing a travel plan can reduce the need for people to travel to and from a location and encourage others to travel more sustainably.
The power of travel planning

A travel plan is a package of measures designed by a workplace, school or other organisation to encourage safe, healthy and sustainable travel habits. By reducing car travel, travel plans can improve health and wellbeing, free up parking spaces, and make a positive contribution to the community and the environment. Every travel plan is different and there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution available, but they can be easily adapted to suit most circumstances. This CIVITAS Insight focus solely on travel plans for schools and workplaces.

School travel plans

“I drive my children to school. Why? Well, I think it is too dangerous for them to walk or cycle to school because of all the cars on the street!”

Making it safer and easier for children to walk, cycle or take public transport to school has long-term health benefits, increases traffic safety around schools, reduces air pollution and traffic congestion, and helps children arrive at school awake, refreshed and ready to learn. Because of these benefits, more and more cities in Europe are actively involved in helping schools to develop and implement travel plans. Typical measures in a school travel plan include promoting the health benefits of walking, providing more or better pedestrian crossings, enforcing tighter parking and traffic rules around the school, providing cycling training, or setting up a “walking school bus”. School travel-planning groups often also work on a policy level to encourage multi-tiered government policies that support active travel.

Workplace travel plans

“I drive to work because I have irregular working hours, a lot of papers and, as part of my monthly salary, the government provides me with a commuter tax allowance. And my company gives me free sheltered parking.”

A workplace travel plan is a package of measures produced by employers to encourage staff to use other ways to get to work than just travelling alone in a car. An employer can choose to develop a travel plan at any time or be required to develop one as a condition of planning consent for an expansion or new development. Typical measures include improving facilities for pedestrians and cyclists (showers, lockers and cycle parking), promoting and subsidising public transport, and encouraging carpooling, working from home (also known as teleworking) and teleconferencing.
Very often, travel plans follow an integrated “carrot and stick” approach by allowing complementary tools to be implemented in one go. This means introducing effective but unpopular tools (such as access restrictions) alongside popular but possibly expensive tools (like public transport subsidies) to deliver the required benefits. Involving an additional party such as a workplace or school can be beneficial as well. In this way, travel plans can replace a possible negative relationship between local authorities and citizens with a more positive relationship, such as between an employer and employee or between a school, parent and pupil. Finally, because of the location-based nature of travel plans they can develop as tailored packages of measures, which take very site-specific needs and opportunities into account.

The concept works by developing balanced packages of user-focused transport tools in a partnership that seeks to provide meaningful benefits to each of the stakeholders involved: improved travel choices to the individuals; cost savings, happier and healthier staff and a better company image for the organisation. Further benefits include additional business opportunities for the service providers and reduced congestion and better air quality for citizens.\(^1\)

The following common features can underpin the concept of a travel plan:

- They are not an instrument but a strategy for other mostly transport-focused measures.
- They are often delivered by additional bodies that are not a part of the “traditional” transport policy structure.
- They are initiated in two ways by the organisation or by the local government.
- They seek to deliver transport and related benefits to the community.
- They are, to some extent, site-specific and tailored to the specific contextual circumstances.
- They deliver, to some extent, a package or a strategy of a wide variety of transport instruments.
CIVITAS encourages travel planning for schools and workplaces

Travel planning is a part of Mobility Management, a concept that promotes sustainable transport and reduces the number of cars used by single occupants by changing their attitudes and behaviour. At the core of Mobility Management are soft measures such as information and communication, organising services and coordinating activities of different partners. Because of the significant impact that travel planning can have on the modal split within a city, the CIVITAS Initiative has realised numerous measures in this field since 2002. The CIVITAS Initiative’s Thematic Group on Mobility Management provides a number of resources, such as training and guidance material, policy recommendations, and learning opportunities such as trainings, study tours or workshops. The group also offers the possibility to network with the city officials and experts involved in examples of best practice.

Whereas the first of the following CIVITAS case studies (Nantes, France) focuses on company travel plans, the second (Preston, United Kingdom) shines a spotlight on school travel plans. Finally, the third case study (Donostia-San Sebastian, Spain) includes information about both school and workplace travel planning.

CIVITAS I | Nantes (France): Creating 246 company travel plans

In 2002, 75 percent of nearly 600,000 work-related trips in the Nantes conurbation took place car, largely during peak hours. Increasing levels of congestion, and the resulting deterioration in air quality, highlighted the need to address the situation. Only a small decrease in car traffic would be sufficient to improve traffic flow, lower fuel consumption and reduce emissions. Company travel plans were a good way to tackle the problem, especially among the growing number of employees concerned about climate change and the rising price of fuel. The city administration of Nantes introduced travel planning for its own employees with the aim of increasing public transport use from 20 to 30 percent, and reducing the modal share of private cars from 62 to 50 percent for commuting and work trips. Nantes worked in partnership with the city’s public transport operator, SEMITAN, the national environmental agency, ADEME, the chamber of commerce and various local companies. The support provided to companies included technical and financial help in developing the mobility plans and a discount on public transport season tickets for employees.

The company travel plans involve four stages. Firstly, they analyse employees’ mobility needs and habits, and access to the company by various transport modes. Next, the plans outline concrete measures that provide better information on alternative modes. Thirdly, the company signs a contract between Nantes Métropole and SEMITAN. Finally, a regular follow-up takes place, with an assessment after three years, comparing mobility habits with the objectives stated in the contract.

By the end of 2010, a total of 246 company travel plans were put into effect (compared to 16 in 2005), benefiting around 66,690 employees. The company travel plan of the Nantes local authority (2,300 employees) reduced car use from 62 percent to 50 percent, representing an annual saving of 640,000 km and a decrease in CO₂ emissions by 90 tonnes.

CIVITAS II | Preston (United Kingdom): School travel planning

Schools in Preston examined the manner in which staff, pupils and parents travelled between home and school. All local authority schools in the area received assistance in developing a school travel plan and ongoing advice and support. The measure aimed to promote walking, cycling and public transport as attractive alternatives to the private car. Schools successfully developing a school travel plan were eligible to receive grants towards related projects, such as bicycle parking facilities.

All local authority schools in Preston received information about school travel plans. The 2Move Festival and Healthy Schools Programme with Preston Primary Care Trust raised further awareness. A number of schools introduced a pilot Walk to School initiative. School travel plan workshops, launched in September and October 2006 and attended by 23 local primary schools, proved a valuable measure. In addition, head teachers attended seminars and workshops to increase the awareness of school travel plans and to boost their adoption by schools.

Because of the measure, 62 percent of schools in Preston developed and approved a school travel plan. Implementing school travel plans had a positive impact in Preston: they reduced car traffic and increased the number of pupils walking to Preston primary schools.5

CIVITAS PLUS | Donostia-San Sebastian (Spain): Travel plans

Daily journeys between home, work or school are a significant part of urban transport and generate excessive demand on the road network during peak times. Donostia-San Sebastian took a proactive approach when targeting pupils and employees to opt for sustainable modes. The city was willing to change the travel habits of pupils, their parents and teachers at 10 schools in the city. At the same time, the city targeted people working in three selected business districts. At the start of the project, 95 percent of these employees were commuting to work by car.

The municipality wanted to teach schoolchildren road safety and cycling skills, while also increasing road safety in the areas around the schools, for example, through speed controls. The measure entails implementing Walk to School programmes and pedestrian school bus schemes. Donostia-San Sebastian also engaged with employers and employees to come up with mobility plans to promote more sustainable travel choices. In cooperation with managers from the Zuatzu, Miramon, and Belartza business districts, they developed commuter travel plans. Employees took part in designing schemes to reduce car traffic, increase cycling and walking, and the introduction of programmes for carpooling and carsharing.

In 2009, CIVITAS helped launch a pilot project at one school and completed a diagnostic study to develop school mobility plans. Following this activity, 10 selected schools conducted surveys in 2010 to analyse travel behaviour and its associated factors among the different groups who travel to school every day. They also identified the main barriers to sustainable mobility when travelling to and from school. Travel plans were ready in 2011, developing as a result two fundamental streams of work: The first were infrastructure improvements to promote changes in the mobility behaviour of families (and the educational community at large: students, teachers and parents). Teachers and parents’ associations developed the second stream together to raise awareness of the need to promote a behavioural change when travelling to school. This resulted in 60 workshops in 24 city schools engaging over 2,500 pupils, 60 teachers and 3,500 parents.
Triggering the development of new organisational entities and arrangements

A number of projects found that drivers and passengers are often reluctant to change their behaviour due to factors such as independence, status or current transport habits. However, they may be willing to adopt more eco-friendly attitudes. Some of the key conditions for success are including key stakeholders, reaching a common understanding of the need to solve traffic and environmental problems, and a well-planned implementation process. Measures should also link into the planning strategies of cities, schools and companies, and funds spent wisely and efficiently.

Some cities believe that travel plans need tailoring to specific local circumstances and cannot be up-scaled in general terms. Nonetheless, the general experience has proven useful. Other cities broadly agree that travel plans are replicable for any centres that generate trips, i.e. not just for educational and business establishments, but also for shopping centres and hospitals. Transport plans should not focus solely on switching from cars to other modes. An equally valid objective is to get drivers to change to less-polluting vehicles, such as hybrid cars. Largely, these measures can transfer easily to other cities.

Apart from the above-mentioned CIVITAS measures, there are a plenty of further examples on travel planning for schools and workplaces in Europe. In this context, two case studies, one from Glasgow (United Kingdom) and one from Kaunas (Lithuania) present aspects of school travel plans, and Koprivnica (Croatia) and the Regional Environmental Center from Szentendre (Hungary) offer insights in workplace travel plans.

The ideas collected at the events led to interventions to increase safety conditions around the schools. These included elevated crosswalks, improved sidewalks, new markings for crosswalks, correcting the phases of green traffic lights, cushions that calmed traffic, narrowing circulation lanes, new traffic lights, marking clearly reserved areas for loading and unloading, bollards to protect sidewalks, arranging traffic systems, penalties for illegal parking, new signposts, and installing bicycle parking spaces.

In parallel, Donostia-San Sebastian developed commuter travel plans for five employment/business areas. The city based them on research that aimed to understand travel behaviour in each area, particularly high car use and the reasons behind such dependency. Commuter travel plans identify measures to reduce car use, promote cycling and walking, and introduce programmes for car-pooling and car-sharing, together with an effective monitoring and evaluation plan. Implementing the measures would start after presenting action plans in each industrial and business area. Unfortunately, while stakeholders saw and discussed the action plans, most of the initiatives were delayed because of the financial crisis.

A survey revealed that walking to school significantly increased after implementing the school travel plans (from 60 to 70 percent). The use of other transport modes decreased, most notably cars and motorbikes (over 2 percent in both cases), public transport (nearly 5 percent) and cycling trips (1 percent). The modal shift away from car travel, together with the physical improvements in the surroundings of the schools also prompted an important increase in the perception of security among school community members, which reached 78 percent (a 25 percent increase). Initially, many accepted the travel plans, with 87 percent of the school community showing interest and taking part in the surveys. However, only 64 percent of the community was involved following the implementation of the measure. This lack of acceptance was more significant among parents (down from 84 to 46 percent) who seemed more sceptical about the transformational potential of the initiative. This placed a significant barrier for the future success of the measure, considering that parents decide on how their children travel to and from school, and are therefore responsible for their change in behaviour.7
Glasgow (United Kingdom)

Since introducing its school travel plan in 2006, the St Ninian’s Primary School in Glasgow has seen a huge increase in cycling - up from just 1 percent to 10 percent in spring and summer, and 5 percent in autumn and winter. The increase is mainly due to the introduction of 20 mph speed limits and cycle training. Like many schools in the United Kingdom, the vision when producing its travel plan was to increase the health of children and staff. This vision motivated the school to promote cycling to pupils. The initial step was to conduct a travel survey with parents and children. They identified the major barriers to increasing cycling and walking as fear of traffic volume and speed. The vast majority of parents were also not going to allow their children to cycle to school unless they had received some training.

In 2006 parent volunteers from St Ninian’s produced a school travel plan, assisted by school staff and the Stirling Council school travel coordinator. The plan was made in coordination with Stirling High School (which was about to relocate next to the primary school). After reviewing best practice throughout Europe, St Ninian’s decided that introducing speed limits across the catchment area and providing cycle training to the children would be beneficial. After lobbying the local council and local newspapers, the city introduced 20 mph speed limits in all the local housing estates near the school. The school also introduced a comprehensive cycle training scheme, led by a qualified cycle trainer (a parent volunteer) to provide children with the skills to cycle on the roads between home and school. There were two training levels:
- Level 1: Provided on the playground after school to pupils aged 7-9 years as a bike-club, and
- Level 2: Provided on the road during school time to pupils aged 10-12 years.

A member of staff has a tool kit and pumps available in school to help children with minor mechanical problems or punctures. During the annual school fete, the school also organised a so called “Dr Bike session”. That many older children are now cycling has had a knock-on effect, and many children attending the school nursery now arrive on balance bikes. In addition, many parents now accompany their children to school on their bikes before cycling to work themselves. The key the success of this case study was introducing the 20 mph speed limits and the cycle training, which have made cycling a more safer and attractive option for children travelling to school.8

Kaunas (Lithuania)

Through the BUSTRIP project9 schoolchildren from two city suburb schools in Kaunas created a school travel plan to promote ways their city can create safer journeys to school. The pupils experience several difficult problems on their journey to school. Commuting time and distance, weather conditions, roadside safety, driver awareness, and other issues can make the journey hazardous. Public transport does not reach many of the children living in higher areas and there are rarely suitable pedestrian walkways along main roads. The school travel plan researched factors relating to their school journey, including the environment around the school, public transport services, road safety, air and noise pollution, and street lighting to school to determine recommendations on how to address issues.

Based on “Safe Route to Schools” materials provided by UK sustainable transport charity Sustrans, pupils prepared qualitative and quantitative questionnaires, distributed them to their fellow pupils, and collected and presented the results. They also included photos to show evidence of the problems they face and included those in the school travel plan. The overall response from the pupils was favourable in changing the way they travel in and around the city. Students featured in a BUSTRIP “Car-free City” advertising campaign posted on trolley buses and made a video advocating for others to change their mobility habits. The school travel plan achieved much, including securing a grant for a school exchange programme between Kaunas and Spyken School in Lund, Sweden. The project also presented the school travel plan to Kaunas city council; designed promotional t-shirts and “Car-free City” advertising campaigns on trolley buses; and produced an informational DVD.10

8 Eltis case study – St Ninians Primary School Travel Plan (Glasgow, United Kingdom), accessed April 20, 2016, http://eltis.org/discover/case-studies/st-ninians-primary-school-travel-plan-glasgow-scotland
Koprivnica (Croatia)

As they develop and implement their work travel plans, employees from Koprivnica’s City Hall and municipal companies are role models for introducing new methods of mobility. Bigger companies are following their good example to benefit their employees. Traffic jams at the start of a working day have become a challenge for big cities but smaller cities share the problem as the dependency on cars increases. In Koprivnica the city’s mobility policies enabled the development of an extensive network of cycling tracks and pedestrian footpaths. Nevertheless, trips to work still largely occur by car. While supporting the city’s initiative for more sustainable transport during European Mobility Week, big companies still resist supporting more sustainable transport modes on a daily basis. The EU-funded Active Access project\(^\text{11}\) engaged them in producing company travel plans to prove the benefits of sustainable travel choices. Wishing to serve as a good example, the town administration and municipal utility company decided to start the trend.

Initial surveys of travel behaviour revealed both objective difficulties and subjective preconceptions. While the absence of public transport inside the city was a problem, the long-term habit of individual motorised transport by private cars seemed the most difficult obstacle. The city found a solution by hosting several annual car-free days, supported by leading decision-makers and companies’ management. In 2010, the municipal utility company produced the first work travel plan; the city administration followed in 2011; while the leading local industry is currently developing theirs. Incentives offered to employees to change their travel patterns have rewarded positive attitudes and motivated more employees to follow the good example. Bicycle shelters, free breakfasts and cycling safety equipment are very popular and cost-effective incentives. The biggest problem is the complete absence of support for active travel in national transport strategies. At the same time, the results of the first travel plans are very positive. Active travel increased by 5 percent in the first year, and another 5 percent in the second. Mobility Management measures also helped reduce work travel expenses by 10 percent in the municipal utility company. Company walking and cycling “champions” have additionally brought change in their working environment. The international management of the big local companies are set to provide additional support.\(^\text{12}\)

Regional Environmental Center in Szentendre (Hungary)

Inspired by its many years of engagement in CIVITAS, the Regional Environmental Center (REC)\(^\text{13}\) in Szentendre, Hungary decided to put Mobility Management into practice within its own organisation, particularly given the rise in company travel planning. As it is in a small town, public transport is not as accessible to REC staff as it is to employees working in companies in big cities (such as nearby Budapest). Furthermore, the surrounding cycling infrastructure is almost non-existent and the suburban rail station is far away. Following a survey in summer 2014 of its travel habits, REC drafted a company mobility plan and put it out for consultation among staff. The mobility plan features eight integrated measures:

1. A “smart” monitoring tool, including a reward scheme;
2. Teleworking (allowing staff to work from home);
3. A ridesharing platform;
4. A bicycle group;
5. Bike facilities;
6. Renting out REC’s vehicle fleet to staff;
7. Parking management; and
8. Providing a shuttle bus to Budapest.
The continuous development of cities and associated population growth, congestion and pollution has pushed urban mobility up the agenda. The emergence of travel plans as a tool to meet economic, environmental, and social and transport challenges has taken place at different speeds across the European Union.

The “digital revolution” is now triggering a “working revolution”. As modern communication technologies allow numerous workers to work independently of time and place, work is no longer a place with a fixed location to which people go. It is something they do. A new way of working is on the rise, with promising effects on congestion and people’s need to travel.

The mobile employee

The “new way of working” comes in many flavours. It comprises of flexible working hours, scheduling meetings outside peak hours, teleconferencing and videoconferencing, webcasts and webinars, compressed working hours (working your agreed hours over fewer days) and, working from home. Known as teleworking (or remote working), it is more than occasionally taking some reading material back home. It means working at home, on the road or any other location, while staying connected to the company’s information and communication channels. It can involve working out of the office all day or just until the morning peak is over. Research shows that the improved work-life balance and retention of employees are the main reasons for companies to offer their employees the option of teleworking. Nevertheless, there are more benefits, like increased productivity, fewer absent workers and increased office and parking space.

An office on demand

Smart work centres and hubs provide desks and meeting spaces that can be hired for a short period, sometimes even by the hour. Some centres are open to employees of certain companies only, while others are open to anyone. Many offer additional services, like catering, copying and printing services or child day-care.

As of 2015, REC has introduced a number of the measures. It developed the travel monitoring application, which surveys and reports daily on the mobility patterns of staff (including those working from home). It also facilitates a Facebook-linked ridesharing initiative that incorporates a Bike-to-Work scheme, and communicates with staff over email on mobility issues. REC has also introduced facilities for cyclists, such as showers, a tool shed and bicycle storage. The smart tool’s reporting feature allows each colleague to monitor and report (daily and monthly) how much they and the organisation save in CO₂ and benzene, and how many calories they burn. Colleagues can also tweet or share on Facebook their environmental and health-related achievements. Despite this remaining a largely voluntary in-house initiative, which means staggering the implementation of certain measures, the maturity of its smart tool means there is real potential of achieving tangible results. REC’s mobility plan has resulted in a spin-off project to investigate bike-sharing services funded through the CIVITAS Activity Fund. More broadly, Szentendre is moving towards preparing its own Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, with which REC is now assisting.
CIVITAS Insight N°17, August 2016

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