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CIVITAS INSIGHT

Planning for sustainable travels

A general shift towards sustainable modes of travel does appear to be taking place. Children are using more sustainable modes to come to school and workers are using cars less than before. Even if not required as part of a planning application, developing and implementing a travel plan can help to reduce the need for people to travel to and from a site, and to encourage the remainder to travel more sustainably.

The power of travel planning

A travel plan is a package of actions designed by a workplace, school or other organisation to encourage safe, healthy and sustainable travel options. By reducing car travel, travel plans can improve health and wellbeing, free up car parking space, and make a positive contribution to the community and the environment. It is worth to note that every travel plan is different, and that there is no ‘one fits all’ solution available, but they can be up-scaled in general terms. This CIVITAS Insight focus solely on travel plans for schools and workplaces.

School travel plans

*‘I bring my children to school by car! Why? Well, I think it 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 catch public transport to school has long-term health benefits, 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 actions in a school travel plan include promoting the health benefits of walking, providing more or better pedestrian crossings, tighter enforcement of parking and traffic rules around the school, providing cycle training, or setting up a walking school bus. School travel planning groups are often also work on a policy level to encourage multi-tiered governmental policies that support active travel.

Workplace travel plans

*‘I am going to work with my car, because I have irregular working hours, I have a lot of papers with me, and moreover, as part of my monthly salary, the government provides me with a commuter tax allowance. And finally, my company provides a sheltered parking place for free.’*

A workplace travel plan is a package of measures produced by employers to encourage staff to use alternatives to single-occupancy car use. A workplace can choose to develop a travel plan at any time be required to develop a travel plan as a condition of planning consent for an expansion or new development. Typical actions in a workplace travel plan include improving facilities for pedestrians and cyclists (showers, lockers and cycle parking), promotion and subsidy of public transport, and encouraging carpooling, working from home and teleconferencing.

Very often, travel plans follow an integrated approach of ‘carrot and stick’ by allowing complementary tools to be implemented in one go, which means effective but unpopular tools (such as access restrictions) can be introduced alongside popular but expensive tools (like bus subsidies) to deliver the required benefits whilst cancelling out the negative impacts. The involvement of an additional 'agent' such as a workplace or school can be encouraged as well. In this way, travel plans are able to replace a possible negative relationship between local authorities and citizens with a more positive relationship, such as between employer and employee or between school and parent and pupil. Finally, because of the site-specific nature of travel plans they are developed at the neighbourhood level and so focus directly on the transport needs of the users in that local area.

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 better company image to the implementing organisations. Additional business opportunities to service providers and congestion reduction and improved air quality to the government are further benefits.[[1]](#footnote-1)

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

* They are not an instrument themselves but a strategy for other mostly transport-focused measures.
* They often delivered by additional 'agents' that are not a part of the 'traditional' transport policy structure.
* They are initiated in two ways by the organisation or by the 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[[2]](#footnote-2), which is a concept to promote sustainable transport and reduce single occupancy car use by changing travellers’ attitudes and behaviour. At the core of Mobility Management are so-called soft measures such as information, communication, organisation of services and coordination of 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[[3]](#footnote-3) 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) focus on company travel plans, the second one (Preston, United Kingdom) throws 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, prior to measure implementation, 75 percent of the almost 600,000 work-related trips in the Nantes conurbation were made by car, largely in peak hours. Increasing levels of congestion, and the resulting deterioration in air quality, highlighted the need to address the situation. It was demonstrated that only a small decrease in car traffic would be sufficient to improve traffic flow, lower fuel consumption and reduce emissions of pollutants. Company travel plans were therefore seen as a good way to tackle the problem, especially among the growing number of employees concerned about climate change issues and the rising price of fuel. The City 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-related trips. Nantes worked in partnership with the public transport operator SEMITAN, the national environmental agency ADEME, the chamber of commerce and various local companies. The support that was provided to companies included technical and financial help in elaborating the mobility plans and a discount on public transport season tickets for employees.

The company travel plans were implemented in four stages. Firstly, an analysis of employees’ mobility needs and habits, and of the company’s accessibility by various transport modes. Afterwards, concrete measures with provision of better information on alternative modes were elaborated. Thirdly, a contract between the company, Nantes Metropole and SEMITAN was signed. And finally, a regular follow-up took place, with an assessment after three years of implementation, comparing mobility habits with the objectives stated in the contract.

By the end of 2010, a total of 246 company travel plans had been put into effect (compared to 16 in 2005), benefiting around 66,690 employees. By way of illustration, the company travel plan of the Nantes local authority (2,300 agents) 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.[[4]](#footnote-4)

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

Schools in Preston were encouraged to examine the manner in which staff, pupils and parents travelled between home and school. All local authority schools in the area were offered assistance in developing a school travel plan and were provided with ongoing advice and support. The measure aimed to promote walking, cycling and public transportation as attractive alternatives to the private car. Schools successfully developing a school travel plan were eligible to receive grants towards related projects, for example the installation of cycle parking facilities.

All local authority schools in Preston received information about school travel plans. Awareness was also raised through the 2Move Festival and Healthy Schools Programme with Preston Primary Care Trust. A pilot ‘Walk to School’ initiative was introduced at a number of schools. The development of a schools’ travel plan-workshop model, launched in September and October 2006 and attended by 23 local primary schools, proved to be a valuable innovative measure. Also head teachers were invited to attend seminars and workshops to increase awareness of school travel plans and to boost take-up by schools.

As a result of the measure, 62 percent of schools in Preston developed and approved a school travel plan. The implementation of school travel plans had a positive impact in Preston: there was a reduction in car traffic and the number of pupils walking to Preston primary schools increased.[[5]](#footnote-5)

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

Daily journeys between home and the work place or school constitute a significant part of urban transport and generate excessive demand on the road network during peak times. Donostia-San Sebastian took a proactive approach targeting pupils and employees to opt for sustainable modes. Donostia-San Sebastian was willing to change the travel habits of pupils, their parents and teachers at ten 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 school children road safety and cycling skills, while also increasing road safety in the areas around the schools, for example through speed controls. The measure entails the implementation of walking-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 district, commuter travel plans were developed. Employees were actively involved in the design of schemes to reduce car traffic, increase cycling and walking, and introduce programmes for carpooling and car sharing.

In 2009, a first pilot project was launched at one school and a diagnostic study to develop school mobility plans was completed. Following this pilot experience, in 2010, surveys were conducted at ten selected schools, aimed at analysing travel behaviour and its associated factors among the different groups who travel to the school every day, and identifying the main barriers to sustainable mobility in school-based mobility. Travel plans were rolled out in 2011, developing two fundamental streams of work: Firstly, infrastructure improvements to promote changes in mobility behaviour in the family environment (and the educational community at large: students, teachers and parents). The second stream is developed together with teachers and parents’ associations to raise awareness of the need to promote a behavioural change in school-based mobility. Awareness rising events for children and parents were organised. In particular, 60 workshops in 24 schools within the city were held, engaging over 2,500 pupils, 60 teachers and 3,500 parents. Ideas collected led to physical interventions to increase safety conditions around the schools as a key factor to promote sustainable modes of transport, namely non-motorised mobility. Physical interventions included elevated crosswalks, improved sidewalks, new crosswalks painting, traffic light green phase correction, traffic calmed by cushions, narrowing of circulation lanes, implementation of new traffic lights, painting of loading and unloading reserved areas, containers moving and relocation, sidewalks with bollards protection, arrangement of traffic systems, penalties for illegal parking, new signposting placement and installation of bicycle parking spaces. In parallel, the municipality of Donostia-San Sebastian developed five Commuter Travel Plans for five employment/business areas. Based on a comprehensive research phase aimed at the understanding of travel behaviour in each business area, particularly the high incidence of car usage and the reasons behind such car dependency levels, Commuter Travel Plans identify actions to reduce car use, the promotion of cycling and walking and the introduction of programmes for car-pooling and car-sharing, together with an effective monitoring and evaluation plan. It was planned that the implementation of the foreseen actions would started right after the presentation of the Action Plans in each industrial and business are. Unfortunately, while all of these Action Plans were presented and discussed with stakeholders, the financial crisis delayed the implementation of most of the initiatives.

Regarding school based mobility, the survey conducted revealed that walking levels significantly increased after the implementation of the School Travel Plans (from 60 to 70 percent of all trips to school), while the rest of the modes declined its use, being especially relevant the reduction in the use of the car and motorbikes (over 2 percent reduction in both cases). Also public transport use decreased in favour of walking (nearly 5 percent). On the other hand, a small reduction in cycling was also experienced (around 1 percent reduction). The modal shift away from car, together with the physical improvements in the surroundings of the schools, prompted an important increase in the perception of security among school community members, which reached a 78 percent (25 percent increase as compared with the situation before the measure started). As for the acceptance of the measure, initially it was very high (87 percent of the school community showed interest in the measure and took part in the surveys). But a decrease in the level of involvement with the measure among all target groups was experienced after the implementation of the measure (64 percent). This lack of acceptance was more significant among parents (from 84 to 46 percent), which seemed to be more sceptical about the transforming potential of the initiative. This placed a significant barrier for the future success of the measure, considering that, at these ages, parents decide on the mobility of their children and therefore are to a high degree responsible of the behavioural change required.[[6]](#footnote-6)

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 social factors, such as independence, social status or transport behaviour. However, they may be willing to adopt more ecofriendly attitudes. Some of the key conditions for success are the inclusion of key stakeholders, reaching a common understanding of the need to solve traffic and environmental problems, and a well-planned implementation process. Measures should also be built into planning strategies of cities, schools and companies, and funds should be spent wisely and efficiently.

Some cities believe that travel plans need to be tailored to specific local circumstances and cannot be up-scaled in general terms. Nonetheless, the general experience gained in the undertaking has proven useful. Other cities broadly agree that travel plans are replicable for any trip-generator centres, i.e. not just for educational and business establishments, but also for shopping centres and hospitals. It should be recognised that 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. To a large extent, these measures can be transferred easily to other cities.[[7]](#footnote-7)

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

* Since introducing their school travel plan in 2006, the St Ninians 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, St Ninians’ vision when producing their travel plan was of ‘healthy children (and staff)’. This vision motivated the school to promote cycling to pupils. In order to achieve this, 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 volumes, fear of traffic speed, and the vast majority of parents not going to allow their children to cycle to school unless they had received some training. Prior to 2006 the school already had 25 Sheffield racks in two good locations in the school. In 2006 parent volunteers from St Ninians Primary School produced a school travel plan. They received assistance from school staff and advice from Stirling Council school travel coordinator. The plan was made in coordination with staff from Stirling High School (which was about to relocate to a site adjacent to the primary school). Having looked at best practice throughout Europe the school decided that they needed to have widespread 20 mph speed limits introduced in the catchment area and to deliver cycle training to the children. After considerable lobbying to the local council and local newspapers, 20 mph speed limits were introduced in all the local housing estates near to the school. A comprehensive cycle training scheme was also introduced to help deliver the skills children need to cycle on the roads between home and school. There were two age-related training levels: Level 1: Delivered on the playground after school to younger (aged 7-9 years) pupils as a bike-club, and level 2: Delivered on road in school time to older (aged 10-12 years) pupils. Training is delivered by a qualified cycle trainer (parent volunteer), in small groups, in the school playground, or on road, in school time. 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 ran a Dr Bike session. The fact that many of the older children are now cycling, also has a ‘knock-on’ effect in that many children attending the school nursery have begun arriving on balance bikes. Also, many parents are now accompanying their children to school on their bikes before cycling to work themselves. Key to success of this case study are the introduction of 20 mph speed limits and cycle training, which together have made cycling a more safer and attractive option for children for their school journeys.[[8]](#footnote-8)
* Through the BUSTRIP project[[9]](#footnote-9) school children in Kaunas create a school travel plan to promote ways their city can begin to create a safer journey to school. As part of the BUSTRIP project, the city of Kaunas began working with two city suburb schools to help improve the students’ journey to school through the creation of a school travel plan. The pupils attending these schools experience several difficult situational problems on their journey to school. Commuting time and distance, weather conditions, roadside safety environment, driver awareness, and other such issues can make the journey hazardous. Public transport does not reach many of the children living in higher elevations and there are rarely suitable pedestrian walkways alongside main roads. The school travel plan involved research into factors relating to the journey to school in order to determine recommendations on how to address issues. These factors included the environment around the school, public transport services, road safety, air and noise pollution, and street lighting Based on ‘Safe Route to Schools’ materials provided by the British organization ‘Sustrans’, the pupils prepared qualitative and quantitative questionnaires, distributed them to their fellow pupils, and prepared the results for distribution and presentation. 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 were featured on a BUSTRIP ‘Car-less City’ advertisement campaign posted on trolley buses and they made a video advocating for others to change their mobility habits. The school travel plan project yielded many achievements including a grant for a school exchange programme between Kaunas and Spyken School in Lund, Sweden, the presentation of the school travel plan to the Kaunas City Council members, the design of promotional T-shirts, ‘Car-free City’ advertising campaigns on trolley buses, and the production of an informational DVD.[[10]](#footnote-10)
* Employees of the City Hall and municipal companies of Koprivnica become role models for the new mobility as they develop and implement their work travel plans. Bigger companies are following the 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 dependancy on cars increases. In Koprivnica, Croatia, the city's mobility policies have enabled the development of an extensive network of cycling tracks and pedestrian footpaths. Nevertheless, trips to work are still largely made 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 project Active Access[[11]](#footnote-11) has engaged them in the production of company travel plans in order 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 presented a realistic difficulty, the long-term habit of individual motorised transport by private cars seemed the most difficult obstacle. A solution was found in several annual car-free days, supported by leading decision-makers and company management. In 2010 the first work travel plan was produced by the municipal utility company. The city administration followed by finalising their travel plan in 2011, while the leading local industry is currently developing their travel plans. Incentives offered to employees changing their travel patterns have rewarded positive attitudes and motivated more employees to follow the good example. Bicycle shelters, free breakfasts and cycling safety equipment proved to be very popular and cost-effective incentives. While a shortage of funds and absence of ambitious and self-motivated ‘drivers of change’ still presents a challenge, the biggest problem is the complete absence of support for active travel in national transport strategies. At the same time, the results achieved by the first travel plans implemented are very positive. There was a 5 percent increase of active travel in the first year of implementation and another 5 percent increase in the second year. Mobility management measures at work also contributed to additional reduction of travel expenses ‘at work’ by 10 percent in the municipal utility company. Walking and cycling ‘champions’ in the companies have additionally fostered change in their working environment. Additional support is expected by international management of the big local companies.[[12]](#footnote-12)
* Inspired by its many years’ engagement in CIVITAS REC (Regional Environmental Center in Szentendre, Hungary[[13]](#footnote-13)) decided to put Mobility Management into practice within its own organisation, particularly given the rise in EU-based company travel planning. Following a baseline survey in summer 2014 of their peri-urban organisation's travel habits, a company mobility plan incl. eight integrated measures was drafted and consulted with staff of the REC. The mobility plan features eight integrated measures: I) ‘Smart’ monitoring tool incl. reward scheme; II) tele-commuting; III) ride-sharing platform; IV) bicycle group; V) bike facilities; VI) renting out REC’s vehicle fleet to staff; VII) REC parking management; and VIII) bus shuttle to Budapest. Implementation to date (2015) includes a ‘smart’ travel monitoring application which surveys daily and graphically reports upon the mobility patterns of the staff (incl. telecommuting), facilitates ride-sharing and incorporates a 'bike-to-work' (Facebook-linked) and email-based communication dialogue, all alongside on-site infrastructure improvements (e.g. biking facilities’ such as showers, bike toolshed and storage) development. REC’s smart tool’s reporting feature allows each colleague to monitor and report on a daily and monthly basis both for organisation and individual the CO2 and benzene saved and calories burned. Colleagues can also tweet or share on Facebook their environmental and health-related achievements. REC is not as well connected to public transport as companies in big cities. Furthermore, it’s cycling infrastructure is almost non-existent. The suburban rail station is on the far side of our community. REC’s mobility plan initiative has yielded a spin-off project to investigate bike-sharing services funded through the CIVITAS Activity Fund. In a broader context, Szentendre is moving towards preparing its own SUMP which REC is now assisting with. The maturity of their ‘smart’ tool means there is real potential to achieve tangible results (despite the fact this remains a largely voluntary in-house initiative, which means staggering certain measures’ implementation).[[14]](#footnote-14)

The societal long-term trend is going towards new ways of working

The continuous development of cities and associated population growth, congestion and pollution has pushed the issue of urban mobility up the agenda. The emergence of school and workplace travel plans as a tool to meet economic, environmental, social and transport-specific challenges has taken place at different speeds across the European Union.

When it comes to school travel plans, the main question should be on how do get pupils out of cars and using more sustainable modes of transport to get to school. The EU-funded project STARS[[15]](#footnote-15) believes that the answer lies in I) Targeting schools that have an impact on the road network in terms of congestion, safety and public transport delay. II) Guiding, encouraging and providing the tools for schools to increase cycling levels and reduce the number of accidents with young people. III) Encouraging schools to work independently as a community to commit to monitoring and evaluating their travel activity.

The digital revolution that we have witnessed in the past few decades is now triggering a ‘working revolution’. As modern communication technologies allow numerous knowledge workers to work independently from time and place, work is no longer a place we go to. It is something we do. A ‘new way of working’ is on the rise, with promising effects on congestion and our need to travel.

* Trend I - Working less and living longer: Analyses of time series data beginning in the mid-nineteenth century in the industrialized nations, especially the United Kingdom, show that on average people are working significantly less while living longer. Although the average career length has remained around 40 years, the total life hours worked shrank for an average British worker from 124,000 hours in 1856 to 69,000 in 1981. The fraction of disposable lifetime hours spent working declined from 50 to 20 percent. Meanwhile the female share of career years doubled to 30 percent. If the long-term trends continue at their historic rates, the work week might average 27 hours by the year 2050. The secular trend away from the formalized work contract to other socially obligatory activities and free time implies numerous challenges for human societies.[[16]](#footnote-16)
* Trend II - The mobile employee: The ‘New Way of Working’ comes in many flavours. It comprises 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 not in the least teleworking. Teleworking or remote working 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 outside of the office all day or just until the morning peak is over. Research shows that improved work-life balance and retention of employees are the main reasons for companies to offer their employees the option of teleworking. But there are more benefits, like increased productivity, less absenteeism and reduced office and parking space.
* Trend III - An office on demand: Smart work centres and work hubs provide desks and meeting and collaboration space that you can hire for a short period of time, sometimes even by the hour. Some centres are open to employees of certain companies only, others are open to anyone. Many offer additional services, like catering, copying and printing services or child daycare.

Maybe the most important step is to provide young people with the skills and confidence to travel on their own to and from school. This approach assists them to enter adulthood confidently as active citizens. The ambition should be that every child meets their full potential in school and can confidently make the transition to adulthood and the world of further and higher education, training or work, and preferring sustainable modes of transport in the future.

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7. Policy Recommendations for EU Sustainable Mobility Concepts based on CI VITAS Experience. 2012, accessed April 20, 2016, http://www.civitas-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/Results%20and%20Publications/d3.4.1-pointer-pu-policy\_recommendations-14\_nov\_2013-final-trt\_cdv.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
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 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. More information about the BUSTRIP project can be found on Eltis, accessed April 21, 2016, http://www.eltis.org/discover/news/bustrip-towards-sustainable-urban-transport-0 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
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15. STARS project official website, accessed April 21, 2016, http://starseurope.org/index.php [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Jesse H. Ausubel, The Rockefeller University, New York, NY and Arnulf Grübler, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Laxenburg, Austria, accessed April 21, 2016, http://phe.rockefeller.edu/work\_less [↑](#footnote-ref-16)