MOBILIS Bulletin

Mobility Initiatives for Local Integration and Sustainability

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Commuter Plans and Innovative Mobility Solutions

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Commuter Plans in CIVITAS MOBILIS cities

On urban and suburban roads, congestion is mainly caused by journeys from work to home and vice-versa, as can be easily observed in rush hours. Therefore, the efforts to reduce the number of cars on the road should be directed to the source of the problem: the close co-operation between employers and employees should play an active role in seeking a sustainable solution. One way to reduce the number of vehicles on the road is to stimulate companies to implement mobility plans for their employees, promoting sustainable mobility schemes to their staff.

The concept of the company mobility plan has become widespread in Europe. An increasing number of public institutions and private companies are implementing a mobility plan and many others are considering the introduction of it.

A common problem however, is that many institutions do not have the required expertise to develop such a plan or do not know where to turn to for such advice.

CIVITAS offers the great opportunity to further promote the introduction of such plans, to share lessons of experiences and to provide 'how-to' guides.

The experience of implementing such measures in the framework of urban transport plans (PDU) raises particular interest among the CIVITAS MOBILIS cities.

Hosted by SMTC-Tisséo (Toulouse), a workshop has been organised in March 2006 dealing with commuter plans as an appropriate means for further stimulating the use of alternative transport modes and as part of a broader sustainable mobility management.

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CiViTAS
Cleaner and better transport in cities

Lessons learned and shared

Increased efforts in promoting collective passenger transport options are essential for a reliable transport system in Europe cities.

Experiences have shown that such options require broad thinking beyond the mere transport planning. Environmental concerns, planning of housing and commercial centres, social issues or economic perspectives equally influence the implementation of successful transport measures.
As far as the linkage between company commuter plans and broader environmental planning and management in cities is concerned, little is known regarding the environmental impacts of commuter plans

Although Toulouse orients its mobility planning along sustainable urban transport principles, in practice the PDEs (Plan de Déplacement d'Entreprises) are mostly developed independently with the aim to increase the efficiency of home-to-work commuting. This level of independency also allows cities to better manage their own fleets. However, the integration of the PDEs into broader framework of the urban transport plans leads to a consistent implementation of practical measures taking the concerns of other stakeholders into consideration. Additional services, such as building permissions and integrating social services in mobility plans enhance the acceptance of such schemes.

On the company side, what is its benefit for introducing a commuter plan? More research on the expectations of the companies would be needed. Often, companies are located in the proximity of larger public transport hubs, such as metro stations. However, the 'last mile' to the premises of the companies is often not covered by public transport which obstructs employees using alternative transport modes. Various options, such as company operated shuttle services or well signposted access streets for pedestrians and cyclists enhance the acceptability of commuter plans.

Companies usually 'gain' apart from better accessibility, such as reducing stress for employees in relation to commuting; parking areas can be converted for different use; etc.

Moreover, the companies can benefit from the PDEs in terms of valorisation of their land occupation. The PDEs permit the companies to physically develop themselves instead of developing parking areas which are very expansive for the companies and limit their economic activities.

For the SMEs, it seems to be difficult to develop PDEs due to their lack of time and personal resources to do so. An eventuality could be to mutualise SMEs efforts to think about a common PDE and then to externalise this service for the implementation.

The example from Toulouse

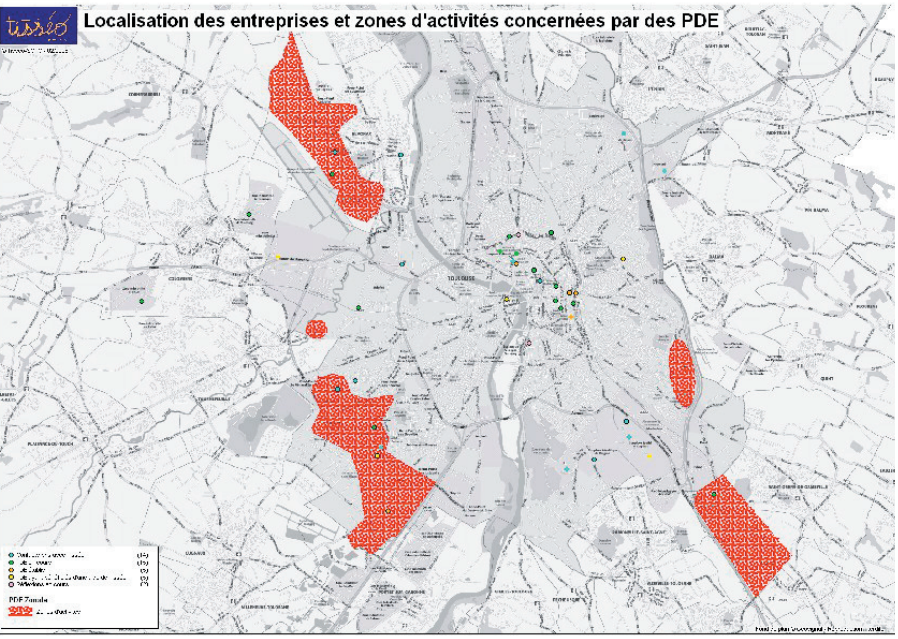
According to French law, cities which are larger than 100 000 inhabitants require an Urban Mobility Plan (Plan de Déplacements Urbains - PDU). This plan foresees that public administration and larger companies develop a PDE with the aim to increase the sustainable transport modes.

Despite the unprecedented urban sprawl of Toulouse, commuting does not contribute to traffic as one might expect. Concern raises the many economic areas of the city which are not sufficiently penetrated by public transport. The key questions are: how the economic areas can be better connected by public transport; how to make cycling more attractive; and how to discourage free parking in such areas.

Tisséo-SMTC identified major areas for implementing PDEs.

The following methodology was applied:

1. a diagnosis of the urban setting and the mobility pattern;
2. conducting a destination survey;
3. defining the action plan of the specific company;
4. validating and implementing the plan and the schedule; and
5. evaluating the process.



It had been realised that the following challenges contribute to the difficulties in implementing such schemes. Sufficient parking spaces at the companies of institutions make it easy for car drivers to use private vehicles. This contributes to an underutilisation of public transport for commuting to the workplace. Cycling is not very attractive due to missing cycle lanes and because of poor safety reasons.

Whitin CIVITAS-MOBILIS, Tisséo-SMTC focuses on dedicated « micro-mobility » schemes. Commuters and School Mobility Plans will help to improve the needs of the approached companies and improve the mobility within the respective activity zones.

The development of Commuter Plans will focus on dedicated PT services and infrastructure of accessibility and development of complementary services.

The project intends to analyse three plans. One of them will be in the North-West of the agglomeration which includes the Airbus - Airport Area. It is planned to

- develop dedicated PT services and infrastructure in connection to the Airbus factory and the Airport;
- improve accessibility for all modes (including freight delivering); and
- develop complementary services (for bicycles users and freight delivering).

An awareness information kit ('mode d'emploi') is under development. It will be adopted to the institutions and territories concerned. The current road sign posts will be enhanced by adding information for cyclists and pedestrians. The definition of particular activity zones will increase the usage of alternative modes.

In 2008 the kit will be evaluated according to its usefulness and whether such a kit can be transposed to other institutions.

The Practical application of Airbus' commuter plan

The company maintains close ties with the public transport authorities of various cities within the Toulouse agglomeration - in particular Tisséo-SMTC and the city of Blagnac and Labege. Urban development projects as well as construction of larger infrastructure measures (such as the extension of the Toulouse subway) are being discussed in round table meetings to allow for effective connection between residential and commercial areas.



Venice

The City of Venice makes efforts to reduce the traffic burden of commuting. Promoting car pooling at companies and institutions has not yet been successful. The software for finding the suitable crew is not user-friendly enough and more efforts are being put in improving such systems. Promoting car sharing schemes with low emission vehicles has been well accepted however, the impacts have not been analysed yet. The third pillar of the strategy is to promote cycling by including a comprehensive bicycle plan in the overall traffic planning.

Ljubljana

The cost for using public transport is high compared to the average salaries of the employees. The increased use of private cars calls for consideration of the social cost of private car based commuting. Political will is needed to get the various stakeholders from the private and the public sectors to agree on schemes which would be attractive to employees as well as to the companies and institutions.

Odense

The City of Odense is implementing a bundle of measures to reduce private car based commuting. Car pooling is being located at popular places with high car traffic. The centres can be combined with other services such as petrol stations, motels, drive-inns etc. This ensures a high visibility among the car drivers and helps to change attitudes by having the opportunity 'to try' such a scheme without having 'to search for it'.

The second pillar is the continued promotion of cycling. With the motto "get rid of the sack" cycling is related to a health campaign. A recent survey showed that 75% of the population is aware of the scheme. Also successful has been proven the campaign with senior people. Guided cycling tours are being offered for interested elderly from 60 years onwards.

Public transport has been made more attractive by opening an interactive route planner. The planner includes photos of the individual bus stops which allows the user to better recognise a stop or to assess the environment of a particular stop (safety). Further measures include the cycle ambassadors; route planners for cyclists; 'walk the line' – a step counter competition; and a park and bike scheme for foldable bikes. The evaluation of the various schemes included a gender and age differentiated methodology. It was found out that both, investments in the cycling infrastructure but also raising the image of cycling contributes to a high share of commuters on bicycles.

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CIVITAS MOBILIS cities and partners
In 2004 the cities of Toulouse (France), Debrecen (Hungary), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Odense (Denmark), and Venice (Italy), and their main local mobility stakeholders established a European partnership for "Implementing Mobility Initiatives for Local Sustainability" – of which the CIVITAS MOBILIS project is the physical result. CIVITAS MOBILIS aims to implement radical strategies for clean urban transport in all five cities and to create a new culture for clean urban mobility in the wider framework of sustainable development. The project will enable the involvement of all relevant stakeholders and the transfer of good practices to other urban communities across Europe.
Altogether 30 partners work on a range of mobility improvements scattered within eight technical and five policy themes during the four years lifetime of the project.
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