



Future cities are cycling cities!

Response to the public consultation of the European Commission on the Future of Transport

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Contact

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Founded in 1983, the **European Cyclists' Federation** (ECF) is the umbrella federation of the national cyclists' associations in Europe, reinforced by similar organisations from other parts of the world. Altogether we have 56 member groups in some 38 countries. On behalf of around 500,000 individual cyclists, we are pledged to ensure that bicycle use achieves its fullest potential so as to bring about sustainable mobility and public well-being. To achieve these aims, the ECF seeks to change attitudes, policies and budget allocations at the European level. The ECF stimulates and organises the exchange of information and expertise on bicycle related transport policies and strategies as well as the work of the cyclists' movement.

ECF website: www.ecf.com



Picture: Brussels during Car Free Day, September 2007

Results from Car Free Day 2007 on noise and air quality:

1. The mean concentration of nitric oxide (NO) recorded for Rue de la Loi, where traffic tends to be particularly heavy, were ten times lower than on an average weekday and five times lower than on an average Sunday.
2. Carbon monoxide concentrations were halved compared to an average Sunday and down to a third of those recorded on an average weekday.
3. In the tunnels, the difference is even more striking. Measurements taken in the Léopold II tunnel (in the city centre) revealed NO levels 62 times lower than on a weekday and 48 times lower than on an average Sunday. The CO concentrations observed in the tunnels of the city centre were six times lower than on an average Sunday and seven times lower than on a weekday.

The **background noise** is reduced by 6 to 8 times compared with an average weekday. Furthermore, the concentration of microparticles and nitrogen dioxide in the air we breathe are 3 to 4 times lower! Note also that the average noise levels recorded in neighbourhoods exposed to traffic drop by 10 decibels compared to an average Sunday.”

Source: <http://www.dimanchesansvoiture.irisnet.be/en/resultats.php>

The current transport system leads to a bad urban environment and hampers urban economic development.

As stated in the European Commission report on The Future of Transport, more and more Europeans live in cities (§42) and this trend will strengthen in the future (§68). Transport in these urban areas generates noise, air pollution (§48) and congestion which affect both citizen's well being and health and economic efficiency (§20).

The current response to the congestion problem is not accurate: increasing the size or the usability of road infrastructure is not a sustainable solution (§106). Designing cities around the car has led to urban sprawl (§43): people have to bridge longer distances to their work, shops, leisure time activities. Therefore, transport demand has increased. Moreover this situation has also created negative externalities for the inhabitants and had lessened their local social life. For instance it has been shown that people residents on busy streets have less than one quarter the number of local friends compared to those living on similar streets with little traffic.¹ Thus the growth of cities has to be supervised in order to promote sustainable transportation means.

Cycling is a solution.

ECF would like to highlight the fact that cycling is in the unique position that it can contribute to target many transport-related problems in a cost-effective way. On top of that, it has a huge potential: 30 % of car trips in Europe are under 2km and 50% under 5kmⁱⁱ; journeys that could easily be made by cycling.

Towards pollution problem

Cycling can help to tackle both the noise and the air pollution problem. The bicycle is silent and is the most important zero emission vehicle.

Towards congestion

Cycling can contribute to discharge roads from private car transport and can help to free the necessary transport from congestions. A bike needs much less space than a car: You can park 10 bikes in the space required for one car. One lane of a typical road can accommodate 2,000 cars per hour – or 14,000 bikes.

Cycling is quick

Above all, cycling is efficient. In urban area, a bike is on average often quicker than a car on short distances (ie less than 5 km) For example, the average speed for a car at rush hour in Central London is just 14.9 km/h (9.3mph)ⁱⁱⁱ, whilst an estimation of average cyclists' speed by Citroën is 20.9 to 24.1 km/h (13 - 15 mph)^{iv}.

Cycling brings mobility to everyone

Cycling can also answer to the right for mobility of the young population (§111): the starting age for bike transport is smaller than the car or motorbike one.

Cycling promotes the equality of opportunity

The wealthiest 20% of people typically travel 4.5 times farther by car and rail than the poorest 20%. However when it comes to cycle use, this gap is more than halved^v.

Cycling makes life safer for all

Cycling gets safer the more cyclists there are. UK research has shown that a doubling in cycling makes cycling 34% less risky. Cyclists are also involved in far fewer injuries to other road users than motorists and the consequences are far less likely to be serious or fatal. Getting people out of cars and on to cycles would therefore improve road safety for all.

Cycle infrastructures are relatively less expensive

Finally, as mentioned in the report financing of transport infrastructure might become a problem in this difficult economical and demographical context (§-64, 150). Cycle infrastructures for many reasons mentioned above are cost efficient. They are quite cheap compared to other road users and have a huge potential. In Great Britain, 43% of people aged 5 and over own a bicycle and a further 1% have use of a bicycle. Bicycle ownership is much higher among children than adults^{vi}. Around half of all local car trips could be replaced using existing facilities by walking, cycling and/or public transport, although this potential varies between urban areas^{vii}.

Cycling is good for your health.

The [WHO](#) recommends 30 minutes of daily activity, which best can be integrated into daily routines. The upcoming burden of obesity could be avoided if the WHO recommendation of 30min of daily activity was followed. Cycling as mentioned in the Green and White Paper on obesity of the Commission could bring a solution.

Moreover, people who cycle to work experienced a 39% lower rate of all-cause mortality compared to those who did not – even after adjustment for other risk factors, including leisure time physical activity.^{viii} And cycling has a positive effect on emotional health – improving levels of well-being, self-confidence and tolerance to stress while reducing tiredness, difficulties with sleep and a range of medical symptoms.^{ix}

ECF's Vision for Cycling.

We call for action on the following themes.

Commitment to cycling

- All Government departments and other organizations in all relevant sectors, European, nationally, regionally and locally, need to recognize the benefits of cycling and support it effectively.

Cycle-friendly planning and design

- Cities must develop **Sustainable Urban Transport Plans** (SUTPs) in order to carry out a coherent policy that takes all transport modes into account
- Cycle-friendly urban planning is imperative in order to prevent further urban sprawl. The longer distances between A and B are, the more people tend to make use of the private car. Living, working and shopping need to be bundled, not separated. Also, new developments must be easy accessible by cycle and other sustainable transport modes.
- We need safe and attractive cycling conditions throughout the network. The emphasis lies on *network* as it also includes dangerous intersections and crossings. This comes with quality cycle parking in order to lock bicycles safely.
- This in turn means ensuring that planners and engineers have the know how and understanding of how best to make good provisions for cycling.

Safe drivers and vehicles

Cycling gets safer the more cycling there is, so encouraging cycling must be central to road safety policies at all political levels. Crucial is also the perception that cycling is a safe thing to do in an urban environment. Measures to be taken include:

- Making 30 kph the speed limit on most urban streets
- Lowering speed limits wherever possible elsewhere and tackling speed
- Making 'Bikeability' cycle training available to everyone, especially children. Future mobility patterns are very much decided in the adolescent age.
- Strengthening road traffic law and, crucially, its enforcement
- Addressing the disproportionate threat from lorries (dead spot); prevent large lorries from entering inner cities
- Monitoring the perception of danger that prevents people from cycling, instead of simply recording casualties alone. Crucial is the perception of the children's mother: she decided whether her kid cycles to school or whether it is driven by car.

Better provision for combining cycling and public transport use:

The integration of the bicycle with the public transport system is imperative and has advantages for both sides:

- a) Well integrated they constitute a viable alternative to the use of the private car, even for longer distances
- b) Cyclists are important feeders for the public transport system, contributing to the economic efficiency of the latter

We therefore need:

- Good access to, from, through and within stations and interchanges for cyclists
- Safe and secure cycle parkings, storage and hire facilities at stations and interchanges
- Provision of adequate space for carrying cycles on public transport

Road and parking charges

- Cities should have the possibility to introduce congestion charging schemes, if needed
- Parking charges should be applied, in particular in city centres

Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)

ITS can contribute to solve urban transport problems in many ways and can alleviate cycling in an urban environment. However, increasing car road capacity by means of ITS is not the approach to be pursued as it will increase traffic volumes. This is not desirable.

In terms of cycling, ITS can contribute:

- *On the bicycle:* navigation systems, anti-theft chips, GSM-based rental system, GPS tracking, electric support when needed.
- *In bicycle parkings:* automatic (underground) parkings, access to parkings, counting of empty (available) places, bicycles lockers
- *In bicycle renting:* automatic systems, access to lockers
- *On the internet:* reservation of bicycles, bicycle routes, routeplanning for cycling (secure routes, green routes, safe routes, etc.)
- *In traffic management:* VMS for bicycles, traffic lights with faster green when raining, priority for cyclists

- *Linking cycling to other modes*: routeplanner with links to public transport, bicycle renting connected to public transport, park and bike systems.

Summary

Cycling is a fully-fledged means of transportation, flexible, inexpensive and fast. For many and very obvious reasons, ECF makes a strong plea for a **modal shift**. The numerous advantages of the bicycle as described above speak for themselves. Cycling is the best means of ensuring sustainability, quality of life and economic development.

ⁱ Study Driven to Excess by Joshua Hart quoted in Cyclenation news January 2009

ⁱⁱ European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT), 2004: National Policies to Promote Cycling, p. 24.

ⁱⁱⁱ Transport statistics for Great Britain 2007.

^{iv} Route 2 action (Sustrans publication), Spring 2008.

^v CTC's new vision for cycling,

^{vi} Personal Travel Factsheet - January 2007 based on data from the National Travel Survey.

^{vii} Travel behavior research Baseline survey; Report on a research conducted by Socialdata with support from Sustrans from September to December 2004.

^{viii} Andersen, L., Schnohr, P., Schroll, M. and Hein, H. (2000). All-cause mortality associated with physical activity during leisure time, work, sports, and cycling to work, Archives of Internal Medicine, 160, pp. 1621-1628. Quoted in Report from Dr A. Davis N. Cavill Cycling and Health 2007.

^{ix} Source Boyd, H., Hillman, M., Nevill, A., Pearce, A. and Tuxworth, B. (1998). Health-related effects of regular cycling on a sample of previous non-exercisers, Resume of main findings; Quoted in Report from Dr A. Davis N. Cavill Cycling and Health 2007