# THE PEP Symposium – World Health Organisation, Geneva

# "Green and health-friendly mobility for sustainable urban life"

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## Improving Air Quality through active mobility – Urban policies and projects

There are many cities in the EU which have successfully introduced policies and initiatives which have led to measurable and credible modal shift away from car use and towards active mobility i.e. walking and cycling. Many are transferable approaches which are successfully shared between cities such as via the Polis Network, who I'm representing today. They are delivered either with local, national or EU funding, such as the CIVITAS Initiative, Intelligent Energy Europe and the Seventh Framework Programmes.

Such initiatives often lead to notable decreases in $CO_2$ and other emissions, and deliver impressive Benefit to Cost Ratios.

Benefit to Cost ratios would be even more impressive, if all benefits of walking and cycling were taken into account.

Walking and cycling improves health, reduces sedentary behaviour and associated health costs, reduces air pollution and respiratory diseases, improves social mobility and social inclusion, reduces road congestion, improves journey time reliability, creates jobs and more.

Basically, investing in walking and cycling is the tool by which cities can continue to expand in population, whilst improving air quality and therefore contribute to sustainable economic growth.

**I'm going to give you some examples of city level case studies on air quality improvements through active mobility.**

### Sustainable Travel Towns

A UK Government initiative running from 2004-9 called **"Sustainable Travel Towns"** saw three medium sized cities invest €4 million each in intensive joined up programmes of sustainable mobility initiatives. Mobility plans for companies and schools, cycle infrastructure, Personalised Travel Plans, cycling campaigns and events. The focus was on changing behaviour change on short trips that could easily be cycled or walked. The results were impressive. All cities saw a reduction in car use. Darlington saw an increase in cycling of 89%; Peterborough increased walking by 9%. In total 17,000 tonnes of $CO_2$ were saved – per annum. A notable return on a relatively a small investment.

### Graz

The city of Graz, Austria, is prone to poor air quality as it is surrounded by mountains. The exhaust fumes of cars is the most significant source of air pollution.

Which is why the municipality has, for many years now, had a very progressive sustainable urban mobility plan which has increased cycling and walking through infrastructure and promotion, turning car parks into public squares, extending bus and tram routes and 30/50kmph zones improving road safety.

The results. From 2005 to 2009, the number of days that air pollution exceeded the background EU limit decreased from 116 days p.a. to 36. It has also halved the number of days exceeding PM10 emissions targets. Since transport is responsible for about half of PM10 emissions, this can be directly attributable to their mobility policy including active travel measures.

**Copenhagen**

I can't avoid mentioning Copenhagen as it's perhaps *the* leading city in cycling, and cycling-related research. It has been estimated that for every 10 Km someone cycles instead of drives: society reduces $CO_2$ emissions by 1.6 KG and saves €7 in health costs. That's why their new 300 Km Cycle Superhighways is expected to decrease 7,000 tonnes of $CO_2$ annually, saving €40m health costs. The infrastructure cost? €134 million. The same cost as extending *one* Km of the metro.

A recent UK study has suggested that the National Health Service might benefit from savings of €12bn in 20 years' time if we increased urban walking and cycling to the current levels of Copenhagen; benefits from fewer heart attacks, strokes and less diabetes could be achieved within three years.

**General**

The explosion of Cycle Hire Schemes, Cycling infrastructure, Urban Realm and Shared Space in cities over the last 5 years shows that at the local and regional level, there is the desire and the public mandate to invest in "health-friendly" mobility. As urban populations increase, so too must car modal share decrease, to free up capacity on the transport infrastructure.

Another promising trend, is the numerous public-private partnerships set up to deliver this infrastructure such as the cycle hire schemes in Paris (JC Decaux) and London (Barclays Bank). These precedents show that such public investments get good value for money thanks to private sector match funding.

**Conclusions**

The challenge at the moment is that there are perhaps too many governmental and EC departments which have a vested interest in active travel, meaning that there is not enough coordination. They should instead have shared policies and work programmes and combined investment objectives to gain economies of scale.

Whilst active travel clearly contributes to improving air quality in cities, it is best harnessed in the context of a joined up urban mobility plan, with long term targets and policy objectives. That has been recognised by the European Commission in its recent prioritisation of SUMPs. I would like to see SUMP guidance include monitoring the health impact of mobility policies.

It is at the local level that these policies and projects are delivered, but in many cases, require national and EU-level guidance and financing to act either as carrot or stick.

We also need to promote more widely existing research and evidencing on the actual health impacts of the improved air quality and decreased sedentary behaviour derived from active mobility policies.

We also need to promote and develop the Health Economic Assessment Tool across EU and national levels.

EU Air Quality Directives act as a major driver for these policies. Such EU legislation is due to be reviewed in 2013 which gives cities, ministries and international organisations the chance to influence future Directives and hence local delivery.

It's also important to note that, should these Directives be more strictly enforced, millions of Euros of fines will be forthcoming to hundreds of cities across the EU in future. So, investment in active mobility, could have an even bigger benefit to cost ratio.

I therefore think that THE PEP has an even more important role to play in the next few years.

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