

Debunking cycling myths

REALITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR NORDIC PLANNING AND POLICY

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Introduction

Transportation is a major contributor of greenhouse gas emissions across the EU.¹ Contrary to the progress made in other sectors, greenhouse gas emissions from road transportation have remained fairly stable in the Nordic Region since 1990, with Denmark, Norway, and Iceland recording an increase in road transport emissions.² To reverse this trend, many governments have developed strong reduction targets and the EU has developed actions for the emissions trading system and shifting to zero-emission vehicles.³ However, the Nordic countries are simultaneously facing other major challenges—like social polarisation, injustice, public health issues, loneliness, and spatial inequalities—that threaten the holistic sustainability of the region. Therefore, policy and planning efforts need to focus on identifying the root problems, which may be more systemic and call for different kinds of solutions. While the green transition will not be “self-driven,” it will not be driven by an electric car either—at least not on its own. In this policy brief, we show how the bicycle—in combination with thoughtful planning and governance practices—can contribute with concrete and cost-effective solutions to many of today’s desperate environmental, social, and economic concerns.

Since 2023, Nordregio and the European Cyclists’ Federation (ECF) have been working with a network of capital cities and regional authorities in the Nordic Region. This Nordic Cycle Power Network includes around 50 civil servants, such as traffic analysts, cycling strategists, and project managers. Through a series of knowledge-sharing workshops and study visits, the practitioners have discussed key issues for cycling in the Nordic Region and gathered insights on tools and initiatives to adapt and apply in their own contexts. The project has also involved desk research on national cycling goals and policy instruments, and a review of recent reports and studies on cycling in relation to emissions, safety, equity, economics, and urban and regional transport practices.

This publication is a culmination of the challenges, lessons learned, and good practices of cycling in the capital cities and regions of the Nordic countries. Derived from the research and discussions among network participants, this publication highlights eight common myths about the role of the bicycle as a mode of transport in the Nordic Region. Each myth is followed by an evidence-based rebuttal, confronting the inaccurate claims and uprooting

the underlying problem. After each reality statement, we provide suggestions and good practices, based on both desk research and contributions from practitioners in the Nordic Cycle Power Network.

With this brief, we hope to provide a constructive contribution to the discussion on sustainable transport, moving beyond black-and-white dichotomies or one-size-fits-all solutions. We recognise that the bicycle is not a silver bullet solution to the problems facing Nordic cities and regions today; however, planning with the bicycle in mind is one pathway for rethinking the built environment and our mobility in and through it. Based on the lessons learned from Nordic capital cities and regions, we provide practical knowledge and suggestions for traffic planners, strategists, and project managers working with questions of sustainable transport in urban, rural, and regional planning. The suggestions are also highly relevant for policymakers from various levels of governance—especially those in transport, environment, health, and business sectors.

Photo: iStock



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Myth #1: Cycling conditions are already good enough in the Nordic Region for those willing to cycle, so we should prioritise other issues.

Reality: Urban and regional planning in the Nordic Region still has a long way to go to improve cycling conditions.

The bicycle parking at Copenhagen Central Station. Photo: DSB

In recent years, cities like Copenhagen and Stockholm have experienced an increase in the number of cyclists due to municipal investments in cycling infrastructure. However, even among major cities, the share of trips made by bicycle remains relatively low. Fewer than 10% of trips in Helsinki, Oslo, and Reykjavík are made by bicycle, and even in Stockholm, the city reports that under 12% of trips are made by bicycle, compared to 22% made by car. Large discrepancies exist between major cities and other parts of the countries; even within Denmark, cycling accounts for about 12.1% of number of trips made compared to Copenhagen's 21%.⁴ From a macro-level perspective, national-level progress on cycling is often outpaced by progress in individual cities.

Good cycling conditions—such as separated, well-maintained lanes throughout the region, covered and secured parking facilities, and slow speed limits for road traffic—have the potential to benefit everyone in society, even those who do not cycle. For example, studies around the world have shown that high-quality cycling infrastructure raises property values and municipal revenues. Additionally, providing access to commercial centres by bicycle can also result in higher retail sales (specifically in dense urban contexts) given that pedestrians and cyclists tend to spend more per month than drivers.⁵

The benefits of cycling cannot be unlocked unless cycling is integrated into transport policies at local, regional, and national levels. It is also important to define governance

mechanisms to better coordinate the implementation, monitoring, and maintenance of infrastructure. Governments need to identify how improvements in cycling conditions—from implementing more infrastructure and incentivising citizens to replace car trips with cycling trips—can holistically improve their transport system. By doing so, governments will also be able to calculate how improvements in cycling can positively contribute to the achievement of wider societal goals such as on climate and health.

POLICY/PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

Update and align national, regional, and local cycling strategies.

According to a 2023 ECF report, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have outdated national cycling strategies that urgently need updating.⁶ Iceland does not have any strategy. Holistic, governmental strategies are a necessary foundation for growing cycling at the national, regional, and local levels. They can align cycling with climate, environmental, transport, and health goals, and they set clear benchmarks to achieve these goals and assign responsibilities, timelines, and budget. At the national level, cycling strategies can ensure that cycling is prioritised throughout the country and not only in select cities. Regionally, cycling strategies can be used to build links between rural and urban areas and develop harmonised cycling infrastructure. Locally, cycling strategies can be used to build dense urban networks that

are safe to ride on, and they can create an important link to regional and national-level strategies, where ambitions are often not as robust. Discrepancies between more progressive local administrations and less progressive national aims make it all the more important for different stakeholders to collaborate to determine rigorous and realistic aims together.

Exchange cycling practices among Nordic neighbours.

Due to similar cultures and institutional frameworks, Nordic cities and regions can benefit immensely by sharing knowledge and learning from each other's successes and failures. For example, where some Nordic cities excel at collecting cycling data, others currently lack the tools to do so; where one region struggles to maintain cycling levels during winter, another has found solutions to keep citizens pedalling year-round. Tools and methods can also be swapped across Nordic municipalities and regions so that different areas can make a short-term trial or pilot study to better understand how a solution might be adapted in a new context.

There are also opportunities to harmonise mobility efforts across the Nordic Region to strengthen cross-border communication and integration. This can only be achieved through well-established, cross-Nordic collaboration. A dynamic network of Nordic cities and regions can become a key source of inspiration, ideas, and practical solutions. This is how the cycling agenda can be elevated throughout the entire Nordic Region.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES:

- Adopted in 2022, the **City of Stockholm** Cycling Plan⁷ sets a vision for 25% of all trips in Stockholm to be made by bicycle by 2040. The plan supports Stockholm's broader goals of reducing private car use, promoting walking and public transportation, and integrating cycling as part of the city's sustainable development and climate goals. The plan outlines a connected network of safe and accessible cycling routes, including concepts like "cycle streets" where bicycles have priority over motorised vehicles.⁸

- The **City of Helsinki's** Bicycle Action Plan 2020-2025⁹ aims to increase the modal share of cycling to 20% by 2030 through the implementation of 34 measures. Key elements of the plan include developing a connected, high-quality cycling network, improving safety at intersections, and separating pedestrian and cycling paths. The plan emphasises year-round maintenance of cycling paths, especially during winter. A notable part of the plan is the "Baana" cycling highway network, which will form a regional system of dedicated bike paths, ultimately stretching 150 kilometres. This network will connect key areas of the city to provide safe and fast routes for cyclists. The plan is closely linked with Helsinki's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.

- The **City of Oslo** adopted a Cycling Strategy¹⁰ in 2015, with actions to make Oslo a cycling city for everyone. Its main objectives are to increase the cycling modal share (weekday trips) to 25% by 2025 and to improve cycling

network accessibility and traffic safety. These goals correspond to the city's climate plan. According to Norway's national cycling strategy, urban areas should aim for 20% modal share (compared to the rural area target of 8%), but Oslo has higher ambitions.

Man riding bicycle along the canal next to Riddarholmen Church in Stockholm, Sweden. Photo: iStock





Myth #2: Cycling infrastructure is too expensive for local and regional budgets to invest in.

Reality: Cycling is a no-regret investment, providing returns for the economy and society.

*Isoisänsilta bridge in Helsinki, Finland.
Photo: Shutterstock*

Cycling is undoubtedly a financially efficient and cost-saving means of transport for private citizens and for the public. It also generates substantial economic growth for businesses and a society's economy. A study on the economic benefits of installing cycling infrastructure in key city arteries in Helsinki found that every euro invested in high-quality cycling infrastructure yields an eight euro benefit for society.¹¹ Using the Health Economic Assessment Tool for walking and cycling,¹² the study found cycling infrastructure to be cost-effective, but it also reduced travel times for citizens and created improvements across a range of societal health metrics. A socioeconomic analysis in Denmark also found similar positive results. The analysis showed that society generates seven Danish kroner for every kilometre invested in regional cycling infrastructure. With a rate of return of 23%, the Danish cycle superhighway network in the capital region is one of the country's most profitable infrastructure projects, and most of the benefits accrue to the state.¹³ And in Oslo, a recent evaluation of the city's cycling strategy shows a net utility value of NOK 3.9 billion, in large part due to the increase in physical activity and safety for road users.¹⁴

Several countries outside the Nordic Region also provide examples of positive returns on cycling investment. A 2022 cost-benefit analysis of cycling in Belgium revealed the net benefits of riding a bike are equal to 98 eurocent per kilometre; riding an e-bike yields 22 eurocent per kilometre. By contrast, a trip by car leads to a social cost of €1.02 per kilometre. Put differently, if 100,000 people commute to

work by bike over a 5-km distance, they generate a total benefit of €196 million per year, as opposed to generating a cost of €203 million per year if they commute the same distance by car. Of that cost, €89 million is paid by car users, but €114 million is transferred to the rest of the society. The main economic benefits are attributed to positive health gains from regular cycling. According to ECF's estimates, cycling produces accumulated health benefits of around €73 billion per year.¹⁶

To ensure financial investments are made, cities and regions need to present the clear benefits of cycling by collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data. However, traffic and cycling planners in the Nordic Region lament the quality of GIS data, complications with travel surveys, lack of available technology for collecting data, and complications around privacy, standardisation, data categorisation, and resources.

POLICY/PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

Invest in high-quality cycling infrastructure to generate economic and health benefits.

Investing in cycling is an investment in society. The widespread benefits are well-researched and documented. According to ECF's annual analysis of national cycling strategies in Europe, central government investments in cycling are less than €20 per capita in Norway, and less than €10 per capita in Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and Iceland.¹⁷

In contrast, the Flanders region in Belgium invests nearly €50 per capita in cycling. These facts do not tell the full story of cycling strategy and finance, but they show that cycling is not sufficiently prioritised on a national level, thus placing most of the burden on local administrations, despite the fact that economic returns also benefit the national level through health care savings. Governments can significantly cut health costs and increase economic gains by building networks of high-quality cycling infrastructure in addition to other incentives that encourage residents to replace cars with bicycles.

Invest in measures to collect cycling data.

Collecting quality cycling data on critical indicators can provide important evidence for making a funding case. Such efforts can also inform planners' decision-making around design, infrastructure, and maintenance. Data is at the heart of cycling promotion. In the Nordics, many cities and regions are collecting data on a wide range of indicators, including number of cyclists, travel times, modal share, perceived and actual traffic safety, number of trips and locations using public bike share systems, bicycle parking, perceptions and satisfaction of cyclists, cycling demographics, cycling speeds, overall travel habits.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES:

- **The City of Copenhagen** works with three key avenues to secure stable funding: 1) Internal long-term planning with allocated budget, 2) budgeting from other administrative departments linked to cycling efforts, and 3) external funding from state and private actors. In combination, these varied revenue streams ensure that cycling maintains a priority in the city.¹⁸

*Rush hour in Copenhagen, Denmark.
Photo: iStock*





Myth #3: Cycling is only a seasonal activity; it can't be done year-round in the Nordic Region, especially in the winter.

Reality: People cycle if there is good infrastructure and good road conditions, no matter the season.

*Man riding his bicycle in winter conditions in Trondheim, Norway.
Photo: Shutterstock*

Winters in the Nordic Region create many challenges for transport, not just for cycling. After all, winter driving in the Nordic Region would not be possible were it not for the high-quality maintenance that municipalities do on their roads during cold, snowy, and icy weather. It is no different for cycling: cycle paths and parking places that are well maintained in the winter months will continue to attract cyclists.

A study of winter cycling in Luleå, Sweden, concluded that cycling levels could be maintained in the winter if city planners developed specific design, policy, and management requirements for winter cycling.¹⁹ Moreover, the research authors found that e-bike usage and high-quality cycling infrastructure were both important to increasing the attractiveness of winter cycling. Another study evaluating cyclists' perceptions of maintenance and operation throughout Norway showed how fewer people chose to cycle during winter months, but that perceptions of things like snow ploughing differed greatly depending on location within Norway.²⁰ While the darkness and cold temperatures may deter some cyclists from continuing to ride in winter months, a study from Trondheim highlights safety concerns, reporting that people perceive winter cycling as riskier than cycling in the summer months.²¹ Even so, all-around bicycle modal share can benefit from increased cycling in autumn and winter months.²² Plus, more cyclists instead of cars on the roads in the winter also helps to improve air quality.

Installing and especially maintaining high-quality cycling infrastructure can enable people to cycle throughout the year, even in frosty conditions. Thus, public authorities need to incorporate winter cycling infrastructure maintenance into their mobility budgets and their staffing and equipment resources. Establishing a regional action plan for clearing cycle infrastructure during snowy and icy conditions—including bicycle parking stations—can enable cyclists to carry on throughout the winter. Such plans require cross-municipal collaboration, technical expertise, and cross-departmental guidance to ensure clearance practices are environmentally sound and strategic for granting residents safe passage.

POLICY/PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

Invest in smart and sustainable winter cycling maintenance methods.

To encourage year-round cycling, municipalities need to invest political commitment and finances in keeping cycling infrastructure well-maintained—even in winter—treating cycle route networks as a high priority maintenance need. Public authorities could experiment with various types of snow and ice removal and choose the ones that are the most environmentally sustainable while keeping cycle infrastructure clear. Alongside keeping the paths clear, public authorities must plan for snow removal logistics, including

where to put snow that is removed from the roads and cycle infrastructure and to keep it clear of bike parking facilities and other places frequented by cyclists.

Create incentives for people to cycle in winter.

Municipalities can create incentives to keep cycling levels high in the winter. Residents may need support to overcome barriers to winter cycling in the form of financial incentives, equipment, and bicycle servicing (e.g., access to lights and reflectors, discounts on winter cycling clothing such as gloves and hats, subsidies for studded tires, pop-up events for changing tires in autumn and spring). Such actions must be backed up by high quality maintenance of cycling infrastructure. Assuming this occurs, authorities can use public communications campaigns to encourage people to make more trips by bicycle than by car in the winter, and authorities can and should be creative with their actions.

Coordinate winter cycling maintenance plans within and across municipalities.

Within each municipality, some roadways and cycle paths are owned and maintained by local authorities while others are under regional or national responsibility. This means there must be close coordination of winter maintenance to define responsibilities and ensure as much of the cycling infrastructure network is cleared. Regional authorities could play a coordinating role to ensure that cycle networks across municipalities in the region are well-maintained, but such coordination also needs to have clear action items and support at national and local levels in order to

move from suggestion to action. Furthermore, some larger municipalities delegate maintenance responsibilities to different city districts within the municipality. While these divisions help to ensure needs are addressed at highly localised level, coordination efforts are needed all the more to enable residents to move across district boundaries with consistent, safe conditions.

Enable sustainable transport options as the next-best alternative.

Some days, winter conditions make it highly challenging for people to cycle. After all, someone may choose not to cycle in the winter for a variety of reasons: lacking the right clothing to endure the ride, feeling unsafe in the dark or unsafe cycling with other road users in slick conditions, lacking the proper bicycle equipment, or lacking confidence handling a bike during extreme precipitation. This is why public authorities also need to invest in top-class public transport to enable people to make sustainable choices rather than swapping out their bicycle for a car in winter months.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES:

- Since 2013, the [City of Stockholm](#) has developed an effective “salt-sweeping” method to maintain their cycle infrastructure during the winter, implemented by vehicles customised for the cycle lanes.²³ Starting on designated primary cycle paths, machines spread a safe brine onto 260 km of cycle paths. The brine uses less salt and reduces the

risks of slush and refreezing on the pathways. Pedestrian paths are also cleared using the same machines.²⁴ In addition, the city employs several maintenance workers to keep the cycle lanes and paths clear year-round (*cykeljouren*).²⁵ These workers are outfitted with a cargo bike equipped with various tools, thereby enabling them to clear debris, fill small potholes, and remove smaller amounts of ice and snow.

- By studying the return on investment of cycling maintenance, the [City of Oslo](#) found that improved winter maintenance led to a 38% increase in cycling traffic compared to the previous winter. While maintenance costs increased, totalling 13.4 million NOK, the health benefits from the additional cycling alone were estimated to be around 305 million NOK, proving that the additional effort to maintain cycle networks in the winter created a major benefit for Oslo’s entire society.²⁶ Several years later, in 2020, the city initiated a subsidy scheme to support residents in testing winter cycling. Residents could be reimbursed for studded tires and winter bicycling services up to 1500 NOK. The before and after study showed that, when people try for themselves, they find winter cycling much easier than they anticipated. Over 90% of those who cycled with studded tires stated that they planned to continue cycling the following winter.²⁷

Cyclist navigating winter conditions on an unmaintained street in Stockholm, Sweden.

Photo: iStock





Myth #4: Cycling is useful for recreation and leisure, but not as a mode of transportation.

Reality: Cycling plays an important role in holistic mobility systems and is recognised by the European Union as a sustainable form of transport.

Young woman waiting with bicycle to board a regional train in Stockholm, Sweden. Photo: iStock

In April 2024, the EU adopted a European Declaration on Cycling, “recognising cycling as one of the most sustainable, accessible and inclusive, low-cost, and healthy forms of transport and recreation.”²⁸ The declaration recognises cycling as a legitimate mode of transport and serves as a strategic compass for existing and future policies and initiatives related to cycling. It is the EU’s most ambitious policy on cycling, containing 36 political commitments for EU national and local governments to build more infrastructure, increase the modal share of cycling, and make it more inclusive for people of all ages and abilities. Every year, more European cities are integrating cycling into their mobility systems. Nordic cities are among the continent’s leaders.

Cycling can be furthered as a legitimate form of transport by integrating it with other modes of transport. Doing so is part of enabling inhabitants to make sustainable choices. A multimodal transport system can provide smooth and efficient linkages for people, improve health by enabling more active travel, reduce pollution, and reduce emissions because it encourages less driving. It also increases the democratisation of transport by dedicating more space to the public and less space towards private automobiles. Furthermore, multi-modal transport systems can improve transport safety and lead to fewer road deaths (which is a national transportation goal in all Nordic countries). When cycling, walking, and public transport authorities work together, resources can be used more effectively to achieve common goals.²⁹

The European Cyclists’ Federation notes that about 90% of people walk to get to public transport, and enabling more people to access public transport stations via bicycle can increase the catchment area for ridership. However, many barriers currently exist for enabling strong multi-modal transport in the Nordic countries, such as lack of commitment among public transport companies, poor quality of—or lack of safety for—bicycle storage at transport hubs, or lack of year-round city bike share systems that can adequately support residents’ transitions from bicycle to train or tram. Combatting these concerns requires cooperation among sustainable transport actors. Furthermore, it is important for cycling to work with, rather than to compete against, other sustainable modes of transport to achieve large-scale sustainability objectives. When cities aim to increase the number of trips made by bicycle, this aim requires disincentivising private transport and incentivising all modes of sustainable transport together, including but not limited to the bicycle.

POLICY/PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

Recognise cycling as a complete mode of transport in national, regional, and local mobility systems.

This means providing cycling with financing and political priority comparable to other modes of transport, and to incorporate cycling infrastructure as a necessary element in all major on-surface transportation projects. It also means each level of government should identify which

commitments within the European Declaration on Cycling can be implemented in the short and long term.

National authorities could also integrate cycling more intimately and seriously into their transport policies. Furthermore, small-scale initiatives can help to rebalance the road hierarchy; for example, by recalibrating traffic lights to grant cyclists and pedestrians a head start at traffic crossings.

Collaborate among regional and local authorities to enable multi-modal transport.

This is a crucial measure needed to create the necessary linkages for people to combine bike and public transport trips. It requires authorities to take into consideration how land is used to ensure a high frequency of service. By incorporating sufficient and secure bike parking and bike share schemes, public transport hubs can better support residents who wish to combine modes of travel for work or leisure. Clearly designated cycle routes are also important to guide cyclists to and from public transport hubs. Integrating public transport with bike share systems through a common regional mobility platform is another way to show the legitimacy of the bicycle as part of urban and regional mobility systems.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES:

- **Helsinki Region Transport** (HSL) provides users with good multi-modal options by combining cycling and public transport. It does so by coordinating with local authorities to offer bike-sharing in the cities of Helsinki, Espoo, and Vantaa, promoting "bike and ride" facilities at public transport stations, and the possibility of onboarding trains and metros with bicycles without needing to pay an extra fee. For the bike-share system, HSL provides 4,600 bicycles in 460 stations in Helsinki and Espoo, which people can use through one mobile application. Inhabitants in Vantaa have access to 1,000 bicycles. The cost is just €35 for a seasonal pass. HSL's own data reveals that 70% of users combine bike-share and public transportation, with the most satisfied users being in Espoo and Helsinki. More than 2.5 million trips are logged each year on average, with a typical trip lasting 2.3 km or 17.3 minutes.³⁰ These efforts are complemented by the work of the City of Helsinki to densify its land use in the urban core.

- In Denmark, 27% of public transport passengers bike to the transport station. One key element facilitating this is the **Cycle Superhighways of the Capital Region**.³¹ This network of cycling paths across the region provides inhabitants with almost 750 kilometres of safe and comfortable infrastructure that facilitates long-distance trips, especially when coupled with other public transport options. The superhighways have been implemented on frequently used public transport corridors which provide frequent service.

Cycle Superhighways use a national tool called "CYKOMBI" which benchmarks transit hubs according to their suitability for multi-modal trips, providing public authorities with an easier way to improve services for users.³²

- **Iceland's Transport Charter** is an agreement between the state and the six municipalities that make up the Capital Region. The charter emphasises holistic transport planning by integrating bus-rapid-transport development with a regional cycling network, thereby connecting municipalities and key neighbourhoods while solving wide-scale traffic issues. One focus is to improve cycling and pedestrian paths (with a dedicated budget) as part of larger transportation aims. As of 2024, the charter is being updated, with development plans until 2040. An independent study has evaluated the potential social benefits of the projects within the Transport Charter, suggesting a 3-kronor return for every 1 krona invested in the charter's projects.³³



On the Cycle Superhighways in the Greater Copenhagen Area, pumps are installed in case your bicycle needs air. Photo: Supercykelstisamarbejdet, hovedstadsregionen



Myth #5: Cycling is an exclusive mode of transport.

Reality: Cycling is a socially inclusive mode of transport that promotes mobility justice.

Boy on his way to school in Reykjavik, Iceland. Photo: Yadid Levy / norden.org

In some Nordic cities and regions, efforts to become more cycling friendly are met with opposition by organisations and individuals who see cycling as exclusive—especially to people living with disabilities or who have lower levels of fitness or agility. However, when compared to other forms of mobility, cycling has the potential to offer a high degree of mobility justice due to its affordability and accessibility to people of different ages, genders, and socioeconomic status. From the user’s perspective, purchasing a bicycle is at least 98% cheaper than buying a car in the EU (in 2023), and it does not require high additional costs to store and fuel.³⁴ The bicycle also has fewer barriers with regards to certifications and age requirements. According to statistics from 2023, around three-quarters of households in Finland and Sweden already own a bicycle; in Iceland, Denmark, and Norway, the statistics are slightly less, but still show that a majority of households have a bicycle (68%, 63%, 57% of households, respectively).³⁵

When compared to car transport, cycling provides more democratic use of public resources. For example, in Denmark, the average number of passengers per car is about 1.3, making car lanes and large parking lots an inefficient use of space per person.³⁶ This space could be used for alternative purposes, such as public green space, housing, or better parking and access for sustainable transport modes. Private automobiles and their infrastructure invite unjust uses of public resources, as taxpayers contribute to expensive car infrastructure that only those wealthy enough to afford and maintain a car can use. Research out of Stockholm states

BOX 1. WHAT IS MOBILITY JUSTICE?

Mobility justice is about reducing harmful consequences of mobility systems to ensure that people can self-determine their movements so they can live meaningful lives without fears or barriers.³⁸ For example, a city that offers mobility justice enables an 8-year-old child to safely ride her bicycle to school in an environment that does not expose her to undue air and noise pollution and provides her peers equal access to do the same, regardless of where they live or their socioeconomic status. The theory of mobility justice contextualises mobility behaviour within social, economic, and environmental systems; therefore, it has opportunity for cross-sectoral impact.



that private automobiles, including electric vehicles, are a form of structural violence because they “create social injustice and indirect suffering, resulting from a divided society with the upper class dominating social resources and the lower class having limited access to those resources.”³⁷ This is especially true when private car traffic competes with public transport—for example, tram and bus lanes—on public roads. Alternatively, a city that is built to the human scale, with safe and comfortable options for people to bike and walk, provides the building blocks for a more socially and economically inclusive society. Therefore, policies that unlock cycling and walking opportunities are more likely to be environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable and beneficial in the long run than those which prioritise mobility by private car.

There are many emerging solutions for meeting the needs and preferences of different groups to cycle, thereby enabling higher degrees of mobility justice (see Box 1). For example, electric bikes (e-bikes) provide all riders with the ability to travel at the same speed efficiently—either alone or with additional cargo. For those who are new to, or less comfortable with, cycling, they offer a smoother transition for taking up this mode of transport. E-bikes can also enable longer commutes, thereby granting people living further from the city centre with higher degrees of accessibility among the city or region. For those commuting on the cycle superhighways of Denmark’s Capital Region, 20% are doing so with an e-bike, while traffic analysts from Oslo report that 39% of all bike trips in Oslo are made with an e-bike.

But there is more that can be done to capitalise on these efforts within the Nordic countries.

POLICY/PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

Integrate universal design principles into city planning.

Principles of universal design³⁹ aim to provide equal access, comfort, and safety of public services for all people—irrespective of particularities or ability levels. Integrating universal design principles into planning practices—not only into cycling-specific work—can help shed light on how public space often fails to abide by inclusive guidelines. The principles can help to shape and reshape public infrastructure that meets people’s unique needs.

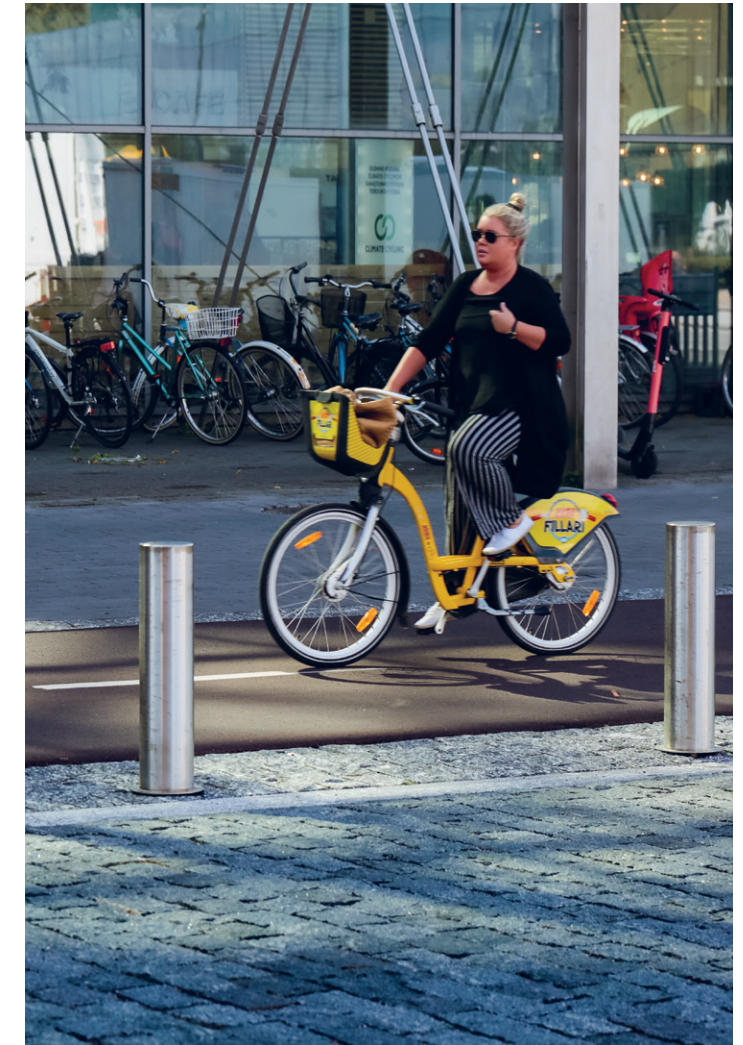
Include e-bikes in bike-sharing systems.

As of 2022, just under 53% of employed persons in Denmark live within a 10-km distance from their workplaces, and 70% of all employed persons live within a 20-km distance from their workplaces.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the City of Stockholm has calculated that nearly 50% of Stockholmers can cycle to their workplace within 30 minutes.⁴¹ This shows a huge potential for more commuting by e-bike if accompanied by integrated cycle infrastructure, such as regional cycle superhighways that are well linked to local paths. To enable more inclusive transport options, regional bike-share systems can offer e-bikes and make these available, particularly in outer urban areas, granting people access to utilise them for commuting and leisure purposes into

and around the city. Municipalities must work together to enable and maintain comprehensive cycling networks and collaborate when it comes to bike-sharing mobility services for residents within a region or functional urban area. Bike share systems can also operate smoothly through public-private partnerships, and various models have been tested regarding parking zones versus docking stations, pay-as-you-go subscription services, and subsidy schemes to keep costs lower for riders. Which methods work best may vary from city to city depending on the existing mobility context.

Support cycling for children, families, and elderly residents.

Supporting cycling for children is a natural on-ramp to more cycling in the future. Not only can it help to improve their own health and urban mobility, but it may also reduce the number of children who need to be driven to school and other activities, which is a common argument from parents for why they require a car. When evaluated from a social justice perspective, cycling can level the playing field and provide more equal accessibility and mobility for those who cannot or do not want to drive or do not have the means to rent/own a car. One tangible way to do this is to assess the quality of walking, cycling, and public transport networks and bicycle parking facilities in and around schools and elderly care facilities. Building cycling awareness and



Cyclist using the bike-share system in Helsinki, Finland. Photo: iStock

training within schools is another way for children to learn safe cycling techniques and encourage cycling to school. Additionally, cargo bikes could be introduced into local or regional bike share systems.

Consider subsidy schemes for residents who need customised cycling solutions.

National governments may also consider providing subsidy schemes for people with disabilities for accessing specialised bicycles. In Sweden, residents can claim an allowance for purchasing a bicycle that requires customised adjustments due to a disability. In some cases, residents with certain disabilities may not even be aware of the options that exist and assume that cycling is not an option; therefore, targeted campaigns to build awareness are also important initiatives.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES:

- The **City of Oslo** has integrated universal design principles at a detailed level into their Street Design Manual. The manual provides an example of how the city folds equitability into technical requirements to accommodate street users of all kinds to comfortably access urban infrastructure. The design manual provides a list of questions to consider when it comes to universal mobility, such as "which groups of road-users should be prioritised in terms of space and ease of movement?" and "are there users that utilise the street that require particular facilitation."⁴² Oslo has also been able to test universal design solutions through

pilot projects, where different user groups were engaged to evaluate the combination of, e.g., bus stops with bicycle infrastructure for improving accessibility.⁴³

- In 2018, the **City of Reykjavík** initiated an ambitious project⁴⁴ lending residents e-bikes to understand travel behaviour for commuting in the city. After several weeks, those who participated could buy the e-bikes if they found it a good fit. The City followed up with participants through a questionnaire to learn about people's experience. In the end, the bikes sold out. The project enabled residents to test if cycling with an e-bike was a worthwhile solution for them before investing in one on their own.

- Beyond the Nordic Region, **the Netherlands** has excelled by integrating a nation-wide bike share system which also coincides with the state-owned transport company NS (which operates the rail network throughout the country). Riders can use their public transport cards to rent a bicycle (regular or e-bike) at one of more than 280 locations throughout the country. The stations are planned to allow for people to travel to a station, lock the bike, take the train, and then pick up a bike in their new destination.⁴⁵ As of 2023, the system had 22,500 bikes available, and travellers made 5.9 million trips during that year. Ninety e-bikes were incorporated into the system in 2022. NS gathered data on the trips to learn that people travelled longer distances on e-bikes than regular bikes and rated them more highly than regular bikes, leading the public transport company to roll out more the following year.⁴⁶



Bicycle storage for thousand of bikes at Rotterdam Central Station in the Netherlands. Photo: iStock



Myth #6: Cycling cannot make serious environmental impacts. Instead, we can achieve sustainability goals by trading in our fossil-fuel cars for electric vehicles.

Reality: Sustainability goals cannot be achieved unless we develop a built environment that facilitates active mobility.

Biking in the suburbs of Gothenburg, Sweden. Photo: iStock

Within the Nordic Region, road transport is responsible for just over 87% of transportation sector emissions, which has changed little since 1990 (see Box 2). When looking at total GHG emissions in the Nordic Region, 26% of total emissions are attributed to transportation and 23% to road transport specifically. This is a European-wide trend, with transport accounting for just under 30% of total emissions in the EU in 2022.⁴⁷ One key method for reducing GHG emissions in the transportation sector in recent years has been to replace fossil fuel cars with electric-powered vehicles or alternative fuels.⁴⁸ However, the European Environment Agency reports that “the improved energy efficiency of new vehicles and the increased use of biofuels ... have been more than offset by the increase in demand for passenger transport and an increase in the share of passenger car transport,” which has “led to higher GHG emissions from passenger cars in 2019 compared to 2000.”⁴⁹ As of 2022, the car accounted for around 80% of passenger kilometres travelled in each of the Nordic countries within the EU (Denmark, Sweden, and Finland). These figures are higher than the share for the EU-27 (73% of passenger-kilometres travelled in the EU are by car). And the total number of kilometres travelled by car in these countries has increased since 1995.⁵⁰ While vehicle electrification can aid in decreasing transport emissions, the European Environment Agency is clear in its limitations:

“

For a sustainable mobility system, electric vehicles alone will not be enough. Moreover, production of electric vehicles will still require substantial resources and generate pollution. Electric vehicles will also not solve the problem of growing transport demand, time spent in traffic, or finding a parking spot.⁵¹

Making cities more sustainable requires rethinking the built environment. The existing backbone of the living environment is often the street, specifically a street designed according to the dimensions of large motor vehicles. Research highlights the problems that electric vehicles pose to land use. One concern is the inevitable maintenance and potential expansion of impervious surfaces that come along with this space-occupying mode of transport associated with sprawling urban settlements.⁵² Fossil-fuel-free or electric vehicles both still require major public investments to build and maintain car infrastructure. Furthermore, road congestion remains the same, as do the negative health effects associated with sedentary lifestyles. Therefore,

addressing road transport emissions and other holistic sustainability goals ultimately requires a transformation of the urban form, with sustainable urban mobility options—and particularly cycling—at the forefront. Cities and regions aiming to achieve sustainability must therefore consider how to reduce as many car trips as possible (even those made with electric cars) while maximizing the share of trips made by walking, cycling, and public transit.

Researchers at Chalmers University in Sweden recently conducted a study to evaluate the potential impact of substituting passenger car trips with e-bikes. Using the Västra Götaland county of Sweden (where Gothenburg sits) as a case study, the researchers ran a simulation study

showing that, based on factors such as speed, trip duration, street gradients, and activities of trips, “e-bikes could replace 57.6% of car trips” in the county.⁵³ Furthermore, they explored potential GHG emissions reductions in the area: “If the top 70% of feasible car users, ranked by shortest to longest daily travel distances, switch to e-bikes, emissions could be reduced by 10.1% compared to 2018 levels. If all feasible car users adopt e-bikes, a reduction of up to 22.8% in emissions could be achieved, representing the upper limit presented by our study.” The study provides encouraging findings for compact built environments where the researchers suggest that it is more possible for car trips to be replaced compared to sprawling environments.

POLICY/PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

Redefine sustainability in terms of the whole landscape, not just the mode of transport.

Transport solutions are not sustainable if they require cities and regions to invest in and maintain infrastructure that contradicts long-term social, economic, or environmental goals. Instead, the high emissions status of the transport sector requires planners and policymakers to reconsider land use and rethink policies that support or hinder the development of living environments as a whole. For example, investments that open streets to other public uses may also have payoffs for social and economic sustainability. Cycling is an important mode of transport not only for its energy

efficiency, but also because building a city at the scale of the cyclist helps cities to achieve other cross-sectoral aims. Approaches such as Avoid-Shift-Improve may be one way to consider how improving the efficiency of electric vehicles works only alongside reducing overall travel or shifting to more sustainable modes.⁵⁴

Identify structural barriers that disable residents from challenging car-centric norms.

While some long-distance trips may not be able to be replaced by a bicycle or e-bike, the percent of trips made by car for short journeys is surprisingly high. In Denmark, the car is the mode of transport that accounts for 46% of all trips between 4 and 9.9 km, and 23% of all trips between 2

BOX 2. KEY TRANSPORTATION EMISSIONS DATA FOR THE NORDIC REGION

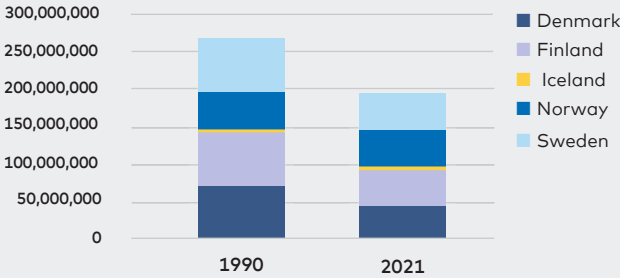


Figure 1. Total GHG emissions (without LULUCF) in the Nordic Region, 1990 v. 2021 (tonnes of CO₂e). Data source: UNFCCC

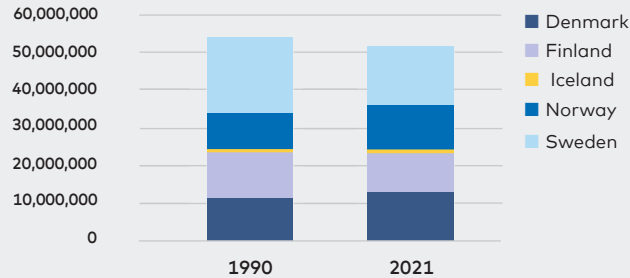


Figure 2. GHG emissions attributed to transportation sector in the Nordic Region, 1990 v. 2021 (tonnes of CO₂e). Data source: UNFCCC

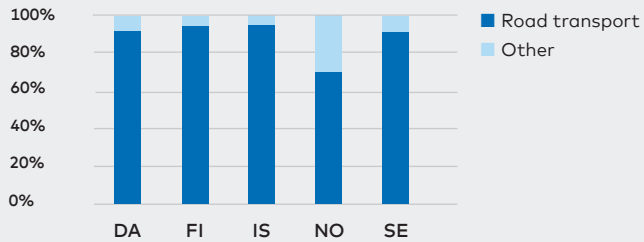


Figure 3. Percent of transportation emissions attributed to road transport v. other means of transport in the Nordic Region. Data source: UNFCCC

and 3.9 km.⁵⁵ Though walking and cycling have higher shares for shorter journeys, still 8% of trips under 2 km are made by car (compared to 10% by bike). Other Nordic cities report similar challenges, with a high share of all car trips used for relatively short distances. As planners consider where to prioritise their modal shift attention, it may be useful to identify areas where people continue to use the car for trips within these bikeable and walkable thresholds and consider the potential urban design or infrastructure barriers that may be preventing residents from choosing the bicycle over the car for such trips.

Integrate active travel modes into climate commitments.

Walking and cycling can play a larger role in discussions for reducing emissions. This can happen by making active mobility a key action item in, for example, Nationally Determined Contributions.⁵⁶

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES:

- The **City of Oslo** provides an example of how a city centre can be reimagined as a place predominantly organised around cyclists and pedestrians instead of cars. In an initiative started in 2016, the city has removed hundreds of parking spots and established new playgrounds, parks, and cycle paths to improve the urban environment. Due to high levels of accessibility by other means of transport, the City can reduce private vehicle access and parking in the centre

while improving the conditions for pedestrians, without reducing overall accessibility.⁵⁷

As part of the car-free strategy, the City initiated the so-called Living Streets (Levende Gater) project⁵⁸ which supports residents in implementing local projects that improve neighbourhood life by reimagining street space for other public purposes.

- The **City of Stockholm's** summer streets initiative⁵⁹ makes use of the contrasting seasons in the centre by temporarily repurposing traffic spaces into urban living rooms. Between April and September, these streets are adorned with outdoor furniture, plants, and art, opening the space primarily to pedestrians and slow cyclists. In 2024, the City also tested the opening of a major thoroughfare near the city centre—Sveavägen. Three blocks were transformed into a car-free public space, providing greater accessibility to local residents participating in social activities, children's games, and other art performances. The Sveavägen car-free weekends were part of a trial program to test the effects of traffic in the area and analyse potential measures for reducing traffic problems along the busy street, which acts as a primary vehicle, walking, cycling, and public transport corridor in the city.



*A bicyclist rides alongside a tram that has just stopped at the Aker brygge station in Oslo, Norway.
Photo: iStock*



Myth #7: Cycling only benefits cyclists.

Reality: Cities built for cycling, walking, and public transport benefit all members of society by providing them with agency, safety, and high quality of life.

*Cyclists passing through a human-scaled built environment in Copenhagen, Denmark.
Photo: Yadid Levy / norden.org*

When planners speak about reducing the number of cars on the road, the aim is not to initiate a war against drivers but to improve quality of life for all inhabitants. We are not all drivers, but we are all pedestrians at some point in our day—whether at the start of our journey with a walk to unlock our bicycle, in the middle of our journey as we transfer from one bus to another, or at the end of our journey when we lock the car and walk to the entrance of our destination. Therefore, designing cities at the human scale is a way to account for all inhabitants rather than focussing predominantly on those operating a vehicle. Since cycling and other forms of micro-mobility remain at the human scale, these transport options accommodate similar goals. In other words, cities that cater to cyclists have built environments that support other kinds of sustainability.

But what does this mean for those who do need to drive? Does improving cycling inherently mean reducing quality of life for those who, under various circumstances, require a private car? If cities offer things like well-maintained cycling paths, safe and convenient bicycle parking infrastructure, and convenient multi-modal transport accessibility, more people may choose to cycle. And if more people who can cycle choose to do so instead of taking a car, the reduction of private vehicles on the street can lead to improved traffic conditions for those who do need to drive—particularly when it comes to congestion. This has the potential to lower stress levels among those who need to use the car. More cyclists and fewer cars on the road also means less air pollution and noise pollution for everyone and can lead to improved health

for the population and greater road safety conditions—including for drivers.

Safety is often reported as a major factor that inhibits residents from cycling. In line with the EU, all Nordic countries have subscribed to a Vision Zero goal regarding traffic deaths, but in 2022, there were still over 700 reported road fatalities in the Nordic countries, and another 27,000 injured.⁶⁰ A recent survey measuring perceptions of transport safety in Iceland revealed that cyclists riding in cycle lanes reported the highest levels of safety compared to all other modes of transport (including drivers). However, cyclists in roadways felt the most unsafe.⁶¹ Some studies outside the Nordic Region have also shown how cycling has the potential to improve road safety as a whole.⁶¹

Another benefit of developing cities and regions for cycling regards **health**. Researchers in Sweden studied health impacts by modelling a scenario of just over 100,000 commuters shifting from car to bicycle in Stockholm. Based on changes in traffic flows and the resulting impacts on air pollution, road traffic injuries, and physical activity, researchers showed how swapping out the car for the bicycle when commuting could have major health benefits.⁶³ Cycling also benefits mental health, reducing the burden of mental health disorders.⁶⁴ Studies like these show how cycling can play a role in healthcare policymaking.

POLICY/PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

Reduce barriers that threaten the comfort and safety of vulnerable road users.

A recent study in Sweden shows how cyclists find a reduction of traffic volume to be the greatest indicator of a safe cycling route.⁶⁵ However, respondents—most of which reported cycling 4-5 days per week or more—also found that smaller adjustments improved their perceived safety, such as changing the colour of the bicycle lanes and providing road markings. Another study from Denmark indicates that cyclists rank right-turning vehicles, cycling close to trucks, and cycling on roads without cycle lanes as the conditions under which they feel most unsafe.⁶⁶ To combat such concerns, policies might require drivers to make a complete stop before turning right at an intersection or enable the implementation of traffic-slowing measures and physical separations (e.g., raised lanes) between cyclists and larger road users. Reducing speed limits to a maximum of 30 kmph in urban areas or creating low-traffic zones are also ways to keep streets safer for all users as well as to reduce noise pollution.⁶⁷

It's important to note that safety is both an actual and perceived measure, and what is objectively considered safe may not be experienced as such by all user groups. Therefore, engaging with citizens to understand their mobility concerns can also help to make mobility of all kinds more inclusive.

Communicate about the benefits of cycling that matter most to residents.

Planners and policymakers may need to shift their approach in how they communicate about mobility behaviour. In a 2022 survey, residents in Copenhagen reported that the reason they cycle is mainly because it is faster and easier than other modes of transport, and because it has positive health benefits. For the public, the environmental-friendly benefits may be less of a priority. Therefore, instead of communicating narrowly about the ways that cycling can contribute to emissions reductions, planners and policymakers can appreciate those benefits while communicating to the public about the many other benefits that cycling can have for their quality of life.

This also applies to the narrative planners and policymakers employ regarding cycling in the city. Street closures, for example, are only closed for those who inhabit the street by car, but for all other forms of human interaction, the street can be described as open and available for new forms of social and economic interaction.

Build bridges across administrative departments for effective cycling planning.

Cycling has many cross-sectoral benefits and can therefore be used as a means for achieving objectives across different departments and policy areas. Simply put, improving cycling cannot be done in isolation. It requires the coordination and commitment from many different actors to be successful. And while this is a challenge, the versatility of the bicycle to

meet the needs and interests of society can make it a simple solution for a range of different stakeholders—from health care and business to tourism and social service sectors—to rally around. Additionally, as suggested by the European Public Health Alliance, health perspectives can be integrated into mobility strategies to more effectively link active mobility and health and well-being.⁶⁸

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES:

- Perceptions of cycling in the [City of Oslo](#) have been measured through a biennial cycling survey.⁶⁹ Through this survey, the City has been able to see a marked increase in cycling satisfaction between 2014 and 2022. When asked about whether it is safe to cycle in Oslo, 9% agreed in 2014 compared to 31% in 2022; when asked whether Oslo is a good cycling city, 17% agreed in 2014 compared to 49% in 2022.⁷⁰ By collecting data on cycling perceptions, the city has also been able to improve their design standards—both in terms of safety and in terms of universal design.

- In their 2022 Bicycle Account,⁷¹ the [City of Copenhagen](#) provides insights from a survey about safety perceptions from both children and adults from public and private primary schools. Respondents could identify locations on a map of where they felt unsafe, which gave the City a better picture not only of which areas might be dangerous for users, but also an idea of the differences of perceived safety across different age groups.⁷²

- The [City of Stockholm](#) is implementing low emissions zones in the city centre for the purpose of improving air quality for all residents. The emissions zone restrictions are regulated at the national level but applied locally by the City to specific segments of central streets. At the end of 2024, a large portion of Stockholm's central business area will be classified as a Zone 3 environmental area, restricting noise and emissions-polluting vehicles from using these streets.⁷³



Myth #8: Owning a car is a necessity for life in the Nordic Region.

Reality: Ownership is less important than access, and the car is one of many mobility options that can accommodate residents' needs.

A mother transporting herself and her children in a cargo bike in Gothenburg, Sweden. Photo: Sofia Sabel /imagebank.sweden.se

Car ownership can often restrict residents' freedom by providing new burdens through things like parking and maintenance. Instead, the car can become an essential part of the sharing economy. Policies and planning mechanisms can assist residents who require a car by helping to grant them access to vehicles when it is necessary, but limiting the unnecessary burden on residents from parking, financing, and maintaining their own personal vehicle.

This is especially important in urban areas. Copenhagen has witnessed an increase in the total number of cars by 28% between 2014 and 2023, even though the population has only increased by about 13%.⁷⁴ In Helsinki, over 50% of the population owns a car, but the share of daily trips made by car is only 21%.⁷⁵ This mismatch shows that, for a large portion of time, private cars contribute to an inefficient use of space and resources—both for the public and for the private owners.

While there are occasions in which the car is a necessary mode of transport, many alternative options exist, such as e-cargo or box bikes for travelling with children, or train networks or car rental options for visiting places outside the region. But this means that cycling policy and planning needs to work in tandem with support for other regional transportation networks—such as bus, train, or ferry access to more rural, remote, or tourism destinations—as well as support for mobility sharing and Mobility as a Service (MaaS). If cities and regions discourage travelling by private car, other options must be accessible, affordable, and

efficient in lieu of the car to ensure residents have fair and reliable transportation to meet their daily needs. Reducing car reliance can enable greater freedom of movement and flexibility if investments and trade-offs are made with mobility justice in mind. In 2021, 50% of respondents from the Helsinki Region stated that no other modes can replace the freedom of movement with a car. Yet, 48% also express a disinterest in living a car-dependent life.⁷⁶ These kinds of survey results highlight the importance of providing residents with high quality alternative options and reducing barriers so that the “need” for a car is relegated to its proper place.

POLICY/PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

Provide a range of shared mobility options for residents.

Through partnerships with private companies, car sharing can be baked into a city's robust public transport system. For example, pre-existing public parking spaces can be available for private actors to place their car-sharing vehicles. Additionally, subsidies for things like cargo-bikes can help parents who feel like car ownership is a necessity to pursue alternative sustainable options that still accommodate the needs of growing families. Funding that enables local governments to implement pilot projects or expand mobility services is necessary to empower residents to switch to more sustainable mobility behaviours.

Enable people to choose the bicycle for leisure trips or running errands.

Some reports have shown that car use is higher for leisure trips compared to commuting.⁷⁷ If cycling routes, including cycle superhighways, are safe, attractive, and convenient across the region, inhabitants may be more inclined to use them beyond commuting purposes. Furthermore, there are opportunities for public and private companies to hire out bicycles for key activities that tend to take place by car by default (e.g., bicycles for moving or postal delivery bicycles).

Plan at the neighbourhood scale with accessibility in mind.

Transport policies that encourage us to reduce our transportation while still enabling high degrees of social and economic engagement could have more beneficial impacts on the environment. This could be achieved through polycentric planning models in larger cities or planning for dense urban centres in smaller towns. This also means ensuring new development happens on existing transport lines (transit-oriented development) or is developed in tandem with extended cycling and pedestrian networks. Such planning can also make these towns more attractive to residents and avoid urban sprawl. Concepts like the 15-minute city that provide residents with access to key services at a neighbourhood scale could be useful if developed in an equitable way.

As a policymaker or civil servant, try cycling in your city today.

If you are a civil servant or policymaker who has never cycled in your city or region, test it out. Enjoy the benefits and seek to understand the challenges that cyclists are facing from their perspective.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES:

- In **Norway**, the Directorate of Health and the Norwegian Roads Administration have considered how people move from place to place based on distance. Generally, speaking, they suggest that 0-2 km can be done by walking, 2-7 km by cycling, and 7-15 km by cycling, using an e-bike, or taking a multi-modal trip combining public transport with walking or cycling parts of the way. While these guidelines do not account for the urban design of those spaces or other perceived factors of, for example, infrastructure or safety, they help to estimate how a “nearby” or “10-minute town” might act as a principal model for providing the greatest number of people with access to their most common needs in a dense, mixed-use, and functional environment.

- Some cities are working to integrate car-sharing/car-pooling systems into their mobility work. For example, the **City of Stockholm** works with several companies to provide on-demand car rentals.⁷⁸ In the **Helsinki Region**, a private company called Omago⁷⁹ is also working with housing cooperatives, enabling residents to access a shared car as a way to reduce the amount of parking needed for residential buildings and lifting car maintenance burdens off residents.



Omago offers electric cars and other shared vehicles in major cities such as Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Jyväskylä, and Tampere, Finland. Photo: Omago

About the project

Funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic Cycle Power Network is a 2-year project running from February 2023 until January 2025. The key aim of the project is to activate a knowledge-sharing network among municipal and regional planners working to improve conditions for cycling. Through a series of workshops and study visits, the network will identify measures that can be implemented in Nordic cities and regions to facilitate and enable a significant increase in trips made by bike to replace car use and reduce carbon emissions from the land-based transport sector.

By engaging in various topics—such as collecting and using cycling data, integrating cycling into multi-modal forms of transport, prioritising cycling work within political frameworks, and planning and maintaining cycling infrastructure in winter conditions—the project addresses the discrepancy that exists between current cycling aims and their implementation. Many measures have been put into practice by Nordic regions and municipalities. However, according to local partner organisations who focus on cycling, there is a need to qualify and strengthen these measures in planning and decision-making processes. By facilitating Nordic collaboration on a range of critical

topics, the project will lead to enabling residents in the Nordic Region to use the bicycle as a preferred mean of transportation.

The network provides planners with tangible input for concrete actions and measurable outcomes to facilitate the development of actions that boost cycling in their own contexts, as well as inspire other European cities and regions with similar challenges. Several findings from the workshops have been summarised into this policy brief, developed based on the discussions among the participating network of municipal and regional authorities and agencies. The policy brief aims to inform decision-makers about what can be done at local, national, and Nordic levels of policymaking to improve cycling conditions in the Nordic Region.

The long-term impact of the Nordic Cycle Power Network is to encourage a significant decrease of carbon emissions from the land-based transport sector. As more people choose to cycle, we will witness more positive effects on the climate, environment, and public health in Nordic cities and communities. Thus, the project produces a variety of social, environmental, and economic benefits that contribute to achieving the Nordic Vision.

Project coordinator: Nordregio

Knowledge-sharing facilitation: European Cyclists' Federation

Participating cities and regions: Cycle Superhighways of the Capital Region, Cycle Superhighways of the Central Region, and City of Copenhagen (Denmark); Helsinki Region Transport and City of Helsinki (Finland); Icelandic Road and Coast Management Agency and City of Reykjavík (Iceland); City of Oslo (Norway); Region Stockholm, Region Skåne, and City of Stockholm (Sweden).

For more information and updates on the progress of the Nordic Cycle Power Network, visit:

nordregioprojects.org/nordic-cycle-power-network

Residents enjoying the cycle and pedestrian path along the Akerselva River in Oslo, Norway.

Photo: Nick Night / Unsplash



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