

**Velo-city 2009**

**Subplenary 5**

**What is hindering good cycle planning: how do city planners think?**

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## Summary

This presentation is based on a study carried out by Institute for Transport Studies at the University of Leeds. The paper presents findings from a questionnaire survey aimed at urban and transport planning officers in Sweden. The survey was carried out during May 2008.

235 officers from local and regional authorities as well as highway authorities responded to the questionnaire. This makes the study the largest in its pitch, within the Nordic countries. The study achieved a 45% response rate which gives confidence in the reliability of the results.

The survey informed an analysis on the role improved decision support for cycle planning may have for planning efficiency, i.e. authorities' ability to fulfil their local planning objectives (such as increased cycle use) in a cost-efficient way. A second purpose of the study was to identify key areas where change is needed in order for the authorities to meet their local targets within the field of cycle planning. The survey repeated several questions from an earlier British study making it possible to compare planning barriers in the UK and Sweden.

To sum up, the survey results point in the direction that better decision support on a local, regional and national level in Sweden would improve planning efficiency. Some of the most interesting findings were that:

1. There is a relatively strong demand for improving decision support for cycle planning in Sweden, with the majority of respondents (54%) indicating that better decision support on a national/ regional level is *important* or *very important* in order to make it easier to implement better cycle facilities.
2. Two out of three respondents (65%) indicated that it is *important* or *very important* that the way infrastructure is financed in Sweden changes in order to make it easier to implement measures leading to better cycle facilities in their local authority.
3. The professional 'culture' in transport planning and the way local transport planning is carried out is considered a relatively high-ranked problem. For example, 47% of respondents in authorities with no or partly out of date planning documents for cycle planning indicated that the own organisation's transport planning 'culture' is a *significant* or *very significant* problem hindering the development of proposals for new or improved cycle facilities and successful implementation of them.

The study shows that decision support for cycle planning is out of date in many organisations. Female respondents were more critical of the way which cycle facilities currently are planned than men. The majority of women (54%) indicated that their organisation did *not* plan for cycling in a *satisfactory systematic manner*. Only 39% of male respondents stated the same. Women had also experienced more difficult implementation problems. The survey results indicated that improved decision support may have two benefits, increased planning efficiency so that cost-effective

measures can be implemented. Improved decision support may also be a catalyst for meeting national transport policy objectives.

Many planners see a need to improve current practice. Hence there seem to be a demand for innovations in terms of solutions as well as when it comes to the content and design of decision support. This demand for innovations is the strongest amongst city planners and less strong but still significant amongst transport planners.

The results of the survey were interpreted to show a need for new or significantly updated free-standing cycle planning documents in one out of three Swedish local and highway authorities. According to planning practitioners there is also a need to update many existing cycle planning documents with a more rigorous analysis of the present situation and users' problems in order to be able to implement the most cost-efficient measures.

The full survey report identifies some key areas for further research. It can be downloaded at [www.cykelplanera.se/Survey.pdf](http://www.cykelplanera.se/Survey.pdf). The report is in English with a summary in the Swedish language.