

Traffic planning for bicycles in Umeå



The optimal city

Surveys of travel habits have shown that up to 5 km many people are prepared to cycle. The optimal city thus has a radius of 5 km¹. This means proximity and a place built for people – in particular for children, elderly people and the disabled. Towns and cities that grow more than that must grow around frequent public transport services a reasonable distance from footpaths and cycle paths.

Travel habits

How do people travel in Umeå municipality? In the city, slightly more than 40% of journeys are made by bicycle or on foot; outside the city itself, the corresponding figure is 35%². Children in the city make 65-70% of their journeys on foot or by bicycle³ and up to the age of 30 almost 70% of journeys are made on foot, by bicycle or by bus². Women in general travel considerably more on foot, by bicycle or by public transport.

Short car journeys

The potential to increase the proportion of journeys by bicycle can be found in short car journeys. Half of all journeys in Umeå municipality are shorter than 15 minutes. Of all journeys in the municipality a fifth are shorter than 10 minutes. In the city itself, half of all journeys are shorter than 10 minutes. At the same time, half of all journeys by bicycle are shorter than 10 minutes². A comparison of how far one can travel in 10 minutes by car or by bicycle shows that in many cases one can travel just as far or further cycling at a moderate speed as one can by car. One of the reasons is that it takes time to park and walk the rest of the way and walk back to the car to drive home.

Build the city for pedestrians and cyclists

The potential to increase the proportion of journeys by bicycle can be found in building the city to allow people to walk or cycle. Umeå has a growth goal of 200,000 inhabitants by 2050. At the same time, Umeå must develop as a city that is sustainable in the long term, which means that the transport system must be extended so that journeys on foot,

by bicycle or by bus are prioritised and increase at the expense of car journeys. Planning must take a holistic approach so that the trip to pre-school, school, after-school recreation centre, etc can easily be made part of the daily journey to work.

How do we increase the proportion of bicycle journeys?

One very important factor is a cohesive network of foot and cycle paths with short, direct routes. It must also be safe, secure and reliable⁴. Yet another factor is good possibilities to park in well-situated locations⁵.

The city must also offer short distances and a journey time ratio⁶ for cyclists and pedestrians that is better than for car-drivers. Prioritising pedestrian and cycle space and public transport often leads to natural decreases in car flows and car use, including less space for car parks. Parking strategies are in fact an effective tool to influence people's choice of their means of transport⁷.

Some important areas to concentrate on are increased commuting to work by bicycle, safe routes to school for children and, not least, a high operating standard.

According to the 2006 travel habit survey, the municipality's inhabitants consider that the most important issue to prioritise in traffic planning is pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and we in Umeå Municipality must consider this!

Political decision

The Bicycle Traffic Programme is part of the Municipality's work for sustainable development, based on the Aalborg Commitments for Sustainable Development (August 2007). The Bicycle Traffic Programme is also part of the "Action programme to fulfil the environmental quality norm for nitric oxide", adopted by the municipal council in August 2007. The municipal executive committee's Business and Planning Committee decided on 8 September 2009 to adopt the goals and aims defined in the Bicycle Traffic Programme. The decision does not imply approval of the Bicycle Traffic Programme's costs; these will be taken up in future budget work.

1 Experience of processing surveys of travel habits shows that up to 5 km a large number of people are prepared to cycle. Christer Ljungberg, CEO of Trivector Traffic AB

2 Travel habit survey in Umeå municipality, ages 16-84. RVU 2006 (in Swedish)

3 Children's and young people's travel habits – a travel habit survey among 6-15-year-olds in towns and cities of varying size. Report 2007:73, Trivector Traffic AB (in Swedish)

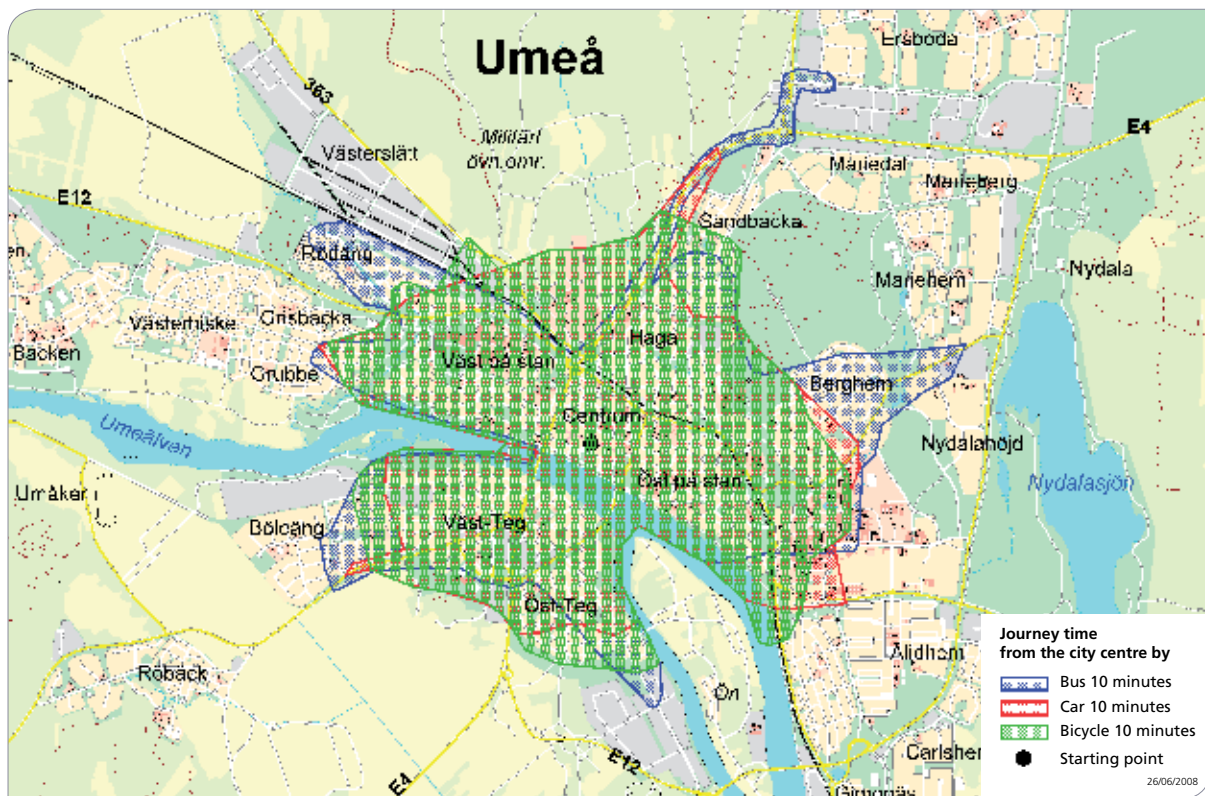
4 'Reliable' refers to maintenance, i.e. sanded, cleared of snow, swept. even surface.

5 Traffic for an attractive city (TRAST). 2nd edition, 2007 (in Swedish)

6 Journey time ratio = total journey time by bicycle divided by total total journey time by car between a certain city district and a largish destination point. The ratio should be 1.5 or less for the bicycle to be a competitive alternative to the car (TRAST).

7 The good city - Interacting strategies for sustainable transportation and city development in other countries - experiences, content, method, forms of organisation, and effects. National Road Administration Publication no. 2006:69 (in Swedish)

How far can you get in 10 minutes?

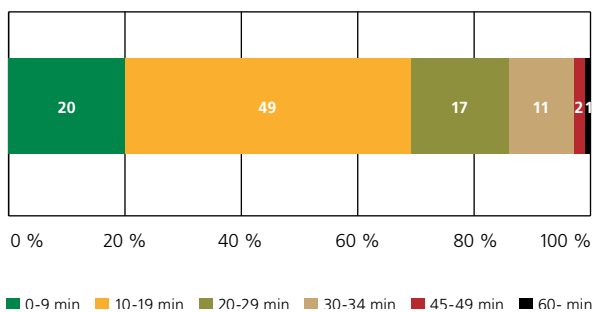


The people of Umeå can do better!

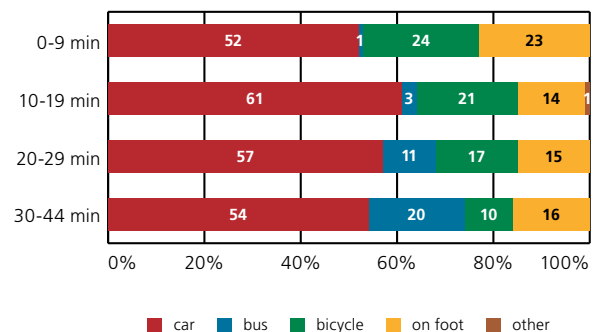
The diagrams below show how people in Umeå travel today. A great many (about 70%) of the journeys made in Umeå municipality are shorter than 20 minutes.

In the city itself, half of all journeys are shorter than 10 minutes. In spite of this, half of them are made by car.

**Journey time (%),
all journeys in Umeå municipality, 2006**



**Means of travel (%)
Umeå municipality, 2006**



Distance from the city centre and The University Hospital of Umeå



* NUS, Norrlands universitetssjukhus = The University Hospital of Umeå

The optimal city

Surveys of travel habits have shown that up to 5 km many people are prepared to cycle. This means that the optimal city for cyclists has a radius of 5 km, a fact that towns and cities in Europe are also making use of.

One example is Groningen in Holland, a city with a population of 200,000, where it was decided to allow the city to grow within a 5 km radius of the

city centre and as a result almost 70% of journeys in the city are made by bicycle.

A compact town or city means proximity – built for people (the elderly, children, disabled people, etc). Studies of children's (aged 6-15) travel habits in particular show that of journeys up to 2-4 km half are made by car. This means that children need shorter distances even more than many other people.

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