

## Transport Demand Management in Reykjavík

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Reykjavík is often referred to as ‘the most environmentally friendly capital of the north’, but it is not worthy of that title when regarding traffic. The private car has throughout the years become a sign of welfare at the same time as it threatens it. There are more private cars than driver’s licenses in Reykjavík. Half of all trips made in the city are shorter than two kilometers and the private car accounts for 75% of all trips made within the city. More than half of all drivers have no company in their private metal shell, they are solo drivers. The outstanding dominance of the private car is a result of the planning method ‘predict and provide’ and the fact is that Reykjavík resembles the situation in North American cities more than neighbouring European cities in most cases.

What is it that is so negative about the private car? It has contributed to serious public health problems such as overweight and obesity due to a sedentary lifestyle, increased the risk of isolation and segregation, complicated social relations in residential areas, decreased the freedom of movement for certain social groups, not forgetting the massive harm to the environment and people’s physical health due to polluting emissions and noise. The extent of motorised traffic in Reykjavík has reached a level which must be considered a problem if all three components of sustainable development; social, economic and environmental, are to be respected.

Transport demand can be managed in many ways and there are certainly unexplored tools to do so in Reykjavík metropolitan area. Parking policies, carpools, public transport, bicycling and walking, education and information, economic measures and involvement of the private sector are among categories of potential measures. The aim is first and foremost to minimise traffic made by private cars.

Parking policy measures are believed to be one of the most important management tools in ‘modern mobility management’. The inhabitants of Reykjavík may complain about parking regulations and parking fee collection in the city centre, but what they do not realise is that Reykjavík has uncommonly low fees and little restrictions compared to the neighbouring countries. The supply of free parking is known to compromise the number of people choosing other modes of transport.

Improved public transport services and infrastructure for walking and biking are important measures as the quality and extent of the network is much related to the use of it. These two service systems are indeed interdependent as people need proper ways to and from bus stops, and public transport is needed for longer trips by foot. They are, in addition, an essential complement to many other measures e.g. parking restrictions. Which factors are to be improved depends on the target group e.g. comfort and travel time are known to be more important to private car users than public transport users. The commonly suggested free public transport is not considered to be cost-efficient and indeed considered to risk lowered standard of service.

The most sustainable measure is to get as many private car users to walk or ride a bike instead. Walking and biking is free of charge, very environmentally friendly and healthy. Education and information are among successful tools to promote bicycling and walking. With increased health awareness, campaigns gain a great potential. Promotion of facts like that regular physical activity can reduce the risk of coronary heart diseases, adult diabetes and obesity by 50% affects individuals directly. Education and information are considered to be great tools to have impact on perception, preferences and attitudes and thereby change the force of habit which tends to be strong.

Economic measures have gained popularity for the principle 'the polluter pays' and their effects are highly dependent on people's willingness to pay for the benefits. Parking fees, taxation on vehicles and gas are among common economic measures. They can also be applied with a more positive approach like economic incentives. An example is when an employer subsidises public transport cards for employees. Road pricing systems that are based on the actual distance driven are worth striving for as they are considered to encourage economic savings for individuals by contributing to sustainability.

There are ways to make private car use more efficient. The average car stands parked for 23 hours per day. Carpools, referred to as the phenomenon of short-term car rental, either run as a cooperative or commercially, are a potential tool for that purpose. It is a way to outsource expensive administration and maintenance of one's own car fleet, possible for private people and companies. It can replace many families' extra car, encourage better planning of trips and promote other transport modes, above all for shorter trips. In addition, carpools allow adjustment of vehicle type to trip purpose, meaning that over dimensioned jeeps can be used for the few times a year when they are needed, instead of driving locally in Reykjavík all year round.

Commuting traffic accounts for a big part of private car traffic in Reykjavík giving the private sector an important responsibility for sustainable travel habits. Employers can for example implement travel plans for employees, facilitate bicycling to work with shower facilities and enable teleworking. Sustainable contribution by private actors is gaining increased popularity for marketing reasons.

Most of the measures discussed above are relatively cheap and simple measures and only a portion of possible potential measures to bring Reykjavík's transportation system closer towards sustainability. The measures include physical, organisational and behavioural change measures and are thought to reinforce each other. It is very important they are applied both as 'carrots and sticks'. The force of habit is very strong, so the aim to minimise the dominance of the car are easier said than done.

The overall potential for implementation of measures is considered to be good due to many unexplored tools, but strongly dependent on political will and will of the neighbouring municipalities to cooperate. Reykjavík metropolitan area consists of eight different municipalities with very limited cooperation when regarding traffic planning. The study has led to a suggested plan of measures that can be used as a bank of ideas in travel demand management in Reykjavík. The suggested plan is dependent on improved cooperation between the decision makers in Reykjavík.

The ongoing economic crisis does have impact on the potential for implementation of measures. The public's willingness to cut costs promotes cheaper modes of transport like walking and biking, while the authorities lack money to implement measures in general, especially the more expensive ones like improving public transport services. The measures are believed to contribute to a better balance between travel modes by reducing private car traffic and promote more sustainable modes of transport, make trips more efficient and replace short motorised trips. With success, Reykjavík should be able to live up to expectations as 'the most environmentally friendly capital of the north'!