

PROMOTION/ **AWARENESS RAISING**

## SAFE CYCLING CAMPAIGNS

### Overview

Some aspects of cycling safety are addressed through infrastructure or other improvements while others are the responsibility of cyclists themselves. Particularly (but not only) in areas with relatively low cycling numbers, some cyclists may see their bike as a form of recreation rather than as a mode of transportation, and may therefore not understand their responsibility in traffic situations. Safe cycling campaigns involve education, encouragement, and support of safe behaviour on a bicycle.

### Background and Objectives

#### *Definition*

Safe cycling campaigns are campaigns aimed at making cycling safer. The focus of a campaign can be a specific user group (for example children at a given school), or a specific behaviour (for example the use of bike lights). Safe cycling campaigns can take a variety of forms and can address issues including:

- the ability of the cyclist to cycle safely
- the visibility of the cyclist to other road users
- the roadworthiness of the bicycle itself
- the safety of the environment around the cyclist

Safe cycling campaigns can entail short-term or ongoing action.

#### *Function/Objective*

Safe cycling campaigns are intended to improve the physical safety of cyclists – and those around them – and to prevent cycling accidents.

#### *Scope/Field of application*

Cycling safety campaigns are generally most applicable in starter cities, and perhaps also climber cities, where the idea of cycling as a mode of transportation is not widespread and where, therefore, traffic safety might not be taken as seriously as it should be.

In champion cities, where people generally have a clear understanding of the bicycle as a means of transportation, safety campaigns are likely not so necessary although a visibility campaign in the autumn, for example, might serve as a useful reminder of the need for lights.

A school route campaign is appropriate in areas where the majority of the children live within easy cycling distance of school but where most arrive by car.

### Implementation

Safe cycling campaigns involve encouraging and supporting safe behaviour on a bicycle. The most common safe cycling campaigns focus on children's routes to school (see good practice case number one below) or on visibility (see case number two below) or on the roadworthiness of the bicycle itself. Campaigns can provide information, education, or enforcement of laws, or some combination of those three.



### *Potential partnerships*

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Potential partners will vary depending on the sort of safety campaign you plan to implement. Some include:

- Schools
- Local police
- Local authority
- Bike shops (or suppliers of bike lights and reflectors)
- Local cycling organisations
- The media
- Bike mechanics

### *Components of a safe routes to school campaign*

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- Assessing the school's infrastructure and other needs and implementing adaptations as needed: this could include creating safe, covered bike parking, rearranging car parking to make cycling safer, or creating a "no drop off" radius around the school to make the approach safer for children on foot or on bikes
- Cycling training for the teachers (if there is a need)
- Teaching safe cycling skills to the pupils (or training teachers to do so)
- Helping teachers, pupils (depending on their age), and parents develop school travel plans
- Setting up workshops for the parents to get them involved and to encourage them to cycle to school with their young children
- Establishing relationships with the local authority in cases where traffic calming or other measures may be needed around the school

### *Components of a visibility campaign*

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- Making cyclists aware, through a media campaign, of the legal responsibility to have functioning lights on their bikes
- Set up checkpoints along popular bike routes to inform cyclists about the law (and the personal safety aspect) about lights
- If possible, offer free lights or reflectors to cyclists who don't have any or a voucher for lights, or for a discount on lights, at a local bike shop

The action can be carried out either by police (sometimes involving a fine for cycling illegally without lights) or perhaps by a local cycling organisation or the local authority who simply give out a warning and a free light or reflectors and some safety information. If the campaign is carried out by the police, another option is for them to cancel the fine if the cyclist demonstrates within a given period of time that he or she has acquired the appropriate lights and reflectors.

It should be noted that cycle lighting requirements and norms may differ from country to country. In some places, removable battery-powered lights are common, while in others, lights must be permanently fixed to the bike.

### *Components of a bike roadworthiness campaign*

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- Making cyclists aware, through a media campaign, of the importance of having a well-functioning bicycle
- Advertising and setting up one or more "bike checkpoints" at schools, workplaces, or along popular bike routes to check the basics (tires, lights, cables, brakes, etc.) to ensure that bikes are roadworthy
- Providing participants with a checklist of items that require repairing, which they can take to a bike shop



## Considerations

### *Strengths*

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- Encouraging children to cycle to school has the potential to create a new generation of adult cyclists.
- A visibility campaign can be relatively easy to set up and can be done quite inexpensively (particularly with volunteer help).
- The payoff of such campaigns is in lives saved.

### *Weaknesses*

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- Safe routes to schools programmes require support and buy-in from all of the relevant stakeholders.
- Visibility campaigns can be relatively labour-intensive (but usually over a relatively short period of time).

### *Success factors and barriers*

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For school campaigns, buy-in from parents and schools is essential to success.

A visibility campaign is most effective in the autumn when days start getting shorter.

A bike roadworthiness campaign is probably best run during an afternoon commute times rather than the morning; people tend to be in less of a hurry at the end of the work day. Spring is a good time of year for this; it encourages people to get their bikes out of storage after the winter.

Whatever safety campaigns you undertake, your goals should be accident prevention and an overall safer cycling environment. Your actions should not discourage cycling, but rather encourage safe cycling behaviour. For example, helmet laws and helmet campaigns may seem like an obvious safety measure, but mandatory helmet use places one more barrier in the way of potential cyclists, does nothing to make the cycling environment safer, and leaves the impression that cycling is a dangerous activity.

### *Evaluation of impact*

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Particularly for school-related programmes, impacts can be measured, in part, through the number of pupils who cycle to school. Accident statistics are another indicator of the success of a programme.

For a light programme, the impact can be measured by tracking the number of people you have contact with during the course of the campaign (or the number of lights handed out, if that is part of your campaign).

For a bike roadworthiness campaign, success can be measured by tracking the number of people who take their checklist with their bike to a bike shop for repairs or a tune-up.

## Good Practice Cases

### *Case 1*

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#### **Safe Routes to Schools (UK)**

Safe Routes to Schools is a campaign carried out by Sustrans in towns and cities throughout the UK. Projects include a package of measures such as training in road safety skills for pupils, incentives and promotional activities, curriculum work, road improvements and the provision of facilities such as cycle parking at schools. The aims of a Safe Routes to School campaign are:

- To create a safe environment for children to walk and cycle
- To support the development and implementation of ambitious school travel plans
- To empower young people to take action on the school journey
- To support communities to become champions of sustainable school travel



## Give Cycling a Push Implementation Fact Sheet

For more information, go to [www.sustrans.org.uk/saferoutes](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/saferoutes) or contact [schools@sustrans.org.uk](mailto:schools@sustrans.org.uk).

*The average modal split for cycling in British towns and cities is between 1 and 3%.*

### Case 2

#### Peterborough (UK) – Be bright, use a light



The Peterborough city council (through its Travelchoice programme) together with the Cambridgeshire Constabulary carried out a campaign aimed at reducing the number of people cycling without lights in Peterborough. The city wanted to encourage people to cycle throughout the winter, but to make sure that they were visible to all road users.

The campaign aimed to highlight that it is not acceptable to cycle in the dark without lights, without discouraging people from using their bikes. Peterborough's campaign ran for two weeks in early November. Fines were handed out to more than 40 cyclists, but a number of local cycle shops participated in the campaign by offering deep discounts on cycle lights.

Roughly 15% more lights were sold during the campaign than usual and police feedback indicated an increase in cyclists using lights. The campaign also received significant positive media coverage and the overall impression – both of cyclists and non-cyclists – was very supportive.

For more information, go to

[www.peterborough.gov.uk/traffic\\_travel\\_and\\_parking/travelchoice/travelchoice\\_services/travelchoice\\_events.aspx](http://www.peterborough.gov.uk/traffic_travel_and_parking/travelchoice/travelchoice_services/travelchoice_events.aspx)

or contact Matthew Barber at [TravelChoice@peterborough.gov.uk](mailto:TravelChoice@peterborough.gov.uk).

*Peterborough is a starter city with a cycling modal split of approximately 2%.*

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