

PROMOTION/ **TRAINING** and **PROGRAMMES**

TARGETED ADULT CYCLING TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Overview

Many adults would welcome the opportunity to cycle for transportation if they felt able to do so. A significant barrier for some European cities to overcome is a lack of cycling skills among their adult populations (or particular sub-groups thereof). While some never learnt the basics of balancing on two wheels, others simply need to learn the skills needed to cycle safely and confidently in traffic. Targeted training addresses both of these needs.

Background and Objectives

Definition

Targeted adult cycling training programmes are face-to-face group training programmes that teach adults the skills they need to cycle safely and confidently in traffic. Training may begin from the very beginning with those who didn't have the opportunity to learn to cycle as children, or it may address the needs of those who know how to balance on two wheels but are uncertain about how to cycle in traffic.

Function

The objective of training programmes is to help adults who are potential cyclists or recreational cyclists to overcome the most fundamental barrier to cycling: the physical inability to ride a bike, or the lack of skills and confidence to do so safely in an urban environment.

Scope/field of application

Adult cycling training programmes are generally most appropriate – and most needed – in urban areas where distances between destinations are short enough that they can easily be covered by bike. In starter or climber cities where cycling is not yet considered the norm, the target group may be relatively broad. In champion cities, where cycling is seen as a normal part of the local culture, the focus will more likely be on smaller groups that are outside the mainstream.

Target group

The target group for adult cycling training programmes will depend to a certain extent on the type of city (starter, climber, or champion) and its specific needs.

- Starter cities: In starter cities, the target group will likely be fairly broad: adults who own a bicycle but currently don't cycle or who only cycle for recreation.
- Forerunner cities: Where cycling is already a part of the mainstream culture, non-mainstream groups (who may even feel excluded from the mainstream culture because of an inability to cycle) are the target. Examples are immigrants from countries where cycling is not common, senior citizens or those with physical disabilities (who might be accommodated by specially designed bikes, tricycles, or pedelecs).
- Climber cities: either of the groups named above (or perhaps a mix of both).

Implementation

Partnerships

There is great potential for partnerships in developing adult cycling training programmes. For programmes targeted at adults who own bikes but don't use them (or only use them for recreation), potential partners include:

- local public transport operators as partners in promotion of sustainable transportation and/or as financial supporters



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- local or national cycling organisations as a source of cycling training programme expertise, instructor training and/or instructors (or they could be contracted to run the training programme)
- health agencies or organisations as supporters in the promotion of healthy, active living
- local businesses (insurance companies or others with an interest in a healthy, fit public or in being associated with "green" transportation) as possible funding partners
- local bicycle shops can help as partners in promotion. They may, for example be interested in offering their customers a free (or discounted) cycling training course with the purchase of a new bike.
- a local media outlet as a partner in promotion
- local employers as supporters of their employees' green, healthy transportation choices (by paying the cost of their employees' participation in a training programme, for example)
- driving schools. In cities where awareness of cycling and cyclists is particularly low, developing relationships with driving schools may also be beneficial. They could be encouraged to incorporate awareness of cyclists into their curriculum. ?

For champion cities with more specific target groups, organisations that support or work with such groups are also key supporters (for example, immigrant-serving organisations if the target group is immigrants, or senior citizens' groups or organisations if the target group is senior citizens).

Implementation and cost considerations

While the length and content of the course offered will vary depending on the target group, those learning to cycle from scratch will require more time than those who only need traffic skills.

While theory is definitely useful, the experience of cycling on the road in the company of an experienced instructor is what will most likely convince a non-cyclist to get on his or her bike more often. Traffic theory, bike handling skills practice, and an on-road ride with an instructor should all be components of an adult cycling skills programme.

You can probably avoid reinventing the wheel (i.e. developing a curriculum that has probably already been developed elsewhere) by contacting other cities that have set up similar cycling training programmes.

Costs that need to be budgeted for include: programme development, programme administration, instructor wages, advertising and promotion, programme evaluation, materials (safety vests, repair tools, traffic cones, etc.)

Possible income sources include: state support, corporate sponsorship, participant fees

Considerations

Strengths

- Adult cycling training addresses the most basic barrier to cycling: the ability to cycle at all.
- The effects can be relatively easily measured through counts of participants and follow-up surveys.
- An ever-growing database of new cyclists can also serve as a source of input and information with regard to novice cyclists' needs in your city or town.
- New cyclists are often excited about their new mobility choices and are effective at "spreading the word."
- Particularly for minority groups, such a training course is also a source of community and a connection to the mainstream society (when they can, for example, ride with their children or grandchildren to school).
- Adult cycling training serves as a good complement to the training of children.



Weaknesses

- Adult cycling training programmes can only reach relatively small groups of people at a time and can therefore be relatively cost- and labour-intensive (particularly in the early stages).
- In order to be really effective, a commitment is needed to offer such a programme regularly for an extended period of time.
- In starter cities, where people may not value cycling highly, it will likely be impossible to run a cycling skills programme on cost recovery basis.
- Without a single dedicated co-ordinator to take on the organisation and management of the programme (with the support of partners), it is unlikely to succeed.

Evaluation of impact

A survey of participants at the end of the course will determine their level of satisfaction with the training. A simple count of the number of participants demonstrates the level of interest.

Follow-up surveys (for example 6 months and one year after course participation) will give a good idea of whether the training programme had its desired effect, i.e. if participants are using their bikes for transportation. Such surveys can be administered (and results compiled) at a relatively low cost through the use of on-line survey tools.

Success factors and barriers

Partnerships are valuable both with regard to gaining financial support for your efforts as well as for the access they offer to various sectors of the community (the business community, public transport providers, governments at various levels, healthcare providers, the media, etc.).

The value placed on cycling in your community is important to keep in mind both with regard to how long courses are and how much you charge for them. If cycling is not generally highly valued, it will be more challenging to convince individuals to invest much time or money in a cycling training programme.

In a starter city, it is likely that most people would not be willing to pay the actual cost of a several-hour long cycling skills course. Offering a course for free may be one way to overcome the barrier of cost, however doing so may have other consequences: people may undervalue the service they are receiving or they may simply not show up for a course they've registered for as they don't have anything invested in it. Thus a fee for the course is wise, but it needs to be modest.

As with so many things, promotion is crucial to success.

Particularly in cities with a low modal split where cycling is perceived as a rather risky activity, creating a safe, sympathetic, and fun learning environment is crucial.

While programmes aimed at specific sub-groups in a community (immigrants, for example) may not be appropriate in starter or climber cities, every effort should be made not to exclude them in programmes aimed at broader audiences. That may include advertising in the language of the larger minority groups in your city and/or making an effort to recruit instructors from larger minority groups to offer the mainstream course in other languages.

Good Practice Cases

Case 1

Tilburg (NL) – Cycling education for immigrant women

For over 25 years, the Centre for Immigrant Women in the city of Tilburg has offered cycling courses for immigrant women. The courses are one hour a week for 10 weeks in groups of 10 to 12. The programme is funded by the local administration together with provincial, national, or other special funding subsidies. Participants each pay €25.

Lessons are divided into a cycling part, a theory part, and a social part, all three of which are considered equally important. The cycling lessons help the women in a variety of ways: cycling is

fast and cheap, helps build up the confidence and independence of participants, and gives them physical exercise. The courses themselves not only improve the women's cycling skills, but they have become a meeting place for immigrant women where they can talk and exchange information. The course ends with a final examination and cycling certificates for those who pass.

In 1996, *Steunpunt Fiets* (Bicycle Support) was founded in Tilburg. There, the Centre for Immigrant Women took the initiative to develop course materials for the cycling courses that are offered in many cities and villages. The aim of *Steunpunt Fiets* is to support the integration and emancipation of foreign women through practical support for cycling courses throughout the country.



Find out more at www.steunpuntfiets.nl/English.html or <http://www.fietsvriendinnen.nl/> (in Dutch only) or by contacting Angela van der Kloof at a.vanderkloof@mobycon.nl.

Tilburg is a champion city with a modal split of 30%

Pictures: by Angela van der Kloof, Mobycon, Netherlands

Case 2

Vancouver (CA) – Streetwise Cycling Programme

Aimed at adults who are potential commuter cyclists, the Streetwise Cycling Programme supports the local Bike to Work Week promotion. Potential participants expressed interest but hadn't cycled for many years and needed some basic information.

The one-day programme includes in-class traffic theory, bike handling skills practice in an empty car park, and a slow-paced 2-hour group road ride. The programme is run by the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition. Start-up funding was provided through a grant from a local credit union. Operating funds come in part by participant fees and in part from sponsorship from the local municipalities and the Metro Vancouver regional transportation authority.

Find out more at www.vacc.bc.ca/cycling/cycling.php?pageID=5 or by contacting info@vacc.bc.ca.



Vancouver is a starter city with a modal split of approximately 3.5%