



# CoP Public Infrastructure and Social Services

## Example of Good Practice

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## Development of a Cycle Path Network in the Ljubljana Urban Region

### Ljubljana Urban Region

**Key words:** cycling, mobility, transport infrastructure, accessibility, intermodality, recreation

### 1. Introduction

The municipalities that comprise Ljubljana Urban Region started planning for improved, multimodal mobility in the early 2000s. The prospect of EU funding, particularly ERDF, helped the authorities to focus and plan improvements on a regional level through the preparation of the Regional Development Plans 2004-2006, 2007-2013, 2014-2020 and continues to this day. A series of projects was implemented on the basis of the long-term vision of establishing a network of cycle paths in the region that would connect to the public transport network and to the national cycle path network and that would serve for both commuting and recreation.

The new cycle path network now connects urban areas, dominated by Ljubljana with its extensive cycle paths within the city, with the rural areas and the smaller, rural municipalities in the periphery. It enables both commuting (predominantly from rural to urban areas) and recreation (predominantly from urban to rural areas). Moreover, it enables recreational tourism linked to the development of agritourism establishments and visiting Protected Areas as well as eco-tourism.

The development of the cycle path network on a regional level in Ljubljana Urban Region provides an example for the CoP Public Infrastructure and Social Services of how the implementation of a common vision can be achieved step-by-step through a series of smaller projects and the cooperation of different sectors, institutions and authorities from local to

national level. Moreover, it is an example of public infrastructure with multiple purposes, serving multiple sectors and social groups (commuters, locals, tourists).

## 2. Project Intention / Background information

Before the joint development of cycle paths in the region, there were several disparate centres of cycling activity and cycle path development. Ljubljana as the largest city in Slovenia had the largest network of cycle paths, enabling easy daily mobility around the city centre and the largest streets. As a result, the share of bike use for daily commutes to school, work or errands was the highest in Slovenia. Cycling was popular for daily commutes also on some sections in the vicinity of Ljubljana, such as from Brezovica and Trzin (including Trzin-Domžale). In addition, there were some areas with hugely popular recreational cycling destinations (Kamnik with Kamniška Bistrica, for example) and a local recreational cycle path network such as Logatec Cycle Route (known also as LKT).

The main drivers of the joint development of cycle paths were the municipalities in the region, thus responding to trends and local initiatives. Due to the different character, they had different motivations: while the municipality of Ljubljana focused on mobility issues and solving the negative impacts of increased commuting, smaller municipalities focused on recreation and cycle paths as tourist infrastructure that could contribute to local development. As a result, defining of the objectives and coordination took considerable time and effort of everyone involved, from the municipality councils and national authorities to the cycling associations and other local stakeholders.

The regional network of cycle paths was planned and implemented in several stages as part of several separate projects, with the core ones coordinated by the Regional Development Agency of Ljubljana Urban Region. The main source of funding were ERDF and municipal budgets. In addition, there were several projects including auxiliary activities or local investments that were funded from INTERREG (for example, SUSTOURISMO project) and EARDF (cycling tourism projects implemented by different LAGs).

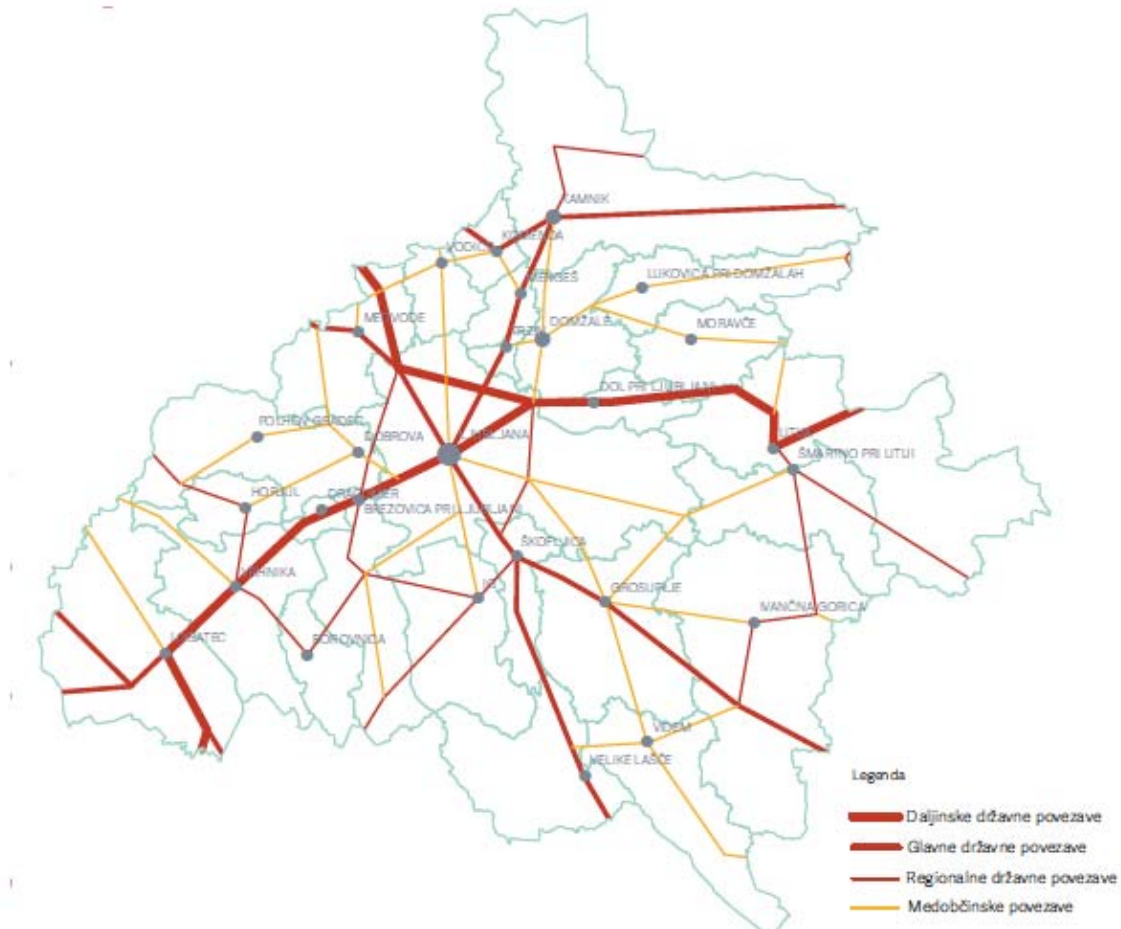
The cycle path network is maintained by the municipalities and the Slovenian Infrastructure Agency (sections along state roads) and promotion is done by the municipal councils and various local associations and initiatives. No statistical data on its usage is available, but observation can confirm the network's popularity. Some of the local tourist attractions, particularly local sights (museums, historic buildings etc.), restaurants and agritourisms are quoting their accessibility by bike.

## 3. Main Description

In 2007, the Regional Development Agency of Ljubljana Urban Region undertook to survey the existing roads, dirt roads and trails and outlined a proposed regional cycle path network. The idea was that instead of building new cycle paths, the existing infrastructure would be improved and clearly labelled. Following that, the physical work was done by 2010: where

possible, mainly along main commuting corridors with wide roads, dedicated cycle lanes were constructed and or painted red to distinguish, while at other sections safety and linkages between sections were improved. The cycle paths were then labelled and mapped and a brochure highlighting the main characteristics was published. This involved considerable regional and cross-sectoral interaction between stakeholders of transport sector, tourism, sport and nature conservation on national, regional and local level.

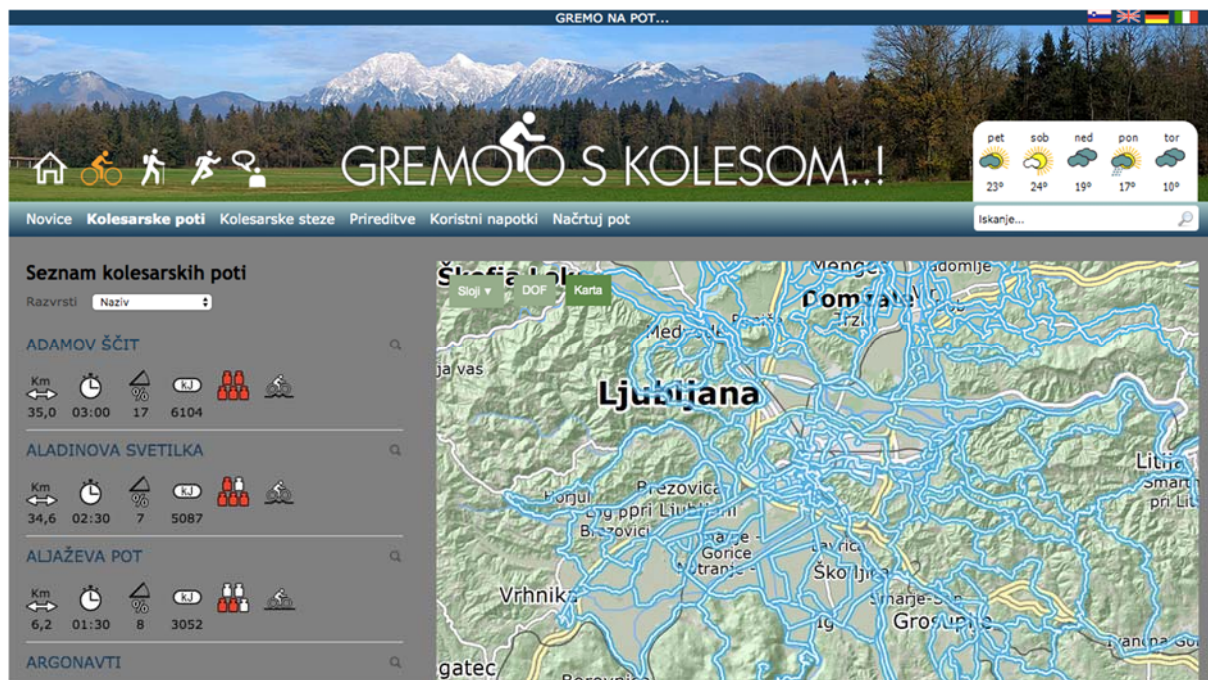
Map 1: Cycle path Network in Ljubljana Urban Region



Source: Regional Development Agency of Ljubljana Urban Region, 2018

As a result, the entire Ljubljana Urban Region is now crisscrossed with a cycle path network. While it is often used by locals and tourists for recreation and sightseeing, it is also used for commuting, particularly in the surrounding of Ljubljana and other towns (Trzin-Domžale-Mengeš area, Vrhnika, Grosuplje etc.). Moreover, in 2013-2014 a web portal “Let’s go on a journey” (<http://www.gremonapot.si/>) was developed which entails cycle paths, hiking paths and jogging paths that lists all the cycle paths with their main characteristics and maps and can be used also as a planning tool. In Ljubljana and some local railway stations P+R stops have cycle parking lots for the commuters.

Graph 1: screenshot of the web portal “Let’s go on a journey”



Source: <http://www.gremonapot.si/>

Although the network is now well established, the municipalities keep working on its further development, both together and individually. Some of the municipalities have expanded the network in their territory while some others installed additional infrastructure such as benches and tables at popular spots, too. Several projects on different levels (from Local Action Groups such as Heart of Slovenia to INTERREG projects) have been and are still dealing with the integration with tourism development. The municipality of Ljubljana, on the other hand, is focusing strongly on commuters’ aspect of cycle paths and multimodality.

At the beginning, the main challenge was to get aboard all the stakeholders and formulate a joint vision and long-term plan. As the municipalities are very different in character, they had different priorities. The municipality of Ljubljana, for example, focused on commuting and improvement of cycling in the city centre, while smaller municipalities felt that recreational tourism is their development opportunity. Discussions, coordination as well as the preparation of the Regional Development Plans led to an agreed long-term vision and coordinated action that continues to this day. In 2018, the Integrated Transport Strategy of Ljubljana Urban Region was prepared in which cycling and walking are the first pillar of sustainable mobility in the region.

Another obstacle was the management and planning procedures for the sections of cycle paths that run along the main roads: while local roads are owned and managed by the municipalities, the main and regional roads are owned and managed by the State and any amendments have to be negotiated with the Slovenian Infrastructure Agency and undergo different procedures.



The implementation of cycle paths was enhanced by some of the trends observed in the region as well as countrywide, such as increased migration of young adults out of Ljubljana to peripheral municipalities and increasing popularity of cycling as a form of recreation, also in connection with development of agritourism and the establishment of Ljubljansko barje Landscape Park. On the other hand, the implementation of the cycle path network contributed to these trends, thus creating regional added value. As cycling enhances mobility of vulnerable social groups such as the poor, students and elderly they might add social value; however, no research has been done so far in this field.

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SUSTOURISMO project: <https://www.rralur.si/projekti/sustourismo-mobilnost-turizem-z-roko-v-roki-za-trajnostni-razvoj>

Cycle paths in the area of LAG “Heart of Slovenia”: <http://www.srce-slovenije.si/turizem/kolesarstvo>