



CoP Public Infrastructure and Social Services

Example of Good Practice

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Regional Authority FrankfurtRheinMain

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Cycle Highways Network

Living Lab Frankfurt/Rhein-Main Region, Germany

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1. Introduction

- The Regional Authority FrankfurtRheinMain is designing a regional cycle highways network.
- It is a regional project because, eventually, it will have east-west/north-south extensions of some 50 km.
- The network will reflect the structure of the main commuter flows by linking the urban core (the city centre Frankfurt am Main) with the surrounding towns and cities.
- This network will enhance our regions' public infrastructure considerably. It addresses various societal needs: The provision of safe routes, encouraging mobility which can both have a positive influence on individual health and reduce CO₂ emissions, and it can take away pressure from roads and from public transport.
- It is a good example of regional governance because it fills a competence gap: We take on responsibility for a topic which is not yet established in the administrative mainstream.

2. Project Intention / Background information

Cycling has always been popular in our region. With the ever-growing popularity of pedelecs (Pedal Electric Cycles), cycling has become a serious option for commuting. To encourage more cycling there is a need to provide cycle lanes that enable safe and quick transfers over relevant distances. Although the advantages are obvious, this is that kind of fresh thinking that

needs pro-active engagement of a relevant stakeholder: There are no established standards and routines yet. Cycling is still being treated, legally and administratively, as a local activity, as sport and recreation, or something for children. Unfortunately, there is opposition: There is the usual NIMBY mindset of individuals afraid of real or imaginary disadvantages. There are car enthusiasts who try to ridicule the concept. Rather surprisingly, environmentalists do not like the idea, complaining about additionally sealed surfaces, lighting, people in the countryside, and loss of trees and bushes.

There is a clearly defined target group: It is commuters, mainly those living less than 15 km from their place of work. However, other cyclists are welcome, too – but they should avoid interrupting the quick transfer of the commuters. As far as we can see there is a high level of acceptance – the pilot route is usually busy, people take part in the public inquiry into the optimal route layout, and the ADFC (Allgemeiner Deutscher Fahrrad-Club, the cyclists' national interest group) are backing the project.

The project (the planning of the network) is co-ordinated by the Regional Authority FrankfurtRheinMain. It is financed by the Regional Authority and by the towns and cities touched by the routes, with a subsidy of the Land Hessen. Eventually, the implementation will be carried out by the towns and cities; they will most probably make use of dedicated implementation companies owned by the authorities.

3. Main Description

There will be a network of 9 cycle highways connecting the centre of the city FrankfurtRheinMain with the adjacent towns and cities north and south, east and west, with an average length of 30 km. These are cycle routes with a standard width of 4 metres, with a hardened surface and lighting, and free from other traffic. The route layout is linear where possible, and avoiding crossings, to enable uninterrupted cycling at an average speed of 25 km/h. Actually, this is the speed for which the so-called pedelecs are designed: They have an electrically powered motor which supports the cyclist as long as the cruising speed doesn't exceed 25 km/h.

The idea emerged from a long-term engagement of the Regional Authority FrankfurtRheinMain, called 'Bike + Business', working with companies aiming at encouraging their staff to use bikes for commuting for example by providing lockers for the bikes and showers for the employees. The Regional Authority then was a partner in the innovative CHIPS project (2016-2019), co-financed by the EU through INTERREG NWE¹ laying the base for European standards for cycle highways. Subsequently, and already in parallel with that project, the Regional Authority developed the concept 'from idea to strategy'. Now we are going from strategy to project, this starts with the quest for the right route, through feasibility

¹ CHIPS Project (<https://www.nweurope.eu/projects/project-search/cycle-highways-innovation-for-smarter-people-transport-and-spatial-planning/>)

studies (involving online feedback from potential users) – ‘right’ means here best possible use for the target group, thus linking relevant areas, avoiding detours, obstacles and unattractive areas, and areas that couldn’t be used because the land isn’t available (land used for a cycle highway must be in public ownership; in case there is a need to purchase land, the owner shouldn’t fundamentally object to selling). Often it makes sense to design a route in parallel to railway lines. This being completed, the implementation will be put into the hands of a dedicated company. The first part of the first route (a pilot route, so to say) is already completed and in use; in this case the implementation has been in charge of the Regionalpark company Regionalpark RheinMain Südwest gGmbH. This company is supposed to implement the Regionalpark RheinMain locally but can use their knowhow also for this cycle highway project.

This is a new concept, and it is not yet completely established: there aren’t accepted standards and regulations yet: The findings and recommendations of the CHIPS projects still have to be translated into national laws and enactments. This concerns mainly technical details about standard widths, crossings, signposting, and the bundling with streets and roads. There are no clear responsibilities yet, too: Cycling is often perceived as local and as a leisure activity, thus as a competence of the municipalities, although cycle highways are of regional relevance and should be considered in federal and *Land* (federal state) laws and regulations.

Figure 1: Cycle Highways Network – pilot routes in use



Source: Regional Authority FrankfurtRheinMain

While there is no stakeholder with an established competence yet, the Regional Authority FrankfurtRheinMain took the lead, through the interpretation of the legal provision of being responsible for the co-ordination of regional development. Direct investment, however, isn’t legally possible. This project combines aspects of social sustainability (promoting cheap mobility), economic sustainability (improving the health of the work force thus reducing sick leave costs), and ecological sustainability – it is carbon neutral as such and reduces car use.

The Regional Authority is initiating and co-ordinating. The Regional Authority is in charge of the feasibility studies (including the definition of the trace). Implementation is then done by a company owned by the local authorities. This project requires intensive interaction, discussion and agreement with the municipalities as well as with the various sectoral authorities (transport, environment). The general public is encouraged to suggest routes via an online survey.

Figure 2: Pilot route runs in parallel to a railway line



Source: Regional Authority FrankfurtRheinMain

This schematic map gives an impression of the proposed network and about the phased planning approach. In red: Feasibility studies completed or nearing completion, implementation in progress; in blue: feasibility studies to be commissioned; in green: Co-ordination of the ongoing investments filling gaps in the existing cycle route (as different from cycle highways) network.

Figure 3: Plan for cycling highways in FrankfurtRheinMain



Source: Regional Authority FrankfurtRheinMain

4. References

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Other downloads at <https://www.region-frankfurt.de/Radschnellwege>