

Walking for life

The Norwegian Walking Strategy

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"Walking for life" is the slogan for the National Walking Strategy that is now being formulated in Norway. Several towns around the world have produced local walking strategies, but as far as we know only Scotland has preceded Norway in producing a national strategy.

The Norwegian Public Roads Administration (NPRA) was commissioned by the Norwegian Government through the previous National Transport Plan to produce a National Walking Strategy. All the regions of the NPRA have been involved in this work, along with representatives from the Directorate of Health and some selected towns and county authorities. The final strategy was presented to the government together with the transport agencies' proposals for the National Transport Plan 2014 – 2017.

Two main objectives

The strategy has two main objectives:

- **Walking should appeal to everyone**

This objective implies that all population groups should find walking appealing, and that it is made easier for them to walk more on a daily basis.

- **More people should walk more**

This objective implies that more of the total journeys made by the inhabitants should be made on foot, and that all population groups should walk more on a daily basis.

Useful and sensible

Arguments for the strategy

There are many arguments in favour of making it appealing to walk, and for getting more people to walk more. For example, it is good for the climate that more people leave their cars at home in favour of walking or using public transport. In terms of air quality and noise, this is also good for the local community. Where there are more walkers, there is also more social control, and this in turn contributes to creating safe and attractive local communities where more people want to live and spend time. The presence of many people in an area also makes it attractive for businesses to set up there. We as consumers want safe and visually appealing shopping areas, preferably within walking distance of our homes. If we are able to provide such areas with workplaces as well as residential housing, there will be people there both in the daytime and evening. Furthermore, we cannot fill all our roads and streets with cars: then no one can get through. Nor can we expand the infrastructure for cars to avoid queues and congestion. That would have consequences in the form of increased use

of land for road construction, major encroachments on urban infrastructure and more air pollution and noise. One solution is to enable an alternative, more environmentally-friendly and active form of transport, such as walking. It is less costly to make provisions and establish infrastructure for pedestrians, and it also contributes to a more inclusive society. Those who cannot or do not wish to drive a car or to cycle can then reach their destination either on foot or in combination with public transport. And last but not least, walking is healthy. Among other things we have an ageing population who need to be more physically active. More people must walk, and more people must walk more. Therefore the slogan is "Walking for life" – for your own life, the life of the planet, quality of life for all, more community life, street life and enjoyment of life, and to gain more life and movement on a daily basis.

Norwegian travel behaviour

In Norway there is certainly a potential for more people to walk more. In 2009 (the last travel survey) 35.5 per cent responded that they had completed an entire trip on foot on the day recorded. If we look at the modal split for the total journeys made by the population, 22.3 per cent are on foot. People in the cities walk most, and in Oslo the proportion is 34 per cent. Women walk more than men, and those with children walk less than those without children. In the 2009 travel survey 16 per cent did not report any journeys on foot at all, neither entire trips on foot nor in association with the use of other modes of transport. In terms of how much and how far we walk, an average walk for a Norwegian amounts to approximately 1.7 km; 51 per cent of the population walk less than 500 m per day (including walking to other means of transport) and 19 per cent walk a total of 1.5 km or more. Moreover, for journeys of more than 1 km more people are using their cars than walking on foot.

Focus areas

On a national level the strategy has six focus areas, with defined objectives and measures. These are linked to (1) responsibility and cooperation, (2) design of physical surroundings, (3) operation and maintenance, (4) traffic interplay, (5) an active walking culture, and (6) knowledge and communication.

Responsibility and cooperation

The objective of this focus area is to encourage all authorities and private agencies to assume responsibility with regard to pedestrians and also to establish cooperation on making provision for walking and developing an active walking culture. In order to achieve this, in cooperation with other national and regional agencies the NPRA must draw up action plans to reinforce the walking strategy and communication plans to engage relevant players. The NPRA must assist in drawing up local walking strategies, with goals for more walking and strategies for how municipalities, county administrations, other public authorities and private agencies should cooperate to achieve these. In addition, pedestrian interests must be integrated into the relevant government, regional and local commitments and programmes.

Design of physical surroundings

The objective is to develop the structures of urban and built-up areas to make them more suitable for walking, to build attractive surroundings based upon the requirements and needs of pedestrians, and to develop coherent and closely interwoven pedestrian networks with an emphasis on accessibility, safety, attractiveness and universal design. In order to achieve this, public authorities must ensure that pedestrians are given adequate priority in national guidelines for land and

transport planning and in the design of infrastructure and traffic installations. Public authorities must ensure that pedestrian needs are safeguarded in all planning pursuant to the Norwegian *Planning and Building Act*, in terms of land use and infrastructure development, formal planning documents and the planning process. The public authorities must also ensure that the needs of pedestrians are safeguarded in the designing, refurbishing and processing of building applications for infrastructure and buildings. They must also assist in the improvement of existing pedestrian walkways and the establishment of new pedestrian links where needed, as well as helping in the development of secure, safe and attractive routes to schools.

Operation and maintenance

Many people avoid walking because of poor operation and maintenance of the pedestrian areas. The objective is therefore to achieve better general maintenance of such areas. For example, there must be improved winter maintenance and better accessibility for pedestrians near roadworks. The NPRA has just revised its handbook for operation and maintenance standards (Handbook 111), which includes the operation and maintenance of pedestrian and cycle areas. The National Walking Strategy emphasises the implementation of these requirements within the government's own sphere of activity and encourages other road owners to adhere to the same standard. The strategy sees the need to identify and evaluate current practices for year-round maintenance, to implement demonstration projects and to develop criteria regarding requirements for follow-up. Setting higher requirements for accessibility and information to pedestrians near roadworks is mentioned in particular.

Traffic interplay

This objective of the strategy is intended to give pedestrians a higher priority when designing infrastructure and traffic installations, and to improve interaction between groups of road users. The prioritisation of pedestrians must hence be enshrined in legal acts, regulations and handbooks that regulate traffic interplay. The public authorities must help ensure that speed reduction measures in towns and built-up areas are implemented, and that safe and attractive pedestrian crossings are provided to safeguard whole travel chains. Another aim is to test out and evaluate types of traffic management and forms of interaction between road users, and generally contribute towards street solutions with a higher priority for pedestrians when streets in cities and built-up areas are being expanded and redeveloped.

An active walking culture

Even if provisions are made for pedestrians, it is not self-evident that more people will walk. We must influence people directly to walk more. The aim is to raise the status of walking as a form of transport and physical activity. The NPRA will draw up a national communication strategy for a more active walking culture and encourage the implementation of local actions and measures to influence different population groups. Information and signage are an important measure. The strategy therefore emphasises mapping, evaluation and improvement in the use of signage and information for pedestrians.

Knowledge and communication

We have insufficient knowledge of pedestrians and what is required to make walking appealing and to get more people walking. Current planning tools and models are inadequate. There is a need to acquire more knowledge about pedestrians and develop better tools and methods to make provision for pedestrians. We must incorporate knowledge about infrastructure and installations for

pedestrians in national registers and initiate research that examines the needs and preferences of pedestrians. Evaluation of demonstration projects and other measures to promote walking can be part of this. Furthermore it is necessary to draw up a communication plan directed at planners and decision makers, and to incorporate knowledge about pedestrians in relevant teaching and as a separate field of study in higher education.

Local walking strategies

In order to succeed, the public authorities are dependent on the implementation of *local walking strategies* or other types of comprehensive efforts on behalf of pedestrians locally. In addition to working to influence local walking culture, the framework conditions for pedestrians must be addressed: land development, the infrastructure, the surrounding environment, operation and maintenance, and the interplay between pedestrians and other road users. It is noted in the National Walking Strategy that all these topics must be included in the local work. A separate section of the strategy document describes how this can be achieved. Some aspects of the physical framework conditions are outlined below.

Shorter distances

As Norwegian travel behaviour demonstrates, more people choose to go by car than to walk if a trip is more than 1 km. This is thought-provoking, but is something we must take into account in local planning. Short distances help make it more appealing to walk. More concentrated structuring of urban and built-up areas can therefore help to reduce walking distances between daily tasks, and to reduce walking distances to stops and hubs for public transport. To get more people to walk, the municipalities must therefore have densification as a principle for their land-use development. However, concentrated structuring of urban and built-up areas must not occur at the expense of parks and green spaces, which are important recreation and play areas. These must be included as part of the system of walking and leisure.

Interconnected pedestrian networks

The needs of pedestrians for accessibility, whole travel chains, universal design and predictable standards must be safeguarded, both in the pedestrian network and in the detailed design of pedestrian links and links to public transport. The infrastructure for pedestrians should be determined at municipal planning level based on knowledge of the needs and walking patterns of the inhabitants, and should be addressed in zoning plans and renovation projects. Routes within local communities and to schools should be prioritised. The strategy recommends that a pedestrian network plan should be drawn up as part of the local walking strategies for a logical, coherent and closely interwoven network. A *main network* should also be defined that should be universally designed and well maintained throughout the year. This will provide predictable accessibility on this main network.

Attractive surroundings

Not all areas are equally attractive, even though it is possible to walk there. The pedestrian network is an extensive urban space in itself, and urban spaces and meeting places must have good qualities, be inviting and be seen as meaningful places if they are to be made use of. For example, there must be room for both pedestrian traffic and meeting places with a varied and complex street life. In walkable areas, buildings ought to have a combination of functions and there should be a high

density of residents and visitors to ensure social control throughout the day. Architectural quality and opportunity for interaction between activities on the ground floor and life on the street is crucial. When working on a local walking strategy, it is therefore important to focus on the surroundings of where people will walk and to ensure that these are as attractive as possible. This applies to both traffic safety and the feeling of security.

Follow-up

The achievement of the objectives will depend on the extent to which the measures are utilised and have the desired effect. Each focus area on a national level will therefore be followed up through separate reports on measures and interventions implemented and through indicators. The effect will be measured in relation to change in travel behaviour.

Follow-up at national level

Several types of indicators are proposed that can be used to follow up the strategy. One type of indicator is associated with travel behaviour – for example, the number of trips made on foot by different population groups (travel survey data) and the number of pedestrian accidents (fatalities and severely injured) (accident statistics). Another type of indicator is associated with the provisions themselves, such as the number of kilometres of national roads and county roads that have provisions for pedestrians, the number of bus stops on national roads, railway stations and ferry connections on the national road network that are universally designed, and land-use development in towns and built-up areas, with the growth of development patterns, size of built-up areas and towns, population density etc. A third type of indicator is associated with reporting work carried out within the different focus areas – for example, the number of local pedestrian strategies implemented, the number and type of action and communication plans drawn up and the resources devoted to infrastructure and provisions for pedestrians.

Follow-up at local level

Like the follow-up at national level, the follow-up at local level is associated with travel behaviour, the provisions made and work carried out. The indicators to be used at national level can therefore also be used at local level. In drawing up local strategies, however, it is necessary to set separate objectives that can be followed up. It may therefore be necessary to develop separate result targets with indicators. The result targets should be drawn up and prioritised by the municipalities as a basis for their activity and should be designed as specific targets for the local work. These, together with the indicators, can provide documentation to the national level through annual reporting.