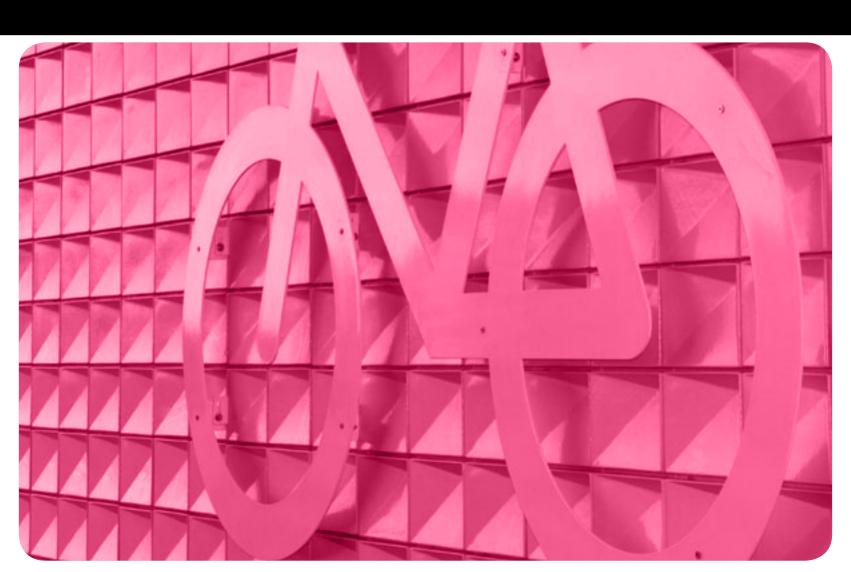


## THE ESSENCE OF SENIOR POLITICAL AND EXECUTIVE COMMITMENT





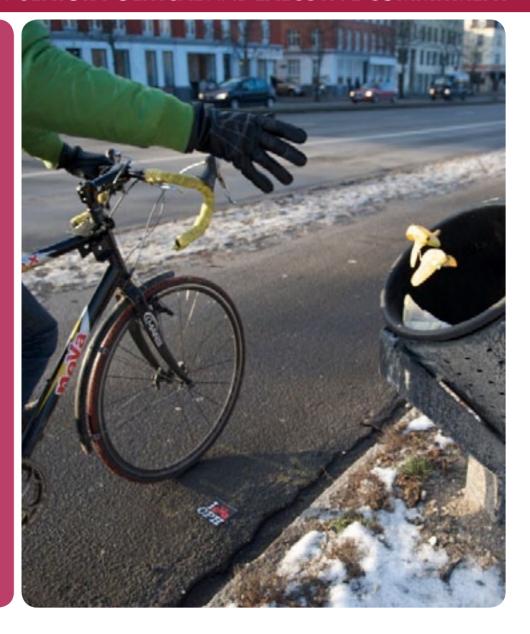
"The involvement of elected representatives is strategic to carry out policies requiring supporting behaviour changes in mobility habits. To obtain positive results in terms of cycling practices, it is necessary to conduct proactive policies for the development of infrastructures and services and to bet on major communication actions. A strong political support is therefore essential to these efforts.."

Jacques Garreau,
Vice President of the Greater Nantes

## CHAPTER 1. THE ESSENCE OF SENIOR POLITICAL AND EXECUTIVE COMMITMENT

olitical and executive support is essential for any policy-based endeavour. Making cycling a concrete priority in urban mobility planning requires strong political conviction and resolution.

This chapter considers the essence of senior political and executive commitment in providing support across policy areas and parties, building an effective administration, facilitating public participation, and in general boosting the cycling activity in cities. The city lessons of this chapter are supported with examples from Vienna and Copenhagen.



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# 1.1 High level commitment to boost cycling shares

Increasing the number of people cycling in a city requires strong political conviction and resolution. This conviction must be present at the highest political and management levels in order to set concrete and quantitative objectives towards boosting cycling shares.

In 2010, the coalition government of the Social Democratic Party and the Green Party of Vienna stated an ambitious goal of increasing the share of cycling from five to ten percent in their city by 2015. While many saw this work as simply a dream or vision that cannot be implemented, the objective gained strong senior commitment because it was seen as one of the most relevant measures of the Vienna city government's environmental policies. As a result, Vienna is on target to meet this objective. The share of cyclists increased by 20 percent in 2011, and Vienna reached a share of nearly seven percent in 2012. Ambitions will depend of the starting point. From a more developed cycling share of 37%, Copenhagen is still having high ambitions of another 50% increase in bike use, safety and comfort.

To be successful, politicians must be able to clearly express their cycling vision and its benefits, while at the same time offer solutions to deal with the possible disadvantages. An example of a classic conflict faced in Vienna resulted from plans to change infrastructure and open on-road parking areas to cycle traffic. To effectively manage this, compensation measures were described to help account for the loss of parking space, comprehensive awareness raising campaigns were organised, and public participation was solicited to outweigh concerns and gain support.

Many politicians have been inspired to support cycling in their city once they see that cycling works in other cities. Well-developed cycling cities like Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Munster or Nantes serve as showcases for different levels of cycling culture. They are usually very welcoming to visitors and also proud to showcase their cycling culture. Another source of inspiration can be a visit to theinternational cycling network including the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) or an examination of the best practices of the Danish Cycling Embassy or the similar Dutch Cycling Embassy.

# 1.2 Commitment across fields and political parties

Cycling policy is not a single issue of transportation, but widespread across almost all policy fields and political parties. With broad commitment from the various policy departments, cycling initiatives can more easily be integrated into long term political ambitions to raise air quality, cut carbon, improve public health and increase liveability and the general feeling of safety by having more people on the streets.

In Copenhagen and Munster, for example, cycling initiatives are meeting carbon cutting goals in politically approved climate plans. In Vienna, political leaders realised first hand that cycling is a cross-cutting topic reaching beyond traffic and transport planning and adapted their administrative structure accordingly. The government established a steering group consisting of the heads of the relevant municipal departments to underline the importance of cycling in Vienna.

Because of the involvement of many policy areas and opinions, dedication to cycling is no longer attached to traditional left wing vs. right wing perspectives. Conservatives, liberals, green parties and socialists can all adopt a cycling approach. As witnessed in Copenhagen - most cycling initiatives are approved by a strong political majority, which can be attributed to high level of commitment across party lines.

A strong commitment within the various areas of the administration also helps maintain ongoing and beneficial relationships with stakeholders including police departments, cycling communities, car owners associations, public transport companies and also organisations dealing with retail and shopping. Without proper relationships in place there is only a weak chance to predict their response or to make valuable win-win solutions. And, when the housing team cooperates with the health team which is linked to the public transport and education teams, then plans for cycling can work even better and have greater impact.



"If there is political consent about promoting cycling, ideas, measures and campaigns are more successful, accepted and sustainable."

Hans-Peter Wessels, State Councilor of the Canton of Basel-Stadt, Switzerland

# 1.3 Senior Political and Executive support for Making it Happen

Strong senior political and executive support is necessary in order to build an environment that can meet the cycling objectives of a city. Well-educated and experienced leaders understand the political logic of how a city works and how it can be translated into the professional tool box of the civil servants. They understand the variety of terms and conditions that are closely linked to cycling and how to create and work with an administrative structure and staff that will be supportive and able to respond to change.

The ability and willingness of leaders to facilitate change is crucial and will influence the time needed to form an administration that can drive the desired changes. A shift in traffic policy towards a more human scaled and bike friendly city includes necessary changes in the administration which may require either an alteration of the professional set of values or the addition of new competencies. In Vienna, it was important to adapt the administrative structure in order to increase the share of cyclists. The staff who were initially responsible for cycle traffic in the city lacked the necessary resources. The Vienna City Administration therefore decided to establish a "mobility agency" that supports the concerns of cyclists and pedestrians, and also nominated an Officer for Cycling Matters. In Copenhagen, the role of dedicated staff has proven effective since 2005. Today all staff members and leaders involved have the basic cycling knowledge necessary. The dedicated staff only have to deal with strategy improvements and preparing the next steps.









An alternative to establishing an agency or parallel organisation is to hire a well trained and well respected consultant. In that case it is important that the knowledge is properly imparted to the staff and will not disappear when the consultant leaves the office. A third approach is to train city staff in house to incorporate cycling in all their plans. Experience has shown that for cities with low historic cycling culture it may be advisable to set up an agency, while for those with greater awareness of cycling it can probably be more quickly effective to train all existing staff. The choice of management tool will depend on the starting point, the expected deliveries, the acceptance by the colleagues and the capabilities and skills in the present situation.

A quick responding administration that can produce concrete results is also important. It must be prepared to produce credible documentation to show that the new initiatives will work as proposed and to convince the doubtful about their advantages. Documentation on new cycle facilities must be in place, especially related to modal split, traffic safety, perceived safety and possible effects on car parking. It can also be invaluable to have a bank of well thought concrete projects. The demand for new ideas and pro-bike projects will often appear with a very short notice In this situation is it priceless to be able to response quickly with new concrete projects, and to have leaders of the administration set this as a priority.

Another important part for the administration is to take into account the power of the press. The communication of the plans and vision can be just as important as the plans themselves. Many businesses, parents, and other social groups will not understand modal split and need to be convinced that the cycle-friendly plans will work for them and are well considered. Local media often seek to expose unkept promises, lack of actual results, slow working civil servants and misuse of public money. An administration with weak power of execution can earn this kind of media attention. It is therefore especially important that senior leaders gain support from stakeholders and commit to communicating a consistent and thoughtful vision.

## 1.4 Political Support on the Street

Commitment to cycling from senior leaders should be seen on the streets. Politicians and senior executives are in a great position to communicate with and set an example for the citizens they serve.

In Copenhagen, the streets communicate that the city administration appreciates its bikers. Attractive visual installations such as the cargo bike shelter, the footrests at signalized junctions and the inclined dust bin have worked efficiently to communicate the city's ambition of serving bike users well. Even though the actual numbers of street equipment are rather small, the sites are well known because they are meaningful and memorable. A similar effect is linked to bike shelters, cycle counters and other kinds of cycling equipment. While these send a message of appreciation to the already convinced, current cyclers are tempting the next bicycle users.

Some cities can spend too much time appreciating and listening to existing cyclists at the expense of reaching out to those who do not cycle to find out why they are not and what would make them start. This latter route is more challenging but more rewarding over time. Insights into better understanding and valuing the human behaviour and choice are discussed in Chapter 8.

Senior political support of incentives and awareness raising campaigns is critical to improving the acceptance of cycle traffic in the city. The City of Vienna, for example, invests regularly in motivation and awareness raising measures. From March to October the City organises a large range of activities including an annual bike festival. This event, held in front of Vienna City Hall, is one of the largest bike events worldwide and attracts more than 100,000 people. Innovative campaigns in Vienna include the creation of a FahrRADhaus, or "bicycle house" in 2012, which serves as a contact and meeting point for discussions, exchanges, and everything regarding cycling, and an upcoming bike bell concert and a bike fashion show.

Finally, there is nothing like seeing your elected politicians doing what they are asking citizens to do and a picture of a politician cycling is worth more than a 1000 words. The Conservative London Mayor Boris Johnson has done it. He can be seen regularly in the streets on his bicycle and this makes his support for cycling very visible while giving him first-hand knowledge of cycling conditions. Social democrat Ritt Bjerregård and Social Liberal Klaus Bondam did it in Copenhagen. And Green Party Deputy Mayor Maria Vassilakou is doing it in Vienna. They all share a strong commitment to increase cycling and they have all gained popularity in doing so.



"If your city is starting from a low level and want to change the way that people are behaving, my recommendation is that the Mayor should lead the way. The most important thing is to start with yourself as a personal example. If it works for you as the Mayor, it will work for the city."

Mr. Steen Møller, Mayor for Culture and Urban Planning, Odense



## 1.5 Conclusion

Drawn from experiences in Vienna and Copenhagen, the following lessons can be helpful and adapted to cities looking to promote cycling in their regions.

- Make sure that there is a high level of commitment to boost cycling shares in the city and a concrete or quantitative goal.
- Make sure that there is broad political commitment for cycling across all policy fields and stakeholders.
- Make sure that there is a sufficient and supportive administration and administrative structure

   administration should be able to cope with change, prepare credible documentation, and communicate a consistent and thoughtful message and vision.
- Make sure that there is a permanent improvement of cycling infrastructure supported by senior leaders.
- Make sure that there is high level support by for a public campaign on public awareness raising to bring people to cycling.





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