



ENABLING CYCLING CITIES INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS

**INTERVIEW WITH HANS-PETER WESSELS**

State Councillor of the Canton of Basel-Stadt, Switzerland





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## BASEL

Interview by **Oliver Hatch**, [Urbrans.org](http://Urbrans.org)

**Basel is a city of cycling. Bicycles are the means of transport used for 20% of all trips within the city. A clearly marked network of bicycle routes covering 130 km and cycling paths criss-crossing both of the city itself and the surrounding region makes Basel a truly bicycle friendly city. In a survey conducted by the Swiss bicycle campaign group, Basel was voted second best of all the larger bicycle cities of Switzerland. Our goal is to be best by 2015. Basel demonstrates in an exemplary manner, how a typical densely populated European city can cope with a large number of cyclists.**

### **In your view, how important is political support and commitment for pro-cycling policies?**

Political support and commitment is very important for pro-cycling policies. If there is political consent about promoting cycling, ideas, measures and campaigns are more successful, accepted and sustainable. It is easier to get the financial and human resources needed as well.

### **Have you a particular success story you can describe in respect of this?**

In 2010 the parliament of Basel approved a global credit in 2010 to promote cycling. This proves its confidence in the pro-cycling strategy of our cycle experts.

### **Is a well-planned and steady flow of finance for cycling measures necessary?**

Yes, it is crucial for strategic planning of cycling measures. It helps to stay focused, to keep things going and to avoid singular actions. Planning and building of transport infrastructure, e.g. a cycling path network, is a process that takes several years. A steady flow of finance is important for planning certainty. The Canton of Basel-Stadt provides global credits to promote cycling on a regular base (1988, 2004, 2010).

### **What is the position of cycle planning within the wider land-use and transport policies?**

Reducing motorised traffic and promoting cycling as a sustainable urban way of transport, is one of the strategic goals of the Government of Basel. This is also embodied in the law (e.g. "Umweltschutzgesetz") and in different planning tools (e.g. "Kantonaler Richtplan"). In all transport and land use planning projects cycling aspects and demands are well considered.

### **Does your city have a cycling-department or team and if so, how vital are they in promoting cycling?**

Basel has a team within the Department of public works and transport who is very active in promoting cycling.

### **Do you consult with your cycling user groups and neighbourhood groups on cycling and how useful are their views and their role?**

We have well established tools for regular exchange with cycling user groups - e.g. regular dialogue with head of the Department of public works and transport, consultations and associated groups within projects for cycling. They play an important role and their views are integrated as far as possible. Residents are invited to take part in participatory processes.

### **How necessary for cycling is that different city departments cooperate and work together?**

It's very important, that experts from different disciplines work together and cooperate in promoting cycling. Our experts on transport work closely with experts on land use planning, environment, health, education and the police.

### **Has your city been able to learn and adapt ideas from other cities for cycling - if so, how?**

Our experts are in contact with other Swiss and European cities to learn from each other and exchange ideas, e.g. "Schweizerische Velokonferenz" (<http://www.velokonferenz.ch>). Together with other Swiss cities Basel launched the Charter for sustainable urban mobility (<http://skm-cvm.ch/de/Info/Charta>) and is member of the "Städtekonferenz Mobilität". These cities aim to reduce individual motor car traffic (e.g. Basel: reducing car traffic by 10% within 10 years, starting 2010). Promoting cycling as a way of sustainable urban transport plays an important part to achieve this goal.

### **To what extent do your city transport planners listen to the views of residents on cycling?**

Residents and local neighbourhood groups are invited to participatory processes. Suggestions on projects are welcomed and if possible are taken into consideration. Due to direct Swiss democracy (popular initiatives) residents are able to place their claims.

### **How does your city balance the provision of 'hard' measures for cycling (infrastructure) and the provision of 'soft' measures such as maps and promotion measures?**

Although the focus is on infrastructure measures, soft measure such as campaigns (e.g. [www.fair-im-verkehr.ch](http://www.fair-im-verkehr.ch)), cycling maps (e.g. [www.stadtplan.bs.ch/geoviewer/](http://www.stadtplan.bs.ch/geoviewer/)) or promoting measures (e.g. e-newsletters) get more importance. In Basel's strategy for promoting cycling both, hard and soft measures, are equivalent.

### **How necessary are the communications and marketing of cycling initiatives to all your city residents?**

For acceptance and sustainability of the measures it is important that residents are aware of the cycling initiatives (strategy and measures). With the help of communication and marketing Basel strives to achieve a higher percentage of bicycle use based on a safe and attractive bike infrastructure.

### **Why is cycling important to you and your city?**

Basel is a historically grown city of only 24 km<sup>2</sup>. In a dense city road space is limited and has to be shared by different traffic participants. Compared to motorised traffic, cycling requires only little space and is environmental friendly. It is a healthy way of travel and brings you quickly to your destination. Bicycles therefore are the urban transport mode of choice in Basel. In 2010 the residents of Basel decided in a popular vote, that the city has to reduce individual motor car traffic by 10% within 10 years. Promoting cycling as a way of sustainable urban transport plays an important role to achieve this goal.

### **How did you become convinced that cycling has an important role in your city?**

I was always convinced that cycling is a sustainable and environmental friendly way of transport, especially in cities. Therefore I am committed to promoting cycling for a long time - as a private person, as a former city council and now as a member of the governing council of Basel-Stadt.

### **If you had one recommendation to make to another city starting to plan for bicycles, what would that be?**

One has to think on a small as well as on a large scale planning cycling measures. Promoting cycling needs large infrastructure projects as well as various small measures.

The interviews were taken by Oliver Hatch,  
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## THIS INTERVIEW IS PART OF 'ENABLING CYCLING CITIES: INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS'

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