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School Streets

Reclaiming the human scale for safety and shared urban spaces, in Malmö

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Gathering good examples
in sustainable mobility and
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School streets

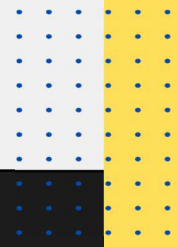
Reclaiming the human scale for safety and shared urban spaces, in Malmö

About this example

The School Streets project in Malmö demonstrates a flexible, context-sensitive approach to improving traffic safety and promoting sustainable transportation around schools. The project emphasizes community engagement, clear communication, and a willingness to adapt solutions based on real-world results.

Context and Challenge

The City of Malmö recognized a problem with excessive car traffic around schools, primarily due to parents driving their children. While not causing accidents, this traffic created a feeling of unsafety, posed environmental and health issues, and hindered children's free movement. The School Streets project was initiated to address these concerns.



General Process

The City of Malmö recognized a problem with excessive car traffic around schools, primarily due to parents driving their children. While not causing accidents, this traffic created a feeling of unsafety, posed environmental and health issues, and hindered children's free movement. The School Streets project was initiated to address these concerns.

The project aimed to test different tools and measures to increase traffic safety and the feeling of safety around schools. The goal was to create car-free zones, encouraging children to walk and bike to school.

Here we highlight two different schools. One of them is Gullviksskolan in the outskirts of Malmö. This school had about 300 students aged 6-12. In average 30% of students are driven by car (50% for 6-7-year-olds). There are no accidents, however the perception of chaotic traffic situation near the school was a major concern for parents and staff. Here, the traffic is mostly the guardians who try and drop-off kids as near as possible to the school.

In this case, the city implemented a car-free zone by using traffic signs to restrict car access to the street directly in front of the school. They also added decorated plant pots to call attention. They directed parents to use a nearby school parking lot (which was underutilized) due to the distance to school.

Nearly all parents complied with the new rules, using the designated parking area, significantly improving the traffic situation outside the school.

The second project case was at Sorgenfriskola (Central Malmö): This school has 600 students aged 6-15, with only 5% commuting by car. Even with such a low drop-off rate by private vehicles, students reported feeling unsafe due to high traffic volume, mainly. The area also experienced significant "through traffic" that should have been using main roads.

A portion of the street (Mariagatan) outside the school was physically closed to traffic, creating a car-free zone and better connecting the school to a nearby park. Another section of the street was converted to a one-way street. Both these measures helped to reduce through traffic. In addition, the street was narrowed to provide more space for pedestrians and cyclists.

The number of pedestrians and cyclists increased, and car traffic was reduced by half. However, a major challenge was a few cars driving in the wrong direction on the one-way street, which is currently being addressed.

Communication was a key part of the project. This included workshops with children to gather their perspectives on the traffic situation and their wishes for improvement. A comprehensive communication strategy was implemented with a dedicated website, and direct communication with residents. Including follow up surveys.

By prioritizing the safety and well-being of children, the project transformed the streets around schools.

Results and Benefits

More pedestrians and cyclists

In Sorgenfriskolan the number pedestrian and cyclist to and around the school increased. Specially for this case, it is relevant to notice that the through traffic has decreased significantly!

Appreciation for reclaimed spaced

The follow up shows that the claimed spaces are appreciated by the students.

Increased safety

The initiative was successful in increasing the sense of safety as it is confirmed by the follow up with students, parents and school staff alike.

Satisfied residents

Even though residents were concerned that they would have to do a slightly bigger loop when driving because of the changes in traffic direction and the closed-off section, the initiative was well received and residents appreciated the benefits of having less traffic and increased sense of safety.



*Photo: enlarged pedestrian and bike path
by Linda Dalundh*



*Photo: Closed street with plants and sitting space
by Linda Dalundh*

Lessons Learned

Monitoring and small Challenges with compliance

A good part of the school street test involved the usage of signs as the main instrument for behaviour change. In very few instances, drivers would not follow the rules. This speaks to the need for monitoring, and that in some cases enforcement may be required to ensure 100% compliance and increase safety,

Street flow and other adjustments

Even though the premise of using sign and clear communication and engagement works, context matters. Different school environments require different solutions. Gulviksskolan, with its parent-driven traffic, benefited from a simple redirection strategy. At Sorgenfrisskolan, due to its central location, it required more detailed physical changes and traffic flow adjustments.

Test period allowed residents to overcome concerns

Since the initiative was not advocating for a permanent solution, rather for a clearly delineated test period; residents from the area were more open to try it, despite concerns with the impacts of the proposed changes in their personal logistics.