Get to school Sustainably

School Mobility Plan in Zhytomyr, Ukraine

Funded by Swedish Institute

Gathering good examples

in sustainable mobility and

safe transport to and from schools

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School Mobility Plan in Zhytomyr, Ukraine

About this example

The transformative urban mobility initiative (TUMI) get to school sustainably, is a leading example of partnership between municipality and schools to promote sustainable active mobility. It underscored the importance of participatory approaches in urban planning, demonstrating how empowering children, parents and school staff can lead to safer, more sustainable, and community-friendly outcomes.

Context and Challenge

"Get to School Sustainably!" aims to improve safety and accessibility for students by enhancing infrastructure for walking and cycling around schools. It seeks to shift transportation habits from cars to more sustainable modes such as walking, biking, and public transport by fostering early education and awareness among children, parents, and school administrations.

General Process

Driven by a commitment to become climate neutral by 2050 and guided by its sustainable city mobility plan, the city of Zhytomyr launched the project: "TUMI: Get to School Sustainably" as an innovative initiative aimed at enhancing safety and sustainable mobility. Uniquely, the project placed children at the heart of the process, empowering them to design urban solutions that directly impacted their daily journeys to and from school.

Two interconnected components shaped the project: a soft approach focusing on education and a hard approach dedicated to infrastructural improvements. School mobility committees were formed and trained with practical skills for working with mobility and engagement. In addition, a comprehensive methodology was employed, beginning with the creation of a task force, followed by in-depth analysis, the identification of key ideas, the development of an action plan, and finally, the implementation of solutions.

A public call for participation invited educational institutions to join the initiative, resulting in the selection of four schools. The process involved conducting school surveys that revealed over half the students walked to school, and while 70% owned bikes, only a small fraction used them due to safety concerns. In response, school mobility committee were established, where students learned to survey infrastructure and pinpoint problem areas. Their findings were then presented to local council members, leading to the allocation of city funds for project designs based on the students' action plan.

Initiatives undertaken included opening bike schools to impart bike maintenance and safety skills, introducing innovative urbanism projects like pedestrian-friendly areas, and installing bike parks with service stations open to the public. The city also focused on enhancing pedestrian infrastructure by building new crosswalks and sidewalks according to the needs expressed by the students.

The impact was significant. Increased cycling rates to school were directly linked to the implementation of new infrastructure. For example, one village saw bike use surge from around 10-15 bikes to over 30 thanks to the new facilities. Crucially, the project resulted in safer routes to school by addressing dangerous areas and providing pedestrian-friendly solutions, leading to positive feedback from the community.

From this experience, valuable lessons emerged. First, it became clear that involving children in urban planning leads to community engagement. Effective communication between infrastructure users and city councils is also essential for successful implementation. Further, the provision of suitable infrastructure can act as a strong incentive for sustainable mobility. By actively engaging the community and addressing their unique needs, tailored and innovative solutions can be found.

Results and Benefits

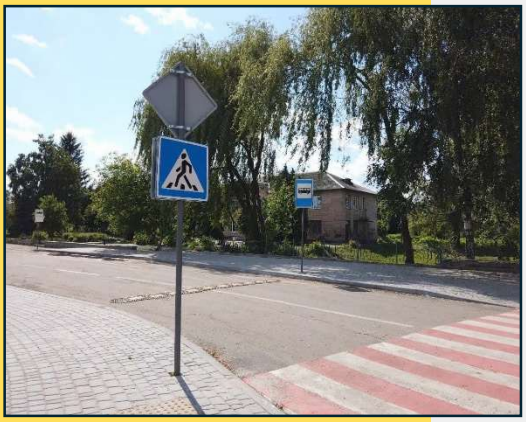

Photo by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) Gmbh

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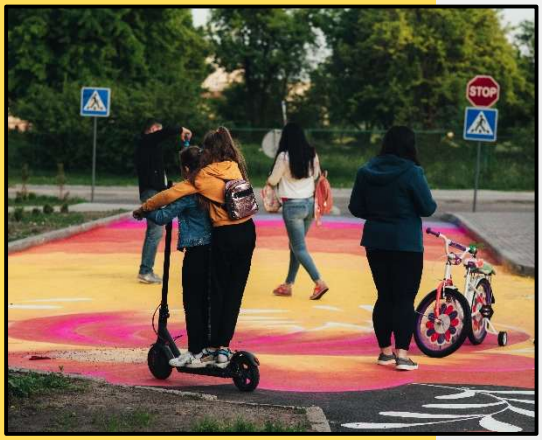

Photo by Andrii Didkivskyi, Zhytomyr, Ukraine, 2019-2021

Baseline and mobility planning

Four pilot schools carried out a comprehensive baseline diagnosis and developed a concept for a large and smaller infrastructure changes to improve mobility around their school.

Increased safety in crossings

Improved intersections with pedestrian crossings, signs, including digital speed displays to encourage slower driving.

Engagement of stakeholder

3 key activities engaged different stakeholders. For example: Mobility Camp trainings with 30 participants consisting of children, parents, teachers from four School Mobility Committees. The training equipped them to evaluate mobility patterns and infrastructure around the school.

Implemented school streets

Tactical urbanism action engaged 100 students over 10 days beautifying areas in order to provide attention to road users. Realization of four Bicycle to School with 94 students from grade 1 to grade 11 and nine adults.

Re-design school yard and parking

One School yard was re-designed according to mobility needs of students and their parents. Moreover, 100 new bicycle parking spaces were installed near the schools.

Lessons Learned

User engagement fosters highly functional solutions

Proper communication between infrastructure users and city councils lead to effective project implementation. Beyond listening to the need statement, for example, “a safer crossing is needed”. Engaging with users allowed the identification of the optimal placement of the crossing, facilitating compliance and behavior change from both pedestrians and drivers.

Include traffic rules to level up student awareness and safety

Traffic safety includes everyone understanding the traffic rules. The project identified that some students were not aware of traffic rules, including those related to cycling This required incorporating traffic rule education into the program.

A permanent solution may require more than a successful pilot

Despite of the success and appreciation of the different tactical urbanism initiative, not all of them became permanent. That speaks to two potential challenges: that old habits and may need a little extra work to change. Or that a particular need was not identified, and thus not addressed properly. It is important to revisit and learn from those cases, as much as from the successes!

Key Steps (Check list)

☐ Define the process and select supporting materials (material for baseline analysis, etc)

☐ Invite and build buy-in from the school leadership

☐ Create a School Mobility Committee

☐ Create a current reality report:

- Map current modes of mobility
- Clarify challenges related to commuting to and from school
- Identify obstacles to increasing the sustainable travel choices

☐ Link the school to community development through working groups at both ends (where possible)

☐ Create a School Mobility Plan

- Examples of potential physical and behavioral change solutions:
  - Appropriate signage and pathways
  - Increase safety at key road crossings
  - Awareness raising campaigns; development of information materials
  - Competitions and challenges (from one week to a several months)

☐ Implement the School Mobility Plan

☐ Monitor the implementation and update as needed