

FACTSHEET

Fast Cycling Routes: towards barrier-free commuting

FAST CYCLING ROUTES, WHAT ARE THEY?

Fast cycling routes are “high standard bicycle paths reserved for cyclists for fast and direct commuting over long distances.” (i)

Criteria: The 5 widely agreed criteria for high-quality cycling infrastructure can be applied to fast cycle routes. These are: **1. Safety, 2. Coherence, 3. Directness, 4. Comfort, 5. Attractiveness.**

Beyond that, additional commonly agreed criteria and characteristics do not exist yet as the concept of fast cycling routes is relatively new.



Nevertheless, individual projects have listed characteristics. A fast cycle route should:

- Be at least 5km long
- Be $\geq 3.0\text{m}$ wide if one-directional, $\geq 4.0\text{m}$ if bi-directional
- Be separated from motorized traffic and pedestrians
- Avoid steep climbs and prioritize mild gradients
- Avoid frequent stops e.g. by giving priority at crossings to enable an average speed of $\geq 20\text{ km/h}$
- Provide regular maintenance, winter service, public lighting, service stations, etc.



Fast cycling routes, challenges and current trends:

The development of fast cycling routes comes at a time where many urban centres face the same challenges, in particular congestion and pollution. Growing urban centres add to these challenges and force cities to find new solutions. This coincides with new trends within the cycling sector, including **public bike-sharing**, electrification of transport vehicles (**e-bikes**), goods delivery by **cargo-bikes**... As more people cycling longer distances more often and on larger bicycles with higher (average) speed, this calls for an upgrade in cycling infrastructure: fast cycling routes.

FAST CYCLING ROUTES, WHO ARE THEY FOR?

The primary target group is people who commute 5 km or more to their destinations: work places, schools, universities. In London 85% of the trips on the Cycle Superhighways are commutes(ii). However, on a fast cycling route between Brussels and Leuven, only half of all trips are commutes(iii).

The **average user** of the Brussels-Leuven route:

- Is a middle-aged cyclist (89% of the users are between 25 and 64)
- Cycles 19 km (50% of the trips are longer than 17 km)
- Cycles several times per week (80% cycle at least 3 days per week)

FAST CYCLING ROUTES, WHERE ARE THEY BEING DEVELOPED?

Fast cycling routes projects can mostly be found in Northern European countries. Best cases include:

- The Fietsostrade (Bike highway) in **Flanders** (BE).
- The Snelle Fietsroutes (Fast cycle route) in the **Netherlands**: the construction of 675km across the country by 2025 is envisioned. Approximately one third is in place.
- The Supercykelstier (Super Bike Paths) in the Greater **Copenhagen** area (DK): Plan of a 500km network of 26 routes. (7.7% in place, 31.4% by 2018).
- The Cycle Superhighways in **London** (UK): 4 routes are in place (41km). New routes are expected by 2016.
- The Radschnellwege (Fast cycle route) in **North-Rhine Westphalia** (DE): a 100km fast cycling route in the Ruhr area is planned to be completed by 2020.

Fast cycling routes projects exist also in Strasbourg (FR) and between Lund and Malmö (SW).

The list of existing fast cycling routes will be regularly updated on ECF website: tinyurl.com/om9dr7w

Such projects often extend over several municipalities. It requires the collaboration of different entities and the coordination of activities by a single organisation. In the City Region Arnhem-Nijmegen, a single City Region project manager coordinates the work of 20 municipalities, several provinces, a cyclists' association...

FAST CYCLING ROUTES, HOW MUCH DO THEY COST AND WHO IS PAYING THE BILL?

The level of capital investment depends on several factors: topographic challenges; the level of quality sought... Expensive pieces of infrastructure (bridges and tunnels) can drive up the costs. Therefore, average costs of current projects vary from about €0.2 to 1.9 million per km. Considering the scale of the investments, local authorities need the support from other authorities. A national fund pays for 50% of the investment cost in Denmark; in Flanders, a typical co-funding share is 40% to the region, 40% to the province, 20 % to the local authorities. Preliminary talks between the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Netherlands could lead to loans by the EIB^(iv).

FAST CYCLING ROUTES, WHAT COULD THEY DELIVER?

Fast cycling routes contribute to get more people cycling. In London, in a year, cycling levels have grown by 46% and 83% on route 7 and route 3 respectively^(v).

Generally-speaking, fast cycling routes could lead to major savings in **congestion-easing, health expenses** and **pollution emission**^(vi).

A study carried out in North-Rhine Westphalia came to the conclusion that the 100 km fast cycling route could take up to 50,000 cars off the regional road network every day^(vii). The benefit-cost ratio of that project is up to 4.8:1.

Further reading:

ELMOS, 2013, tinyurl.com/pgykwy7

CIVITAS, 2014, tinyurl.com/nl473a2

Metropoleruhr, 2014, tinyurl.com/nlyzzlw

CROW, Inspiratieboek Snelle Fietsroute, 2013.

DIFU, Cycle Highways, 2012.

Notes:

i- **Transportøkonomisk institutt**, 2012, tinyurl.com/ovnen7c

ii- **Transport for London**, 2011, tinyurl.com/q8hnc2e

iii- **Provincie Vlaams-Brabant**, 2012, tinyurl.com/osefahq

iv- **EIB**, 2014, tinyurl.com/q8hjjepp

v- **Transport for London**, 2011, tinyurl.com/q8hnc2e

vi- **Goudappel Coffeng**, Cycle Freeways. What are the benefits, 2012

vii- **Website of the Ruhr region**, 2014, tinyurl.com/qavnwmm

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About ECF

With over 80 members across 40 countries, the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) unites cyclists' associations from across the globe, giving them a voice on the international level. Our aim is to get more people cycling more often by influencing policy in favour of cycling within political, economic, and social institutions.

ECF gratefully acknowledges financial support from the European Commission



Pictures - Credit:

1- Cycle Super Highways, Capital Region Copenhagen

2- Danish Postal Service, ECF

3- Snelbinder bridge, Steven Vance/Flickr, cc, modif., tinyurl.com/k6pzy5r