



VELO-CITY 2013
THE SOUND OF CYCLING
URBAN CYCLING CULTURES
VIENNA, JUNE 11 - 14

 **City of Vienna**

Paper Proceedings

Athens Metropolitan Cycling Network

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Athens, in the current place, lacks both the mentality and the level of infrastructure for a shift to sustainable transportation. The dominant view says that "the more cars in a city, the more productive it becomes", consequently the prevailing policies are trying to facilitate the increased demand for cars. On the other hand, people have started to realize the consequences regarding car accidents, pollution, delays and most importantly the degradation of urban space. Hence, this is the time that urban planning and transport policies shift to tackle contemporary needs through sustainable transportation. This project refers to a strategic Athenian vision; the development of a metropolitan cycling network, as shaped in Sustainable Mobility Unit®, N.T.U.A. with the valuable contribution of Podilates group(cyclists). It aims at connecting the main centralities throughout the whole city. The proposed network covers 226 km in two phases (36 fast lane routes). It will serve respectively all the main aspects of modern urban life;

Universities 94%

Recreational Activities 69%

Cultural Areas 83%

Shopping malls 86%

Linear Urban Centralities 72%

Open Spaces 65%

Sports facilities 50%

Administration-Ministries 82%

Health care-Hospitals 55%

Metro, Rail, Tram stations 54%

The start of the project focused on a thorough research about cycle fast lane networks in Europe. The analysis centered around 8 main European cities regarding their cycling culture, technical characteristics, implementation and promoting policies. The outcomes of the above analysis supported the formulation of principles for the Athenian network, while useful ideas were also obtained regarding the selection of key routes, the involvement of stakeholders and technical issues such as parking policy, inter-modal connectivity, coding, traffic calmed intersections etc. The followed methodology is based on creating a pleasant, functional and readable proposal within a bottom-up approach that takes into account the views of experienced and less experienced cyclists in Athens. The fundamental principles of the network are; safety, comfort and immediacy of activities. The whole plan is not simply aiming at fitting into the existing street network but rather change priorities of mobility, so particular attention has been paid to the integration of routes with a high quality urban architectural environment. The methodology consists of 4 consecutive steps; In the first step the main urban centralities were identified through the analysis of urban and traffic characteristics of the Athenian conurbation, which needed to be linked with cycle routes. Secondly, there is the formulation of alternative scenarios regarding the potential cycling links between these centralities. The third step evaluates the alternatives with the contribution of cyclists. The

evaluation was carried out with multivariate analysis, where particular criteria were weighted by both the research team and the cyclists. The last step was related to an overall evaluation of routes and the final selection regarding their spatial coverage throughout the whole city. The above plan could be considered as over-ambitious, though in cities, where there is no cycling use, a complete cycling network must be presented to the inhabitant in order to convince him to use that new transport mean. The implementation cost of such a network with any supporting interventions would have been expensive and time consuming. A first implementation phase is needed, which will show the overall network and which will consist both of the cycle lanes and the supporting interventions (e.g. sidewalks' enlargements) in any place needed. This phase will send a double message to the citizens, the first being an image of the overall objective and the second being the decisiveness of the Local Authority.



Picture 1: Athens Metropolitan Cycling Network