

Cycle connections on the outskirts of urban areas



Photo Britta Boutry, FUBicy

Cycle connection in Tours station



Photo J. C. Poutchy-Tixier, CGEIDD

Connection at a bus stop in the suburbs



Photo J. C. Poutchy-Tixier, CGEIDD

Bicycle & tram, outskirts of Montpellier

Many districts on the outskirts of urban areas were designed to be accessed exclusively by car. Public transport is generally absent and it is even often impossible to get around by bicycle or on foot.

But as urban sprawl increases, broken up by many roads or railways, split up into hamlets, boroughs or discontinuous and remote districts, the bicycle appears as one of the main solutions to the problem of physically and socially opening up peripheral districts, particularly when this is part of a comprehensive policy inciting people to use public transport.

The challenge of the bicycle on the outskirts of urban areas

The [summary](#) and the [report](#) deriving from the study “How to encourage the use of the bicycle in dense suburbs” carried out by the research agency 6t as requested by the *Club des Villes et Territoires Cyclables* (Cycle-friendly towns and regions club) and by the *Coordination Interministérielle pour le Développement de l'Usage du Vélo* (Interdepartmental body for developing the use of the bicycle) show that with a very positive image on the outskirts of urban areas, the **bicycle appears as a reliable** (allowing people to manage their time very precisely), **flexible** (facilitating journeys in several stages), **efficient** (from door to door quickly) **and inexpensive means of transport. It also increases mobility and autonomy for most people.**

The major policy issues involved in developing the use of the bicycle on the outskirts of urban areas are:

- ◆ being able to reach secondary centres for shopping, teaching, leisure activities, relaxation, services - in short all the places that people go to within the district where they live,
- ◆ being able to cycle to the main transport lines, especially those serving the central parts of towns and urban areas, which become all the more attractive because more people go to them, thereby improving the level of service.

For the inhabitants, the important thing is to be able to easily make use of the bicycle for any type of journey. Making it easier to use the bicycle for all aspects of inhabitants' daily life must therefore be the goal set by the local authorities as part of their cycle policy.

This also means that an effective cycle connection policy cannot be run by the transport authorities alone, nor by transport operators alone – and even less by the railway company alone –, but that it must above all be run by the urban areas and inter-communal policies so as to take simultaneous action involving routes, journeys, accessibility to services and facilities, cycle parking and housing.

Cycle connection policies

There is unquestionably a strong potential for development of the bicycle as a mode for feeding the main public transport networks, outlying metro and tram stations, suburban stations, and bus stops, in near or distant periurban areas. This is an offer that is still under-developed in France.

Considering the difficulty of extending key dedicated lane networks in major urban areas, and owing to the fact that it is slow and difficult to make buses more efficient on the general roadway system, the bicycle is often the prime means available for extending public transport network coverage and to reduce the zones in which it is lacking.

A bicycle can easily cover 3 to 4 km, or even more, in a quarter of an hour, as compared with a maximum of 1 km on foot. This mode makes it possible to increase the distance within easy reach of stations by a factor of at least 3, and therefore by a factor of 9 in terms of the area or activities served directly by the public transport network (without bus connection or changing). Compared with the bus, the bicycle is a flexible mode, like walking: it allows the traveller to manage his connections with pinpoint accuracy: there is no time wasted on the outward journey and no risk of missing one's connection on the return leg, as often still happens with buses leaving before the train arrives.

But unlike walking, several problems arise with bicycle connections:

- ◆ not everyone has access to a bicycle: it cannot therefore completely stand in for a connection mode of the bus type,
- ◆ promoting it requires investments which may seem significant: cycle tracks on the connection routes to the railway or bus station, and sufficient secure parking.

Depending on the location, transport authorities, local government authorities and the French railway company are gradually taking the bicycle into account in programming and financing development work in stations but the rate at which this is going ahead is still quite slow and the other dimensions of the connection are almost completely neglected: networking the routes developed, developing parking available on the roadway system or near traffic generators (such as shopping centres, schools, etc.).

The challenge of connected cycle routes

Connection to a marked-out, safe, continuous, comfortable, cycle network going beyond the scale of the district or the urban sector is a fundamental issue, especially when the urban development is spread out or split up. This challenge requires a real land development policy.



Breda, Netherlands

The challenge of cycle parking

Cycle parking at all interchange hubs or large housing, employment, education, or leisure facilities, is a priority area for action. While considerable expenditure has been devoted to building car parks close to stations with a very limited impact on the modal shift, it is now high time to look at secure cycle parking as a means to encourage cycle connection with public transport.



Münster, Germany