



Traffic calming creates space for active travel

Excessive vehicle speeds and heavy car traffic not only put people in danger but also restrict their mobility. Traffic calming measures provide more space for active travel and will bring huge benefits to our health, environment and quality of life.

The share of active mobility such as walking and cycling differs significantly between rural regions and cities. In Austria's larger cities (excluding Vienna), an average of 32 per cent of journeys are made on foot or by bike, compared to around 22 per cent in the rural regions. In recent years, cities such as Graz, Innsbruck, Bregenz and Vienna have been successful in increasing the proportion of active travel. In rural areas, considerably fewer daily journeys are still made on foot or by bike; and no trend towards more active mobility has been observed.¹

Better infrastructure needed for active mobility

Both the functionality and quality of the infrastructure are crucial for increasing the share of walking and cycling. Only seven per cent of the Austrian population are “enthused and confident” cyclists, while about 60 per cent are “interested but concerned”.² For the latter group, it is important to have a safe and high-quality infrastructure.³ Traffic calming measures such as 30 km/h speed limits or shared space help expand the cycling infrastructure relatively quickly and cost-efficiently and create more space for walking in cities, towns and villages.

In Innsbruck, more than half of the daily journeys are already made in physically active ways, like walking, cycling or scooting.⁴ In Bregenz, the share of active mobility is 49 per cent, in Graz 41 per cent.⁵ In Vienna, active travel already accounts for 44 per cent of all journeys, compared to 37 per cent in 2019. Walking and cycling have boomed over the past three years.⁶

Implementing active mobility goals

Many Austrian federal states have committed themselves to increasing the share of walking and cycling. Vorarlberg plans to increase the proportion to 39 per cent by 2030, from 34 per cent in 2017.⁷ Lower Austria strives to double the share of walking and cycling, also in combination with public transport use, by 2030.⁸

Vienna aims to increase the proportion of daily journeys made on foot, by bike or by public transport to 80 per cent by 2025.⁹

There are many ways to calm traffic

There are numerous traffic calming options, ranging from individual measures such as lower speed limits, shared space, bicycle streets, home zones, school streets and pedestrian zones to area-wide traffic calming schemes, such as 30 km/h zones or continuous pedestrian zones.

On an international scale, successful models include car-free neighbourhoods like Barcelona's "superblocks", traffic calmed streets such as the "low traffic neighbourhoods" in Great Britain or

the Dutch "Woonerf" scheme, which is considered a predecessor of shared space, or "traffic circulation plans" for intelligent traffic management and reduction of through-traffic as implemented, for example, in Groningen and Ghent.

Active travel improves health

People who walk or cycle to work take two sick days less on average than those who travel by car.¹⁰ Regular cycling significantly increases healthy life expectancy and helps prevent cardiovascular diseases, overweight and diabetes.^{11, 12} The benefits of physical exercise far outweigh the negative impacts including the risk of traffic accidents or the inhalation of exhaust fume.¹³

In Bilbao (Spain), bike use has increased fivefold since the introduction of a default 30 km/h speed limit across the city in 2018; in Lille (France), cycling traffic has increased by 55 per cent since the introduction of a 30 km/h default limit in 2019.¹⁴






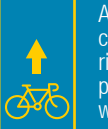

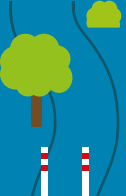
Road safety is paramount

The positive effects of traffic calming measures on road safety are demonstrated by successful examples worldwide. Lower speed not only reduces the severity but also the probability of an accident.

In Vienna, for example, pedestrians accounted for half of road deaths in the years 2013 to 2022, cyclists for ten per cent. Implementing a 30 km/h default speed limit on all urban roads, with the

There are many traffic calming measures that have been widely implemented and can be adapted to local needs.

There are many types of traffic calming measures

<p>Shared space</p>  <p>In a shared space, pedestrians either have priority over cars or they have equal priority. In most cases, the speed limit has been lowered to 20 km/h.</p>	<p>Bicycle street</p>  <p>Bicycle streets have a 30 km/h speed limit. Cyclists can ride side by side; car traffic is allowed only to a limited extent, for crossing, entering and leaving the street.</p>	<p>Home zone</p>  <p>A general ban on car traffic, with the exception of entering and leaving the zone, makes it possible to walk on the carriage-way and use it for other purposes as well.</p>	<p>Pedestrian zone</p>  <p>In pedestrian zones, pedestrians have priority. Other modes of traffic may be prohibited or restricted.</p>
<p>School street</p>  <p>A school street is closed to motor traffic at the start and end of the school day. Signs as well as physical barriers are used.</p>	<p>Pop-up bike lanes</p>  <p>As pop-up measures car lanes are temporarily turned into cycling paths or footpaths without the need for construction measures.</p>	<p>Speed reduction</p>  <p>Reducing the speed of car traffic helps lower the risk of accidents and facilitate mixed traffic.</p>	<p>Physical barriers</p>  <p>Physical barriers such as bollards, plants, trees, benches and street markings can direct car traffic and keep defined zones clear.</p>

exception of priority roads, could reduce the number of road fatalities by 20 and the number of casualties by over 5,000 per year.¹⁶

Lower speeds encourage cycling

Traffic calming measures that reduce speeds also make cycling and walking more attractive. On the one hand, road space can be redistributed for walking and cycling and, on the other hand, at low speeds, a physical separation between cyclists and car traffic may not be necessary.¹⁷

In London's low traffic neighbourhoods, physical barriers have been built to reduce through-traffic. As a result, cycling increased between 37 and 172 per cent in these areas, and the number of cyclists on the peripheral roads also grew by up to 43 per cent.¹⁸

Give priority to active travel

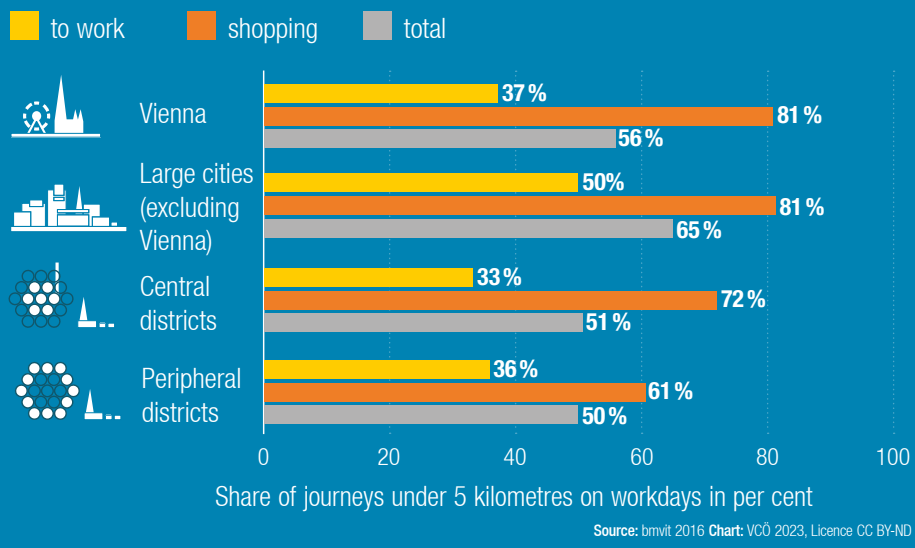
In the German city of Freiburg, the share of active mobility reached 63 per cent in 2016, up from 40 per cent in 1999. In 2016, 29 per cent of all journeys were made on foot and 34 per cent by bike. This development was mainly driven by the clear prioritisation of public transport and active mobility in the 1979 traffic master plan.¹⁹

As part of a traffic circulation plan, the Belgian city of Ghent created six zones with physical barriers such as bollards and plants, preventing cars from directly driving from one zone to the other. The aim was to reduce through-traffic. Combined with parking management, the development of public transport and improvements for walking and cycling, this measure reduced the share of car traffic from about 54 to 38 per cent between 2012 and 2021. The share of walking increased from 14 to almost 16 per cent, and the share of cycling from about 22 to nearly 34 per cent.²⁰

Active last-mile travel

In Austria, 40 per cent of the journeys to the train station are made by active modes of travel.²¹ Traffic calming can make a significant contribution to improving access by foot and bike to train stations. One example is the Dornbirn main train station, which can be reached on foot and by bike from both sides through an obstacle-free, accessible underpass. The fully accessible and weather-proofed bus hub is located directly in

Many short journeys in cities and regions



front of the platform entrance.²² In the cities of Villach, Rankweil and Sankt Pölten, there is a shared space in front of the main train station.²³

Create space for active mobility

The city of Barcelona has demonstrated how much public space can be reclaimed by a large-scale traffic calming scheme. If implemented, the planned 500 superblocks would increase the pedestrian space by more than six million square metres, or 270 per cent. Life expectancy would increase by 200 days per person on average. Superblocks are units of housing blocks and residential streets covering approximately 400 metres by 400 metres. Walking is given priority, while car traffic and parking are severely restricted.²⁴

In the Dutch Woonerf scheme, the streets are used on equal terms by all types of traffic, the speed is low, and liveability is high.²⁵

Many short journeys can be made on foot or by bike. This requires continuous and safe infrastructure.

More physical activity improves quality of life

Traffic calming measures are used to reallocate road space and create more room for walking and cycling. This is not only necessary to make active mobility more attractive and safer, but it also contributes to a fair distribution of space. The availability of safe and high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure has a significant impact on the choice of travel mode.

People, and especially children, are not only put in danger by excessive vehicle speeds and heavy car traffic, but are also restricted in their mobility and movement. Therefore, traffic calming measures should be widely implemented in the school environment and elsewhere.

Create structures for active travel

Settlement structures have a strong impact on mobility behaviour. The development of well-connected street networks as well as short distances, for example from a housing estate to the nearest supermarket, will make walking and cycling attractive. A lack of infrastructure, existing danger spots and detours for pedestrians and cyclists are all reasons why people use the car to cover even short distances (as the crow flies).

A wide range of measures and concepts is available for implementing traffic calming measures, which also serve as push and pull measures by reallocating road space from car traffic to active travel modes.

Sources online under:

www.vcoe.at/publikationen/vcoe-factsheets



VCÖ recommendations

Traffic calming involves a variety of measures that make active mobility more attractive and safer and can be adapted to local needs.

- Road safety is a strong argument for implementing traffic calming measures.
- Walking and cycling should be given priority when planning and building infrastructure and public space.
- When making any changes to road space or carrying out road construction work, a more equitable distribution of space should be ensured.
- A legislative framework is needed that gives higher priority to climate-friendly and healthy mobility.
- The Austrian road traffic regulations (StVO) should be adapted to facilitate the implementation of traffic calming measures such as 30 km/h speed limits on main roads.
- Public transport hubs such as train stations should be easily accessible via footpaths and cycle paths.
- As shown by international concepts, comprehensive traffic calming consists of a number of measures that work together in synergy.




Photo: Lina Mosshammer

Lina Mosshammer

VCÖ – Mobility with a future:

“Excessive vehicle speeds and heavy car traffic in cities, towns and villages restrict many people’s movement and mobility. Traffic calming creates space for people.”

The klimaaktiv mobil programme offers advisory services and funding throughout Austria to make walking and cycling more attractive in everyday life and promote sustainable tourism. For more information, visit: klimaaktivmobil.at

 Bundesministerium
Klimaschutz, Umwelt,
Energie, Mobilität,
Innovation und Technologie

klimaaktiv

mobil