

## Public events for personalised travel planning in Riga (Latvia)

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**City:**

Riga

**Region:**

Northern Europe

**Country:**

Latvia

**Topic:**Walking and cycling  
Mobility management**In brief**

The city of Riga is implementing PTP-Cycle, a personalised travel planning project which aims to affect a behaviour change away from private cars to sustainable modes such as cycling, walking and public transport. The target audience in phase 1 was households in two neighbourhoods and public events, but it was public events which proved much more successful as a means to engage people.

In Riga, when trying to influence behavioural habits, events provided an open and friendly environment eliciting positive results, compared to the less effective on-the-doorstep approach to households.

**Context**

Riga has many parks and gardens, is a transport hub in the Baltic and home to a large port. Cycling is increasing year by year among the 695 000 inhabitants, with the number of daily cyclists increasing from 3 per cent in 2010 to 6.4 per cent in 2012.

PTP-Cycle supports the goals of the Riga Public Transport Development Concept: to stimulate cycling and public transport as alternatives to the car. At the present time, a cycling strategy is being developed to encourage faster growth in cycling infrastructure. In 2014 there were only 53km of officially marked cycle routes in the city.

The target neighbourhoods of Jugla and Teika are well connected to public transport and crossed by a major cycle route from the city centre to the outskirts. The areas have a mix of private houses and apartment buildings, and several shopping areas and cultural attractions where public events regularly take place.

**In action**

The PTP-Cycle approach relies on a personal conversation to understand barriers to cycling or walking, before information is supplied to the individual to provide solutions to their unique situation. Therefore, Riga first conducted preparatory work to update existing marketing materials about cycling in the city, develop maps and several brochures ('Get to know Riga on a bike'; 'Cycling in Traffic') and a guide to maintenance and assistance available to cyclists. These materials provide specific, tailored solutions to problems.

The city contracted a public relations company to ensure a professional approach to advertising and contact in the target area. A local field-work team was trained based on the PTP methodology, and six consultants visited households and attended events. Consultants had particularly recognisable uniforms and personal identity cards to increase their profile and public trust. A mobile stand for public events and even project balloons were created as part of the brand, and a cargo bike with the project logo was used for delivery of materials.

To promote PTP-Cycle more widely, a well-known cycling enthusiast was invited to champion the project. Viesturs Silenieks was a key figure in the promotion of PTP-Cycle to the local community; through his weekly radio show, and to political figures through influencing activities in his role as the chairman of the Latvia Cycling Association. He also contributed to training the consultants, sharing his knowledge of the barriers that people have to cycling. His prominent role raised the project profile and gave it increased credibility.

## **Results**

During the first implementation phase in the spring and summer of 2014, 2 034 households were visited by consultants and 1 128 visitors to public events had personalised travel planning conversations. In total, 1 512 questionnaires about mobility patterns were completed and 1 117 different marketing materials were distributed.

Some conclusions from phase 1 of field work:

- Public events had a higher rate of positive responses than conversations held on the doorstep;
- Residents were often reluctant to engage with PTP-Cycle on their doorstep;
- Selecting appropriate events is an important consideration for success, with outdoor family events more successful than sporting events.

## **Challenges, opportunities and transferability**

The participation in PTP-Cycle was a challenge in Riga, as it is the first time that the methodology of personalised travel planning for cyclists has been used. Direct communication with residents on their doorstep is not a common practice, and household engagement was made more difficult because of a lack of available data, due to data protection laws.

Additional time was required before commencing field work in order to plan access to apartment buildings, which meant that interviews in households required a lot of time, and sometimes multiple visits. Bad weather and reluctance from people to engage on the doorstep also contributed to the challenges.

Public events were much more successful with people more open to a conversation about their mobility habits, and more receptive to new information. Riga will continue to use public events as a core element of PTP-Cycle to reach a receptive audience, and their results indicate how other cities with difficulties accessing households can successfully replicate a personalised travel planning programme with positive results.

Success in Riga was aided by a prominent 'champion' who publically advocated the project. This meant that some people had prior knowledge of the project before being contacted, making them more receptive to behaviour change.

## **In Depth**

- [PTP-Cycle website](#)
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