

Towards an Action Plan for Cycling in Utrecht

Citizen participation

The Netherlands – Utrecht

→ Context, objectives and target group

To make Utrecht a world class cycling city, part of its SUMP is a long term and comprehensive policy plan on cycling. In order to make this “Action Plan Utrecht Cycles! 2015–2020” as thorough and as widely supported as possible and to obtain fresh ideas, Utrecht actively involved its citizens in the policy development through a large scale public participation event.



→ Description of the activities

At a citizen participation event in 2015, approximately 180 Utrecht residents joined the discussions on how to make Utrecht a better cycling city. The following activities were carried out over the course of six months (“D-2” means: “date of event minus 2 months”).

- D-2: 800 cyclists were interviewed on the street about which cycling-related topics they deemed most interesting for the citizen participation event. From these answers, the municipality distilled the seven most mentioned topics: (1) Bicycle parking, (2) Removal of (unused) bicycles and enforcement, (3) Cycle routes and paths, (4) Traffic lights and traffic flow, (5) Safety and cycling behavior, (6) Road works and traffic diversions, (7) Cycling economy (e.g. related to tourism, health, retail, accessibility, etc.). On each topic, a fact sheet was produced, providing some facts, explaining specifically which (sub) areas are included and what is already being done.
- D: Event with 20 round tables of each approx. 10 people. Each table chose two topics to address. The municipality provided a moderator and a note-taker for each table.
- D+1: public report on results of the participation event, hosted on a dedicated web page of the municipality’s website,
- D+1: all ideas are being evaluated for feasibility, financial implications, conflicting interests, cooperation possibilities with other stakeholders, etc.
- D+2: Draft version of Action Plan Utrecht Cycles!, including as many concrete ideas and solutions as possible resulting from the event.
- D+2: Draft version sent to review team, consisting of independent experts and local stakeholders (such as Universities of Utrecht and Amsterdam, Dutch Cycling Association, student representation body and others)
- D+3: Final Action Plan Utrecht Cycles! sent to the executive board of the municipality for decision-making
- D+4: Action Plan put on-line at dedicated web page upon political approval.

→ Communication

A municipal web page was created, dedicated to the Cycling Action Plan and the citizen participation event: <http://www.utrecht.nl/utrecht-fietst/actieplan/>. All fact sheets, reports, pictures and other documents can be found there. The invitation to the event was widely circulated, among stakeholder organisations, neighborhood associations, retailers and entrepreneurs. The 800 people who were interviewed on the street were also invited. The municipality did not set a limit to the number of participants. A separate round table session took place with the major stakeholder organisations in the city.

→ Costs and who paid them

Indication of the costs for the citizens participation event: € 15,000, paid for in full by the municipality, specifically through the budget of the cycling unit.

→ Project objectives, indicators, data and impact/results

OBJECTIVE	INDICATOR	DATA USED	IMPACT / RESULTS
To make the municipal "Action Plan Utrecht Cycles! 2015–2020" as widely supported as possible, with input from all relevant stakeholders	Level of participation in public participation event	Number of cyclists interviewed on the street and number of people attending the actual event	800 people interviewed on the street. And 180 participants in the event, debating 7 different topics spread over 20 round tables.

→ Barriers

- How to obtain a representative spread of people and not only the "usual suspects".
Solution: invite a very wide range of people via many different channels.
- How to reach as many interested people as possible.
- How to make an event useful with such a big group.
Solution: let small sub-groups focus on themes that were established in advance.

→ Drivers

- Having official policy documents in place: the document "Vision Utrecht: Attractive and Accessible" of the city puts the user in first place (conforms to SUMP) and specifically singles out cycling as a primary means of transport.
- Good cooperation between various city departments and disciplines such as infrastructure, spatial planning, communication, maintenance and traffic and transport. This was especially important after the event, when the Action Plan had to be put in writing and internal municipal agreement was required.
- Strong political support: having the vice mayor as clear "face" and champion of cycling is crucial. She has been a big motivator and inspiration and is happy to attend citizen participation events to personally explain why cycling is important to the city.

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→ Details

<http://www.utrecht.nl/utrecht-fietst/actieplan/>
Here the Cycling Action Plan can be found, as well as all Fact Sheet that were used for the discussion evening.
<http://www.holland-cycling.com/utrecht>



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