



Engaging citizens in the SUMP implementation

SUMP Training session for cities, module 5

Anna-Kaisa Montonen
Urban mobility expert

Urban environment service division, strategic steering
City of Turku





Background

- Turku is a medium-sized city (approx. 210,000 inhabitants) with strong strategic targets for increasing the share of sustainable modes of transport and reducing emissions
- First (city)SUMP approved in December 2024
- Engaging citizens in **sustainable urban mobility planning** in a structured and meaningful way has been a challenge



- While various participation methods exist, they often do not support continuous dialogue or in-depth discussion
- In Turku, there was a need to **complement existing data and planning processes with a better understanding of residents' everyday experiences, needs and perceptions related to mobility**
- As part of the SUMP for BSR project, the City of Turku organized a representative citizen panel to gather opinions and experiences related to transport and mobility.

Interreg
Baltic Sea Region



Co-funded by
the European Union



SMART GREEN MOBILITY

SUMPs for BSR

Representative citizen panel

Recruiting the stakeholders

- Participants were recruited through organisations representing different user groups, and the panel included individuals from diverse backgrounds
 - children, youth, seniors, disabled, entrepreneurs, cyclists, unemployed, immigrants

Five meetings during 2025

- In the meetings variety of mobility services were tested together and development needs were discussed with experts of the city
 1. Walking and walking conditions
 2. City bikes and electric scooters
 3. Reform of the Föli trunk line network
 4. Air quality and noise in the city
 5. The city's digital mobility and transport services

Stakeholder management

- Approachable coordinator who is easy to reach
- Communication throughout the way – engagement
- Make stakeholders feel heard and make sure everyone knows how their responses will be used

Results

- The panel produced qualitative information about residents' needs, experiences, and views on different mobility-related themes

Learnings from the meetings



1. Observations from the walking tour clarified the city's current state, especially from the perspectives of comfort, functionality, and development needs.

- For example, the diverse activities in the market square were perceived mainly positively.
- Development suggestions included better signage and improved consideration of accessibility.
- Further promotion of pedestrian-friendly urban environment design was encouraged.

2. City bikes were seen as a positive alternative to cars for short trips.

- However, easier accessibility was desired, for example through local payment options.

3. Electric scooters were viewed critically because of concerns related to safety and traffic behavior.

- There were also concerns about the reduction of active mobility.
- Suggestions for improving safety included lower speed zones and better parking arrangements.
- Traffic education was proposed to be strengthened in schools, for example through cycling licenses.

Learnings from the meetings

3. The trunk line reform was perceived positively, as it has, for example, made navigating routes clearer.

Development needs included the volume of announcements, and the route guide was considered somewhat complicated.

Free trial tickets were seen as a good incentive to increase bus use.

4. During the air quality and noise session, participants observed air quality and noise levels in a busy environment and compared them with a quieter environment.

Air quality and noise were unfamiliar topics to the panelists, but measuring air quality was considered important, especially for supporting the wellbeing of people suffering from respiratory symptoms.

Air quality issues were perceived as somewhat invisible in the city's operations, although still important.

5. In the meeting on digital mobility and transport services, the features of the city's service map were presented.

The service map was mainly perceived as a useful tool; for example, it supports the daily lives of people with mobility limitations.

Development ideas included adding new features to the map, such as marking stairs and transport hubs.

Increasing awareness of the service map's existence was also considered important, especially among young people.





Lesson learned from the process

- Panel discussions provided important perspectives for urban development.
- The panel provided an opportunity for dialogue between residents and experts
- Participants felt that similar panel meetings should also be organized in the future.
- Participants considered it important that future panels address topics that stimulate discussion and attract more participants
- Participation in the citizen panel declined towards the end of the process, highlighting the challenges of maintaining participant engagement over a longer period
- Future panels could consider alternative ways of selecting participants. In the organized panels, selection was based on organizations representing different groups of people. In the future, participants could also be selected, for example, from different city districts.
- The future of the citizen panel and its further development are currently under consideration, based on the experiences gained





Replicability

The citizen panel provided a structured way to gather in-depth insights from residents and to facilitate dialogue between citizens and experts

Based on the experience in Turku, similar approaches can be useful in other cities when:

- there is a need to better understand user perspectives on specific mobility topics
- interactive discussion and qualitative insights are needed to complement other data, e.g., survey data

Important to consider:

- the required staff resources for organizing and facilitating the meetings
- the challenge of maintaining participant engagement over time
- the importance of participant selection to ensure diverse representation



