

Implementing a neighbourhood mobility hub to support everyday commute in Turku

SUMPs for BSR - Enhancing Effective Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning for Supporting Active Mobility in BSR Cities

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Imprint

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Project note

SUMPs for BSR project supports cities shifting their planning practices towards people-centred sustainable urban mobility planning, focusing on active mobility modes to fight the climate crisis. The project aims to increase the uptake of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP) as a strategic tool for sustainable mobility planning by developing tools and offering extensive capacity building for local authorities, especially in small and mid-sized BSR cities. A common framework on monitoring and evaluation for sustainable urban mobility planning will be developed to set up sound local processes suitable for smaller cities. Together with a unified model for testing and experimenting with innovative mobility solutions, it will help to evaluate the performance of the local mobility system and to provide crucial information for planning and decision-making.

1.1. Implementing a neighbourhood mobility hub to support everyday commute in Turku

City profile

Turku is a coastal city in south-west Finland and one of the country's major urban centres, with approximately 195,000 inhabitants. As the core city of the Turku region, it plays an important role in education, employment and transport. Turku has set an ambitious **goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2029**, and sustainable mobility is a central element of this transition.

The city's SUMP and Climate Plan place strong emphasis on reducing car dependency, increasing the share of walking, cycling and public transport, and improving everyday mobility options in residential areas. **Neighbourhood-level solutions** are seen as particularly important for supporting daily trips, such as commuting to work and school. The small-scale experiment in the Pääskylvuori district contributed to these objectives by testing a local mobility hub concept in a real-life setting.

Objectives of the pilot

The pilot aimed to explore how a neighbourhood mobility hub could support more sustainable everyday travel and reduce reliance on private cars. Pääskylvuori is a residential area with a local school and good public transport connections, but car use remains common for short trips. The city identified the area as suitable for testing whether bundling mobility services and facilities in one visible location could encourage behaviour change.

The specific objectives of the pilot were to:

- Test the concept of a neighbourhood mobility hub in a residential area.
- Improve access to shared and active mobility options for daily trips.
- Support sustainable school and work commutes, especially for families.
- Collect feedback and usage data to assess how residents interact with the hub.
- Generate lessons for scaling up similar solutions elsewhere in Turku.

Pilot activities

The small-scale experiment focused on the planning, installation and testing of a mobility hub (Figures 1 and 2) near the Pääskylvuori school. The hub combined several mobility-related elements in one location and was accompanied by communication and monitoring activities. The pilot followed a step-by-step approach, allowing the city to adjust activities based on early observations.

Planning and location selection

The city selected the mobility hub location based on several criteria, including proximity to the school, accessibility for local residents, existing pedestrian and cycling routes, and public transport connections. The aim was to place the hub in a location that was already part of residents' daily routines, making it easy to notice and use.

Planning involved close cooperation between municipal departments responsible for transport, urban planning and public space management. Attention was given to ensuring that the hub elements could be installed without major construction works and that the location remained safe and accessible for all users.

Installation of mobility hub elements

The mobility hub included a combination of services and facilities intended to support different travel needs. These included bicycle parking, space for shared mobility services and clear information on sustainable travel options. The design was kept simple and functional, emphasising visibility and ease of use rather than large-scale infrastructure changes.



Figure 1. Mobility hub. Source: Turku municipality (author: Iiris Yli-Junnila).

The installation was carried out by the city in cooperation with service providers and maintenance staff. The modular nature of the elements made it possible to adapt the hub over time and to consider relocation or replication in other neighbourhoods.



Figure 2. Mobility hub at the National Reflector Day. Source: Turku municipality (author: Oona Uusitalo).

Communication and engagement

To raise awareness of the new mobility hub, the city carried out targeted communication activities. Information about the hub and its purpose was shared through school channels, local communication platforms and municipal websites. The messaging focused on practical benefits to people, such as easier access to bicycles and shared mobility, rather than on abstract sustainability goals.

Families with children at the nearby school were a key target group. Teachers and school staff helped distribute information, and the hub was presented as a tool that could make everyday trips more convenient and flexible.

Pilot operation period

During the pilot period, the mobility hub remained accessible to residents for everyday use. The city observed how the hub was used and collected feedback from users and local stakeholders. This operational phase was essential for understanding real-life behaviour, as it allowed residents to interact with the hub without the pressure of formal events or campaigns.

Stakeholders and interaction activities

The pilot involved a range of stakeholders at both municipal and local levels:

- Turku City departments responsible for transport planning, public space management and communication.

- Pääskyvuori school, including teachers and school administration, who supported communication with families.
- Local residents, particularly families living near the hub.
- Mobility service providers, whose services were integrated into the hub.

Interaction activities were primarily informal and integrated into daily routines. Feedback was gathered through conversations, emails and observations, rather than through structured workshops. This approach allowed the city to capture spontaneous reactions and everyday experiences related to the hub.

Evaluation and monitoring activities

Evaluation focused on understanding how the mobility hub functioned in practice and how residents perceived and used it. Rather than aiming for a full impact assessment, the city prioritised learning-oriented monitoring that could inform future planning decisions.

Observation and usage monitoring

Municipal staff carried out regular observations at the hub to assess usage patterns. These observations focused on how often different elements of the hub were used, at what times of day and by which user groups. Particular attention was paid to school-related peak periods, such as morning arrival and afternoon departure times.

The observational approach provided practical insights into how the hub fitted into everyday mobility patterns and whether it complemented existing walking, cycling and public transport routes.

Feedback collection

User feedback was collected through informal channels, including direct conversations with residents, comments received via school communication channels and emails sent to the city. Feedback focused on perceived usefulness, clarity of information, ease of access and suggestions for improvement.

This qualitative feedback helped the city understand user expectations and identify aspects of the hub that were well-received or required adjustment.

Internal reflection and triangulation

The city combined observational data and qualitative feedback in internal reflection sessions involving staff from different departments. By triangulating these sources, the project team assessed whether observed behaviour matched reported experiences and whether the hub addressed the intended needs.

This reflective process supported internal learning and helped identify which elements of the mobility hub concept were most promising for future replication.

Success stories and best practices

- + The pilot demonstrated that neighbourhood-level mobility hubs can be implemented with limited resources.

- + Engagement activities gave valuable input for choosing the best place and the needed mobility options. Locating the hub near a school, on the same side of the main road, and including a city bike station in the mobility hub helped integrate the mobility hub into daily travel routines.
- + Cross-departmental cooperation supported smooth planning and implementation.
- + Informal engagement methods captured authentic user experiences.
- + The modular design allowed flexibility and future adaptation.

Challenges and deviations

- Awareness of the hub varied among residents, highlighting the need for sustained communication.
- Informal feedback, while rich, limited the possibility of quantitative analysis.
- Weather conditions influenced cycling-related usage during parts of the pilot.
- The short pilot period restricted observation of longer-term behaviour change.

Results and impact of the pilot

The pilot offered locals more mobility options to choose from and provided Turku with concrete insights into how neighbourhood mobility hubs can support everyday commuting and local travel. Although the pilot did not aim to produce immediate modal shift, 64% of respondents reported that the services in the mobility hub had replaced the use of their private car. It also strengthened the city's understanding of user needs and operational considerations.

Key results and impacts included:

- Increased visibility of shared and active mobility options in the neighbourhood.
- Positive reactions from families regarding convenience and accessibility.
- Identification of design and communication elements that support uptake.
- Improved internal understanding of how mobility hubs can complement existing networks.

Sustainability and scalability

The mobility hub concept tested in Pääskyvuori can be considered scalable and adaptable. The pilot showed that hubs can be introduced incrementally, without major infrastructure investments, and adjusted based on local context.

From a sustainability perspective:

- Hub elements can remain in place and continue serving residents.
- Maintenance requirements are limited and manageable within existing budgets.

In terms of scalability:

- Similar hubs could be implemented near other schools or residential centres.
- The concept can be expanded to include additional services over time.

Lessons from the pilot support integration of mobility hubs into future planning strategies.

Lessons learned

The experiment highlighted several lessons relevant for future neighbourhood mobility initiatives:

- Proximity to everyday destinations is key for uptake.
- Simple, visible solutions can be more effective than complex systems.
- Informal monitoring provides valuable insights but should be complemented with structured methods where possible.
- Communication needs to be continuous, not one-off.
- Cross-departmental collaboration is essential for smooth delivery.

If repeated, the city would extend the pilot duration, strengthen communication with residents and explore combining informal feedback with light surveys for more robust evaluation.

For more information about this case study, you are welcome to contact the City of Turku:

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