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Testing fixed and mobile bicycle parking solutions in Greifswald

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. Testing fixed and mobile bicycle parking solutions in Greifswald

City profile

Greifswald is a medium-sized university city in north-eastern Germany, located in the federal state of Mecklenburg–Vorpommern. With around 60,000 inhabitants, including a large student population, the city has a **compact urban structure and a strong cycling culture**. Cycling already plays a significant role in everyday mobility, supported by relatively short travel distances and a flat topography.

At the same time, Greifswald faces **growing pressure on public space**, particularly in central areas where demand for bicycle parking often exceeds supply. Improving bicycle parking has therefore been identified as an important element of the city's SUMP. The small-scale experiment described in this case study tested two complementary approaches to addressing this challenge: a fixed bicycle parking facility and a mobile bicycle parking unit.

Objectives of the pilot

The pilot aimed to explore how **different types of bicycle parking solutions could improve everyday cycling conditions** and make more efficient use of public space. Prior to the experiment, the city had identified recurring problems related to informal bicycle parking, obstruction of pedestrian space and insufficient parking capacity near key destinations.

The **specific objectives** of the pilot were to:

- Test a permanent weather-protected bicycle parking facility as a structured, long-term solution.
- Test a mobile bicycle parking unit as a flexible, temporary measure to understand the real need for parking in certain locations.
- Observe how each solution was used and perceived by cyclists and nearby stakeholders.
- Compare the strengths and limitations of fixed versus mobile parking.
- Gather practical lessons for future bicycle parking policy and implementation in Greifswald and other cities.

Pilot activities

The small-scale experiment consisted of two parallel but distinct interventions. Both solutions were introduced in real urban settings and monitored over a defined period, allowing the city to assess their performance under everyday conditions.

Fixed bicycle parking facility

The first solution involved the installation of a permanent weather-protected bicycle parking facility at a centrally located site with high demand. The facility was designed to provide clearly structured and secure parking, reducing informal bicycle parking on pavements and near building entrances.

Planning for the fixed facility included coordination with municipal departments responsible for urban planning, traffic, and monument protection. The location and design were selected to fit into the surrounding urban environment and to meet both functional and aesthetic requirements. Once installed, the facility remained in place throughout the pilot period, allowing for continuous observation of usage patterns.

Figure 1. Permanent weather-protected bicycle parking facility. Author: Stephan Braun

Mobile bicycle parking unit

The second solution consisted of a mobile bicycle parking unit, designed to be installed temporarily and relocated if needed. The unit was relocated to different locations during the pilot period, responding to varying demand and local conditions.

The mobile unit allowed the city to test bicycle parking in areas where permanent installations might not be immediately feasible due to spatial, legal or political constraints. Its temporary nature also made it suitable for short-term demand peaks or pilot testing before permanent decisions.

Figure 2: Mobile bicycle parking solution. Author: Greifswald City administration

Implementation and operation

Both solutions were installed and maintained by the municipality, with support from external partners where necessary. The city ensured that signage clearly explained the purpose of each parking solution, particularly for the mobile unit, to avoid confusion among users.

During the operation period, municipal staff regularly visited both sites to check the technical condition, cleanliness and correct use. Minor adjustments were made where necessary, especially for the placement of the mobile unit.

Communication and visibility

Communication around the pilot focused on explaining why new bicycle parking solutions were being tested and how they should be used. While no large-scale promotional campaign was organised, the visibility of the installations themselves generated discussion and informal feedback from cyclists and residents, especially in the case of the mobile unit.

Stakeholders and interaction activities

Municipal departments played a central role in planning, implementing and monitoring this experiment. Cyclists were the primary users of both solutions and provided informal feedback through everyday use.

For the **bicycle parking facility**, interaction mainly meant communicating with the administrative staff of the city, as the facility was installed next to the city's administrative offices. For the **mobile bicycle parking unit**, coordination was kept internal, but citizens were engaged in the form of a QR-code-based survey.

Evaluation and monitoring activities

Evaluation focused on understanding how the **two solutions functioned in practice**, how they were used and how they were perceived. The city applied a learning-oriented monitoring approach, adjusting its activities and pilots based on observations and comparing the performance of both bicycle parking solutions.

Observation of use

Municipal staff observed usage levels at both the fixed facility and the mobile unit. Observations recorded the number of parked bicycles, peak usage times and turnover. For the mobile unit, observations also considered how quickly users adapted to the new location and whether demand justified relocation or longer-term placement.

Internal reflection and comparison

The municipality compared findings from both solutions in internal meetings. By triangulating observations, survey feedback and staff reflections, the city assessed which contexts were better suited for fixed or mobile parking and how the two approaches could complement each other. This comparison-based evaluation was central to the pilot's learning value.

Success stories and best practices

+ The process of searching for new pilot ideas increased the awareness of local traffic authority and police about the traffic safety of pupils – outside the project, at least one primary school got new road markings to reduce confusing parking situations, railing was opened, and crossing was improved to have safer reachability to school.
+ The fixed facility provided a clear, long-term improvement in areas with consistently high demand, while the mobile unit proved useful as a flexible and quickly deployable option.
+ Both facilities enjoyed quick adoption and approval among the citizens, although the media tried to cover the topic subjectively.
+ Comparing fixed and mobile solutions supported evidence-based decision-making.
+ Minimal investment enabled meaningful testing in real conditions.

Challenges and deviations

- Due to political decisions, the preliminary pilot idea was substituted by testing bicycle parking options.
- The fixed facility required complex coordination as numerous issues had to be clarified as part of the building permit process (including historic preservation and species protection).
- Mobile bicycle parking unit required a special use permit and a traffic permit.
- Limited communication reduced broader public awareness of the pilot.
- Installation was delayed due to the construction company's lack of workforce.
- In the case of the mobile unit, coordination processes for site selection were challenging.
- It was realised during the process that automatic counting is not possible with pushed bicycles, so manual counting was used instead.
- Local media were rather critical of the mobile bicycle parking experiment.

Results and impact of the pilot

The pilot generated concrete insights into how **different bicycle parking solutions perform in practice**. While neither solution alone addresses all parking needs, together they provide a broader toolbox for the city.

Key **results and impacts** included:

- Improved understanding of where fixed parking is most appropriate.
- Identification of situations where mobile parking offers clear advantages.
- Reduced informal bicycle parking and, therefore, also a negative attitude towards cyclists at pilot locations.
- Greater awareness within the municipality of trade-offs between permanence and flexibility.

Sustainability and scalability

Both solutions demonstrated potential for future use, albeit in different ways.

For the **fixed facility**: suitable for long-term deployment in stable, high-demand locations. Even though it requires upfront planning and coordination, it offers lasting benefits.

For the **mobile unit**: well-suited for temporary needs, events or testing new locations. It can be scaled up or relocated with relatively low effort.

Together, the solutions provide a flexible framework that can be adapted to changing urban conditions.

Lessons learned

The Greifswald pilot highlighted the **value of testing multiple approaches in parallel**. It showed that bicycle parking solutions must be context-sensitive and that flexibility can be as important as permanence.

Key **lessons** included:

- Fixed and mobile solutions serve different but complementary purposes.

- Additional services could be considered, complementing parking (e.g. a repair station).
- A good solution speaks for itself – no extensive advertising was needed, and the facilities were quickly adopted.
- Temporary installations can lower barriers to experimentation.
- Clear communication is essential, especially for mobile solutions.
- Pilot testing supports more confident long-term decisions.
- The support of local politicians is crucial – the original plan was to conduct a traffic experiment in the city centre, but this was cancelled owing to political reasons.

If repeated, the city would strengthen communication efforts and engage the political sphere in the planning process of pilots as much as possible.

For more information about this case study, you are welcome to contact the City of Greifswald: Dr Stephan Braun and Karl Hildebrand at umwelt[at]greifswald.de**.**