



Strategy for the development of cycling transport and cycling tourism in Košice Self-governing Region (Abstract)

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Content

| | |
|---|-----------|
| INTRODUCTION..... | 3 |
| 1. DELINEATION OF CYCLING IN STRATEGIC MATERIALS | 4 |
| 2. CHARACTERISTICS AND DEFINITION OF CURRENT TRENDS AND NEEDS..... | 6 |
| Cycling infrastructure | |
| Characteristics from the point of view of cycling transport..... | 7 |
| Characteristics from the point of view of cycling tourism..... | 8 |
| Position of Košice Region on the „cycling tourism market“ | 9 |
| 3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CYCLING TRANSPORT AND CYCLING TOURISM IN KOŠICE SELF-GOVERNING REGION..... | 10 |
| Priority Axis No.1 - Cycling Transport | 11 |
| Priority axis No. 2 - Cycling tourism | 11 |
| Priority axis No. 3 - Partnership | 11 |
| 4. MEASURES | 12 |
| Priority Axis No.1 - Cycling Transport | 12 |
| Priority axis No. 2 - Cycling tourism | 12 |
| Priority axis No. 3 – Partnership | 13 |
| 5. MEASURES EVALUATION | 13 |

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this document is to offer a somewhat more complex view of the issue and stress the importance of cycling transport and cycling tourism in Košice Self-governing Region as well as suggest measures to 2020.

The strategy for the development of cycling transport and cycling tourism has been elaborated in connection with the implementation of the Košice Self-governing Region project called BICY – Cities & Regions of Bicycles“ No. 2CE108P2., financed from the resources of the Operational Programme Central Europe.

The aim of the said strategy is:

1. Support the development of cycling transport in the towns of the Košice Self-governing Region and make sure it is integrated into public transport.
2. To put the region of Košice on the map as a modern cycling destination and in cooperation and partnership with local tourism associations and destination management organisations to improve the quality of services and utilities offered to cycle tourists.
3. Increase the safety of cyclists on the roads and apply modern principles in the planning and implementation of measures to decrease the number of road accidents.

1. DELINEATION OF CYCLING IN STRATEGIC MATERIALS

Cycling is nowadays considered one of those activities which are facing a serious boom among the general public and that not only as a recreational activity, but as shown in the result of the carried out SWOT analysis, also as a means of transport and part of the transportation service. Cycling is environmentally friendly, and produces nearly no noise or emissions. It is available to all groups of the society. Riding a bicycle is good for the health and increases the quality of life of inhabitants, which is one of the objectives of the Programme of economic and social development of the Kosice Self-governing Region.

European Union policy has defined the support of cycling transport and cycling tourism development especially in its strategic documents, the so called White and Green Papers. The ideas expressed therein have been translated into financial aid programmes such as Central Europe programme, Civitas Plus, Trendy Travel, or Intelligent Energy for Europe, which had been created for the implementation of the mentioned programmes as financial tools. Within cross-border cooperation programmes financial resources have been allocated into measures to support not only the physical development of cycling transport infrastructure, but also the marketing support and the presentation thereof.

There is a **Strategy for Development of Cycling Transport and Cycling Tourism in the Slovak Republic** on national level which was approved by the government of the Slovak Republic on 7 May 2013. On national level, the development of cycling infrastructure is also a part of the Transport Policy of the Slovak Republic, although it has not been implemented yet via separate measures or programmes. In the current programming period the resources used within this area are usually part of more complex projects for the revitalisation of towns and villages for example as part of local transport infrastructure construction.

The zoning plan of the higher territorial unit in the area of development of recreation and tourism includes regulations / Generally binding regulation of the Košice Self-governing Region No. 10/2009 a 11/2009 „to create conditions for the creation of cycling tourism routes of regional, and trans-regional importance, connecting important tourist centres in the region (regulation no.4.14);“ to create conditions for the development of cognitive tourism“ (regulation no.4.7); and other related regulations supporting territorial development in the field of tourism.

In the **Programme of Economic and Social Development of the Kosice Self-governing Region 2007 -2013**, the development of cycling transport and cycling tourism or of the related measures are discussed in chapter No. 3, No. 8, and No.13.8..

Summary of related strategic documents and legislative regulations:

European Union documents:

WHITE PAPER - European Commission, latest amendment from 2011

GREEN PAPER - Strategy Towards a new culture for urban mobility, European Commission, 2009

National documents:

- Transport Policy of the Slovak Republic (2005)
- Strategy for Development of Cycling Transport and Cycling Tourism in the Slovak Republic (2013)

Regional documents:

- Programme for the Economic and Social Development of the Region for the period 2007 – 2013 (2007);
- Zoning plan of the higher territorial unit of the region of Košice – Changes and amendments 2009;
- Strategy for the development of tourism in the region of Dolný Zemplín, Strategy for the development of tourism in the region of Slovak Karst National Park, Strategy for the development of tourism in the region of the Slovak Paradise National Park
- Feasibility study – Cycling trails in the corridors of the Gothic and Wine Routes (2009)
- Feasibility study – Cycling trail EUROVELO 11 in Košice Self-governing Region (2013)

Other regional documents and materials:

- SWOT analysis of cycling in Košice Self-governing Region (BICY project, Department of Culture and Tourism at the Office of Košice Self-governing Region 2010);
- Common indicators (BICY project, Department of Culture and Tourism at the Office of Košice Self-governing Region 2011);
- Cycling trails in Košice Region;

Other documents:

- Let's give room to bicycles! (PBS Kostitras, 1998)
- STN 01 8028 – Cyclo – touristic marking
- Marking of cycling routs, Slovak Cycle Club, Piešťany

2. CHARACTERISTICS AND DEFINITION OF CURRENT TRENDS AND NEEDS

Cycling is perceived by the integral part of transport as an activity divided, due to its function, between **the field of transport services provided within a certain territory** and **the field of cycling tourism**. The current state of mobility of our towns is increasingly influenced by aggravating transport, safety, and ecology-related conditions affecting all inhabitants, visitors and users within their territories. The demands of users relating to cycling transport are growing constantly, whereby they require that there is more transport space dedicated to cyclists and that there attractive cycling tourism routes are created. This topic is slowly becoming one of the issues discussed in the zoning plans and documents of the towns and villages as an integrated part of zoning planning especially in the field of tourism development, but also in the field of transport to safeguard appropriate conditions of transport demanded in accordance with the territorial and organisational possibilities of the towns.

Using cycling for transport and recreation purposes shows a rising tendency around the world and in many countries this trend influences the services, planning or possibilities of integrated transport systems. The tendency to maintain healthy lifestyle together with the vital factor of environmental protection is the major motivation factor promoting cycling. This type of exercise significantly improves the quality of life of inhabitants and makes the transport much more ecological.

Cycling transport and tourism infrastructure

Cycling transport infrastructures in towns:

According to European Commission cycling handbook: „Number of people crossing a 3.5 m-wide space in an urban environment during a 1-hour period is 22 000 by train, 19 000 on foot, 14 000 by bicycle, and only 9 000 by bus and 2 000 by car“. Many of Slovak towns has no kilometers of cycling paths.

Current situation of cycling infrastructures in Košice region towns:

As regards commuting to work, commuting on a bicycle was assessed in three towns in Košice Self-governing Region, in which the street opinion poll (BICY project) was made with the aim of gaining information on the ratio of cycling transport in the total division of transport work. The opinion poll was carried out in the towns of Košice, Michalovce and Spišská Nová Ves.

Table 1: Cycling infrastructure in Spišská Nová Ves, Michalovce a Košice

| Town | Lenght of cycling trails (km) | Number of parking places |
|------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Spišská Nová Ves | 5,7 | 60 |
| Michalovce | 1,5 | 58 |
| Košice | 14,5 | 134 |

Source: Common indicators within the BICY project, 2011

Cycling tourism infrastructures:

A cycling route is a marked route in terrain. Cycling routes can be divided into routes for road bicycles and those for mountain bicycles. In terms of hierarchy, the system is divided into four groups, marked by different colours.



Red colour is used exclusively for long – distance cycling routes leading through a number of different districts or even regions. Most often, they lead through river valleys or mountain passes, with the aim to lead cyclists to the most interesting places of the country.



Blue marks the routes parallel to long-distance cycling routes. These are the longer routes leading elsewhere or more challenging routes leading through spaces away from the abovementioned long – distance routes.



Green color denotes routes of medium and low difficulty level, health – trails and family trails.



Yellow – Yellow colour represents connecting lanes and routes between cycling routes or short diversions leading to various natural, historical and technical points of interests.

By difficulty level routes divided into REKREA, SPORT and EXPERT.

Present situation in Košice Self-governing Region:

The total network of marked cycling tourism routes in the region of Košice covers 1306,9 km.

Characteristics from the point of view of cycling transport

The transport function of cycling lies in the safeguarding of a quick and safe connection between two or more localities (villages, towns, recreational spots, etc.) and between single dwellings in order to make commuting to work, school, and take advantage of services, civic or cultural facilities possible. In other words, cycling is perceived as a transport model and not merely a leisure time or recreational activity. In towns, the development of cycling transport has got a positive influence on the environment, urbanisation of the space and the health condition of inhabitants. The representatives of self-governance should show interest in the support of its development and general improvement of the quality of life of citizens.

An inevitable precondition to increase the ratio of cycling transport in the overall division of transportation work is the assessment of the proposed measures according to five fundamental criteria: route directness, fluency, safety, quality, and attractiveness of the environment, as well as availability.

Basic principles of the draft cycling network in dwellings

Route directness– appropriately designed cycling infrastructure should provide cyclists with a maximally direct (the shortest and thus the quickest) route leading to their destination with minimum diversion routes. Most cyclists consider flexibility the main advantage of cycling, because they can ride a bike on different types of roads while having the possibility to eliminate varying limitations. The most practical is the use of a bicycle when it is quicker than a car. In city centres affected by great problems with parking also car drivers opt for a bicycle when it is quicker. **Time saving** is therefore a very important element in the change of behaviour and selection of a means of transport.

Fluency – the cycling network connects all starting points and destinations so that the cyclist can get to any spot located within the territorial unit. The type and structure of such network depends on the possibilities provided by the road network, environment, ownership and administrating relations, safety, etc. Cycling routes which end away from the destination point and do not continue through crossroads marked with traffic lights or are interrupted due to construction or road maintenance decrease the use of the cycling network and thus decrease the effectiveness of the investments incurred.

Safety – a well designed cycling network should try to eliminate collision situations between cyclists and motorcyclists, but also between cyclists and pedestrians. In road transport, it is the cyclist who is in greatest danger due to the difference in the speed of the bicycle and the car as well as the fact that the cyclist is practically unprotected. In case of a collision between a car and a bicycle, the cyclist can never win. Special attention must be paid when separating cycling and pedestrian transport. It is a mistake to expect that joint routes with insufficiently separated lanes are a less of a risk for cyclists and pedestrians. In this case it is the cyclist, who is the „winner“, however, the pedestrian is the most jeopardised unprotected participant in a non-motorised traffic situation.

Route quality and attractiveness of the environment – the quality of the cycling route (especially of the surface) has got a significant influence on its utilisation. Also, the attractiveness of the environment is closely related to the feeling of safety of a certain locality crossed by the route, especially at dawn and in evening hours.

Accessibility – when assessing the starting and the end points within a cycling network it is necessary to keep in mind that the interest in using a bicycle as a transport means decreases rapidly when the distance increases above 3 km. This result undoubtedly is influenced by the weather conditions, when bad weather decreases the motivation of the cyclist to ride the bike. Košice Self-governing Region, just like the rest of the territory of the Slovak Republic a mild climate zone with changing seasons and extrem temperatures. The usage of bikes is very limited in the winter months due to very low temperatures and precipitations.

Present situation in Košice Self-governing Region:

As regards commuting to work, commuting on a bicycle was assessed in three towns in Košice Self-governing Region, in which the street opinion pool (the project BICY – Cities and Regions of Bicycles) was made with the aim of gain information on the ratio of cycling transport in the total division of transport work. The opinion poll was carried out in the towns of Košice, Michalovce and Spišská Nová Ves in December 2010 and January 2011, reference

sample: 1500 inhabitants. The ratio of cycling transport was 3% in Košice, 6,1% in Spišská Nová Ves and 3,1% in Spišská Nová Ves.

Characteristics from the point of view of cycling tourism

Cycling is mostly associated with leisure time activities, tourism or recreation used term is cycling tourism, which covers all the aspects mentioned above. Cycling tourism is a very topical issue in the Slovak Republic at the moment. According to research, there is a bicycle in every family and this type of leisure time activity is becoming more popular especially in localities well equipped with cycling routes.

Present situation in Košice Self-governing Region:

Table 2: Summary table of marked cycling tourism routes in Košice Self-governing Region

| | red colour routes | blue colour routes | green colour routes | yellow colour routes | Total lenght |
|---------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Region | Length in km | | | | |
| Spiš | 114,8 | 16,5 | 79 | 38 | 399,3 |
| Abov | 105 | 60,3 | 55,7 | 2,5 | 223,5 |
| Gemer | 198,5 | 147 | 43,5 | 44,5 | 43,5 |
| Zemplín | 5 | 82 | 75,5 | 43,1 | 250,6 |
| Spolu | 468,30 | 456,8 | 253,7 | 128,1 | 1 306,9 |

Source: Cycling routes in the region of Košice, mapping the cycling routes conditions in the territory of the Košice Self-governing Region in 2011.

Position of Košice Region on the „cycling tourism market“

The cycling tourism „market“ is composed of people with specific needs which have been very clearly declared in numerous studies and surveys. Our objective is to make the region of Košice a competitive destination for cycling tourists. In order to achieve this objective, we need to implement such measures that will satisfy the demands and expectations of cycling tourists. Due to this reason it is necessary to consider orientation measures, which are important in the process of planning and assessing of the suggested cycling routes.

The total network of marked cycling tourism routes in the Slovak Republic covers approximately 11 000 km.

Table 3 : cycling tourism routes in the regions of the Slovak Republic

| Self-governing region of | Number of cycling routes administrators | Number of routes | Lenght in km |
|--------------------------|---|------------------|--------------|
| Žilina | 6 | 112 | 2200 |
| Banská Bystrica | 11 | 106 | 2140 |
| Prešov | 13 | 76 | 1350 |
| Košice | 13 | 54 | 1307 |
| Trenčín | 6 | 64 | 1178 |
| Trnava | 7 | 56 | 804 |
| Bratislava | 12 | 41 | 749 |
| Nitra | 6 | 21 | 387 |

Source: SCK, Žilina Self-governing Region, Košice Self-governing Region

3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CYCLING TRANSPORT AND CYCLING TOURISM IN KOŠICE SELF-GOVERNING REGION

The submitted material should serve as a strategic material describing the major priorities and implementation measures in order to improve the condition of cycling transport and cycling tourism in the territory of the region. The suggested measures cover the following three basic levels:

Priority axis No. 1 - Cycling transport

Priority axis No. 2 - Cycling tourism

Priority axis No. 3 - Partnership

Košice Self-governing Region should fulfil the function of a coordinator and create conditions for the mutual cooperation between institutions by forming a coordination group or centre. The proposed recommendations and objectives defined in this strategy respect the possibilities and competencies of the region. They are based on the knowledge about the current condition not only in the territory of Košice Self-governing Region, but also in the territory of the Slovak Republic and the European Union.

An important measure is to define a legislative framework or to amend the existing legislation on national level which would explicitly define the sphere of action and competencies of self-governing regions – especially the coordination competencies for the development of cycling transport.

The main precondition for the development of cycling transport is the **integration thereof into the transport strategy of the region** and the approval of this concept document, but also the creation of conditions for an expert discussion. Moreover, it is necessary to elaborate the **methodology to implement cycling transport** as part of the transport strategy of the region **and define the responsibilities of** single stakeholders operating in the territory of the region, and last but not least to support the **organisational and personal representation at the Office of Košice Self-governing Region**.

It is necessary to harmonise single measures suggested within three priority axes with the prepared zoning and development documents in the region with the aim of making them part of

the development documents on national level in the programming period after 2013, but also on local level in the zoning and development documents of municipalities. The measures are of long-term nature and the fulfilment thereof depends on the support granted by the expert and general public.

Priority Axis No. 1 - Cycling Transport

Priority axis No. 1 is the development and support of cycling as an equivalent transport means within a certain territory. The aim is to safeguard such conditions, which will make the bicycle more used by the inhabitants as an advantageous and comfortable transport means. This will not be possible without high quality safe cycling communications and the necessary supplementary infrastructure such as parking places with racks and other bicycle facilities, bicycle depositories and so on. In order to safeguard an increasing share of cycling transport in the division of transport work we suggest the following two objectives:

Objective 1.1 Coordination of cycling transport development in Košice Self-governing Region

Objective 1.2 Support of cycling infrastructure building and maintenance

Priority axis No. 2 - Cycling tourism

Priority axis No. 2 is the development of cycling as an element of tourism. Nowadays, cycling tourism is an activity with many fans and a well mapped market and demand. In Europe there are regions in which the strategy of tourism is based on cycling tourism with great success. The region of Košice has very good preconditions for the development of this segment considering the general geomorphologic characteristics of the country. It may offer its visitors various types of environment and difficulty levels of the cycling routes in the long season starting in April and ending in October.

Measures relating to cycling tourism focus on the promotion thereof on national and regional level, on the creation of new cycling tourism products and on the improvement of quality of what the major cycling tourism routes have to offer.

We can use the interest in cycling tourism for the development of tourism, which is one of the priorities in Košice Self-governing Region, and that by implementing the following main objectives:

Objective 2.1 Promotion and marketing of cycling tourism offer in the territory of Košice Self-governing Region

Objective 2.2 Financial support to the development of cycling tourism infrastructure

Objective 2.3 Supported improvement of service quality

Priority axis No. 3 - Coordination and partnership

The objective of this priority axis is to coordinate the activities of the cooperating self-governing units, organisations and institutions aimed at cycling transport and cycling tourism, so as to safeguard awareness and achieve most efficient usage of financial and human resources.

Objective 3.1 Support provided to the carrying out of regular cycling and cycling tourism surveys.

Objective 3.2 Raising awareness among stakeholders

Objective 3.3 Promotional events to support cycling transport and cycling tourism

4. MEASURES

General measures:

Measures according to priority axes

Priority axis No. 1 – Cycling Transport

Objective 1.1: Coordination the cycling transport development in Košice Self-governing Region

Measure 1.1.1: Selecting the key cycling communications

Measure 1.1.2: Making cycling transport part of the integrated transport system

Objective 1.2: Support of cycling infrastructure building and maintenance

Measures 1.2.1: Financial programmes to support the planning and development of cycling transport

Measure 1.2.2: Maintenance of cycling communications

Priority axis No. 2 - Cycling tourism

Objective: 2.1: Promotion and marketing of cycling tourism offer in the territory of Košice Self-governing Region

Measure 2.1.1: Defining the main cycling tourism corridors

Measure 2.1.2. Marketing support of cycling products on international long-distance routes, cross-borders and regional cycling routes

Objective 2.2: Support of cycling tourism infrastructure

Measure 2.2.1. Preparing the documentation for the marking of international corridors and the Eurovelo 11 route

Measure 2.2.2. Supported marking of international corridors and the Eurovelo 11 route

Measure 2.2.3. Support provided to the maintenance and modernisation of the existing cycling tourism infrastructure

Measure: 2.2.4 Support provided to the building of supplementary cycling infrastructure

Measure: 2.2.5 Support provided to the building of new cycling tourism products.

Objective 2.3 Supported improvement of service quality

Measure 2.3.1 Support provided to projects to integrate cycling transport into related types of transport

Measure 2.3.2 Support to organisations offering certification of Cyclists Welcome Services and stakeholders participating on this project.

Priority axis No. 3 - Coordination and partnership

Objective 3.1. Support provided to the carrying out of regular cycling and cycling tourism surveys.

Measure 3.1.1 Support of regular cycling surveys

Measure 3.1.2 Support of cycling tourism infrastructure surveys

Objective 3.2. Raising awareness among stakeholders

Measure 3.2.1 Working meeting organization in the region

Measure 3.2.2 Creating of virtual space for sharing of information

Objective 3.3. Promotional events to support cycling transport and cycling tourism

Measure 3.3.1 Support of cycling events

Measure 3.3.2 Support of education

5. MEASURES EVALUATION

1. Evaluation of Strategy implementation will be realised once a year by the Office of Košice Self-governing Region.