

ATN – Sebeş Audit Report, July 2011 _ by ATU



Audit organisation

Since the beginning of the year 2011, the Urban Mobility Active Travel Audit was held in Sebeş according to the project's initial programming. Information collected from the official documents (like The Historical Centre Urban Plan, The Feasibility Study for the traffic belt and for the by-pass and the Sustainable Local Development Strategy) has been completed by the ones acquired through direct observations and discussions with the representatives of the local administration, stakeholders and general public. Besides, a series of questionnaires have been distributed, commented, filled in and discussed at the level of politicians, representatives of the local administration, of the Environment Agency, of the profile NGOs and of the shopkeepers.

Objectives

General objective:

Identifying the most adequate ways of determining changes in people perception and behaviour favouring walking, cycling, short daily trips made by bike or on foot and car use decrease.

Specific objectives:

1. Evaluate and largely acknowledge the general state of arts concerning urban mobility in Sebeş;
2. Rising awareness on active mobility benefits (thus contributing to the change of the inhabitants' attitudes and perceptions concerning non-motorized travel modes;
3. Supporting the initiation of a process of planning dedicated to non-motorised transport (including resources' allocation), pursued in a sustainable manner and treated as a regular task of the local administration.



Background information

Sebeş is a small sized city with short distances, much used as transit area because of its crossroads position and with recently implanted industries, which are polluting considerably through the high traffic generated. Even if it benefits of an attractive natural and built heritage and a substantial tradition concerning walking and cycling, Sebeş has developed as a car-oriented town. There are almost no place and finishing for pedestrians or cyclists. Bicycles are still used by the older persons (even on bad weather, like on a snowing windy day of this February), but had been abandoned by most of the adults because of the fashion (bad reputation of these transport modes) and of their anxiety related to the motorised heavy traffic.

Lasting the past decade, there has been noticed a vicious cycle conducing to an unjustified use of cars even for small distances, practice paradoxically leading to a larger amount of time spent because of the frequent jams. The increase of traffic generated by the flourishing industrial development engendered people's fear to walk or cycle determining their adoption of motorized modes of travel even for ridiculously small everyday distances. This conduced to an additional augment of the roads' congestion while discouraging even more inhabitants to practice any form of active travel. In this sense, an eloquent fact is that, at the beginning of the project, most of the pupils were brought to school by family car even when in secondary school or in the first years of high school.

Until the involvement of Sebeş in the ATN, here there have been no consistent actions supporting clean means of transport in terms of facilities and adaptations for cycling and walking or dedicated incentives. In addition, people didn't seem completely aware of the negative effects induced by their excessive car use both, on short and long terms.

Peoples' attitudes and feed-back

The **representatives of sustainable mobility associations** focused more on infrastructure measures necessary to be taken by the administration and offered their support concerning promotion campaigns and public motivation. (February, 17th)

The **representatives of shopkeepers** were presented international case studies and researches demonstrating the increased profitability of small commerce in pedestrian or cycling areas. They were also introduced the marketing advantages provided by their involvement in a walking and biking friendly network. They have given suggestions concerning bike tracks and parking design and disposition. (February, 17th)

The pupils from local schools and especially the ones from "Lucian Blaga" National College, Sebeş received the active travel activities enthusiastically, expressed their interest for sustainable mobility and proposed different solutions for supporting this in Sebeş. They showed extremely willing to have bike lines, pedestrian routes and a dedicated area for practicing mountain bike. (in April and at the beginning of May for the preparation of the WB exercise)

The discussions **with teachers and parents** focused on pedestrian safety. Some of the parents expressed their qualm concerning the numerous obstacles encountered by their children while walking and cycling, all of them declaring themselves favourable for the shift of the central area into a pedestrian one, as well as for bike tracks implementation (in April and first part of May for the preparation of the WB exercise).

With **local police officers** concerning the most dangerous points in the city, traffic rules and measures to be adopted in order to assure children security when pedestrians or cyclists. (February, 17th and May, 20th)

Conclusions

The audit highlighted a vivid interest for active travel means and actions in the field overlapped on the complaint against the lack of facilities and care for pedestrians and cyclists.

Sebeş is a relatively small town and has a long tradition of bike using, maintained today mostly at the level of older persons. As a consequence of the campaigns promoted in the recent years, more and more young persons are progressively being attracted by cycling and walking, while some of them are also joining the profile associations participating in dedicated competitions. Despite the usual preconceived ideas adopted at national level, Sebeş inhabitants seem to appreciate cycling requiring on each occasion new facilities for this (like cycling tracks, bikes parking or mountain bike area).

The teenagers and children could play an important role in the general level change of attitude as they were extremely receptive and supportive when discovering active travel's social valences. The success of the Walking Bus exercise as well as the numerous suggestions for future similar activities to be organised and measures to be taken in mobility filed are fully justifying this assumption.

Since its involvement in the ATN project, besides the raising awareness campaigns, Sebeş municipality has already facilitated the implementation of several groups of parking places for bikes and promised to further support cyclists through the inauguration of a mountain bike area in Arini Park as well as through the organisation of a yearly town bike tour.