

RTPI Cymru- Wales Planning Conference 2016

Seminar 5: “Simulation Tools for planning Active Travel Networks” delivered by Sustainable Places Research Institute

This summary of the key points from the breakout seminar held at the Wales Planning Conference 2016 has been compiled by students at Cardiff University.

Overview

Since the Active Travel (Wales) Act became law in Wales in November 2013, Welsh local authorities are obligated to produce existing active travel routes maps and Integrated Network Maps (INM) in helping to improve the provision made for, and to have regard to the needs of, pedestrians and cyclists. The seminar delivered by Sustrans and Cardiff University demonstrated how local authorities can help to deliver the Act and how different mapping models of spatial network analysis can be utilised in gauging the flow of active travel, which in turn can be used to prioritise, as well as to enhance the active travel network.

Background

The *Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013* calls for all Welsh local authorities to promote active travel, which encompasses both walking and cycling, to become a common and safe mode of transport for everyday short journeys. The Act requires local authorities in Wales to map and plan for suitable routes for active travel and to build and improve infrastructure for walking and cycling.

Various research suggest that the promotion of active travel has many positive implications to the community:

- Economic Development- Research shows that the provision for bike parking spaces delivers 5 times higher retail spent than car parking spaces.
- Environment- By switching from driving to cycling, individuals' level of carbon footprint can be reduced by 6% a year.
- Health- Reduce physical inactivity in will and stimulate active lifestyle, which in turn eases the pressure on public health care.
- Equality- There are 25% of people in Wales who do not have a car; by not merely focusing on planning for car travel, and to integrate active travel into developments can help to reduce inequality.
- Community Cohesion- Feedbacks from public on various Sustrans projects have reflected that the quality of street and sense of safety have been improved after the interventions.

Local Planning Authorities' duties under the *Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013* to help delivering active travel, in particular, to new people:

- To develop Integrated Network Map (INM), which shows the new active travel routes and related facilities and the improvements of existing active travel routes. By connecting key localities such as schools, workplaces, shopping areas, hospitals with active travel routes, the network will reduce people's dependency on their cars when making short journeys.
- To provide better infrastructure and design; in order to increase the use of active travel facilities, the design and quality of infrastructure must encompass safety as one of its main elements.
- To promote active travel; local authorities should thoroughly seek opportunities to raise the awareness for active travel. Other than integrating cycle parking in housing developments in the planning process, planners should also take consideration of relevant services or facilities to equip new residents the suitable knowledge and skills for active travel.

The Welsh Government have published *Delivery Guidance* and *Design Guidance* in assisting local authorities to deliver and implement active travel to various groups in the society.

Departments in local authorities should work together across sectors to serve the Active Travel Plan. With LDP sites allocated and coming forward in next 15 years, relevant active travel routes connecting to those sites should also be considered in the INM. The active travel plan should not merely be seen as a network map, but as a mean to creating more accessible places to live.

During the process of gathering data to develop Integrated Network Map, local authorities can:

- Consult with public to capture useful information, especially with those who don't cycle.
- Talk to colleagues within council department to find out what is happening and where priority is needed.
- Use quantitative data to support how to improve network.

Using Active Travel mapping model in developing Active Travel Network

The active travel model, approved by Sustrans, is essentially based on the accessibility of the urban layout. Unlike the traditional car model, the active travel model takes into account of every single link in the region, which is then interpreted to identify the existing routes and flows for pedestrians and cyclers. The model can be utilised in developing active travel plan, by:

- Illustrating the flows of active travel
- Identifying existing accessibility problems that could be addressed by new infrastructure
- Predicting the flows of new routes- given a proposed infrastructure scheme

At the moment there is no framework or guidance to assist local authorities on how to prioritise schemes; the active travel models can be used to demonstrate the potential impact of a cycling intervention to surrounding area; which in turn can be used by the council to plan and to prioritise schemes for active travel.

However, there are some limitations to the active travel model; it could be argued that the model only takes into account of the urban design and accessibility of the network, and does not take the social-demographic nor the location of key areas into account. Although it could also be argued that the model does not fully explain the behavior of the whole population, it has, nonetheless, successfully provided a visual reference that explains the majority of the active travel users.

Q and A session

- Concerns were raised from one of the delegates that there is a lack of cross-reference of Active Travel (Wales) Act in Planning Policy (Wales) to obligate planning authorities to implement active travel duties in the planning decision process; since the duties of the Act seem to fall heavily onto transport department's functions, there is a need to review Planning Policy (Wales) in order for planning department to share responsibilities.
- A transport planner reflected on the notion that rather than active transport modelling, public transport also takes on a very heavy duty in terms of everyday travel, and more emphasis should be placed upon the provision for public transport modelling. It was also mentioned that the urban design of cities can significantly determine the impact of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.