



Traffic safety as part of sustainability: Towards an integrated approach in traffic safety implementation

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The traffic safety situation in Sweden has seen notable improvements over the decades in reducing the number of fatalities and serious injuries in road traffic. However, the development has flattened out in recent years. Significant challenges also persist, particularly concerning the high number of seriously injured cyclists and pedestrians. This calls for action to further advance implementation of measures to improve traffic safety as well as strategies where traffic safety benefits from and contributes to other sustainability goals.

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* puts traffic safety as a necessary part of sustainable development. Relating traffic safety and other sustainability goals is also the focus of the *Stockholm Declaration*, arising from the UN Ministerial Conference on Road Safety 2020 and adopted by the UN General Assembly through *Resolution 74/299*. The expert recommendations that formed the basis for the declaration refer to a *sustainable development goal integration*. In this way, benefits are taken from synergies that exist between traffic safety and other sustainability goals and sub-optimisation is avoided. However, how such integrated approach can be operationalised in practise needs to be further explored.

The aim of this presentation is to give an overview of the possibilities and challenges to advance traffic safety implementation applying an integrated approach in relation to other sustainability goals. This involves both starting in the *synergies* with other sustainability goals as well as handling *conflicting goals and interests*. The latter often requires change on a deeper level where current systems and norms are questioned and reconstructed. The aim of the presentation is also to give examples of *enablers* for an integrated approach in traffic safety implementation with a focus on the local level in Swedish municipalities and the different roles (sphere of influence) that municipalities have concerning traffic safety: as road authority and planner, as setter of requirements, as purchaser in procurement, and as influencer. These roles may also apply for authorities on other levels (regional, national). Within this context, the presentation revolves around the following main areas:

- Promoting increased active mobility (walking and cycling) with traffic safety for pedestrians and cyclists as precondition.
- Implementing safe speeds on rural roads and in urban contexts – traffic safety as an enabler of sustainability or (auto)mobility.
- Traffic safety implementation in organisations – the organisations' roles as employer and purchaser in procurement.



International Co-operation on Theories and Concepts in Traffic Safety

The presentation is based on results from previous studies exploring an integrated approach in traffic safety implementation: at the local level in Swedish municipalities (Wennberg et al, 2022a; 2024), on organisational level with a focus on traffic safety as part of sustainable practise and reporting (Wennberg et al, 2022b) and with gender and social perspectives (Wennberg et al, 2020).

The studies reveal several positive synergies between traffic safety and other sustainability goals, as well as contradictions between goals and conflicting interests posing challenges to traffic safety implementation. On an overall level, agreement is perceived between traffic safety and other sustainability goals, but depending on how the traffic safety goals are operationalised and managed in practise, the outcome can either be in harmony with or opposite to other goals. In other words, contradictions are in the solutions.

The need for handling contradicting goals and conflicting interest is most evident in the municipalities' role as *road manager and planner* and as *influencer* in relation to citizens. For example, several conflicting interests for traffic safety implementation are present such as spatial conflicts and accessibility conflicts with car traffic, public transport and emergency traffic, conflicts with views on 'urban street design' and aesthetics, and traffic safety being either in harmony or opposite to perceived safety. Even though Swedish municipalities generally are not aware of traffic safety's inclusion in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there are existing local platforms and collaborations that serve as a foundation for an integrated approach in these roles, for example Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning.

Traffic safety implementation in the organisation in the role as *employer* and *purchaser in procurement* is generally characterised by positive synergies with, for example, a safe working environment, climate and environmental considerations, reduced energy use, and economic savings. Other implementation barriers exist instead, such as low recognition of traffic safety as a sustainability issue and a lack of support from legislation and standards on sustainability reporting for the inclusion of traffic safety.

The practical implications of the findings presented in these studies concern prioritisations in traffic safety implementation, at any level (local, regional, national). In the context of the Stockholm Declaration and the UN Resolution 74/299, there are an argumentation with strong focus on the integration of traffic safety *into* the sustainability agenda. However, there appears to be a lack of corresponding reasoning regarding how it affects traffic safety being part of the sustainability agenda. In the systematics and prioritisations in traffic safety implementation, the synergies are the starting point and the potential conflicts are to be recognised and handled. In other words, the perspective on traffic safety as a component of sustainability should influence decisions about whom to collaborate with across different target areas.



References

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