

Communications: How to Increase Awareness and Support for Mobility Hubs



Communications: How to increase awareness and support for mobility hubs – a case study

Many people in Scotland have never seen or used a mobility hub. They need a clear message about what they are and the advantages they bring.

Mobility hubs encourage positive alternatives to the private car - typically bike share and car clubs - together with improvements to the public realm. By offering shared transport in easy reach, these hubs can significantly reduce traffic and parking problems. It is important to spread a positive message as people can be fearful of change and worry about the impacts that reducing parking and traffic could have on their way of life.

The City of Bremen continues to run a very effective communications strategy, successful for nearly two decades, offering a tried and tested approach for Scotland.

During that time Bremen has moved forward from planning its first hub; to building 10 large hubs and 33 mini-hubs in 2020, with plans to further expand the network to provide hubs every 300m. The city's Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan had a target of 20,000 users and to take 6,000 cars off the road by 2025, which was achieved 5 years early. This success is at least partly attributed to a positive approach to communications.

Too much parking and traffic pressure needs a radical approach

The aim was to communicate the challenges of doing nothing about traffic and parking

and then to explain how mobility hubs could reduce these problems.

Get a clear message out there from the beginning

Bremen demonstrated the reasons for a change of policy:

On-street parking restricts space for service and emergency vehicle access, causes damaged pavements from lorries and provides insufficient space for pedestrians to use the footpath safely.

Bremen invited the local media to see the everyday issues caused by traffic and parking. This included meetings to view the problems faced by emergency vehicles accessing residential streets and an invitation to ride with a bin lorry to see how service vehicles slowed down or faced obstructions in areas with on-street parking. By being open about the problem-solving approach, people could understand the desire for change.



Showing the local media the problems of access for emergency and service vehicles

Build on the message with solutions to the problem

Bremen set out a plan to reduce the number of cars in the city and stressed the role of shared mobility and a network of mobility hubs to achieve this. Their mobility plan took this further with the goal of taking 6,000 cars off the road by reducing parking and replacing the parking spaces with mobility hubs.

From their actions we can take the following points going forward:

- Be clear on what is planned – what, why, where, how, when
- Focus on positive benefits for the group you are talking to
- Be consistent
- Show empathy

Public consultation

Bremen sought to reach a wide range of people:

- Try to reach all user groups and ages
- Use a digital platform as well as paper
- Send detailed information to residents and businesses near a proposed hub
- Reach children and young people through schools and colleges
- Target vulnerable and minority groups
- Use Mockups and videos to show what a hub can be like

Residents

Bremen sends a letter explaining proposed hubs to every resident living in an affected neighbourhood, together with a copy of their Intelligent Mobility and Effective Parking Management document. Residents are invited to meet planners to discuss a proposed hub and the current traffic and parking problems. Any concerns from residents are dealt with quickly.

Explain parking and traffic problems in their neighbourhood and how shared mobility offers:

- An attractive, sustainable alternative to the car resulting in less traffic
- A more pleasant environment
- Safer streets
- A cheaper way to travel

Write to residents and meet those wishing to discuss further.

This open approach faces little opposition – perhaps one or two letters of opposition per 1,000 mail-out.

It has won over the public to see the advantages of mobility hubs and some streets are even asking the council to install a hub where they live!

The Council has a further incentive it uses; if a street reduces its parking demand by a significant amount, the council invites residents to choose the new use for one of their redundant on-street parking spaces.



Local businesses

Focus on the advantages of less traffic and ease of access for cyclists and pedestrians:

Bremen highlighted that car club and bike share users shop locally rather than travelling to a more distant retail area or using online shopping.

Enhancements to the environment from reduced traffic and parking can further attract more customers.

Car club and bike share operators

Focus on the positives:

- A better environment at the hub
- More mobility choices for end to end journeys reduce the risk for operators by encouraging more users and more trips

Developers of new housing

Focus on the advantages and ensure the hub and incentives are in place ahead of completion:

- By reducing parking provision, the cost of building can be reduced
- Parking space can be used for higher density housing or desirable enhancements
- Development can be marketed as attractive, sustainable, quieter and low carbon
- More space for social interaction of people and for children to play
- More space and safer for pedestrians and cyclists
- Opportunities for greening and public realm

Communications can encourage a change of travel behaviour:

By offering information about shared mobility choices at the viewing stage with 'try it' evenings or a chance to test drive a car club vehicle, new residents can be thinking about their travel behaviour ahead of the move.

It is very important to have a hub in place before the first residents move in and to provide information as people are more likely to change their travel behaviour when they move to a new home and have a new travel pattern to work out.

Continued usage of the hub can be encouraged by offering incentives such as free membership and other offers over a long period of time to imbed the behaviour.

Branding



A typical hub with Bremen's branding: a reduced carriageway and user-friendly setting showing totem pole branded mobil.punkt (in English 'mobility point')

Bremen has developed a clear brand recognised by users and non-users alike. Hubs are located where they are highly visible and with a clearly recognised totem pole to increase awareness.

Public awareness is promoted by adverts featuring Udo- a character whose name stands for 'Use it don't own it'.

Udo shows the positive impact of shared mobility on lifestyle. Udo can be seen on large roadside hoardings, street posters, adverts on public transport and at interchanges, in cinema video adverts and leaflets.

This approach has won over the public to see the advantages of mobility hubs and some streets are even asking the council to install a hub in their street.

Looking at further developing these ideas, the city of Cologne offers car-free days in neighbourhoods with the street and parking space used for sustainability related stalls, shared transport operators vehicles on show, games, busking, local shops and cafés opening longer hours. These are promoted as trying the 'good life' rather than banning cars. By creating a fun and relaxed atmosphere, people can see what reduced traffic and parking could feel like.



'Tag der guten Leben' or 'Day of the good life' in a suburban shopping street, Cologne, Summer 2018

A typical advert with Udo: 'Searching for a parking space? No way! Tyre change? No way! I'd rather chill and use the car club'

Further support

CoMoUK can provide bespoke guidance on communications, informed by the experiences of our work with our SHARE-North partners in Bremen and other areas in mainland Europe, together with our contacts from authorities and organisations in Scotland that are embarking on exciting shared transport and mobility hubs projects.

To find out more about how we can help you, please contact scotland@como.org.uk for details.

Please also see our website como.org.uk for further information and to sign up to our newsletter and forums.

Find out more about CoMoUK and collaborative mobility online at como.org.uk

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