



BICYCLE RESEARCH REPORT NO. 4

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ANDRZEJ ZALEWSKI: CYCLE USE IN SMALL TOWNS IN POLAND

Independence and fun are the most important reasons for cycling, say the Poles.

The Key Facts

The importance of cycling varies greatly from town to town in Poland. Bicycles form 26% of the traffic in the town of Wyszkw but only 2% in Tarnow. The commonest reasons for cycle use are enjoying the exercise and being independent of public transport and the car.

Contents

Small towns with populations of up to 150,000 are particularly suitable for cycling, says Andrzej Zalewski of Warsaw Polytechnic in his lecture given at the international conference, "Vivre et circuler en ville" (living and travelling in towns) in January 1990. Such towns have radial structures and small distances between destinations so that journeys are generally short. In addition there is the need to protect historic buildings from the damage inflicted by motor traffic.

For every 1000 Polish households there are 280 light two-wheeled vehicles. Of these only 5% are mopeds; the rest are bicycles. Owing to limited petrol supplies and low car ownership - less than 150 per 1000 inhabitants - private motor traffic plays only a small part.

On the other hand cycle use is discouraged by the risk of an accident, which is said to be high, and by exhaust fumes more toxic than in Western Europe on main roads. In addition a bicycle costs about the equivalent of a month's salary and there are often delays in delivery.

Of the 13 towns studied in the research Wyszkw, Namyslow, Ciechanow and Myslenice have the highest proportion of cycle traffic. The figure for Wyszkw (population 18,000) was 26%, with 0.42 cycle journeys out of a total of 1.65. The lowest figure was 2% for Tarnow.

Cyclists in Tychy, Ostrowiec Sc., Wyszkw and Ciechanow were asked in questionnaires to give their reasons for cycling. The commonest were enjoyment of the exercise, independence from cars and public transport and savings on travel costs. The most important advantage mentioned by the



Poles was independence, both from private and public transport.

- Lecture "Use of light two-wheelers in medium-sized towns in Poland". Given at the international congress "Vivre et circuler en ville" held in Paris 20/31 Jan. 1990. Available in manuscript in "Livre des Communications (complements) published by the Centre d' Etudes des Transports Urbains" (CETUR), Paris 1990.
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