

## **Managing the Transition to Soft Mobility Solutions**

### **– A Portuguese city case study –**

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#### **Abstract**

In the last few years cities were strongly committed to define policies, procedures and interventions to promote soft mobility solutions (usually defined as non-motorized transport), which, if well planned and established can have a huge influence in local development nexus in far-reaching ways. The current international and national crisis and the will to satisfy low cost and adjustable measures to the population mobility needs are decisive for the optimization of the transport planning decisions. In most cases, urban mobility policies remain focused on the old fashioned car-centered perspective, prioritizing the private car infrastructural investments leading to an increase of the motorized transport among the population. However, changes in this perspective are slowly taking place.

This paper focuses in the transition process to soft mobility solutions in Santo Tirso. This Portuguese city as the appropriate mobility patterns and segmentations, considering the concentrated urban layout, the distances between trip generators and most off all it as appropriate local management support to establish a real alternative transport network. Our goals are: 1- Show the connection between the actual local transport governance issues, considering the implementation of several other urban and transport development plans and policies (the so called low carbon city's strategies) already in place or being implemented; 2- Demonstrate the orientation given by the developed mobility plan to create a multi-phased cycling network project in a wide and optimized range of solutions for the inner-city premises, with special focus on the adaptability of the solutions presented with the actual political and financial support.

To fulfill part of the established objectives a methodology had to be developed in order to choose geographical areas to be served by the soft mobility corridor solution. First, we focused on the analysis of the residential units and social service structures, considering the existing road network access and excluding the non-suitable areas. This methodology generated points (trip generators), which were marked and interconnected in what can be defined as the "potential desire lines" of the demand for an optimized soft mobility solution. After a computer-designed network (using a GIS system) was reached, further screening was fulfilled, with slopes and road corridor space analysis and the most suitable solution was found. Although achieving a network solution consensus with a process was rewarding enough, the true benefits of this methodology were only obtained after several discussions and rearrangements concerning local governance engagement in the soft mobility policy solutions and the proper synchronization with other existing urban planning strategies already in place.

Following this analysis and its implementation in this specific case study, we can conclude that these type of plans can be an important breakthrough for the understanding and improvement of local mobility policies and local transport governance. They are an important and innovating instrument to increase local urban mobility awareness, to improve the quality of life (with the coordination and integration of several other local plans, according to specific urban layouts), to raise environment standards and the awareness by the city population of urban mobility governance issues.

**Keywords:** soft mobility options, planning cycling networks, on-going urban planning evaluation and governance.