

# Vitoria-Gasteiz

2013 SUMP Award: Finalist factsheet

## Local Transport facts

**Name of the authority:** Vitoria-Gasteiz, ES

**Website:** <http://www.vitoria-gasteiz.org/>

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**Size of City/Town:** 239,361 inhabitants (2010)

**Traffic volume:** 418,501 trips/day on foot; 220,956 trips/day by car; 67,161 trips/day by public transport; 53,773 by bicycle (year 2011).

**Land area:** 278 km<sup>2</sup> (of which 19.81% is urban space)

**Population density:** 4,420 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> in the urban space  
(875 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> in the whole municipality)

## Urban transport policy objectives of the city:

Growth-induced challenges opened the debate on sustainable mobility in Vitoria-Gasteiz in 2005. After an interdepartmental coordination technical committee was set up and the Citizens Forum for Sustainable Mobility was created in 2006, Vitoria-Gasteiz developed and approved its first SUMP in 2007 with the goal to reorganize traffic, free-up space, redefine the public transport network to improve accessibility and coverage, consolidate cycling paths network of and set up a network of pedestrian walkways. In practice, the city aims at a reduction of overall traffic by 10-15% and an increase of trips made by public transport or bike by 30%. Pedestrian areas are to be increased by more than 50% and bicycle lanes are being extended from 90km in 2010 to 160km in 2015.

The 'Superblocks' concept, for which Vitoria-Gasteiz is well known in Europe, is one of the key strategies to achieve the targets of the city's SUMP. The planning concept defines the city as units (blocks), where motorized transport modes are allocated to the outer streets, while inner streets cater for pedestrians and cyclists, neighbours and services to convert them into attractive low traffic areas.

The ongoing challenges the city is looking at include transport modes to travel to work as well as co-existence of pedestrians and cyclists. Vitoria-Gasteiz's growth, urban planning and concern for environmental and social aspects have been acknowledged by the European Green Capital Award 2012.

## The role of social, environmental and economic policy criteria in the city's SUMP:

### 1. Commitment to sustainable mobility principles

Sustainability principles form the basis of Vitoria-Gasteiz' SUMP and the Citizens Agreement for Sustainable Mobility. The city's SUMP goes beyond transport and titles it the "Sustainable Mobility



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and Public Space Plan”: Adding “Public Space” makes the plan subject to mobility as well as any other use of public space including streets and squares.

Among others, Vitoria-Gasteiz’s commitment to sustainable transport transpires through the city’s involvement in the CIVITAS initiative since 2008, its accession to the Covenant of Mayors in 2008 and its memberships in the CIVINET network, the European Healthy Cities Network as well as in ICLEI.

## 2. Territorial Integration

Vitoria-Gasteiz is the centre of the province of Alava, surrounded by 64 rural villages. The ‘Master Plan for Interurban Transport of Alava’ (2010) stresses the need for coordinated transport management across local and regional public administrations. An example for joint work is Vitoria-Gasteiz’s pilot to run the so called BUX public transport on demand service connecting surrounding villages with Vitoria-Gasteiz with the help of an on demand taxi service to central bus stops.

Important functional relationships between the three major cities Bilbao, Donostia-San Sebastián and Vitoria-Gasteiz lead to high numbers of journeys between them. To develop a common strategy in urban mobility a permanent working committee involving all three cities has been established.

## 3. Sectoral integration

A range of stakeholders participated in the design of Vitoria-Gasteiz’s Sustainable Mobility and Public Space Plan, guided by an interdepartmental technical committee. The ‘Citizens Forum for Sustainable Mobility’ was created, which runs a technical working group involving the following municipal departments:

- TUVISA, managing the public transport buses system;
- Traffic and mobility service;
- Local police;
- Department of economic development;
- Department of environment and public space;
- Public Health unit;
- Citizen participation service;
- Environmental Studies Centre (agency promoting sustainable mobility in the municipality)

Activities that relate to other policy fields include for example the city’s Plan against Climate Change (2010), the Climate Change Adaptation Plan (2011) and the Diagnosis, Profile and Development Plan of Health (2007), which addresses issues of the local government’s scope that affect the health of the population. These are namely air and noise pollution caused by motorized transport, and sedentary lifestyles emerging from private car use and a lack of physical activity.

### *Jury Comment*

Vitoria-Gasteiz has most consistently combined transport planning with urban planning. A good knowledge of the agglomeration’s mobility patterns linked with strategies such as the superblock concept have led to proven success and a high modal share for walking. Vitoria-Gasteiz, a compact city with about 98% of inhabitants living within the city, still makes significant efforts towards the integration of the city’s peripheries through its dedicated accessibility plan. Establishing working groups with the neighbouring cities Bilbao and Donostia-San Sebastian has brought the regional dimension of transport planning to life. Integrated efforts to reduce the adverse impact of transport on the climate and on citizens’ health exemplify Vitoria-Gasteiz’s serious cross-sectorial planning approach.



## Concrete measure, example 1: Superblocks

**Beginning and end date:** Since 2009, still under development.

### Description of the activity:

Superblocks are the core concept lying behind the whole Mobility Plan. It is an urban planning initiative that allows planning mobility with the aim of giving more public space back to citizens. Superblocks are urban cells of varying dimensions where motorized mobility is moved to the surrounding streets, so that the inner streets are reserved for pedestrian and cyclist mobility, for neighbours and services. Likewise, a new public transport network, created in line with the superblock model, replaces the old one. By doing so, traffic is removed and the interior roads become quiet streets. This scheme results in an urban landscape with more quality, which makes urban travel more attractive, comfortable and safe for both pedestrians and cyclists.

Rather than defining a new hierarchy for pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, the superblock model is about creating a mobility scheme that limits the space and the speed of passing vehicles.

The initial scenario regarding public space sharing and target scenario of the SUMP can be viewed here: <http://imageshack.com/a/img12/300/r3h2.jpg>

### Outcomes, findings and results:

In general, the superblock model works properly, reaching the targets and goals set in the plans. However, there are some aspects that need further rethinking to make the measure more effective. The main obstacle to extending the model is the type of solution used in the first implemented superblock to improve the public space, based on the complete renovation of the pavement in the inner streets, which has proven to be very expensive and not applicable in the short term in the other superblocks.

However, due to the shortage of funds available in the municipality as a consequence of the global economic crisis that has hit the city since 2008, the model was extended to other superblocks in the city centre but with the adoption of lighter actions. It is planned to extend the model to the rest of the city in that same way. The new approach applies all the philosophy of the superblock scheme without having to spend a great amount of money to make public works and big changes in the structure of streets. The main goal is to implement traffic calming elements that reduce car speed and give more confidence to cyclists & pedestrian in the inner streets of the superblocks, so that they use the road to its full extent.

## Concrete measure, example 2: Climate Change

**Beginning and end date:** 2010-2020

### Description of the activity:

Adhering to the Covenant of Mayors, Vitoria-Gasteiz committed to reduce CO2 emissions by 20% by 2020. To this end, the City Council approved in 2010 the Plan against Climate Change (PCC) [<http://cort.as/6bvuj>]. Since transport is the second sector to contribute to GHG emissions in Vitoria-Gasteiz (37% share), mobility solutions less dependent on fossil fuels need to be put in place.

The mobility actions evaluate the implementation of the mobility plan which is based on superblocks with the aim of achieving a new modal split incl. decreasing the share of private car trips from 36.6% (2006) to 23.5%. A new bus and tram network has been implemented getting a more than 40% increase of users compared to 2006. This measure may be accompanied by technological improvements in the vehicle fleet (hybrid and electric vehicles).



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In addition to the PCC, a Climate Change Adaptation Plan [<http://cort.as/6bwu>] was adopted in 2011, to establish a set of priorities for action based on the identification of areas, sectors or key elements that are particularly sensitive or vulnerable to the expected changes. This prioritization should guide the future definition of climate change adaptation measures in the municipality of Vitoria-Gasteiz, enable it to articulate its action plan and allow support and provide guidance for municipal policies on combating climate change.

**Outcomes, findings and results:**

Energy consumption in mobility has decreased 5% in 2011 compared to 2006 and emissions by 9.9%. The 2006 transport modal split has been transformed in 2011 thanks to the Sustainable Mobility and Urban Space Plan: in 2011 only 28% of the journeys within the city are made by car (54% on foot, 7% by bike, and 8% by public transport) while in 2006 the figures were 49% on foot, 36% by car, 4% by bike and 8% by public transport.



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