It Pays Off to Bike to School

Jakob Schiøtt Stenbæk Madsen

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Getting children to bike to school benefits society in terms of both economy, health, and congestion says new report. COWI has analyzed the effect of the popular Bike to School campaign which is organized by the Danish Cyclists’ federation and TrygFonden.

By Christina Britz Nicolaisen and Jakob Schiøtt Stenbæk Madsen, Danish Cyclists’ Federation

Every September, about 140,000 Danish school children jump in the saddle during the national Bike to School campaign which has been running annually since 2002. The organizers asked COWI to do an independent evaluation of the last three years’ Bike to School campaigns, and we now have the results.

School children get healthier

The report clearly shows that Bike to School is good business for society both economically and health-wise. The campaign makes school children bike more and thus makes them healthier.

This in turn results in fewer sick days for the children and thereby less sickness absence for their parents. In addition, when children bike to school they motivate their parents to bike more instead of driving their car. This results in less congestion, pollution, and road maintenance. The results can be quantified in money terms. During the two-week campaign alone, the socio-economic benefits amount to EUR 165,001 corresponding to 14 % of the total investments in the campaign.
The socio-economic balance sheet 2009-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>EUR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campaign costs</td>
<td>-1,195,311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>-450,974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax effect</td>
<td>-194,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prolonged lifespan</td>
<td>880,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>742,697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport costs &amp; reduced traffic</td>
<td>389,992</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total (Net current value)</td>
<td>+165,001</td>
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Trine Juncher Jørgensen, Deputy Manager at the Danish Cyclists' Federation, is pleased about the conclusions of the report:

“The results from COWI show how important the campaign is. It is simply sound economics to let your kids bike to school. The report also plays into this year's campaign theme: that cycling makes you more intelligent. A large-scale Danish research project shows that children who bike to school concentrate better than children who are driven to school,” says Trine Juncher Jørgensen with reference to the results of “Mass experiment 2012” which shows a direct correlation between children's exercise and their ability to concentrate.

**Good economy in the bicycle**

The evaluation is based on the most conservative assumptions only calculating the effects of the campaign period. But all indicates that a large number of the 140,000 participants keep cycling after the campaign. So in reality, the campaign has even greater value.

The 14 % is a very cautious estimate of the ROI as the survey is based on some very limiting assumptions:

- The campaign has no effects right after it ends.
- Possible health effects on the parents are not included.
The estimate of the health effects on the children is very restrictive.

If you moderate these assumptions a bit, the campaign has far greater effect:

- The campaign has effect to weeks after its end = an additional socio-economic gain of 68 % (+ 6 million DKK).

- The campaign has 50 % effect until autumn vacation (app. 4 weeks) = an additional socio-economic gain of 34 % (+3 million DKK).

- Parents take their kids to school by bike during the campaign = an additional socio-economic gain of 47 % (+ 4 million DKK).

So in reality, the return of the Bike to School campaign is at least 80-100%.

In 2012 1,095 schools and 142,000 from preschool to tenth grade participated in Bike to School. This year’s campaign takes place 2-13 September, and it is free for the schools to participate.

Read about the socio-economic benefits of the Bike to Work campaign here: [Danish society profits DKK 43 million on Bike to Work](http://www.cycling-embassy.dk/2013/08/26/it-pays-off-to-bike-to-school/)