



Unit 2: Why FLOW?

Module 2.1: Setting the Context



The congestion paradigm

Cities want to reduce congestion and economists count every minute of time lost to it as an economic loss. On the other hand, congestion indicates liveliness and a certain level of human and economic interest in a city. If your city had no congestion at all, you would probably have bigger problems to deal with. Such a city would be lifeless.

So the question is: how much congestion is acceptable? It seems we're looking for a balance between activity and not-too-much activity – a state which is probably impossible to achieve on an ongoing basis.



Analysing transport improvements

In striving for the perfect balance of enough-but-not-too-much traffic activity, it's important to think about not only the movement of motor vehicles but of ALL traffic participants. After all, in many European cities, the combination of walking, cycling and public transport can make up over half of the traffic activity. It doesn't make sense that these are not properly analysed.

For discussion (please respond in the forum): Do you analyse cycling and walking measures in your city in the same way you analyse measures for motorised modes? Why (not)?



Road users vs. traffic participants

In English, the standard term for those participating in transportation activity is “road user”, but this doesn’t fully address all of the actors involved. Pedestrians are generally only on the road when they cross it (i.e. when they’re hindering motor vehicle traffic). Cyclists sometimes use the road (where they are also often perceived as hindrances) but they are also sometimes on separated facilities. For this reason, we find the term “traffic participant” (translated from the German *Verkehrsteilnehmer*) better covers all those involved.



For discussion: What terms are used in your language? Do they cover all the actors involved? Do you think this makes a difference?