



Powered Two Wheelers

The road to beat traffic jams and pollution

1. INTRODUCTION

Powered Two Wheelers (PTWs) are an ideal means of transportation in modern traffic. Some background and suggestions for and examples of congestion reducing measures involving PTWs follow.

2. BACKGROUND

+ Whilst a PTW takes approximately 16 to 46% less time to cover the same urban trip as a car (due to congestion of 20 car rides in cities are made with only one occupant).

+ A report of the Motor Vehicle Emissions Group of the Commission states that PTWs have a share of 14,6% of powered vehicles in the EU, but produce less than 3,8% of the CO, less than 1,1% of the CO₂ and less than 3,8% NO_x of the total output of air-pollution. Furthermore, PTWs consume between 55% and 81% less fuel than cars at the same distance, and they require far less use of resources to manufacture.

+ Increased use of cars and public transport will result in costly investment in infrastructure, yet an increase in PTWs will have the opposite effect. PTWs cause a fraction of the damage to roads compared to other motorised transport, and thus is responsible for only a tiny percentage of the maintenance costs.

+ PTWs occupy far less space on the road and four or more motorcycles can be parked in a single car parking space. Vienna City Council investigation in 1985 found that every day 1.5 million km are driven just to find parking places for cars, and that in 1992 in one day 180,000 litres of fuel are used in this way in the one city. Similarly a Viennese University found that Austrian congestion costs 6.75 billion ecu per year.

+ PTWs play an essential role as private economical means of transportation for those who cannot afford a car. For the young, for women with their lower disposable incomes than men: they also benefit from a degree of immunity to assault, etc.

+ PTWs' accident record is commonly exaggerated, and the causes of PTW casualties could be better understood. Accident rates are comparable with cars, no worse than pedal cycles and are improving faster than for any other mode of transport. They also present less of a threat to most other road users than other powered transport. The major cause of all road accidents is still bad car driving.

+ PTWs are often used in tourism, furthering the aims of the CTP to encourage tourism in remote parts of Europe (e.g. Norway's North Cape).

3. SUGGESTIONS

Low-cost traffic administration measures for PTWs

+ Some minor low-cost improvements in infrastructure will help encourage safe use of PTWs. For example, taxi lanes can be immediately opened to use of PTWs. This is already allowed in Barcelona, Rome, Bristol (UK) and in Sweden.

- + High occupancy vehicle lanes should be opened to PTWs, as recommended by the US federal government in the Inter Modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, and operated in States of California, Minnesota, Texas, Washington and Virginia. Virginia's recent survey showed motorcycles to be safer in HOV lanes.
- + PTWs should be allowed access where cars are forbidden. In Rome, PTWs are allowed to enter the historic city where car traffic is limited to residents. In Barcelona, all PTWs are allowed access to the city centre with public transport and taxis.
- + Inner city PTW parking areas should be increased. They already exist in numerous towns and cities in the UK, (where 3000 new places have just been installed), Milan and Barcelona. Many of these have, or will have soon, a provision (i.e.: strong bars to which machines can be locked). In Milan special lockers exist in which helmets can be locked, which are also planned in Rome. PTWs should be exempt from parking fees, unless special coin-operated security wheel clamps are provided.
- + Motorcycles should be allowed to park on pavements where no obstruction to pedestrians is caused, and where the pavement is large enough, as allowed in Paris and Barcelona.
- + In stationary and slow-moving congested traffic, PTWs should be allowed to "filter through" the lanes. This practice is safe and accepted in most countries. Those countries with a ban on filtering, e.g.. Germany, should repeal.
- + In Japan, Netherlands, Belgium and France, two stop lines at relatively large intersections have been introduced: the front line for bicycles and PTWs and the rear one for other vehicles.
- + In Florence, a ban on all cars is operated when ozone levels rise. However PTWs are not included in the ban, in recognition that PTWs are part of the solution.
- + Positive references to PTWs should be made in all relevant road transport documents from the EU's Common Transport Policy (CTP) through to local town plans.
- + Ferry companies should receive incentive to allow PTWs free passage, and adopt the same policy as north Sea ferries in charging riders and pillion passengers just the normal pedestrian fare.
- + PTWs and bicycles should be exempt from all purchase, possession and use taxes in line with the opinion of the European Parliament (document A3-0150/92). Helmets and other equipment worn often for safety reasons should be subject to a lesser VAT or nil VAT rate.

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