**SVI 1999/137**

**Better understanding individual behaviour in traffic**

*Motive und Fahrzwecke der Verkehrsteilnahme*

**Funding:** National (Switzerland)  
**Duration:** May 1999 - Dec 2002  
**Status:** Complete with results

### Background & policy context:

Sustainable and supply-oriented traffic planning makes modification of individual attitude and behaviour necessary. Therefore, this project focuses on human beings as individuals. How do we learn about human attitudes, motives and motivation in traffic?

The starting point for this interdisciplinary research project was the ascertainment that current explanations of behaviour relating to mobility does not go far enough. Transport and transport use represent more than merely costs and loss of time.

### Objectives:

The goal was to construct a better understanding of individual behaviour as it relates to mobility. The application of the project concerns the following areas:

- Reformulation of the behavioural mechanisms of mobility according to standard usage;
- Estimating the efficacy of steps toward the realization of political objectives as they relate to traffic;
- Principles of evaluation relating to the general impact of concepts and concrete projects;
- The elaboration of a behavioral model for individual mobility;
- Making indicators at various levels of the model operable enables practical application in traffic planning possible.

### Methodology:

24 Interviews with 6 especially chosen individuals who had previously recorded their mobility patterns as entries in a diary.

Subsequent to the interviews, which were conducted by 6 experts - a sociologist, a transportation planner, a psychologist, two ethnologists and a philosopher - these same experts dealt more extensively with the resultant information in a discussion setting with moderator and condensed it into a broader list of the motives and motivations relating to mobility.

### Related Projects:

An interdisciplinary team was formed in the context of the SVI-Research project 42/94, according to the motto "take off your blinders".

### Parent Programmes:

**SVI - Swiss Association of Transportation Engineers (various projects)**

**Institute type:** Private foundation  
**Institute name:** Association of Transportation Engineers
**Funding type:** Public (national/regional/local)

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**Key Results:**

Model for comprehension: The findings of the research process were summarized in the form of a model for the comprehension of actions relating to mobility in transport. It includes the influence of perception, of individual psychosocial processing and of societal regulation on the formation of individual motivation.

Astonishment and reflection – many truths instead of one: The factors that stimulate and influence mobility, including the interplay among them, are complex and unstable.

The combinations of motives which are variable for the individual are decisive, both in terms of time and of situation. Therefore, it is extremely difficult simply to complement current transport models by formulating additional indicators for the incentives and motivations of users and their choice of means of transport.

Individual reason and optimizing: A factor that opens paths to an improved portrayal of individual behavior relating to mobility has emerged. Starting with the fundamental principle of individual reason, a person chooses the possibility, which, relative to the individual situation, yields the greatest utility with the least effort. This optimizing behavior does not occur, however, according to the scale of cost and time factors alone; social factors play an important role as well. In the interplay of the various factors that influence behavior, individual freedom of decision is nevertheless limited. In those areas of highly purpose- and goal-related mobility, the degree of individual freedom of choice is narrow.

There is not much latitude for decisions relating to mobility in these situations, and the spectrum of inducements that determine decisions is restricted. In the case of rather more open intentions concerning mobility as affected by activities and destinations, freedom of choice in both mobility and means of transport is broad.

Classification of mobility:

The standard classification of mobility according to purpose into groups which include commuters, business, shopping, and free-time trips does not do justice to the complex mobility biographies of women and men. More helpful in research into incentives is to make a distinction between a 'fixed mobility' (for example, commuting or classical business traffic) and a 'mobility with freedom of choice' (for example the ever-increasing combination of shopping/adventure travel).

**Policy implications**

Participative planning: Transportation planning, which, up to now, had as its starting point rationally met decisions concerning mobility and the steering effect of the standard offering, must be rethought. In connection with the extremely varying motives of the users of systems of mobility, new participatory elements must enter into the planning process.
These forms of communications should not just serve as an exchange of fixed opinions, but rather make a process of social learning possible. Less standard commentary and more forums for discussion, as were practiced for this study, are advisable. Next to classical 'Zeitgeist' phenomena such as the replacement of motor scooter with mountain bike together with new participatory forms could make a change in incentives in the sphere of mobility.

**STRIA Roadmaps:** Network and traffic management systems, Smart mobility and services

**Transport policies:** Decarbonisation, Societal/Economic issues