



# EcoMobility

**PRIORITY FOR ECOMOBILITY IN OUR CITIES. A SERIES OF LOCAL STORIES**

## Freiburg, Germany Successfully reducing automobile traffic

**Summary:** Freiburg's long-lasting ambition to encourage sustainable mobility shows successes: Due to the affordable and convenient alternatives to car use, more than one third of Freiburg residents do not own a car. Latest statistics from 1999 indicate that 18% of all journeys within the city are done by public transport, 27% by bikes, 23% by walking and only 32% by car.

### EcoMobility since the 1960s - Freiburg's mobility history

In the 1960s, when traffic congestion in Freiburg was at an all-time high, officials decided to not replacing the trams but to maintain and develop the tram system. This decision was different to many other German cities in which the vision of an automobile city resulted in enlarging the streets and reducing public transport infrastructure. Since these days – much earlier than later sustainability debates - public transport is given priority within city development and trams build the backbone of the system.

In Freiburg, it is mainstream to use public transportation and bikes. Investments are done in all systems constantly so they are kept modern. It is normal to find local leaders, business people, professors and sports idols in trams and on bikes, together with students, elderly people and others. How does it work?



Freiburg is a leading city in terms of successful public transportation routes.

© City of Freiburg

### Public Transportation

The tram system is constantly extended, new lines are built and existing lines are prolonged. In each city development public transport must be there first, is it in new housing areas or commercial zones. Trams are fast: they have mainly own tracks independent from car roads and they get automatic priority at traffic lights. 65% of Freiburg residents have a tram stop within 500 meters of their home.

It's not only convenient to use public transport, it is also not expensive: As first city in Germany, Freiburg took over a model from Basel, Switzerland in the 1980s: An unpersonalized mobility card which can be used for one month by anybody. In 1991 a regional mobility company was formed and the card transferred into a "Regio card" which since then allows to use all local trains, trams and buses in a wider region. During weekends not only one but two people including their children may use the one card. In 2011, one out of five inhabitants of the region purchases such a card each month and 1,5 Mio monthly passes are sold per year.

The secret of Freiburg's tariff approach is: offer public transport for low prizes, increase the services constantly, extend the use and thus become one of the cheapest but highly competitive systems in Germany.

## Priority to Pedestrians

Since the 1980s the city center remains open only to pedestrians, cyclists, buses and trams. The local economy has enormously benefited, unfortunately rents for centrally located stores are among the highest in Germany meanwhile. Since most of the city center is a pedestrian area, walking makes up 23% of all travels in Freiburg. The city promotes walking by reducing difficulties and delays. For example, the maximum waiting time at pedestrian crossings is sought only 30 seconds. In most parts of the city, the speed limit has been reduced to 30 km/h to make safer travel conditions for those traveling by bike and other means of EcoMobility.

## Increasing bicycle use

Freiburg became famous through its bikes. Since the 1980s, the use of bicycles has doubled in Freiburg. Currently, bikes account for 27% of all journeys. The city has over 400 km of bike paths and new bike fast lines are built to cross the city without stops, this also in expectation of the faster e-bikes. Significant investment has also gone into bicycle parking facilities. The city has 9,000 parking spaces for bike in the city center and at "Bike & Ride" locations at bus or tram stops. In 2011 the city council decided to set-up a by-law on bicycle parking which, among others requests that new buildings must offer bike parking facilities, an obligation which is well-known for cars.

## Impacts are obvious: living without a car is easy in Freiburg

Due to the affordable and convenient alternatives to car use, more than one third of Freiburg residents do not own a car. Over the past 10 years, there has been a 100% increase in public transportation use. Every day, 200,000 residents make use of the system of four tram lines and 26 bus lines. Freiburg has the lowest automobile density of any city in Germany with 423 cars per 1,000 people. The increase of car trips in Freiburg over the last 15 years was only 1.3% while the total trips increased 30%. Public transport passengers have increased 53% and bicycle trips have risen by 96% since 1976.



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When possible, trams do not share roadways with cars to improve timing and efficiency of routes.



Freiburg, Germany

**The City of Freiburg** is located in southwestern Germany near the Black Forest with a population of 220,000 in the city and 615,000 in the region. The city is known for its university and for its advanced environmental practices. The main economies of Freiburg are public administration, university, electrical and medical engineering. Freiburg has been an ICLEI member since January 1990 and is the seat of the ICLEI European Secretariat.

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