



NORWAY'S ZERO-GROWTH GOAL FOR MAJOR URBAN AREAS

Key messages

The Zero-Growth Goal for major urban areas means that any growth in passenger transport shall be absorbed by public transport, cycling and walking. Urban Growth Agreements are in place in four urban areas to implement this goal. There are plans to extend the concept to five more urban areas. The Zero-Growth Goal has helped reduce car traffic volumes in Norway's major cities. This has contributed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, air and noise pollution and congestion, as well as to improving the quality of life in cities.

Country: [Norway](#)

Sectors: [Transport](#) | [Urban planning](#)

Scales: [Local](#) | [National](#) | [Regional](#)



Good health and well-being



Sustainable cities and communities



Climate action



Partnerships for the goals

Challenge

More than 80% of Norway's population lives in urban areas. Urban car traffic has been increasing significantly over the past decades, leading to problems related to air pollution, congestion and road fatalities. Road transport is also a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The popularity of urban lifestyles also contributes to increased urban population density and higher demand for transport. This makes sustainable mobility a critical objective for cities.

Approach

Norway's Zero-Growth Goal provides the framework for land-use and transport policy in large urban areas. The goal was first stated in the 2012 Parliament's climate agreement and then incorporated in the subsequent national transport plans. The National Transport Plan 2022-33 envisages to extend the Zero-Growth Goal to smaller urban areas.

Urban Growth Agreements (UGA) are the main tool for achieving the Zero-Growth Goal. They promote the development of smarter and greener cities through the reallocation of road space to uses other than driving and parking private cars. UGAs are in place in four large urban areas (Bergen, Oslo, Stavanger and Trondheim). The Government plans to adopt five new UGAs (Buskerudbyen, Grenland, Kristiansandsregionen, Nedre Glomma and Tromsø).

UGAs are binding agreements outlining infrastructure investments and packages of measures over a ten-year period. The solutions chosen shall ensure better accessibility and facilitate the use of transport modes other than private cars. Strategies to reduce or limit urban road traffic volumes include densification and transformation of urban centres, improved conditions for walking and bicycling, better public transport services, and restrictions to private car traffic.

For example, a high-standard cycle path is being developed between the cities of Stavanger and Sandnes. Oslo has a restrictive parking policy; parking fees are charged for on-street parking in the inner city, with higher fees for visitors. Oslo municipality also removed more than 750 on-street parking spaces in the inner city to give room for bike lanes. Nine continuous bike routes link the inner city to the city centre. Road toll rates increased in 2017, and in 2019 an inner toll ring was established to charge those driving in the city centre.

UGAs are a multi-level governance tool involving local, regional and national governments on an equal footing. All three levels work together, across relevant sectors, to identify land-use and transport systems that can result in zero-growth in passenger car traffic. The final decisions are the result of negotiations between national transport authorities and regional and municipal political representatives.

Funding for projects comes from toll revenue and state, regional and municipal budgets. The state budget covers 66% of the investment costs for large public transport infrastructure projects in the four largest urban areas. The National Transport Plan 2022-33 allocates about EUR 8 billion to urban areas.

Outcomes and lessons learned

The Urban Growth Agreements succeeded in reducing passenger car traffic volumes in Norway's major cities and contributed to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Despite some remaining seasonal problems, there has been a clear downward trend in air pollution in all major cities.

The Zero-Growth Goal also helped green people's lifestyle. For example, large parts of Oslo city centres are car free, especially around strategic places such as schools and parks.

The implementation of the Zero-Growth Goal and the UGAs have successfully federated different government entities around the same objective. They have helped strengthen collaboration across government levels and improved strategic long-term planning.

Some UGA measures such as road tolls and parking restrictions have been met with some resistance by the population. Nonetheless, social acceptability of the mobility measures has increased over time. Citizens are more likely to support policy changes when they start harnessing the benefits of better integrated, sustainable transport systems and improved quality of life.

Further information

OECD (2022, forthcoming), *OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: Norway 2022*, OECD Environmental Performance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Tennøy, A. and O. Hagen (2020), "Reallocation of Road and Street Space in Oslo: Measures for Zero Growth in Urban Traffic", *International Transport Forum Discussion Papers*, No. 2020/14, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://www.itf-oecd.org/sites/default/files/docs/reducing-car-dependency-oslo.pdf>

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