

IMPLEMENTING CYCLING POLICIES FOR EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS OF THE POLITECNICO DI MILANO: RESEARCH AND PARTNERSHIPS

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1. Travel plan and bicycle policies

The Politecnico di Milano is one of the major universities in Italy, with about 40.000 students, and a permanent staff composed by about 1200 teachers and 900 employees¹. It is located in two main “campuses” in Milan, in the neighbourhoods of Città Studi and Bovisa, and several recent “regional campuses” are located in other towns of the surrounding region, such as Como, Cremona, Lecco, Mantua and Piacenza.

In the beginning of 2001 the university decided to set up a project about mobility management, and in the end of 2002 was approved the first travel plan for the staff, according to an Italian law of 1998.

During the formulation of the travel plan, it came clear that it was necessary to consider some peculiarities:

- With its 30.000 students attending the courses located in Milan, the Politecnico is one of the principal destinations of daily trips inside of the metropolitan area of Milan².
- Teachers, students and non-teaching employees in their daily activity have to move frequently between different buildings, located at a distance of several hundreds of meters or even of some kilometres. Moreover, many teachers have to move frequently between the different towns in which the university is located. This is influencing the travel choices, inducing many people to reach the university with their private cars.
- Local communities and enterprises consider the Politecnico as an important factor for economic development of the towns in which the regional campuses are settled.
- Inside the university, there are many technical skills about mobility planning and management.

According to the mentioned peculiarities were identified two key ideas:

- Though the law of 1998 establishes a staff-oriented mobility management, it is clear the relevance of those policies affecting also the travel choices of the much larger number of students.
- Providing alternatives to the use of private cars for daily trips between different university locations can help to reduce the individual use of cars for trips from home to the university and vice versa.

Consequently, even though the first travel plan is centred on management of travel choices of the commuting staff, it is also considering issues about students' mobility. Promotion of bicycling has been acknowledged as one of the main actions to be implemented in the travel plan, since policies on behalf of bicycling can be easily oriented towards the students.

Moreover, bicycling is a convenient choice for the daily trips between the different buildings, and for reaching the train stations (for those people going to the regional campuses).

Cycling policies to be implemented can be classified as "internal" and "external"; in the first group, we can find the following:

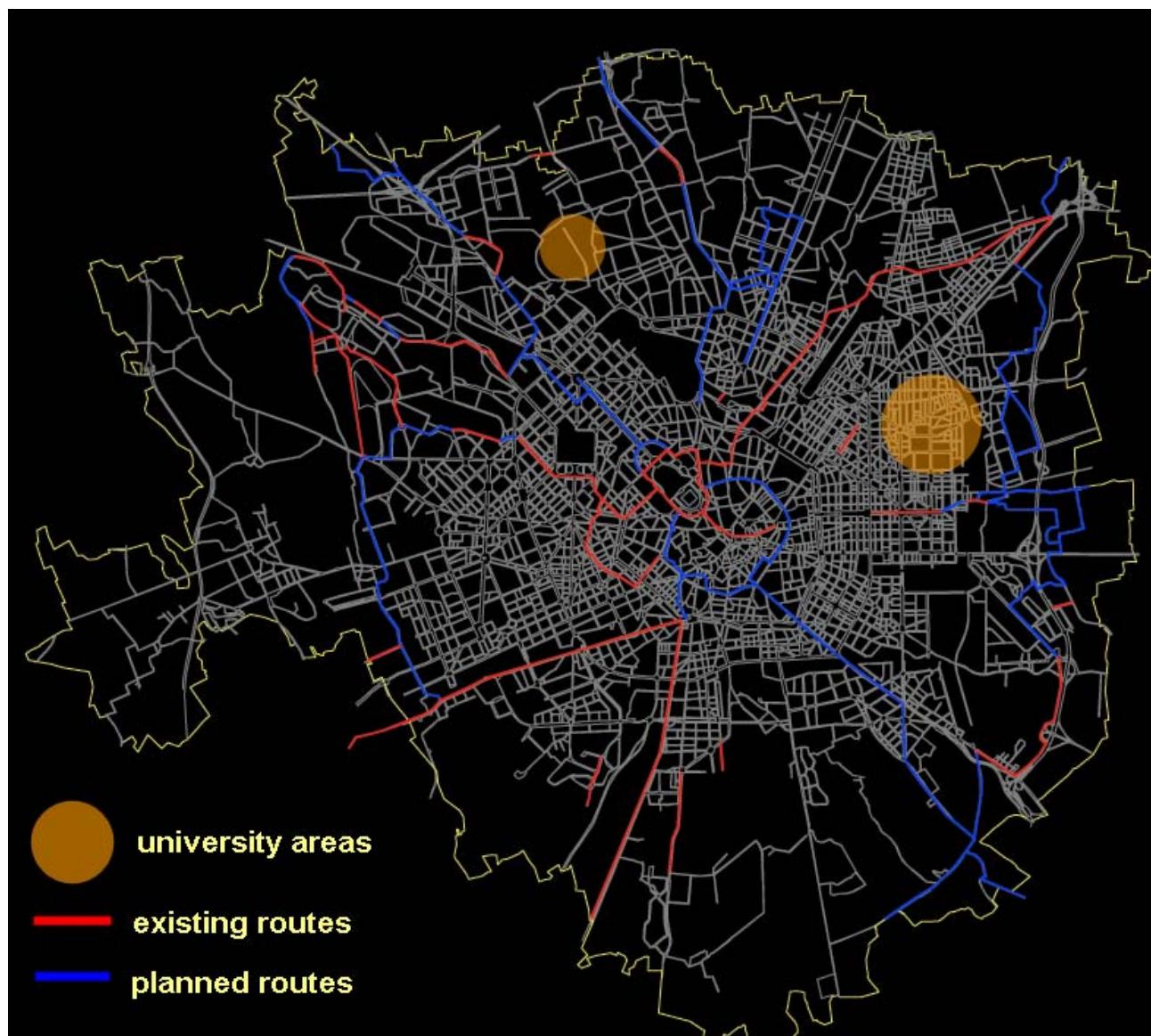
- providing better bicycle parking in the internal areas (more parking slots, more convenient and secure parking facilities, location of parking areas closer to the final destination);
- providing bicycles to be used by students and employees for trips between different buildings or for going to the train stations.

Some other policies can be classified as "external":

- connecting the locations of the university to the urban cycling network; until few months ago the existing cycling network in Milan, as well as the extensions planned by the municipality, didn't connect the areas in which the university is settled -see *picture 1*;



- providing parking equipment for bicycles in the public areas close the main entrances of the campuses.



picture 1 – university areas and cycling routes before 2003

The aim of connecting the university to the cycling network shouldn't be considered properly as a mobility management policy, as it isn't a demand-oriented activity. However, cycling infrastructures are relatively "soft", since their realization is quite inexpensive and doesn't require a long time, so it was possible to think of submitting a request in this sense to the municipality of Milan, while offering a technical support for the planning work.

2. Partnerships and results

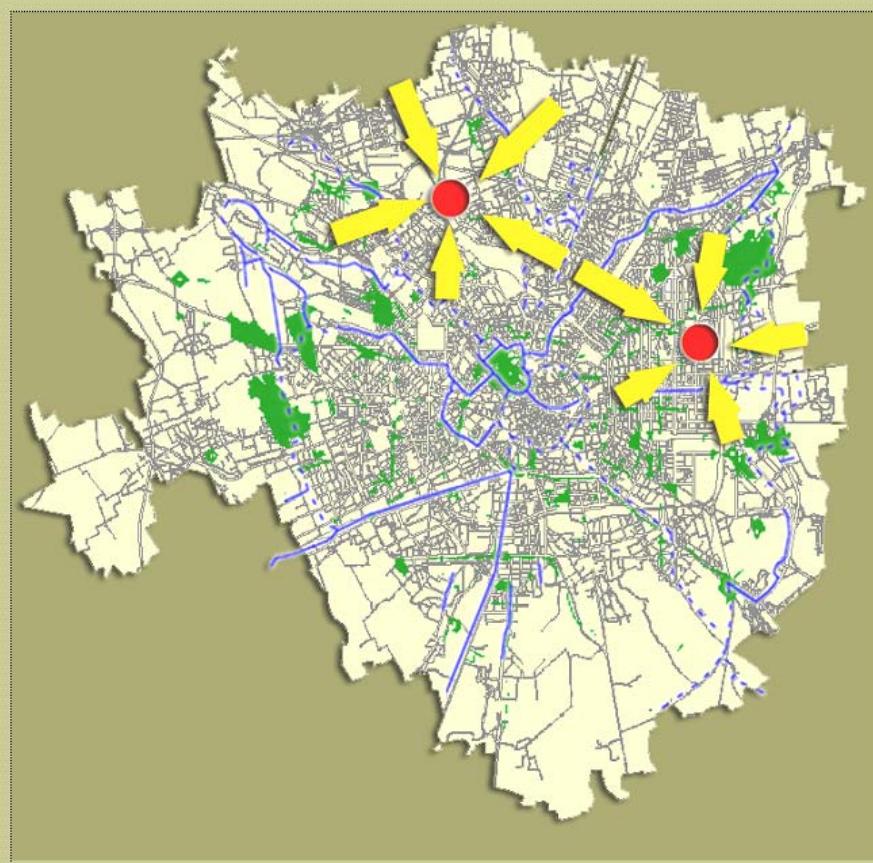
For the implementation of the above-mentioned policies, it was established a network with different partners having complementary roles:

- The internal bicycle user group of the Politecnico (**Ciclo-Poli**), composed of students, teachers and other employees, helped to define the internal policies to be implemented, and the requests to be submitted to the local authorities in order to put into action the external policies.
- The **mobility management group** of the university, composed by senior and junior researchers specialist in different mobility issues, developed a research to find some proper connections between the two campuses in Milano and the urban cycling network. This research established some criteria for developing the cycling network in a large and dense city³, and devised a plan identifying a number of safe cycling routes in a wide area surrounding the two Milanese campuses -see *pictures 2, and 3-*.
- The cycling routes plan was developed with the partnership of **Ciclobby**, the major association representing urban cyclists in Milano, and with the **Bicycle Office of the Municipality**⁴. The association provided the knowledge base about the realizations that bicycle users consider necessary for a safer cycling on the roads around the university while the cycling office provided information about the short and long-term programs of the Municipality about infrastructures and developments in the considered areas.
- An **informal coordination between the mobility managers of the main universities of Milano** is operating to exchange information and experiences related with cycling policies.
- An agreement with **Trenitalia**, the Italian train company, establishes to develop a project about setting up cycling facilities in the stations of the towns in which are placed the “regional campuses” of the university. The acknowledgement of the technical and cultural role of the Politecnico made easy to set up a positive cooperation with the local authorities, finalized to realize safe routes from the stations to the university.

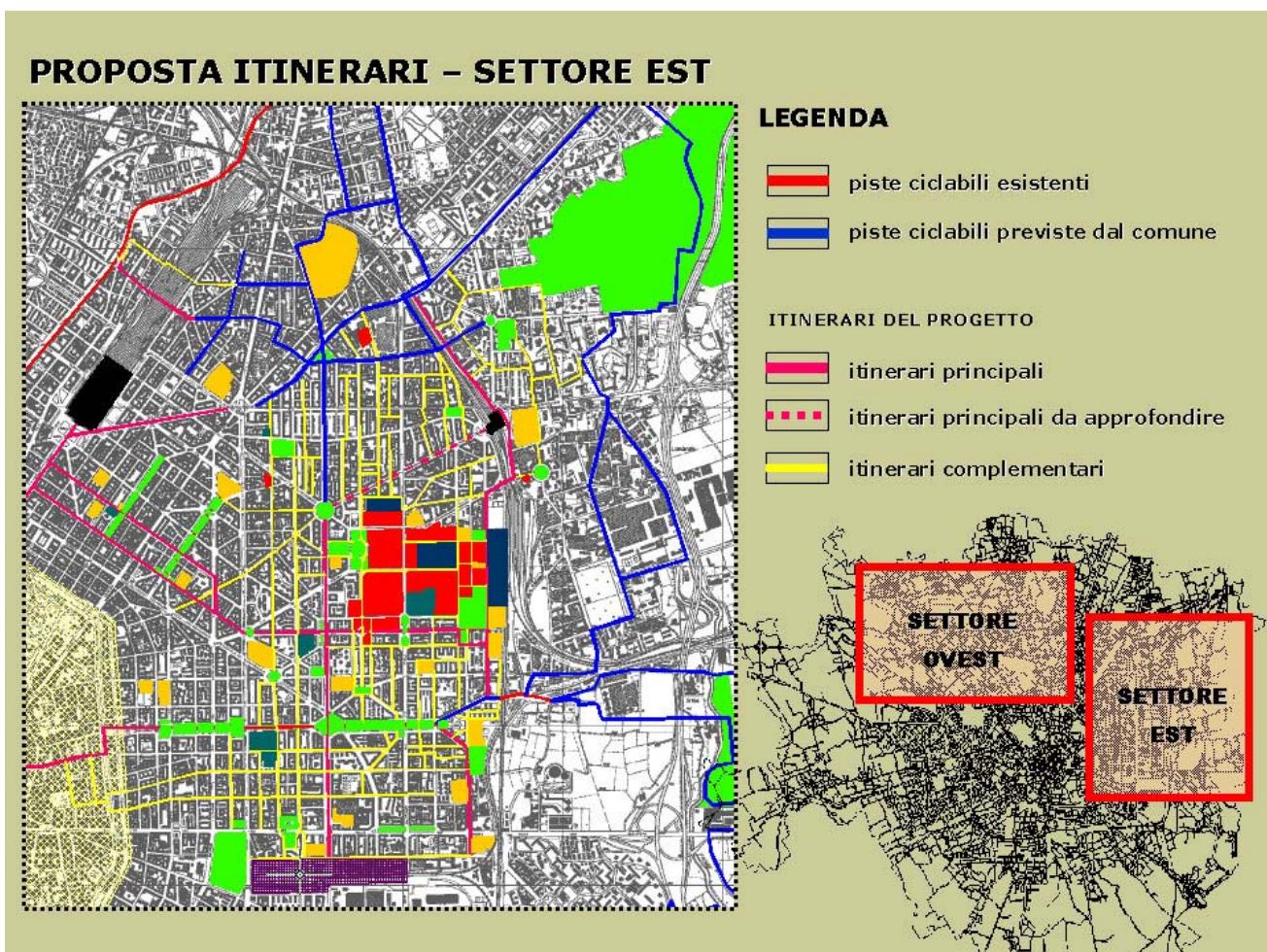
It is now possible to see the first results of the described activity on behalf of cycling:

- The technical offices of the Politecnico are providing better parking facilities for bicycles in the university courtyards.
- The Municipality of Milan set up a large amount of parking facilities close to some important entrances of the Politecnico and of other universities.
- The new Traffic Plan of Milan, approved in December 2003, is mentioning some of the criteria for the development of the cycling network that were identified by the research of the Politecnico.
- The connection of the two Milanese campuses with the urban cycling network is foreseen for the first time in the new Traffic Plan.
- The Municipality of Milano involved the mobility manager group in defining the future “environmental area” of “Città Studi”, the university district around the main campus of the Politecnico.
- The Politecnico presented to the municipality of Milan a feasibility study about providing with a number of bicycle the local Universities in order to support the cycling policies set up by mobility managements. The Municipality requested a co-financing from the Ministry for Environment, the project was approved, and in the summer of 2004, the Milanese Universities will receive 500 bicycles, to be used mainly for the daily trips of employees and students. A communication event will be organised in that occasion together with the other universities.

Integrazione delle sedi del Politecnico con la rete ciclabile



picture 2 – connecting the Politecnico to the urban cycling network



picture 3 – proposed routes (east)

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- The Municipality of Milano involved the mobility manager group in defining the future “environmental area” of “Città Studi”, the university district around the main campus of the Politecnico, as a traffic calmed area.
- The Politecnico presented to the municipality of Milan a feasibility study about issuing a number of bicycles to the local Universities in order to support the cycling policies set up by mobility managements. The Municipality requested a co-financing from the Ministry for Environment, the project was approved, and in the summer of 2004, 500 bicycles will be given to the Milanese Universities, mainly for the daily trips of employees and students. A communication event will be organized in that occasion together with the other universities.

Conclusions

Large universities are among the main attractors of daily trips, therefore management of travel choices of university students and employees is an important tool for a more sustainable mobility in urban areas.

The Politecnico di Milano established an informal but effective co-operation with the municipality and with other subjects, including the user groups at the level of the university and at the level of the city, that allowed to plan and to start the implementation of a better cycling accessibility to the university.

¹ A survey finalized to the description of the mobility of temporary staff will take place in the next months; nevertheless it is possible to estimate that the number of people working “temporarily” in the university with different roles, doubles, at least, the number of the members of permanent staff.

² Cf. Giuseppe Barra, Marco Felisa, Paola Manacorda, Fabrizio Ottolini, Enrico Prevedello; Quaderni del piano per l'area metropolitana milanese – n.8 – Quadro infrastrutturale: mobilità, trasporti, reti; 1999, Franco Angeli editore, Milano.

³ An urban cycling network should not be seen just as an assembly of cycle-lanes physically protected and completely separate from road space reserved to motor vehicles. It should rather be seen as a network of safe routes, that can be built up with different components, such as large and underused sidewalks, bus lanes, traffic calmed streets, “friendly” streets with low traffic, access streets running parallel to a main street, etc. Intersections tend to be the critical points of the network, which often need to be re-organized.

The results of this research were presented in the seminar *Criteri innovativi per la costruzione della rete ciclabile milanese*, Politecnico di Milano, 9 june 2003.

⁴ The partnership with the Bicycle Office of Milan was activated in the framework of an existing general agreement of co-operation between the Politecnico and the Municipality, which was drawn up some years ago.