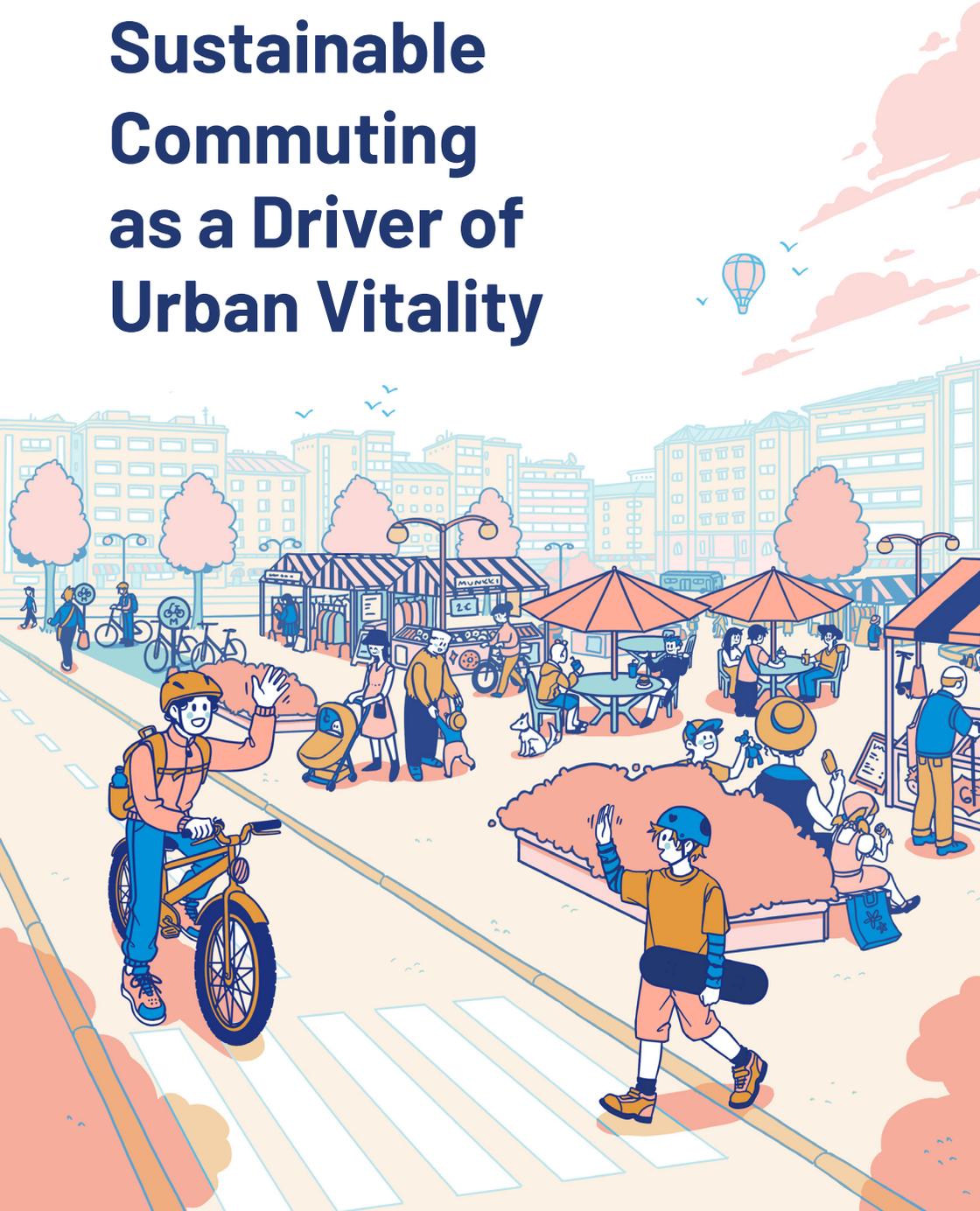


# Sustainable Commuting as a Driver of Urban Vitality



Sustainable mobility solutions can make cities more attractive to live, study, and work in. Promoting sustainable commuting should be placed at the heart of urban planning through determined collaboration between the city and employers.

## 01 A Sustainable Transport System Enhances Cities Vitality

Collaboration with local stakeholders creates tailored solutions to strengthen cities' appeal and retention power. It offers a possibility for cities to enhance their profile as pioneers in sustainable development, attracting more businesses and investments to the region.

## 02 Active Commuting Supports Residents' Wellbeing

Active commuting promotes residents' physical and mental well-being and health. This can reduce costs for both the city and businesses, while also supporting the vitality of local actors.

## 03 Environmentally Friendly Commuting Benefits Everyone

Reducing private car use, especially in city centers, improves air quality, creates quieter and safer streets, and supports the achievement of the city's emission reduction targets.

*A vibrant city is one where people, nature, and businesses can thrive together.*

# Promoting Sustainable Commuting Requires Collaboration

**Traffic accounts for about one-third of greenhouse gas emissions in the city of Lahti, Finland.**<sup>1</sup> Most of the traffic-based emissions come from passenger cars. Reducing traffic emissions has been challenging for Lahti, and there has been no significant progress in the 21st century.<sup>1,2</sup> A good starting point for the required change could be targeting the transit modes on shorter trips, as in the region of Päijät-Häme, more than half of trips between 1–2 kilometers are made by car.<sup>3</sup>

**Active modes of transport**, such as walking and cycling, are nearly emission-free<sup>4</sup>, have significant health benefits<sup>5</sup>, and are convenient alternatives to cars especially on short distances. Increasing active commuting is important, as, for example, in Finland about three out of four working-age people do not get enough physical activity for their health.<sup>6</sup> Regular active commuting could help people meet physical activity recommendations, promoting well-being and health.<sup>7</sup> According to a survey conducted in Lahti, active commuting methods support employees' physical and mental

well-being and recovery from work better than other modes of transport. In contrast, private cars rank lowest in these aspects of perceived well-being.<sup>8</sup>

**Electric-assisted mobility**, such as e-bikes and e-scooters, offer an alternative to private cars even for longer distances. However, their production and battery life cycle can cause significant emissions compared to regular bicycles.<sup>9</sup> **Public transport**, such as trains and buses, is a low-emission alternative compared to internal combustion engine cars. For example, emissions from a bus are often less than a half of those from a gasoline-powered car per person kilometer.<sup>9</sup>

**Promoting sustainable commuting** primarily requires making the use of sustainable transport modes smoother through urban mobility planning. In Lahti, employees often find that workplaces are not easily accessible by public or non-motorized transport, which encourages car use.<sup>10</sup> In addition to comfort, convenience, and schedule compatibility, factors such as control over the commute and safety influence the choice of commuting mode. Simply encour-

**Case Example: City of Lahti and Kempower – Growth Through Sustainable Mobility**

In 2023, the City of Lahti, Lahti Region Development LADEC, and Kempower signed a growth agreement to support the company's rapid growth through timely services provided by the city. The agreement served as a practical lever for improvements within the Systemic change towards sustainable commuting in Lahti project (2023–2025).

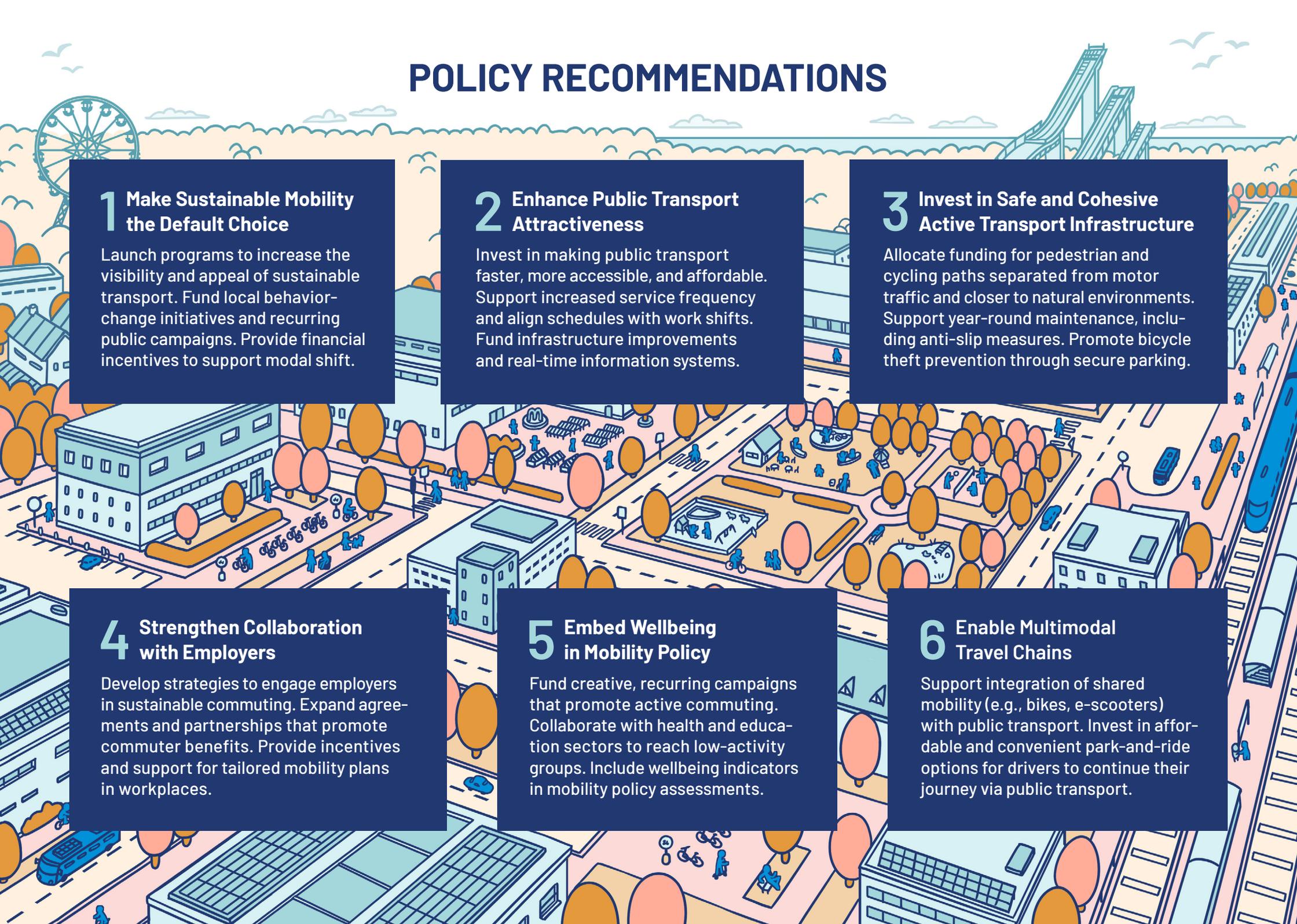
A shared vision and continuous dialogue enabled stronger collaboration between the parties. The city responded to Kempower's needs with a new bus connection, a city bike station, and a pedestrian and bicycle path. These actions improved the area's accessibility and the company's attractiveness.

Integrating sustainable mobility into agreements between the city and companies can support corporate strategic goals, for example, through infrastructure or public service development. Companies, in turn, can support the city's climate goals and act as a communication link between their employees and the city.

aging individuals through appeals to well-being benefits or environmental values is not enough if the use of sustainable modes is not already easy, fast, and comfortable.<sup>8</sup> Although cars are a central part of societal functioning and access to services, a car-dependent transport system causes significant harm, burdening the environment and exposing threat human well-being. **A transport system designed for sustainable solutions** exposes residents to less traffic pollution, noise, and other urban environmental stressors.

**Rethinking urban mobility** is essential for reducing traffic emissions and ensuring that freedom of movement and everyday convenience are no longer tied to car ownership. **For commuting, this requires ongoing dialogue and cooperation with local workplaces** so that the city can support organizations with timely and need-based changes. Sustainable solutions should not only benefit the environment but also actively advance social equity and enhance overall well-being.

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



## 1 Make Sustainable Mobility the Default Choice

Launch programs to increase the visibility and appeal of sustainable transport. Fund local behavior-change initiatives and recurring public campaigns. Provide financial incentives to support modal shift.

## 2 Enhance Public Transport Attractiveness

Invest in making public transport faster, more accessible, and affordable. Support increased service frequency and align schedules with work shifts. Fund infrastructure improvements and real-time information systems.

## 3 Invest in Safe and Cohesive Active Transport Infrastructure

Allocate funding for pedestrian and cycling paths separated from motor traffic and closer to natural environments. Support year-round maintenance, including anti-slip measures. Promote bicycle theft prevention through secure parking.

## 4 Strengthen Collaboration with Employers

Develop strategies to engage employers in sustainable commuting. Expand agreements and partnerships that promote commuter benefits. Provide incentives and support for tailored mobility plans in workplaces.

## 5 Embed Wellbeing in Mobility Policy

Fund creative, recurring campaigns that promote active commuting. Collaborate with health and education sectors to reach low-activity groups. Include wellbeing indicators in mobility policy assessments.

## 6 Enable Multimodal Travel Chains

Support integration of shared mobility (e.g., bikes, e-scooters) with public transport. Invest in affordable and convenient park-and-ride options for drivers to continue their journey via public transport.

## DO

### Redesign

Ensure sufficient safe street space for sustainable modes of transport. Implement pedestrian zones and restrict car traffic in city centers. Reassess the prioritization of car traffic in mobility planning.

### Listen

Gather feedback regularly from various stakeholders to increase acceptance and usage. Provide opportunities for participation, especially for those in vulnerable positions, to prevent transportation poverty.

### Reflect

Monitor and evaluate the impact of sustainable commuting measures and communication regularly to ensure continuous improvement.

### Develop

Invest in the user-friendliness of commuting-related employee benefits, such as public transport and city bikes. Create effective customer service channels to handle potential problem situations.

## PROMOTE

### Engagement

Utilize employer collaboration and lead by example through the city's group companies. Appoint a dedicated contact person within the city and ensure that cooperation agreements are implemented in practice.

### Communication

Strengthen communication in multiple languages and tailored to different target groups. Communicate not only about changes but also how to use sustainable modes of transport.

### Mindset shift

Be a proactive driver of change. Attitudes and travel behavior change when the overall conditions for sustainable mobility are improved.

### Endurance

Continue developing existing sustainable mobility services. Strengthen cooperation with private service providers. Commit to change with long-term dedication.

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