The “code de la rue” (street use code) programme in France

INITIAL RESULTS - OCTOBER 2008
Making an active contribution to sustainable development is a key issue for France. In particular, this issue relates to urban areas.

However, combining the demands of traffic, road safety, local life and environmental protection in a single location can be a complex process. In April 2006, the government followed the example of other European countries such as Belgium by launching a consultation process involving representatives from institutions and associations involved in the code de la rue project. This process was designed to help road managers improve the way in which public space is shared between all types of users, to improve user journey safety, particularly for the most vulnerable, and to encourage sustainable solutions as an alternative to car journeys.

This desire was reaffirmed in autumn 2007 by Jean-Louis Borloo, minister of state and minister of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Spatial Planning for the Grenelle de l’Environnement (the French government’s environmental round table). The consultation process involved a participative approach to sustainable development, a key issue for France. In particular, this issue relates to urban areas.

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The code de la rue programme

Taking its inspiration from the Belgian example, the code de la rue programme is designed to raise awareness of the code de la route as applied to urban areas and, where necessary, to modify regulations by adapting them to the practices of those using public space.

The programme is managed by the DSCR (Road Traffic and Safety Directorate), with the support of Cerpi (Centre for the Study of Urban Planning, Transport and Public Facilities). It brings together national associations representing policy-makers, professionals, users and institutions concerned. The principle of participation underlying the programme implies commitment on two levels: the commitment of the government to push forward the proposals made by the steering committee and the commitment of other actors participating in the consultation process to disseminate the results.

The Code de la route (highway code) consists primarily of behavioural rules for car drivers and its aim is to improve traffic flow. The role of the pedestrian or cyclist were, until now, defined only within the context of their relationship with motorized vehicle traffic. The 1980s and 1990s saw a turning point in France with the introduction of a partnership programme between central government and local authorities entitled “Ville plus sûre, quartiers sans accidents” (safer, accident-free cities). A new scheme, focused on road safety and the needs of local residents, saw the speed limit reduced from 60 to 50 kmph in urban areas and the introduction of the “30 kmph zone” into the Code de la route. Since then, road and street user practices have changed further. Society is now concerned with sustainable development, and particularly with the use of green modes of transport for urban journeys. It is also concerned with improving the way in which conflict between users is managed. In order to help road managers improve the way in which public space is planned and shared between citizens, and to provide greater consistency between different traffic zones in towns and villages of all sizes, the French legal framework needed to evolve and a formal set of road network planning rules was required. This is the central motivation behind the work of the government, politicians, transport professionals and user associations and their involvement in the code de la rue project in 2006.

> THE CODE DE LA ROUTE HAS CHANGED FOLLOWING DECREES 2006-754 OF 30TH JULY 2008

Firstly, the principle of prudence towards vulnerable users was accepted and introduced. Article 841-6 of the Code de la route now states that the drivers “must, at all times, behave in a prudent and respectful manner towards other road users. In particular, they must show increased prudence towards the most vulnerable users.” The changes also included a legal redefinition of specific traffic zones in urban environments, to include pedestrian areas and 30 kmph zones. The concept of the pedestrian priority zone was created and defined. Finally, two-way cycle traffic in 30 kmph zones and pedestrian priority zones is generalized (except in specific cases).

VULNERABLE USERS PAY A HEAVY PRICE FOR POOR ROAD SAFETY

Although significant progress has been made in terms of road safety (4,620 deaths in 2007 compared with 7,742 in 2002, a fall of 40%) through a voluntarist policy, this progress relates primarily to inter-urban road networks rather than the urban environment itself. In 2007, 1,359 people were killed in urban areas, compared with 2,079 in 2002 (38%). The most vulnerable users are two-wheeled vehicle drivers (34% of all deaths) and pedestrians (28% of all deaths). An analysis of the age of pedestrians killed in urban areas shows that 2 out of 3 casualties are over 65 years old.

BREAKDOWN OF THE 1,359 PEOPLE KILLED IN URBAN AREAS BY USER CATEGORY:

- Cyclists: 4%
- Motorised two-wheeled vehicle drivers: 5%
- Pedestrians: 34%
- Others: 28%

BREAKDOWN OF THE 379 PEDESTRIANS KILLED IN URBAN AREAS BY AGE:

- Under 15 years old: 9%
- 15-17 years old: 1%
- 18-24 years old: 5%
- 25-64 years old: 21%
- 65 years old and over: 68%
In urban areas, peripheral vision of safety seeing and being seen is a key gauge of the movements of pedestrians, for whom in a better position to identify and anticipate by moderating their speed, drivers are more likely to be aware of pedestrians. Peripheral vision widens as speed decreases; field of vision is essential. The higher the speed, the lower the probability of detecting a pedestrian. The probability of pedestrian fatality during a collision with a car is 10% at 30 kmph, and 30% at 50 kmph. The energy of the collision is proportional to vehicle mass and speed squared. It is 60% lower for a collision at 30 kmph compared with one at 50 kmph. The energy of the collision is proportional to vehicle mass and speed squared. It is 60% lower for a collision at 30 kmph compared with one at 50 kmph.

The city of Chambéry is noted for its perseverance in fighting road safety issues and its ability to maintain a calm urban environment. In 1979, there were 413 road accidents in Chambéry. In 2006, there were just 36 accidents. The city has focused its energies on "calming" traffic and redressing the balance in how public space is used. Firstly, the city increased safety around school exits and introduced restrictive planning measures for motorised vehicles in areas where mixed use was considered dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists. Next, the focus turned to combining traffic and road safety on the main routes through the city. At the same time, the city encouraged measures designed to improve mixed use between different modes of transport, in particular by reducing speed and taking active planning decisions: pedestrian priority zones at intersections, "30 kmph zones", the pedestrian priority zone and pedestrian areas. Each of these designs has its own set of rules as defined in the Code de la route, none of which were introduced by the decree of 30th July 2008. Thanks to the changes in the law and the actions taken to disseminate knowledge and encourage discussion between parties, urban planning policy-makers and professionals are finding new legal and technical planning and signalling solutions for traffic zones.

The speed of motorised vehicles is a key factor in accidents and in the severity of collisions, especially when pedestrians are involved. The challenge is therefore to reduce vehicle speed. Clarification of regulations and the introduction of new, additional measures will help planners to improve road safety.
> BALANCE BETWEEN LOCAL LIFE AND MOTORISED TRAFFIC.
In urban areas, the roads often combine the demands of local life and motorised vehicle traffic in a single location. Depending on the importance that policy-makers place on each of the network’s roles – traffic or local life – there are several possible planning schemes.

**Status of the area or route**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Walking speed</th>
<th>20 kmph</th>
<th>30 kmph</th>
<th>50 kmph</th>
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<tr>
<td>Motorised traffic</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
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<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Speed limit**

Walking speed 20 kmph | 30 kmph | 50 kmph | 70 kmph

> BALANCE BETWEEN LOCAL LIFE AND TRAFFIC

THE GENERALISATION OF TWO-WAY CYCLE TRAFFIC IN PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY ZONES AND “30 KM/KP H ZONES”

In order to encourage cycle use in these zones and to dissuade cyclists from using the pavements on one-way streets open to vehicles, road managers must (unless otherwise specified), make provisions for two-way cycle traffic with suitable signage on each section of road. If necessary, specific materials may need to be used for this purpose.

Local authorities have until 2010 to ensure that existing “30 km/h zones” enable two-way cycle traffic.

**Type of infringement**

- Unauthorised use of a motorised vehicle in a pedestrian area
- Parking a motorised vehicle in a pedestrian area
- Parking a motorised vehicle in a pedestrian priority zone outside areas specifically designated for this purpose

**Offence class**

- 4th class
- 2nd class
- 2nd class

**Fine**

- Reduced 90 euros 135 euros 380 euros
- Normal rate 22 euros 35 euros 75 euros
- Increased 22 euros 35 euros 75 euros

> A NUMBER OF SANCTIONS HAVE BEEN SPECIFIED FOR THOSE WHO INFRINGE THE REGULATIONS

**... WHAT ABOUT USERS?**

From now on, the principle of prudence by the best-protected user towards the most vulnerable user will prevail. There is a hierarchy from the “strongest” to the “weakest”: HGV drivers, utility vehicle and public transport vehicle drivers, car drivers, motorcyclists, cyclists, pedestrians, people with reduced mobility.

This principle will become an integral part of user behaviour under the condition that there is improved visibility in each zone that a pedestrian, cyclist, motorcyclist or car driver may use. Henceforth, each specific urban zone will be identified with clear signage and will be subject to specific parking and traffic regulations. As each zone is identified in the same way across France, it is easier for users to adapt their behaviour: for motorised vehicle drivers: change of speed, parking authorisation; for cyclists: two-way cycle traffic in the majority of “pedestrian priority zones” and “30 kmph zones”; for pedestrians: safer crossing provisions; for people with reduced mobility: dedicated routes, etc.

The effectiveness of urban planning provisions to improve public space use depends on all users respecting regulations.
For more information...
- Decree 2008-754 of 30th July 2008, pertaining to modifications to the Code de la route.
- The Code de la route, particularly articles R. 110, R. 411 to R. 417.
- Guidelines on specific traffic zones in urban areas (CERTU).

www.securite-routiere.gouv.fr
www.certu.fr

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