

Strategic choice of measures – a Swedish method for deciding on infrastructure investments



Andreas Nordström, andreas.nordstrom@afconsult.com
ÅF Infrastructure AB

Introduction

Since 2013 the strategic choice of measures study has been a part of the process for the strategic and economic planning of the transport system in Sweden. The main objective in implementing a new planning process for infrastructure was to ensure safe and cost-efficient solutions which contribute to sustainable development and the fulfilment of the Swedish transport policy. The government states in the bill to the parliament, 2011/12:118, in the chapter on the physical planning of roads and railways, that:

“A preparatory study with an unbiased multimodal analysis and application of the ‘four-step principle’, should take place before any formal physical planning and design.”

The method

The method for strategic choice of measures is focused on facilitating collaboration between the actors that have a responsibility in planning the transport system as well as enabling involvement of the general public and other actors. The methodology is divided into four phases.

Initiate

Making the decision of starting a study, involving the closest concerned actors and deciding on the main aim of the study as well as the cost and time frame. The actors should write an agreement on performance and cost of a strategic choice of measures study based on a project description. The project description should include the background to the study, the situation and the problem at large, the aim of the study, preliminary scope, organisation and time plan and the cost frame for the study.

Understand the situation

Defining the problems, needs and deficiencies, setting a scope for the study, describing the current situation and the ‘zero option’ and agreeing on which goals the measures should reach.

The phase ‘understand the situation’ is perhaps the most important part in which to invite as many interested actors as possible to a workshop. The users of the transportation system are the ones who have the greatest understanding of the deficiencies of the system relative to what they need.

When the actors all have understood the current situation and the existing problems, the final step of this phase is to agree on which goals should be achieved by the possible solutions

Test possible solutions

Identify possible measures with the help of the ‘four-step principle’ and within all modes of transport and assess the measures to see whether they contribute to the goal of the study, are economically sound and do not lead to any negative consequences etc.

The four-step principle

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Think differently
Can the demand for traveling and transportation be influenced, or the way it is carried out?2. Optimise the use
Can the existing transport system be used more efficiently?3. Reconstruction
Is there a need for adjustments or improvements of the existing infrastructure?4. New construction
Is there a need for new infrastructure to complete the transport system? |
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During this phase one or more workshops with all interested actors – authorities, the general public, local businesses etc. - can be carried out to gather a wide scope of possible solutions. The measures can range within all steps of the four-step principle and all modes of travel and transport as well as be within different actors' field of responsibility.

Form a direction and recommend measures to be taken

Based on all the information gathered in the previous phases, recommend measures or a combination of measures and hopefully reach an agreement between the actors.

Ideally, an agreement can be signed between the responsible actors, stating which measures is to be implemented when and who is responsible for the planning, implementation, cost and maintenance.

The recommendation at the end of a strategic choice of measures study can also be that more extensive studies are needed before a decision on any measures can be made.

Conclusions

There are some adjustments to be made to the method, but there seems to be a consensus that the strategic choice of measures method has led to a better understanding of the different actors' points of views - both the problems and needs within the transport system but also the issues and limitations within their respective organisations. This is something that could benefit the Danish authorities, especially since they have separate authorities for road and railway.

The Danish planning process for infrastructure has similarities with Sweden's previous one and the same changes could be made. One difference between the countries is that Denmark has two separate authorities for road and railway, where Sweden has one. Strategic choice of measures could be even more effective in Denmark because of this, linking the two authorities closer together. The collaboration between them is crucial if the objective of trying all measures within all modes of transport is to be fulfilled.

Swedish authorities took inspiration from the Norwegian method, adapting it to the aims and usage in Sweden. The Danish authorities have to do the same if they decide to implement something similar. Answering questions such as what do we wish to improve by implementing a new method? What is the aim of the method? When should it be used?

The presentation

Based on the experiences gathered from carrying out many strategic choice of measure studies and based on the findings concluded from a survey that ÅF has carried out in December 2014, Maria Håkansson will present the strategic choice of measure method, clarifying strenghts and weaknesses, adding examples from real, carried out analysis, to help understanding the process. The presentation will also adress the question of how a similar method could be implemented in Denmark.