BATS

FROM CONCEPT TO POLICY:

Recommendations for introducing Year-Round Active Mobility in European municipalities



Interreg Baltic Sea Region
Co-funded by the European Union
SMART GREEN MOBILITY
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Foreword

Active mobility is much more than a transport choice. It is a foundation for healthier communities, more sustainable mobility systems, and more liveable municipalities. Yet across Northern Europe, walking and cycling are still too often viewed as seasonal activities, despite their potential to serve as reliable year-round modes of transport.

Through our participation in the BATS project, the Union of Harju County Municipalities has had the opportunity to work alongside partners from across the Baltic Sea Region to explore how municipalities can make walking and cycling safe, attractive and accessible in all weather and lighting conditions. The lessons learned demonstrate that year-round active mobility is not determined by climate alone. It is the result of strategic planning, collaboration, knowledge, and a commitment to meeting the needs of residents throughout the year.

This brief translates those lessons into practical recommendations for policymakers and practitioners. It highlights how national, regional and local governments can integrate year-round active mobility into policies, planning processes and daily operations, ensuring that active transport becomes a resilient and dependable part of the mobility system.

I hope that the experiences and recommendations presented here inspire municipalities, regions and national authorities to recognise year-round active mobility as an essential public service and a valuable investment in the future of our communities.

Andre Sepp *- Managing Director, Union of Harju County Municipalities (Estonia)*

Through the BATS project, Kiili Municipality gained valuable experience in promoting year-round walking and cycling, with a particular focus on children and young people. The project gave a strong impetus to continue developing active mobility in the municipality and strengthened cooperation between the municipality, schools, families and the wider community. It also highlighted the importance of practical measures and consistent communication in creating lasting change.

Marek Vainola *- Mayor of Kiili Municipality (Estonia)*







Introduction

Walking and cycling are key pillars of a sustainable and healthy transport system. Local, national and European policies widely agree on the central benefits of these low-carbon, active transport modes. It is therefore a missed opportunity not to exploit their full potential by improving the conditions for walking and cycling all year round, meaning across all seasons and times of day. This is the premise behind Year-Round Active Mobility (YRAM).

This brief translates the transnational learnings of the BATS project into four drivers of change (1. Strategic prioritisation, 2. Collaboration, 3. Caring, 4. Knowledge) and a set of actionable recommendations for policy and practice. This document aims to stimulate the uptake of the YRAM concept into relevant policies, protocols and daily practice, therefore creating the conditions for local actors to address the year-round needs of pedestrians and cyclists. The project was implemented in the Baltic Sea Region and focused on autumn and winter conditions such as darkness, snow, ice, and rain. Nonetheless, the concept of YRAM is also applicable in hot weather conditions.

About BATS

BATS (Baltic Sea region Active mobiliTy Solutions - in darkness and all weather conditions) was an Interreg Baltic Sea Region co-funded project running from November 2023 to October 2026. The project aimed to help municipalities plan and set up suitable infrastructure for year-round walking and cycling, and build an active mobility culture among people, as a green and healthy transport option regardless of the season.

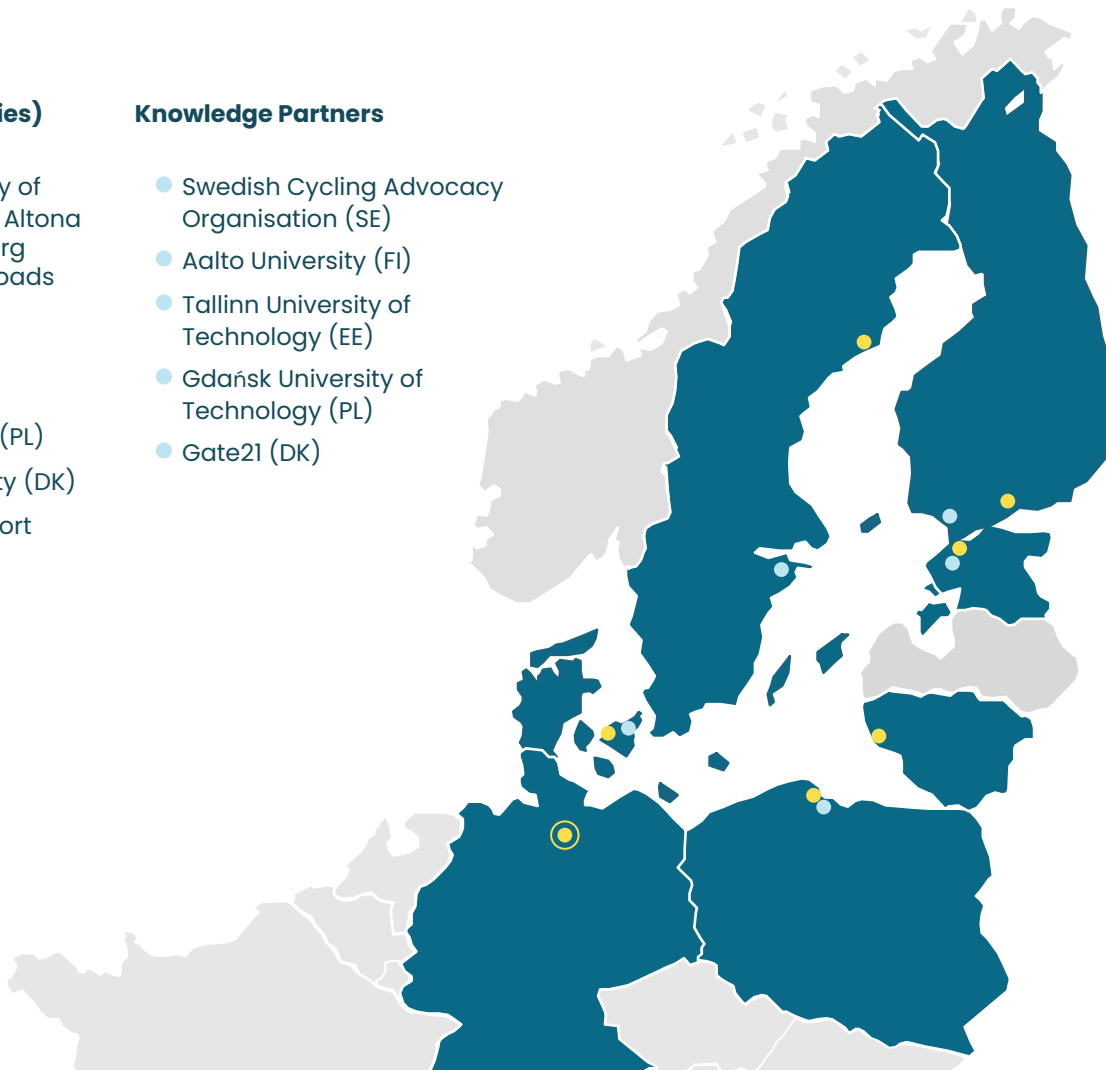
In BATS, seven 'pilot cities' and five knowledge partners learnt and experimented together with policies, infrastructures and promotion activities that are most effective for encouraging YRAM. By collaborating transnationally and learning from different conditions and cultures across the region, the project has created guidance and toolkits that support public authorities and other stakeholders on the YRAM journey.

Public authorities (pilot cities)

- Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg - Borough of Altona (Lead Partner); Hamburg Authority for Bridges, Roads and Water (DE)
- Umeå (SE)
- City of Porvoo (FI)
- Municipality of Gdynia (PL)
- Kalundborg Municipality (DK)
- Klaipėda Public Transport Authority (LT)
- Union of Harju County Municipalities (EE)

Knowledge Partners

- Swedish Cycling Advocacy Organisation (SE)
- Aalto University (FI)
- Tallinn University of Technology (EE)
- Gdańsk University of Technology (PL)
- Gate21 (DK)



A year-round perspective to active mobility planning

What is Year-Round Active Mobility?

Year-Round Active Mobility (YRAM) is a mindset change to ensure cycling and walking are taken into account as a means of transport throughout all four seasons, both by users and city planners.

When snow, ice, rain or darkness occur, pedestrians and cyclists tend to look for other transport options (at least those who have the opportunity). This means that the modal share for active mobility drops substantially for many months in Northern European countries. However, it does not have to be this way. Municipalities like Copenhagen (Denmark) or Oulu (Finland) have shown that YRAM is a policy choice rather than a climatic impossibility.

From a user perspective, YRAM is the **practice of using a physically active mode of transport, such as walking and cycling, consistently throughout all four seasons**, with special attention to the autumn and winter months. It is not about athletic commitment in extreme weather, but rather about considering active mobility a feasible means of transport almost any day of the year.

From a planner's perspective, YRAM places special attention to **ensuring cycling and walking remain a safe, feasible and attractive transport option in darker, colder (and typically wetter) months**.

In the context of the Baltic Sea Region, this may involve managing snowfall piled up on cycling and walking infrastructure or ensuring lighting is suitable for pedestrians beyond just illuminating dark paths. It represents a transition from treating active mobility as a summer season or recreational activity to supporting it as a resilient, permanent, equal transport mode.

The importance of policy endorsement of YRAM

Policy endorsement of YRAM planning is imperative to shift the perspective from seeing active mobility as a summertime activity towards a year-round municipal service. Several policy areas are positively influenced by this shift.

Policy areas affected by YRAM

Climate: *a low emission transport system is crucial to reach climate-neutral targets; enabling it all year round helps reach such targets even faster.*

Health: *YRAM sustains the health rewards of a year-round active lifestyle, cuts air and noise pollution by reducing motorised traffic, strengthens social cohesion, and lowers risks for fall-related injuries from poor (winter) maintenance.*

Economy: *YRAM prevents active mobility investments from sitting idle during colder months; it reduces healthcare costs for accidents and illnesses; plus, it can help plan public transport more reliably and reduce system inefficiencies.*

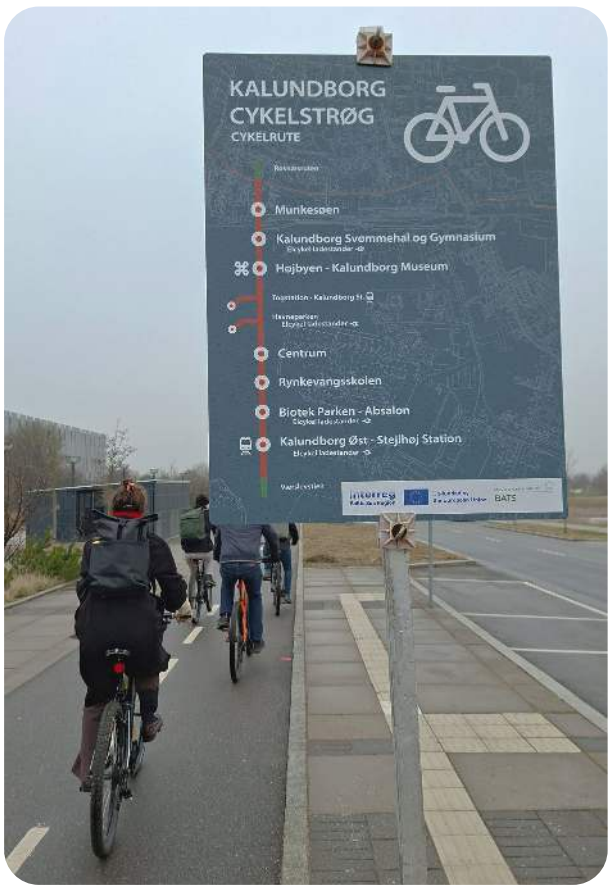
Accessibility and justice: *YRAM ensures year-round accessibility and safety in the urban environment for those depending on active modes; this includes those who require a maintained and lit footpath to reach public transport hubs.*

EU policy landscape: increasing but fragmented support for Year-Round Active Mobility

A review of the principal European policy and strategy instruments that promote sustainable mobility and improved urban living environments shows progress towards acknowledging and enforcing specific aspects of YRAM but also reveals that it is addressed only superficially.

Policy instruments that have been updated since 2020 now treat walking and cycling as transport modes in their own right. Both specialised urban mobility instruments like the New EU Urban Mobility Framework (2021), the Trans-European Transport Network 'TEN-T' Regulation (2024) and the latest Guidelines for developing a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) (2026), as well as the general EU urban ambitions via the EU Agenda for Cities (2025), all give active mobility substantial, dedicated attention.

In 2024, a major milestone was reached with the launch of the European Declaration on Cycling. It recognises cycling as one of the most sustainable, healthy and efficient forms of transport, essential for reaching the EU's climate, zero pollution and energy efficiency objectives.



This explicit emphasis has not yet been translated into the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), the macro-regional strategy that guides the thematic priorities of Interreg BSR programming (under which the BATS project has been implemented). The EUSBSR from 2012 sets the direction for maximising the potential of the region via action plans that are periodically updated. While the instrument prioritises sustainable mobility overall, it lacks a focus on urban mobility, let alone any explicit mention of active mobility even in its latest proposed action plan (2026).

When it comes to concretely addressing the seasonal aspect of active mobility, endorsement in policy becomes more scattered. In the realm of traffic safety, the EU Road Safety Policy Framework 2021-2030 (2021) and its Vision Zero ambitions urge infrastructure measures to address the insufficient safety level of vulnerable active road users. But YRAM encompasses much more than accident prevention.

Active mobility users' unique exposure to weather conditions calls for prioritised cleaning of snow, leaves, and ice on paths; targeted traffic management; specialised lighting for cyclists and pedestrians; and the design of public space to increase the feeling of security in the dark. The recent EU Agenda for Cities does emphasise the importance of lighting and security in public space but does not delve into seasonal details.

The more comprehensive approaches to the seasonal aspects of active mobility can be found in the policy work supported by specialised NGOs, such as European Cyclists' Federation and Walk21, who bring real issues of active mobility users to the attention of decision-makers. The Pan-European Master Plan on Walking (2024) urges footpaths to be kept snow-free in winter and secure in the dark; and recommends collecting data across all seasons. The Pan-European Master Plan on Cycling Promotion (2021) promotes the deployment of innovations such as weather-responsive traffic signals.

Four drivers for improved YRAM

1. Strategic prioritisation

Acknowledge the specific needs and opportunities of year-round conditions in active mobility strategy at all levels.

Municipal mobility planning for active mobility has long operated under an unwritten assumption that active mobility is a summer season activity. This institutional bias creates a self-reinforcing spiral: because local authorities do not prioritise winter maintenance or cold- and dark-weather infrastructure safety, residents abandon walking and cycling when conditions become challenging. This drop in seasonal usage is used in turn by administrations to justify the lack of investment in resilient infrastructure and maintenance processes.

Breaking this cycle requires a strategic shift in planning attitudes. When cities and municipalities formally redefine active mobility as a year-round public service, they alter the default operational standards for street maintenance, infrastructure quality and mobility management practices promoting sustainable travel.

A crucial part of this perspective twist is acknowledging that YRAM plays an important role in a weather-resilient transport system, especially in its interplay with public transport. If residents turn to buses and trains during harsher weather conditions, the accessibility of the wider mobility system depends heavily on ensuring that active mobility infrastructure leading to public transport hubs remains safe and clear. If residents feel forced to buy a car to get through the season, they are likely to continue driving it also in warmer conditions contributing to a 'modal lock-in'.

Examples from BATS

Umeå (SE): By combining a strong strategic focus on winter maintenance, perceived safety, and security, with campaigns that foster a positive cycling culture all year round, the project's northernmost city sees a drop in active mobility during winter but maintains a comparably high level all year round. A travel habit survey during winter 2025 (January-February) showed 52% walking and cycling compared to 57% measured during regular travel surveying in October (2022).

Gdynia (PL); Kiili (EE): By increasing awareness and motivation among children and teenagers through targeted activities, the municipalities have shown children, teachers, educators and parents, as well as departments within the municipalities that walking and cycling can be maintained or even increased during the fall and winter seasons.

Estonia: The representatives from the Union of Harju County Municipalities brought insights from BATS to the discussion table of a new Cycling Strategy for Estonia. This resulted in specific mention of year-round cycling, maintenance issues and how cycling can be a 'crisis-proof' transport option in the updated strategy and its implementation plan.

2. Collaboration

Recognise YRAM as a shared responsibility, requiring collaboration across departments, governance levels, and external stakeholders.

While mobility lies at the core of the YRAM concept, there are many other disciplines required to achieve safe, attractive active mobility infrastructure all year round. In practice, this demands broad cooperation within and beyond local urban administrations.

Internally, the municipal executive actions needed to embed YRAM as a priority span across multiple departments such as mobility planning, maintenance, public lighting, public transport, spatial planning, and public health. Although these departments have an interest and a stake in YRAM planning, they work with different priorities, timelines, and budgets. Therefore, it often remains unclear where the specific responsibilities should lie and who has the mandate to coordinate and ensure the overall YRAM experience for residents. Active mobility or cycling/walking units can serve as a nexus, but they are often small and depend on ad hoc collaborations with other departments that do not foresee such extra work or costs.

External stakeholders are required for many planning and operational tasks. Snow clearing is generally outsourced to operators that work seasonally, and agreements with landowners can smooth snow piling management. Cycling associations and public transport providers can offer operational insights such as cycling behaviour and/or conflict areas, while large workplaces, schools and local businesses can be allies for driving a change in culture. Communication with the community and neighbourhood groups is also beneficial, not only to gather their contextual insights, but to foster a cooperative climate and acceptance.

Cooperation with other public authorities and higher governance levels is equally important. Inconsistent maintenance protocols and disjointed infrastructure design due to different road owners risk making active mobility infrastructure networks fragmented during adverse weather and dark hours.

Examples from BATS

Porvoo (FI): After mapping out critical gaps in the maintenance of cycling and walking infrastructure due to different road ownership, Porvoo negotiated with the national authorities for a shift to a route-based winter maintenance that prioritises how citizens actually move rather than what was most efficient for each road owner.

Hamburg-Altona (DE): Aiming to improve perceived safety in dark tunnels for cyclists and pedestrians, the Borough took advantage of an opportunity window: restoration work had to happen on the tunnel ceiling by the national railway (DB) - the 'tunnel ceiling' owner. During the repairs, Altona collaborated with Hamburg's infrastructure authority and DB to agree on the installation of projected inspirational messages that aimed to reduce fear when passing during dark hours.

Klaipeda (LT): On two central roads, the bike lane was moved from the sidewalk to the cobblestone driving lane, resulting in safety risks with passing cars and buses. In collaboration with the municipality, cycling community representatives and a municipal service provider, Klaipėda's Public Transport Authority installed projected traffic signs (gobo projectors) to improve the lane's visibility all year round, reminding bus drivers to overtake cyclists at a safe distance.

3. Caring

Ensure that strategies are based on a complete understanding of different types of users, caring for their specific needs.

Year-Round Active Mobility is a deeply contextual concept. Interventions to address Year-Round Active Mobility need to vary not only with climate and geography, but also with the type of resident they are meant to serve. What works for one group of people, in one place and in one season, will not automatically work for another.

Active mobility users are far from a uniform group. There are substantial variations in their needs, capacities and motivations, and all of these can significantly shift across seasons. People with reduced mobility, balance, or vision are especially vulnerable in slippery or dark conditions. An important aspect of treating YRAM as a reliable component of the mobility system is making sure all user groups maintain their access to public life and services.

This is why, on one hand, universal infrastructure on its own is not enough: high-quality infrastructure will not change the behaviour of residents per se. On the other hand, launching a winter cycling campaign in a municipality that does not maintain its cycling infrastructure well enough can generate negative public reception and poor uptake. The message and the provision behind it must match.

So, to build public trust and secure long-term use of the infrastructure, urban planners need to move away from a technical view of infrastructure design and towards caring for the needs of specific user groups. In practice, this means ensuring that strategies favour a 'persona-based' approach to the design of infrastructure and mobility campaigns across the seasons.

Examples from BATS

Kalundborg (DK) ran a survey and workshop activities to understand the perspectives and experiences of diverse resident groups. These residents biked across the testing areas to validate the safety, comfort and overall attractiveness when cycling in their adequately lit and signalised bike path.

Hamburg-Altona (DE) ran survey and workshop activities to understand how diverse resident groups experience different protective elements for cyclists and pedestrians. In Altona this included involving local groups representing people with physical disabilities and visual impairments who shared their views on planned interventions.

Kiili (EE): To promote YRAM the municipality, supported by Union of Harju County Municipalities, targeted pupils. The success of the campaign was a good understanding of the divides between children and teenagers as two distinct personas to approach. This led to diversity in activities fruitfully engaging all age groups.

4. Knowledge

Move beyond basic data collection by building analytical capacity, streamlining accident reporting channels, and ensuring active mobility monitoring captures seasonal variations.

When it comes to YRAM, municipalities often deal with incomplete knowledge and limited season-specific insights which reduces possibilities to strategically address the issue. To overcome this, municipalities must ensure active mobility monitoring captures year-round variations rather than relying on generic annual perspectives based on manual counts and periodic travel surveys scheduled during peak active mobility season.

Digital solutions such as automated counters do provide continuous traffic volume data, but unlocking their full potential requires strengthening municipal capacity to process, analyse, and apply this data for YRAM planning.

Beyond looking at travel behaviour of residents, a key piece of knowledge about the conditions for YRAM is information about accidents. A common critical gap in this knowledge is single-user incidents such as pedestrians slipping on ice or cyclists falling due to wet paths. Official police databases rarely record single-user crashes unless a motor vehicle is involved and while hospital registries capture severe falls, administrative backlogs and staffing constraints in healthcare settings lead to significant reporting delays.

Furthermore, less severe incidents often remain unrecorded in official healthcare statistics, becoming a hidden figure of seasonal safety hazards. Streamlining accident reporting channels and exploring complementary crowdsourced alternatives provide crucial information for targeted winter maintenance and infrastructure improvements.

Examples from BATS

Porvoo (FI) implemented a targeted monitoring matrix for winter, recognising the direct strategic value of systematic data tracking to evaluate the delivery of winter maintenance services for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure..

Umeå (SE) expanded its traditional monitoring practices by conducting its first dedicated winter travel habit survey, establishing an empirical baseline for cold-weather cycling and walking behaviours to guide future investments. To monitor winter maintenance of cycling and walking infrastructure, Umeå also rolled out a citizen-driven quality assurance programme.

Klaipėda (LT) installed a specialised route sensor capable of monitoring the physical state of a cycle path. This tool tracks climatic and road conditions in real-time, allowing the city to deploy winter maintenance teams efficiently or issue safety alerts to residents.

Call to action

The experiences in the BATS project show that YRAM is possible, but to achieve its full potential, active mobility must be prioritised as a year-round public service.

Recommended actions to higher levels of policy

Policy level: European Union, Baltic Sea Region, National
Ensure there is funding for research, experimentation, piloting and exchange of best practice on how to make active mobility feasible in all seasons (cold and hot). The topic is niche, but with more unpredictable climatic conditions the relevance will only increase and the institutional capacity and awareness must follow.

Policy level: Regional, Local
Formally embed year-round requirements into local strategies, such as Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) or dedicated cycling and walking strategies. This formal commitment ensures all future infrastructure projects are assessed for multi-season usability.

Policy level: National
Incorporate seasonal data reporting into the requirements for urban nodes under frameworks such as the TEN-T Implementing Regulation on harmonised Urban Mobility Indicators. Provide clear, flexible methods that easily integrate into existing workflows of European cities' data technicians.



Recommended actions to local urban administrations

Local urban administrations have different starting positions depending on their experiences with active mobility planning in general, their winter conditions, and the local cycling and walking culture. This overview aims to show different potential actions, depending on your starting point. The stages are not fixed; it is possible to explore actions from the 'YRAM champion' stage while you are still building the base with some 'YRAM starter'' activities. It takes time to create a favourable environment for active mobility (incl. political will, infrastructure changes, behavioural and cultural shifts) - but it is not impossible, so just get started!

	YRAM starter	YRAM enabler	YRAM champion
	A municipality or city with limited cycling and walking infrastructure and no specific priority given to active mobility in maintenance, lighting, or traffic management & control.	*A municipality or city with general cycling and walking infrastructure which carries out targeted interventions to improve maintenance, lighting, safety, and traffic management & control for the specific purpose of AM.*	*A municipality or city with extensive, protected cycling and walking network and with proven ambition to ensure a systemic year-round functionality of AM infrastructure.*
Strategic Prioritisation	Recognise that YRAM is important for an inclusive mobility system that maximises the potential of active mobility.	Increase awareness across relevant teams about the specific needs and opportunities of YRAM and define specific goals.	Focus on optimisation for high-level service standards for winter maintenance including top-tier methods adjusted for local weather conditions and local regulations (e.g. specialised grit, sweeping and brine-salting if allowed).
Collaboration	Collaborate with maintenance departments and contractors: to agree on dedicated cleaning of priority bike and pedestrian paths; and to raise awareness and to avoid snow from car lanes being ploughed onto sidewalks and bike paths.	Improve continuity of winter maintenance by reviewing and realigning route ownership and maintenance responsibilities for critical corridors. Where necessary, transfer responsibility for specific road segments between authorities to guarantee a predictable, uniform level of service across the entire network. Collaborate with maintenance departments to ensure new AM infrastructure can be cleaned from snow, ice, leaves properly when moving from pilot intervention to more permanent structures. Invite key operators such as winter maintenance staff or bus drivers to try out YRAM, in order to feel the YRAM experiences of residents first hand.	Establish a formal framework to facilitate cross-border municipal collaboration for winter maintenance, ensuring active mobility infrastructure is treated as a continuous network rather than isolated segments.

	YRAM starter	YRAM enabler	YRAM champion
Caring	Utilise 'winter pilots' to implement measures such as temporary physical barriers, projected light, innovative illumination to try it out and build public support without the need to go through negotiations within rigid legal frameworks. Engage with residents, cyclists and pedestrian groups to gather their feedback and input. Activities like information campaigns or YRAM events can act as a conversation starter on YRAM conditions and municipal needs.	Pilot with persona-based approaches and cross-department collaboration in the planning process. Consider the complete YRAM experience concerning path quality, illumination, traffic signalling, and how you can make people feel safe, secure and motivated. Identify the key personas in your mobility system whose needs you want to address also when planning soft measures. Competitions or nudging activities might activate a behaviour change with one type of persona while others might need information on how to increase safety in order to feel confident.	Revise planning process to apply the persona-based approach in early design phases, involving maintenance teams when reviewing current winter service workflows.
Knowledge	Measure differences in mobility behaviour for different seasons through travel surveys, counters or other low-threshold methods.	Engage residents for feedback on winter maintenance through targeted on-street surveys or focus group discussions. Set up continuous, automated counting (radar/thermal) rather than manual seasonal counts to accurately measure winter drop-offs.	Establish cross-departmental collaboration between departments such as mobility, maintenance, public lighting, public transport, health using joint KPIs and feedback loops (e.g. joint anonymised reporting, crowdsourced data to systematically log single-user pedestrian or cycling accidents). Establish a quality assurance programme to monitor winter maintenance with active mobility users (winter agents programme).

Find out more

The BATS project has developed toolkits and guidelines for planners who are working with Year-Round Active Mobility. All materials can be found on the project website. The key resources include:

- Year-Round Active Mobility Diagnostics and Interventions Toolkit
- YRAM Monitoring Guidance
- Citizen Activation Guide: Promoting Year-round Active Mobility (YRAM)
- Year-round Active Mobility Thematic Insights

Capacity building based on the results of BATS will take place within the frame of BSR Urban Mobility, a Platform project also funded under the Interreg BSR Programme.