

From student to tourist: “Here is why an environment-friendly mobility network is needed”

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The meeting organized by the **Province of Varese** in cooperation with **FIAB Varese Ciclocittà** on the morning of 16 May in Villa Recalcati has been at the same time a moment of debate and confrontation, but also an opportunity for a first overview about **cycle and pedestrian mobility**.

In a room full of administrators and officials of Municipalities, Mountain Communities, Parks, various associations, institutions and organisations that promote cycling tourism, professionals, firms that carry out operations about the territory, confronted themselves about a topic that is in constant development, both on regional and provincial level.

Starting from the innovations introduced by the law on cycling mobility – in particular on financial aspects and planning facilities provided for in the new national legislation – also regional policies about cycling mobility were introduced; these are two important examples of “good practices” and of innovative instruments that are coming from Canton Ticino and the province of Trento. Finally, a discussion between administrations and the Chamber of Commerce, about the importance of development of this type of mobility, has been initiated.

FROM CATTANEO TO CATTANEO: REGIONAL ECO-FRIENDLY MOBILITY GOES THROUGH AN ALDERMAN (AND TWO ASSESSORSHIPS)

Among the participants we have also **Raffaele Cattaneo**, that had more than one reason to be involved in the issue. “The plan of cycling mobility was born when I was alderman of Infrastructures and my purpose was to suggest an environment-friendly mobility, one that could preserve the environment. Today, as alderman of environment, I can only back up what started with that plan. That’s because cycling mobility, even more than other forms of environment-friendly mobility, can lower the rate of polluting elements in the air, like fine dusts; to develop it is a very effective means in order to sustain these environmental policies. Not for nothing, the Life Repair project, a big European environmental plan about air quality in the Padua basin, finances initiatives about cycling mobility.”

Is Lombardy ready? “Lombardy’s walking in the right direction. We’ve lived during decades when **cycling mobility was considered to be a second-class mobility, like a beggar**. Today a cultural dynamic is born, according to which **cycling mobility is trendy and keeps you healthy**, a dynamic that encourages the recovery of cycling mobility. The success of **bike-sharing** in Milan and also in Varese shows that the cycling community is socially accepted and citizens are starting again to consider this opportunity when it comes to moving about. The problem is that **this type of mobility isn’t considered**

to be enough safe, because there isn't any protected route; bike lanes answer to this need. To encourage cycling mobility and to offer more safety to this type of mobility are two things that go hand in hand.”

THE ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY MOBILITY BRINGS TOGETHER THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

“The Provincial Council has the role of coordinating the activities and the projects of the territory: this is the reason why we've tried to gather the current information and itineraries. The new national law provides for regional plans of mobility, similar to the current one of Cattaneo, which is still quite old and needs updates, and so, we need a strategy plan for mobility in the Province of Varese too,” explained the vice-president **Marco Magrini** after his speech.

The Provincial Council states: “**We've already built 160 km of cycle paths.** In the last years, we've worked in order to create **agreements with more than 70 Municipalities** with the aim of realising **another 88 km of cycle paths in the future.** Some of these are useful to create **important links:** for example, I'm thinking of the **cycle path of Piambello that now leads to the Valganna caves.** The purpose is to find an agreement with the Comunità Montana, the Induno Olona Municipality and the Varese Municipality **to make the cycle path arrive to the railway stations of Varese.** Putting together the Comunità Montana, the Induno Olona Municipality, the Varese Municipality and the Provincial Council is very important in order to achieve a common goal. Also, because it's necessary to start working from now on the projects, so that the Councils would be ready if a regional or European notice was published. I encourage everybody to work on priorities, so that we'll be ready to seize the notices as soon as they're published.”

THE VARESE MUNICIPALITY IS WORKING FOR OUR EVERYDAY LIFE

The projects of the Varese Municipality are directly focused on the daily use of bicycles: the projects are for students and workers who want to use the bicycle on their way home, to work or to school. “€1.5 million will be used to project and build paths to reach the schools by bike, thanks to the notice “Casa – scuola / Casa – lavoro” (Home – School / Home – Work), explains **Dino de Simone**, environment alderman of the Varese Municipality.

The cycling mobility, its infrastructures, are a matter of interest for the Municipality, that is including “pieces of infrastructures” in many notices. In particular, we are already working on the renovation of the cycle path which links the centre of Varese to Casbeno. The works are already in progress, and there will be some changing in the area between the centre of Varese and Casbeno to create some room for the circulation of bikes.

“THINK TO THE TWO-TIERED TOURISM BECAUSE IT'S ALREADY FILLING HOTELS”

The environment-friendly mobility that we have been talking about is especially linked to the everyday

ways, such as the home-work way, but there is also a mobility that is changing the financial perspectives of the province, the sporting touristic one, which is primarily driven by the sports events: "the cycling tourism is not only 'slow' like the one of FIAB, but is also linked to sports. And the sports events are always driven by a "slow cycling" tourism, both for who is cheering for a race and for who is taking part in that race. A main example is the Gran Fondo, which is already filling the hotels of the territory for the end of August," explains **Sabrina Guglielmetti**, who works at the Convention Bureau at the Chamber of Commerce in Varese and who is involved in the final decision.

The reasons why it is important to give space to the bikes in the streets of the Province of Varese are not only closely environmental, but also financial.

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