

Summary:

Road Package Drammen

The intermediary 2003 socio-environmental study

Background

Years of increased traffic and extensive industrial and housing development has resulted in an overload of the road system in central areas of Drammen town. To improve the traffic environment and to alleviate the situation for the town's inhabitants the highway authorities have instigated a comprehensive development of the traffic system, "Road Package Drammen". The most important elements of the package are two tunnels, the Strømsås tunnel and the Bragernes tunnel that reroute traffic to a new ring road system around the centre.

This report describes the situation after the two tunnels are completed. The results are based on a survey carried out in 2003, which functions as a follow up of a survey conducted in June 1998 and 1999. The purpose of the surveys is to analyze the environmental impacts from the traffic changes, how the population reacts to the changes, and the effect of traffic upon the everyday life and health of the residents.

Noise and noise experience

The average noise level was reduced from 64 to 61 dBA from 1998 to 2003. The proportion of dwellings exposed to high noise levels (above 65 dBA) was reduced from 52 to 36 percent. Still the central areas of Drammen see relatively high noise levels from road traffic compared to other urban areas in Norway. The reductions in traffic levels and subsequently in noise levels have lead to a reduction in people's annoyance from road traffic noise. The proportion highly annoyed when outside of own dwelling is reduced from 26 to 21 percent as a result of the traffic changes. However, this annoyance reduction is not as large as the reduction resulting from a similar project in Oslo east from 1987 to 1994.

Air pollution and experience of air pollution

Average exposure of PM₁₀ has increased from 1998 to 2003, whereas exposure to NO₂ has been reduced. The latter can be explained by a significant reduction in background ozone levels. Increased levels of particles might be due to increased overall traffic volumes. Road package Drammen has failed to reduce air pollution levels, and there has not been any reduction in people's annoyance from air pollution.

Visual aesthetics

Road traffic is not just noisy and smelly, it can also adversely affect the visual aesthetic properties of an area. Removal of traffic might thus be expected to lead to improvements in visual aesthetics.

The proportion of respondents who judged their immediate surroundings as pretty increased from 29 to 33 percent. Although a small increase, it is statistically significant. However the improvement seems not to be related to traffic reductions as such but rather to an aesthetic upgrading of one specific road environment, Konnerudgata. It was in this local area that we could see the improvements in people's evaluations.

Experience of safety and ease of movement in traffic

There has been no improvement in parents' experience of safety for their children as a result of the traffic rerouting. The road package has however lead to an improvement in the ease of traversing the road network, especially for cyclists, 72 percent saying it is good or very good compared to 63 percent in 1998. In general, Drammen is seen as a safe and comfortable town for cycling