

Promoting traffic safety during a global pandemic

This Traffic Safety Review includes a summary of traffic safety work activated by traffic safety operators in 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged traffic safety operators to find new operating models. Municipal traffic safety groups had to conduct their meetings remotely, and many events that have run systematically for years had to be postponed or cancelled. However, several alternative ways of running events were also found and new approaches developed. Virtual environments were introduced for safety demonstrations, training courses and lessons, and the resources available online had unprecedented appeal among the public. Some in-person events were able to go ahead with restrictions in place, especially in the autumn.

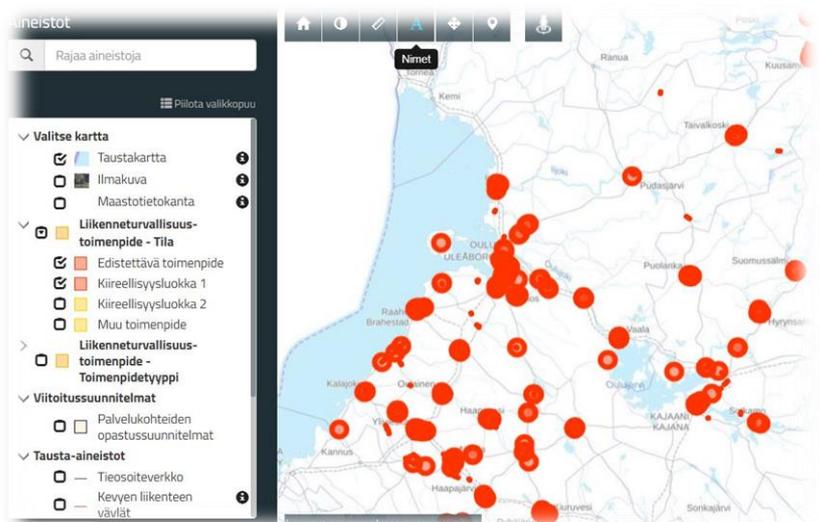
The operators' two priorities in 2020 were communication and transport infrastructure planning. Training courses relating to the new Finnish Road Traffic Act, upgrades introduced to the traffic safety map application and hazard surveys conducted in multiple municipalities provide a good foundation for the development of safer transport infrastructure.

Pursuing targets together

In addition to municipalities, several stakeholders do traffic safety work in North Ostrobothnia and Kainuu; the most important of them are the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centre) for North Ostrobothnia, the Finnish Road Safety Council, the rescue departments in the area, the police and the regional councils.

The traffic safety plan of North Ostrobothnia and Kainuu for 2019–2022 presents the vision and goals of traffic safety work. In addition to the active work by operators, the aim is to increase the visible appreciation of traffic safety and improve wellbeing with smart and safe mobility.

The latest events calendar, maps showing the locations of traffic accidents and safety measures, the regional traffic safety plan and links to social media accounts, among other resources, are available online at www.liikenneturvallisuus.info.



Picture: New traffic safety measure map application.



Progress by operator area

All municipalities in North Ostrobothnia and Kainuu have continued to work on promoting traffic safety. Harmonised operating models are applied, and common themes pursued in operator areas. Events for people of different ages were hosted not only by municipal traffic safety groups and local authorities, but also a range of non-governmental organisations.

City of Oulu

Traffic safety information was disseminated about current topics such as a new reduced speed limit in the centre of Oulu and the importance of wearing reflector during the dark months. *Did you think about it?* campaign posters were distributed to schools and nurseries. Educational video shows *The Killer Moped* and *Magic Petteri and the Art of Vigilance* were shown in 19 schools.

Municipalities around Oulu

The Wilma parent-teacher communication system was used to give parents up-to-date information about various aspects of traffic safety, *Did you think about it?* campaign posters were distributed to child health clinics, schools and nurseries, and newsletters and useful tips were disseminated to support professionals in their work. Trees hung with reflectors that passers-by can help themselves to appeared in several municipalities in the autumn.

Oulu South

A range of approaches were adopted for educating young people about safety on mopeds, such as rewards-based traffic surveillance, training events, virtual lessons and *The Killer Moped* virtual shows. Pensioners' associations successfully educated around 200 senior citizens about the new Road Traffic Act. Safety surveys were conducted in 20 municipalities. The responses help to identify emerging traffic safety concerns.

Kainuu and Koillismaa

Virtual traffic safety lessons were run for the first two years of primary school. Traffic safety education was also provided in person. Secondary schools were given access to virtual shows *The Killer Moped*, and training sessions aimed at reducing risky behaviours in traffic were run for young men in military service. Public safety surveys were also conducted in Kainuu and Koillismaa to gain insight into new traffic safety issues.

Operator area	Participants in events set up with traffic safety operators
City of Oulu	around 10,000
Around Oulu	7,000+
Oulu South	11,000+
Koillismaa	around 6,000
Kainuu	around 10,000



Highlights of the year 2020

Educating the public about new laws and regulations

A range of training courses and events were run in each of the operator areas to educate the public about traffic safety. The new Road Traffic Act featured prominently in municipal traffic safety meetings, and a special webinar was hosted in May about the new law for local authority staff. Feedback on both the webinar itself and the recording made of the event has positive.

Six webinars focusing on walking and cycling were held in the autumn. The topics included recent changes to laws and regulations, accident statistics, transport infrastructure planning, impact assessment, accessibility, land use planning and auditing. The events were popular and will continue in 2021 in cooperation with traffic safety partners in Eastern Finland and Lapland.

2020 Regional Traffic Safety Award to Utajärvi

The 2020 Regional Traffic Safety Award was presented in a virtual traffic safety forum in January 2021. The winner was the municipality of Utajärvi, thanks to its long history of promoting safe and healthy mobility. Utajärvi has introduced a wide range of measures to promote cycling and the safety of cyclists and successfully factored in different aspects of mobility and different age groups.

Rewarding safe riders

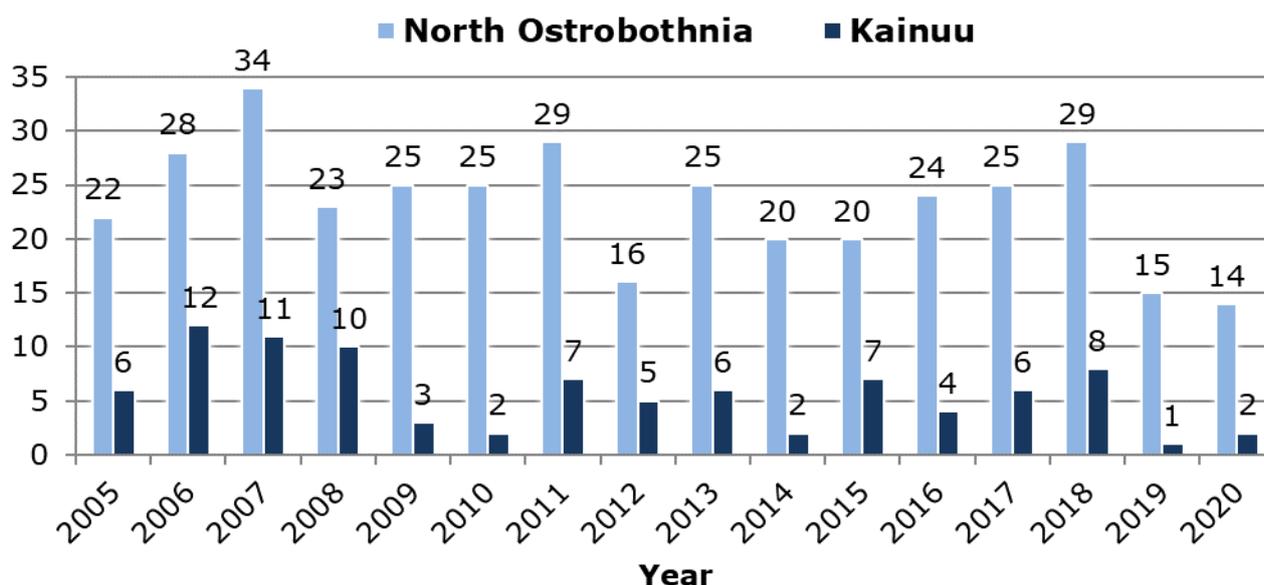
Rewards-based traffic surveillance has proven an effective way to get the attention of young moped riders. The concept is based on the police not only intervening in inadequate gear and stopping unsafe vehicles but also rewarding safe riders. The possibility of rewards incentivises young people to behave correctly in traffic. Other good ways to reach out to young people include safety demonstrations and classroom-based lessons.

Picture: Aapo Katajala was rewarded for safe riding with a gift voucher worth EUR 20 in Ylivieska. Both his electric moped and his personal gear were found to be fully up to code (photograph by Rainer Kinisjärvi).



Statistics

According to preliminary data for the year 2020, the traffic-related death rate in Kainuu and North Ostrobothnia has not changed significantly since 2019. The 2019 figure was noticeably lower than that of previous years.



Picture: Number of road traffic deaths in Kainuu and North Ostrobothnia by region. The information on 2020 is preliminary. Source: Statistics Finland.

According to preliminary data, a total of 297 people were injured in road traffic accidents in North Ostrobothnia and 71 in Kainuu in 2020. The numbers are slightly higher than in 2019 but still comfortably below earlier years' figures.

Statistics from the most recent years show serious injuries as a separate category. These statistics are a year behind other accident statistics. According to official road traffic accident statistics, a total of 23 people were seriously injured in North Ostrobothnia and five in Kainuu in 2019. The figures were down from 2018. The 2019 figures based on the Hospital Discharge Register, which are not included in official road traffic accident statistics, have not yet been published.

Picture: People injured in road traffic accidents in Kainuu and North Ostrobothnia by age group in 2020. Source: Statistics Finland.

