

Shared Mobility and a Car-Free Centre in Ghent – A People Focussed Approach



City of Ghent, Case Study

By encouraging shared transport as part of an action plan for a car-free city centre, car journeys in Ghent have reduced from 55% to 27%, creating a more peaceful, people-friendly urban environment.



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Ghent has a population of 260,000 with half of them living in the city centre.

In 2017, after 2 years planning work to take traffic out of the centre and high-level public engagement, Ghent opened its new car-free centre and traffic circulation system in just one weekend.

Traffic was banned in the centre except for city centre residents and deliveries to shops and cafés. Car club cars were installed at hubs in easy reach of residents.

Motorists were diverted to the ring road rather than crossing the centre. Pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and taxis could access the centre.

The impact was huge, creating a high-quality experience. People could focus on enjoying the abundance of historic buildings, cafés and shops, rather than negotiating traffic.

The impact of the plan implemented in 2017 was measured in 2020 as follows:

- Cyclists have increased from 22% of journeys to 37%
- 18% reduction in air pollution
- 20% per cent fewer cars in the centre
- 10% per cent more cars on the ring road but no traffic jams
- Increased use of public transport instead of the car (Flanders region saw a decrease)
- Fewer road traffic accidents
- 6,000 car share users in 2017, then 13,500 in 2019 and aiming for 20,000 by the end of 2020

City of Ghent's Action Plan 2024 - taking things further

Ghent has 4 central targets for 2024:

- To decrease the number of private cars by 1% (requiring at least 95 extra car club vehicles)
- Shared bikes and range of bike types to expand

- 10% of workplaces to take up shared transport offers through their transport plan
- Half of shared cars to be electric

The city is also aiming for 25,000 car sharing users by 2025 – roughly 10%.

People-based approach

Many people cycle in Ghent and so increased space and a reduction in traffic was immediately popular with this group.

An ongoing large-scale communication campaign to reach everyone includes car sharing festivals with stalls and fun activities like 'test drive your local car share', video competitions and special parties for residents.

Sharing transport encourages a more conscious decision-making process about how to travel. Changing travel behaviour takes time, particularly the transition from owning a private car to using shared transport and so people were encouraged over time. An ambassador works closely with residents, workplaces and developers to coordinate the offer of shared transport and to encourage residents to use the schemes. Any building project of more than 10 residential units is required to provide a minimum number of electric cars and bikes at an adjacent hub. By having shared transport on offer as people move in, travel habits can be more easily embedded.

The city leads by example with the Deputy Mayor, Filip Watteeuw, using car-sharing, cycling and shared cargo bikes. City staff also use car sharing for work-related travel.

Also ride sharing and peer-to-peer is used by over 150 residents. School journeys are encouraged by bike and foot.

The city targeted groups other than the typical car club users including special wheelchair modified vehicles/bikes offered at social housing built for people with disabilities.

Children are encouraged to cycle with a child bike share scheme for 2 to 12 year olds at five 'Opwielekes' hubs. These hubs enable children to learn to ride on a suitable bike and to change the bike as they grow. These children are potentially the shared transport mobility hub users of the future.



Children's bike share logo showing the range of bikes for all ages at Opwielekes

Quotes from residents in response to the Action Plan speak for themselves:

'Teaching my son to cycle has been a fun and relatively stress-free experience'

'I sold my car and switched to electric car sharing'

'People walking and talking mixed with the quiet zoom of bikes is a vast improvement'

'The car is no longer king: Cyclists and pedestrians are king'

'The air tastes better'

'People put their chairs out in the summer to sit on the pavement and talk'

Further support

CoMoUK (Collaborative Mobility UK) is a charity that has a collective and representative role for shared transport in the UK.

Over the years we have published a variety of research into shared transport and the built environment and as part of the EU Inter-reg project SHARE-North we are a UK repository of expertise on mobility hubs.

CoMoUK can provide bespoke guidance on planning shared transport and mobility hubs for specific contexts. This includes providing expertise and advice on the design, planning, consultation, implementation and monitoring phases, informed by the experiences of our SHARE-North partners we are working with in mainland Europe who have been

implementing shared mobility and hubs for many years and by our contacts with authorities and organisations in Scotland that are embarking on exciting projects.

To find out more about how we can help you, please contact scotland@como.org.uk for details.

Please also see our website como.org.uk for further information and to sign up to our newsletter and forums.

Find out more about CoMoUK and collaborative mobility online at como.org.uk

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