Cycling as a city changer

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City of Groningen
the Netherlands

Chester
Overview
Overview

- 235,000 inhabitants (50% is younger than 35)
- 6th largest city in the Netherlands
- 60,000 students
- Catchment area of 1 million people
Political landscape

- GroenLinks
- PvdA
- SP
- D66
- VVD
- PvdD
- ChristenUnie
- Stad en Ommeland
- CDA
- 100% Groningen
- PVV
- Student en Stad

(is coalition)
Facts and figures

- more than 200 kilometres of special infrastructure
- some routes more than 20,000 (!) cyclists a day
- average distance within 10 minutes reach is 2.5 kilometres (by car 1.6 kilometres)
Modal split

Modal split in Groningen municipality

Modal split to/from Groningen municipality
Traffic Circulation
1977
City history: All traffic through City Centre

1960’s/70’s: cars, cars and cars!
City history: **All traffic through City Centre**
City history: Traffic Circulation Plan 1977
City history: All traffic through City Centre
City today: Pedestrian and cycling orientated
City history: All traffic through City Centre
City today: Pedestrian and cycling orientated
City history: **Major road in a green environment**

- 1980's
- 1993: temporary closure
City today: Recreational value of a park
City today: **Parking policy**
City today: Parking policy
Bicycle Strategy
2015-2025
The cycling situation is properly organised. Yet at the same time we are faced with a number of urban challenges. The bicycle can make an important contribution to the development of the city.

Groningen grows. In a number of places we notice that it is becoming busier all the time. There are traffic jams on bicycle paths, long waiting times at traffic lights, and there is not enough bicycle parking. The result is more irritation and nuisance. In the long term this could encourage more car use and a greater burden on public transport. Reduced access and a less viable, healthy and safe city is something we don’t want to see at all.

Consequently we are faced with the following urban challenges:

- Create good conditions for the growth of the city;
- Keep the city accessible;
- Improve the health of our citizens;
- Ensure a viable and economically vital city;
- Ensure a safe city.
Create good conditions for the growth of the city

The number of inhabitants of the city of Groningen has been growing for years, but growth has increased strongly in the last few years in particular. We surpassed 200,000 inhabitants in 2014, which was much earlier than expected. Growth is likely to continue during the coming years and we are expected to have 225,000 inhabitants by 2025. At the same time the population of the region is decreasing, and more people from the region travel to the city. They are looking for places to live, work or to use the facilities.

Visitors come by train, bus or bicycle but often by car, as a large part of our region is strongly dependent on cars. However, the available space in Groningen does not increase, which means it will be busier on the roads.

Keep the city accessible

We reached strong agreements to guarantee the city’s accessibility. We are dealing with the southern circular road and are moving some of it underground. We are also preparing the Main Railway Station for the future, creating new Park & Ride locations (P+R) and expanding existing ones. We have also introduced a new top-quality public transport network. We wish to retain structural access and access during the completion of many major projects. The bicycle can make an important contribution, not just for the entire journey, but also for shorter legs of the journey.

Number of inhabitants of the city of Groningen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>169,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>174,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>200,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2025</td>
<td>225,000</td>
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Daily commute to and from the city

- 2000: 160,000 people
- 2011: 185,000 people
- 2020: 215,000 people
Improve the health of our inhabitants

Apart from being healthy, cycling is social too. People make contact more easily when they are on a bicycle and almost everybody has a bicycle. As the cheapest mode of transport it is affordable for people who have trouble linking in with society. A bicycle makes facilities accessible and can help to remove people from their social isolation. People really do start to feel better - physically and mentally.

Number of sick days: non-cyclist and cyclist

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>non-cyclist</th>
<th>cyclist</th>
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<tr>
<td>sick days a year</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>7.4</td>
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Cycling every day is a natural way to make sure you have enough physical exercise. In Groningen we are conducting a lot of research into the relationships between exercise and ageing (Healthy Ageing). The city is ideal for this study, because experiments can be put into practice immediately.

Ensure a viable and economically vital city

A bicycle is the cleanest, most silent and sustainable mode of transport; the CO₂ emissions of a bicycle are nil. Furthermore, it is extremely cost effective to invest in a bicycle. Achieving the same CO₂ reduction with public transport would require much greater investments. By investing in cycling, you kill several birds with one stone. The air quality improves, noise nuisance reduces and the city becomes more attractive for visitors on foot or on a bicycle. The greatest economic opportunities for Groningen are in the knowledge-intensive economic sectors.

Knowledge-intensive economic sectors and institutes are seeking each other out in attractive cities with a flourishing city centre, an exciting cultural climate and a high level of facilities. The spatial quality of Groningen is therefore of the greatest economic importance. It attracts additional visitors and that benefits the retail and hospitality sectors. With a bicycle our city can be used more intensively and remain attractive at the same time. In short, good bicycle facilities are important to a sustainable economic development of the city.
Ensure a safe city

Groningen is safe and we want to keep it that way, even in a growing city. Socially safe, but physically safe too. Safety in particular means that Dutch cycling policy - and the same applies to the Groningen cycling policy - is so successful compared to other countries.

The law protects cyclists against liability in traffic accidents. We also strive to have as few crossings as possible with motorised traffic. In a busier city, the number of crossing movements in the same infrastructure increases. The march of the pedelec and scooter increase the speed differences. Therefore we are looking for solutions that separate bicycle and car routes where necessary. This helps to deal with the differences in speed too. We do the latter to give additional protection to more vulnerable cyclists - children and elderly - a city for 8 to 80.
Our Cycling Strategy

What do we want?

In Groningen we have a long tradition of a good and clear cycling policy and that's a tradition we wish to continue.

Cycling connects physically and socially; our inhabitants value the quality of cycling and we want to keep it that way. People like it when they can move quickly from A to B on a bicycle. When they can put their bicycle away properly and feel safe. Under those conditions the people of Groningen will continue to use their bicycle. However, cycling is not an aim in itself, it is a means to an end - to move about quickly and to stay viable, safe and economically vital as a city.

At the same time, it is getting busier in Groningen. The space is more limited and the same applies to financial resources. It goes without saying that we will continue to improve the existing bicycle network with wider bicycle paths, new bicycle connections and larger parking facilities. However, a true response to urban challenges requires us to make an important choice - a change in scale - now.

This important choice means that we need to make more use of the self-organising and learning abilities of our cyclists. We provide quality impulses, offer alternatives and try to influence behaviour. We opt for support and encouragement, and most specifically not for stricter regulation. We experiment, discover what works and what doesn’t and adjust our measures accordingly. Innovative solutions are paramount, for example consider the combination of ICT and cycling - Smart Cycling City. Innovation can take us a step closer when traditional solutions cease to be effective.

Five strategies

Our cycling strategy contains five strategies. We clarify each of them with ‘compass projects’, projects that illustrate clearly what our strategies mean in practice.
STRATEGY 1
THE BICYCLE COMES FIRST

When we are incorporating new spatial developments we think from the point of view of a cyclist right from the start. After all, a bicycle is the most important mode of transport in our city and that deserves a safe and properly maintained bicycle network. Just as important - traffic education for children, elderly and other vulnerable road users.

Bicycle Effect Analysis (BEA) for new spatial developments
For new spatial developments we prepare a Bicycle Effect Analysis. This guarantees that every urban development takes account of bicycles at an early stage.

COMPASS PROJECT: BICYCLE TUNNEL AND UNDERGROUND BICYCLE PARKING MAIN RAILWAY STATION

Our city is on the eve of ‘Groningen Spoornet’, a far-reaching infrastructural project for better access by train and bus. The most eye-catching interventions take place at the Main Railway Station. The station itself will be refurbished and will have a bicycle tunnel running underneath it. It means that an important missing link in our bicycle network will be solved. The new bicycle tunnel will help to break through the isolation of the area just south of the railway station, and that offers new opportunities for developing that area. On the south side of the Main Railway Station the bicycle tunnel will have an underground bicycle parking for 5,000 bicycles. Up to 2020 the total capacity around the Main Railway Station will rise to 15,000 bicycles.

Management and maintenance in order
The main routes of the cycling network will have priority snow clearance. We make sure they stay clean and safe. We will clear away glass and give priority to dealing with unevenness in the road. We will perform the work outside rush hour where possible. We make sure that all our main routes have good lighting because of social safety. We also make sure that inhabitants can report complaints easily - for example with an app called 'MeldStad' - about the management and maintenance of bicycle routes and bicycle facilities.

COMPASS PROJECT: HEATED BICYCLE PATHS WITH GEOTHERMAL ENERGY OR THERMAL ENERGY FROM WASTEWATER

Groningen has good opportunities for using the heat of the earth. For example, heating busy bicycle paths to keep them free from snow sustainably and naturally. Important components of our main network have good opportunities for geothermal energy (heat from the earth) and thermal energy from wastewater (heat from the sewers).
A bicycle contributes to intensive and sustainable use of our city. Bicycles are also essential to our attractiveness to businesses. Good bicycle connections to public transport hubs, to important economic motors and to the region are also essential to the Groningen economy. Therefore we charted the future bicycle network in this strategy.

We secure its cohesion in two ways:

- By considering bicycle connections from an integrated point of view. We do not approach every bicycle path individually, but focus on our bicycle network from door to door.

  We focus on good connections between where people are coming from and where they are going to. For example the Main Railway Station area, the city centre, the Zernike Campus, the University Medical Center Groningen, the Martini Hospital and Europapark/Kempkensberg.

- By approaching the bicycle as part of the entire transport chain. Not every journey is suitable for using a bicycle. Therefore we aim to use the bicycle for completing the last part of the journey. If you travel from Amsterdam to Groningen, you’ll arrive by train or car, but cycle to the Grote Markt.

We distinguish the main network, focused on a quick cyclist who moves through and a basic network that provides access and is fine-meshed. We also charted the bottlenecks.

The main network

The main network in Groningen consists of:

- Bicycle connections between the most important commuting areas to and from the city;
- The Bicycle Routes Plus and the connection with Meerdal;
- The urban network consisting of the city axes and the canal ring around the city centre.

The Bicycle Routes Plus are intended to bring students and commuters to and from the city quickly and comfortably. These routes compete with cars. The city axes go further into the city towards the city centre and the main economic motors. The comfort and speed of the main network are not yet of the required quality, particularly when we consider developments such as the pedelec. That is why we want to widen the main network, and build top-quality bicycle paths and add the missing links.

Separating bicycles and cars

Traditionally, bicycles infrastructure has always been laid next to car infrastructure. When cars and bicycles meet you create unsafe situations and delays. Therefore we choose to separate bicycle routes from car infrastructure where possible. In some streets, bicycles and car use do not combine well. In consultation with the inhabitants, we will investigate whether those streets could become a ‘bicycle street’ (fietsstraat). Where these types of measures are not possible, we will provide traffic lights with smart settings to ensure they do not delay cyclists unnecessarily.

The basic network

The fine-meshed basic network is woven into the districts and neighbourhoods of Groningen. The basic network is important to arrive from home or work onto the main network. Bicycles and cars meet in the basic bicycle network, where it is often not possible to separate them but that is generally not necessary either. It does require special attention to traffic safety and the quality of stay.

Strengthening the bicycle in the mobility chain

Bicycles form part of the total mobility chain. Many people cycle for part of their journey to or from the city; whether they use a car, bus or train. They often park their car in the districts or on business parks. We want to offer a structural option to cycle further into town from P+R locations and railway stations.

We want to achieve that people cycle for the first or last part of their journey. We hope that this will reduce the parking pressure on the districts.

COMPASS PROJECT: PARK & BIKE AT ALL P+R LOCATIONS AND RAILWAY STATIONS

We make it more attractive at all Groningen P+R locations and stations to change from car, train or bus to a bicycle. We will improve the bicycle links from the P+R locations to the city.

We will also provide public transport bicycles (OV-fiets) for commuters, combined with bicycle lockers and top-quality bicycle parking. We are also considering offering pedelecs.

Take opportunities during infrastructure projects

Over the coming years, the city will have major infrastructure projects. During these works we will encourage bicycle use. We are doing this together with Groningen Bepalebaar, traffic infrastructure board of the northern authorities and Groningen employers. When the large projects have been completed, we want people to continue cycling. Particularly for the first and last part of their journey to their destination. We aim to achieve this with infrastructural modifications, bicycle parking facilities and Smart Routes. A central aspect is improved use of the existing infrastructure.

COMPASS PROJECT: ACCELERATE CYCLE ROUTE PLUS GRONINGEN-HAREN

During the conversion of the southern circular road, the new Helpertunnel will be constructed. This replaces the existing level crossing at Esperantostad. We aim to prevent that this produces an additional crossing for cyclists who travel north. Therefore we want to build here a Bicycle Route Plus alongside the busy Helpertunnel. The Helpertunnel district will become a 30 km/h (20 mph) area. The conversion of the southern circular road is a good opportunity to accelerate the redesign of Helpertunnel and to build a Bicycle Route Plus between Groningen and Haren.
STRATEGY 3
SPACE FOR BICYCLES

In Groningen we acknowledge the benefits of bicycles. We also know that further development is important to our city, so we are dealing with the consequence of growth. We improve our bicycle network and create new Smart Routes. We also create more space - literally - for bicycles in various places.

Better quality of stay in the city centre
We are aiming at an improved quality of stay in the city centre. We will ensure that the layout of the key shopping area is focused even more on pedestrians. Cyclists are also welcome. Cyclists who do not have to be in the city centre are offered attractive and smart alternatives. We build sufficient high-quality bicycle parking in the city centre. When bicycle parking is a little further away, we make sure there are attractive walking routes to the shops and other important places. These routes should have the least possible nuisance for pedestrians. We are looking at clean and safe provisioning of shops with cargo bikes for example. We wish to achieve that walking becomes a real pleasure.

Space for bicycles on routes to the city centre
Our bicycle network to the city centre can no longer cope with demand in some places. This has a negative impact on traffic safety, but also on the speed of cars and bus traffic. With the growth of Groningen in mind, clear choices for bicycles are required in several places.

COMPASS PROJECT: BICYCLE STREET KORREWEG
The Korreweg is one of the most busy bicycle routes. At rush hour, the bicycle paths are overflowing and the lane for cars becomes smaller. Therefore we want to redesign Korreweg as a bicycle street (fietsstraat). This plan should match the plans for the Oosterhannink-route and the replacement of the Gient Krol bridge.

COMPASS PROJECT: CYCLING ON THE CANAL RING
Major maintenance to the canal ring provides an opportunity to improve our cycling network in and around the city centre. We aim to achieve a high-quality bicycle route over the canal ring. The design will take additional account of bridges and other places where busy bicycle routes cross with top-quality public transport.

TOP 5 busiest bicycle routes

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STRATEGY 4
TAILORDED BICYCLE PARKING

The people of Groningen want to get everywhere on bicycle. Good parking facilities are essential. Part of our cycling strategy is to experiment a little more. We learn what works and what doesn’t. It is important that we do not force anything; cyclists choose the most logical solution. We focus on influencing behaviour by providing attractive facilities and innovative measures. We give cyclists choices and take account of the fact that they behave differently on weekdays than at weekends. At busy times we will offer alternative facilities or routes.

Bicycle parking in the city centre
For bicycle parking in the city centre we make clear choices that meet the parking needs of visitors and employees:
• Short-term parking: flexible solution in public spaces;
• Medium-term parking: permanent facilities in public spaces;
• Long-term parking: top-quality bicycle parking, indoors or underground. It is important that short-term and medium-term parking remains free of charge.

COMPASS PROJECT: EXPANSION OF CITY CENTRE BICYCLE PARKING
We want to build a top-quality bicycle parking at Vismarkt/Haddingestraat. This will be a significant expansion of the parking facilities in the city centre. We also want to create more temporary bicycle parking in vacant shop premises. This way, cycling contribute to the economic vitality and social safety of the city centre.

Bicycle parking in the districts
Young people like to live in the old districts around the city centre. Consequently the number of bicycle parked in public spaces has increased significantly even though space is limited. In order to make sure that parking for inhabitants works well, we make the following choices:
• Solve as much indoors as possible. From the beginning, developers have to include this in their planning, as set out in the new Bicycle Effect Analysis;
• If there are no indoor solutions, we will look for a solution on their own site;
• If there are no indoor solutions or at our own site we look for district-specific tailored solutions in public spaces. Naturally this happens in consultation with the inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

COMPASS PROJECT: BICYCLE PARKING IN ORDER
We would like to remove car parking spaces to create more bicycle parking spaces. This will be on condition that if parking bicycles on own site is not possible, the parking pressure of cars permits more bicycle parking and it requires commitment from the inhabitants. We will also consider whether it is possible to ask lodging providers to place bicycle racks at their own expense.
STRATEGY 5
THE STORY OF GRONINGEN - CYCLING CITY

In Groningen we love bicycles. We are a young, innovative, cultural city in an attractive environment. This makes Groningen an attractive living and working environment. We want people of Groningen to be even more aware of this to ensure they will cycle even more often. We also aim to be and remain an inspirational example to other cities. Not just for them to learn from us, but to promote Groningen too. A viable city with good cycling facilities attracts innovative knowledge companies. In the end, cycling is economy.

Awareness
We want to promote Groningen - Cycling City clearly and permanently. We want to achieve that bicycles are used even more for commuter traffic. To have even more recreational cycling to enjoy the City and Province of Groningen. In a healthy way. We also aim to achieve that cyclists behave more actively and aware and that self-learning behaviour becomes the norm. We wish to inspire and invite people to devise innovative cycling ideas. Cycling is fun and cycling makes you proud of your city.

Promotion
Groningen’s clearly defined cycling policy is seen as an example internationally. We aim to promote Groningen - Cycling City even more to ensure more delegations from other cities and countries to visit our city. Every year, dozens of delegations from all over the world come to visit to learn from our approach. This strengthens our cycling image and encourages the urban economy, for example stays in hotels.

COMPASS PROJECT: YEAR OF THE BICYCLE

In 2016 we organise the Year of the Bicycle. We aim to host a large national or international bicycle conference in Groningen. We will also be a candidate to become the Best Cycling City in the Netherlands. We will organise or host some popular bicycle events, for example the Eneco Tour, Ride for the Roses or the Red Bull Mountain bike Challenge.

COMPASS PROJECT: 050 CYCLING CITY LOGO

The 050 Cycling City logo has major potential for the ‘brand’ Groningen - Cycling City. Everybody knows 050 as the telephone area code for Groningen. We want to incorporate this striking logo in all bicycle traffic lights in the city and everywhere where a bicycle marking is required on the road, we choose the 050 Cycling City logo. We will also develop merchandise. Our logo must become the eye catcher for all communications about cycling.
Some examples: Show what to gain!
Smart Route: Promotion and campaign

3,000

11,700
Smart Route: Promotion and campaign

- Zonnelaan:
  - 3,000 (2013)
  - 5,000 (2017)
  - +67%

- Smart Route: West:
  - 9,900 (2013)
  - 10,400 (2017)
  - +5%

- Smart Route: East:
  - 11,700 (2013)
  - 19,200 (2017)
  - +64%
Smart Route: Bicyclestreet
Smart Route: **Bicyclestreet**
Smart Route: **Bicyclestreet**
Smart Route: **Priority for cyclists**

- 12,000 cyclists per day
- 11,000 cars per day
Smart Route: Priority for cyclists
Smart Route: **Space for cyclists**
Smart Route: Space for cyclists
Smart Route: *Bicycle roundabout*
Smart Route: Bicycle roundabout
Accessibility and Safety
Accessibility and Safety
Pop up bike parking
Modern bicycle parking
THANK YOU and Tot Ziens in Groningen!