

Summary

Long-term Bicycle Plan 2012 – 2016



Amsterdam' bicycle infrastructure deserves investment

It is impossible to think of Amsterdam without thinking of bicycles. Bicycle use over the past 20 years has grown spectacularly. The number of bicycle trips has increased by more than 40%, Amsterdam residents cycle about 2 million kilometres each day and the bicycle is the favoured form of transport for short trips within the city ring. Municipal policy has supported these promising and healthy developments for years.

Bicycles were always the solution to all problems, weren't they?

Bicycles are an inexpensive and indispensable mode of transport in cities. Because bicycles don't take up much space and are 'clean' compared to other forms of transport, the use of bicycles is an enormous contribution to a city's appeal. Moreover, for years bicycles have been the solution to accessibility problems; cycling reduces road traffic and numbers of people using public transport, and bicycles are the primary form of transport to and from railway stations.

It is at exactly these locations that bicycles have come to be seen as a problem in recent years: as pollution in the public space that also impairs accessibility at stations.

Current problems

Amsterdam residents wanting to park their bikes at Central or Amstel Station spend a great deal of time trying to locate a suitable and safe place, and out of frustration eventually leave their bikes parked against a tree or to a bridge railing because of the lack of racks. The situation around Central Station is so out of control that the area is now worse than the average disorganised messy public space. If we do not intervene, the way bicycles are parked will cause serious accessibility problems.

More than 1500 cyclists use the busiest routes in the evening rush hour between 16:00 and 18:00; over 3500 cyclists pass through the Weteringschans alone. The cycle lanes and paths in the city are too narrow to safely accommodate this enormous stream of cyclists and busy intersections become congested. A third of cycling accidents happen on one of these busy routes (15% of the total cycle network).

The problem is not the huge number of cyclists – after all this should be regarded as a victory for the city – but the shortage of a good cycling infrastructure. The construction of additional facilities has lagged behind the increasing bicycle use. This is clear to anyone, especially in the city centre where most of the cycling occurs. Amsterdam is in a transitional phase: the cycling infrastructure requires significant investment during the next few

years to restore the balance between supply and demand in this area. The daily visible effects caused by the current imbalance are hereby eliminated.

This Meerjarenplan Fiets (Long-term Bicycle Plan) is operational until 2016. Cyclists will notice tangible improvements at major bottlenecks, but this is only the beginning of an ambitious catch-up effort. If we want to continue to enjoy the benefits of the widespread use of bicycles as we did before, major investments will also have to be made after 2016 in anticipation of their increasing use. Approximately € 120 million will be invested in this programme before 2020.

The solution: a catch-up effort

Smart, targeted investing will reinvigorate bicycle use as Amsterdam's response to major urban challenges such as accessibility and creating appealing public spaces. The available resources, particularly in this period of austerity, will be used as efficiently as possible during the next few years. The resources for bicycle parking will be used in those places where accessibility is most under pressure (stations) as well as in the Rode Loper¹ and Leidseplein coalition projects that focus on improving accessibility and the public space. These are also the places where Amsterdam residents find it the most difficult to park their bikes (see figure 1). Investment in the cycling network focuses on the busiest routes, so that as many cyclists as possible benefit from the improvements.

Bicycle parking, steps to be taken by 2016

a. *Significantly increasing the number of bicycle racks at stations and in the city centre.* 2013 will see the addition of another 1700 parking spaces at Central Station to ensure that there will be enough places until construction of the large indoor bicycle racks is completed. The first new facility with approximately 1000 places will open in 2013. The bicycle racks at Station Zuid that will be removed due to the construction of a tunnel under the A10 will be replaced by a new indoor facility with 3000 places. Furthermore, during this period decisions will be made about investing in indoor parking facilities at Central Station and Station Zuid to ensure there is sufficient capacity by 2020. A total of 800 additional places will be created at the remaining stations, with 2000 new places at subway stations.

¹ The Rode Loper project was founded in 2003 to prepare the re-organisation and makeover of the surface route following the new North/South underground line in the city centre. It affects the following streets/locations: Damrak, Beursplein, Beursstraat, Oudebrugsteeg, Rokin, Oude Turfmarkt, Vijzelstraat, Vijzelgracht en de Nieuwe Vijzelstraat.



Another 4500 parking places will be created around the Leidseplein and Rode Loper areas. The situation has to be tailored to the needs of the cyclists. We have taken note of these requirements and are working on appropriate measures with the Leidseplein and the Rode Loper project teams. Initially, a solution will be sought on the ground, so that cyclists can park in close proximity to their destinations. If it is not possible to park a bike within reasonable walking distance of a destination (up to 200 metres), we will have to consider increasing capacity by constructing other, more expensive and often more complex facilities, such as open overhead parking spaces.

b. Improving the operating and regulating of bicycle parking

More space for bicycle parking is created through substantial investment, but space will always be limited. Instead of continuing to build new parking facilities, those at the busiest locations should be better regulated than they are now, also to get rid of abandoned bikes and bikes that have been parked there too long. The following actions will be carried out in the short-term:

- Limiting parking time to 7 or 14 days (this is already successfully used at the Leidseplein, Amsterdam Central Station, and elsewhere). This also ensures that all wrecks and abandoned bikes are removed from an area.
- The success of Fietspunt at Station Zuid means it is slowly being phased in at other stations.



Figure 1: answer to the question to 2600 Amsterdam citizens: What is, in your opinion, the most annoying spot to park your bicycle? Source: O+S

Cyclists still have to pay for the first day they park their bike in a shed but the city council would like the first day of indoor parking to be free. A charge can be levied from the second day to prevent the indoor racks from being unnecessarily occupied for too long (present rate Fietspunt Zuid: 1st day free, 2nd and 3rd days € 0.50 per day, then € 2 per day). The municipality is in discussions with NS to introduce the Fietspunt concept in the short term at the indoor facilities at Amstel Station, currently half empty all the time.

- The use of bicycle monitors.
- Utilise temporary bicycle parking facilities in crowded areas in the city, as has been done at Leidseplein.

c. New construction strategy and plans for other busy areas

We are working with other districts on a long-range plan for bicycle parking for busy areas outside the city centre. Special attention will also be paid to parking facilities for carrier tricycles and scooters. New parking standards for homes, offices and facilities will address the problems in Amsterdam. More than before, bicycle parking will be integral to city planning.

Bicycle parking, steps to be taken by 2020

Commissioning indoor parking facilities and implementing the new construction

The construction of large indoor facilities is currently being prepared at Station Zuid and Amsterdam Central. Between 2016 and 2020 the capacity at Central Station will increase by at least 14,000 spaces, 10,000 of which will be indoors. Capacity at Station Zuid will be expanded to about 8000 spaces. A new parking facility with 3000 spaces below the Mahlerplein is another part of this strategy. These steps will ensure that cyclists have a secure location close to their destinations to leave their bicycles, and the public space surrounding stations can also be made more appealing. Approximately 4500 additional bike racks are needed at other stations, in addition to improving the use of existing sites by introducing the *Fietspunt* concept at the indoor bicycle sheds and applying time limits on parking spaces in the public space.

The cycling infrastructure, steps to be taken by 2016

More space has to be created for cyclists, especially within the A10 ring road. Many roads will have to be changed to accommodate this. The following steps have been taken in anticipation of this re-routing work to improve the cycle network in the short term:

- a. 15 km of the most dangerous sections of the cycle network (busy routes without separate cycle paths) are being made safer (red asphalt and widening where possible);
- b. Improving traffic flow and safety by adjusting the timing of traffic lights and using countdown timers;
- c. New connections.
 - Expand the cycle network with important connections such as the one below the train tracks to the west of Central Station and the new cycle path across the Noordhollandsch Kanaal (Great North Holland Canal) near the Mosplein in Amsterdam North.
 - More new connections are being prepared as well (e.g., a fast connection between Amstelveen and Amsterdam West, along the Kostverlorenkade). A decision to be taken about this in the next few years.



Cycle network, steps to be taken by 2020

From a dense network of reasonable quality to a finely-woven network of excellence

The most popular mode of transport in Amsterdam should be given enough space. This will be achieved with Plusnet Fiets: a comprehensive network of spacious, safe, fast routes through the city centre. Cyclists have priority here. The routes that will be part of Plusnet Fiets must not only meet all the requirements specified in the Duurzaam Veilig² (Sustainable Safety) vision; the width of cycle paths must also be tailored to the number of cyclists using them. Insofar as it is possible, cyclists must have priority at intersections and countdown timers reduce anxiety in waiting cyclists. The construction of the Plusnetten ('Plus Networks') is dependent on the necessary changes to the road infrastructure and will also be financed from the available resources. This will create work through work and the infrastructure will be modernised in a sensible and cost effective way.

² The national Duurzaam Veilig (Sustainable Safety) proposal aims to prevent accidents and, where that cannot be achieved, to eliminate risk of injury as much as possible. One of the main principles is to minimise potential conflicts between slow and fast moving traffic by constructing cycle paths, for example.



Dealing with scooters

Scooters are not that dangerous to cyclists, but they do irritate them. The Meerjarenplan Verkeersveiligheid 2012–2015 (Road Safety Plan 2012–2015) describes the steps the city council is taking to reduce this aggravation as well as the number of accidents involving mopeds and scooter. These include the possible exclusion of mopeds from bicycles paths in 30 km/h zones, and the Slow Riders educational and enforcement campaign.

Amsterdam has a limited ability to effect substantial change. To be truly effective national measures such as requiring riders to wear helmets or abolishing mopeds have to be taken. The city council will not falter on this issue and will continue to seek solutions to tackle problems associated with mopeds and scooters, mopeds being the priority.

Costs

Bicycles are extremely important for the city of Amsterdam. Realising all these ambitions by 2040 will require approximately € 200 million. An investment of almost € 120 million is needed between now and 2020 to solve the main problems associated with bicycle parking and the cycle network. € 90 million is needed to realise 38,000 parking spaces.

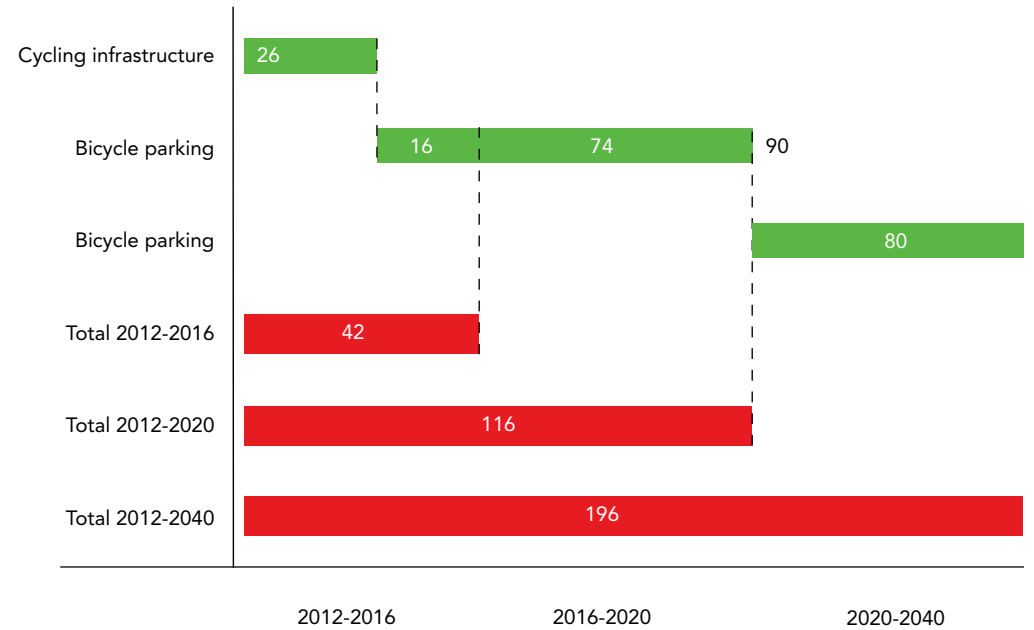


Figure 2: bicycle investments over the years 2012-2040 (in millions of euro's) – The investments in the bicycle network after 2016 are not displayed, these are largely financed from the available resources for road reconstructions.

Of this, about € 70 million is covered by ongoing projects (e.g., by ZuidasDok, ProRail and the City Region) and the Mobiliteitsfonds (Mobility Fund). Based on the current financial projections, there is sufficient money available for the remaining measures.

What's in it for the Amsterdam cyclist?

We will tackle unsafe areas on the busiest routes over the next few years. The routes will be safer and stations and busy urban areas will be more accessible. Not only the Amsterdam cyclist will benefit from this: bikes are indispensable to solving mobility issues in Amsterdam, so ultimately everyone benefits. The measures outlined above are necessary and economically justified. Compared to other modes of transport, investing in the bicycle infrastructure yields the most impact per euro. This upholds and strengthens Amsterdam's status as the world's bicycle capital. That is not a goal in itself, but a great way to ensure that Amsterdam remains appealing, sustainable, healthy and accessible.