



Maastricht



About Maastricht

Maastricht is a city situated in the southeastern part of the Netherlands, close to the border with Belgium and not far from Germany. It has a population of around 122,000 residents. Unlike the typically flat landscape of the Netherlands, Maastricht is surrounded by more hilly terrain characteristic of the South Limburg region. Bicycle use in Maastricht peaked in the 1950s, but the post-war shift towards car-oriented planning led to car travel becoming dominant by the late 1970s. Despite a refocus in urban planning towards promoting cycling in the 1970s, the region's share of cycling remains among the lowest in the Netherlands.

To enhance bicycle use, the city is currently developing an Action Plan for 2026–2030, which builds on the current 2020–2025 plan. The current plan aims to reduce rush-hour (car) traffic create more space for non-motorised transport, and increase the share of cycling trips both within the city and for trips to and from it by 5% by 2030 - from 31% (within) and 10% (to/from), respectively. The strategy focuses on strengthening both the city's and the region's cycling infrastructure to achieve this goal.



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Cycling in Maastricht

Various bicycle-promoting initiatives have been introduced in Maastricht and South Limburg over the past two decades to encourage a shift from car use to more sustainable modes of transport. For this policy brief, diverse yet emblematic initiatives have been selected and grouped into three categories.

1. E-bike interventions, which are part of stimulating bicycle use through different types of incentives;
2. Awareness campaigns that create positive attention for bicycle use and promote good mobility behaviour;
3. Cycling infrastructure improvements, including strengthening the bicycle network and providing secure parking facilities and reduce bicycle clutter in the public space.

While bicycle campaigns and actions are important for promoting cycling uptake, physical infrastructure represents a necessary condition, which is why such initiatives have been included. The selected initiatives were launched between 2013 and 2023, with e-bike interventions being among the most widely applied, particularly targeting car commuters. The municipality and a regional public-private partnership (PPP), Maastricht Bereikbaar (now Zuid-Limburg Bereikbaar), were among the key actors. The evaluation of the actions is based on stakeholder interviews, document reviews and external survey data.

Examples of cycling promoting initiatives

E-Bike actions

Try an E-bike (from 2012)

E-bike actions have been carried out by Maastricht Bereikbaar (MB) since 2012. Initially, the A2 motorway construction near Maastricht provided an opportunity to involve car commuters in trying transport alternatives more easily. The actions vary in duration and incentives. One type of action, recurring in the last decade, offers e-bikes for employees to try for a limited period. Other types of actions dominant in this period include financial rewards for e-bike use and discounted purchase options.

Burn Fat Not Fuel (2013)

Burn Fat Not Fuel (BFNF) was launched in 2013 by MB to assess the impact of rewarding employees for cycling instead of driving to work. Employers paid a fixed monthly fee per participant, while participants earned 10 cents per kilometre travelled. GPS devices installed on the e-bikes tracked the distances, and the BBNF app (now the GoodMoovs app) managed the financial compensation.

Bicycle campaigns & offers

#Posifiets (from 2021)

#posifiets is an awareness campaign focusing on cycling behaviour and culture. Launched in 2021 in Maastricht by MB, it initially focused on cycling safety, proper cyclist conduct and responsible bicycle parking (with enforcement). The campaign has since expanded to the rest of the Limburg province and now covers a variety of bicycle promotion and educational initiatives, such as e-bike actions and bicycle recycling programs.

Fietsbank (from 2012)

Fietsbank is an initiative run by volunteers who repair abandoned and defective bicycles in collaboration with Maastricht Municipality, the University of Maastricht (UM), and Kringloop Zuid (thrift store/charity). The bicycles, either donated or collected from designated drop-off points, are repaired and then distributed to people with limited financial resources through an application process. The initiative is also connected to similar concepts, such as Broodbank, a food bank that provides free bread to those in need.





Photo: Denis Jans on Unsplash

Bicycle infrastructure

F2 – Cycling highway (from 2018)

The Sittard–Maastricht fast cycling route, also known as F2, runs parallel to the A2 motorway and is the bicycle highway in the South Limburg region. F2 spans 23 kilometres, and is part of the national bicycle highway network in the Netherlands. Its development started in 2018 and is still (early 2025) under construction. Parts of the route are completed connecting towns such as Beek and Meerssen, and include features like the curved bicycle bridge.

Parking facilities in/outside the city (2013 & 2022)

To support bicycle parking and reduce car parking in the inner city of Maastricht, several (infrastructural) efforts have been undertaken. A notable project is the large underground bicycle facility near Central Station (CS). Also near the station there is a smart bicycle facility at street level, offering free parking with solar-powered digital signboards showing available spots. On the outskirts of Maastricht, several car Park & Ride (P&R) facilities have been established, such as P&R Noord, which provides access to shared bicycles and bus transit to ease parking pressure and reduce inner-city congestion.

While a broad range of factors shape cycling practices in Maastricht, we identified the following ones as key inenabling andconstraining further growth of cycling levels.



Factors enabling cycling in Maastricht

Rewarding cycling

Bicycle programmes that offer rewards for cycling appear to positively impact bicycle use in the wider area of Maastricht, according to data on self-reported behaviour. The initiatives also seem to influence the decision to purchase an e-bike, as the rewards provide a way to recoup the investment. The e-bike initiatives that gives participants the opportunity to try an e-bike for a limited period also seems to encourage e-bike purchases. Ideally, there would be a permanent offer for commuters to try an e-bike for a limited time.

Employer-based transport approach to promote cycling

Maastricht and Zuid-Limburg Bereikbaar's (MB & ZLB) approach to collaborating with local employers appears to effectively establish bicycle initiatives, promoting cycling for commuting, and achieving results in practice. A clear strategy is important for the initiatives' success and for future improvements. MB's focus on the entire customer journey seems impactful and involves the design of the actual bicycle action, employer support for incentives and reimbursement policies, and measuring and evaluating bicycle use results.

Awareness through campaigns

Broad bicycle campaigns, such as #posifiets, are an effective tool for raising awareness of bicycle culture and highlighting opportunities. Data indicate that people aware of this campaign tend to make fewer car trips. To build trust and raise awareness, ambassadors can play an important role. These ambassadors may be former participants or professionals. Alongside ambassadors, the use of technology and gamification, such as a VR experience, is also part of #posifiets and has been, according to a co-facilitator, an effective approach to making new inhabitants (i.e. students) aware of cycling-related issues such as parking.

Responsible use of cycling apps

Bicycle apps, some of which are employer-designed, help facilitate commuting by bicycle. For example, the BFNF app has supported employers' mobility plans and the incentivising employees' e-bike use. By providing data on health and the environment, GPS-based apps improve transparency regarding benefits, as well as monitoring and rewarding bicycle use. Thus, integrating bicycle apps seems valuable, though ethical concerns about when and how travel distances are measured must be carefully addressed. On a national level, the app Da's Zo Gefietst, launched in 2025, provides an overview of current bicycle initiatives, including those in the Limburg province.



Factors hindering cycling in Maastricht

E-Bike commuting near saturation?

The e-bike trial offers illustrate some positive outcomes as a collaborative approach to promoting e-bike commuting. However, the e-bike is no longer the novelty in the Netherlands that it was ten years ago, when these initiatives began to emerge. Monitoring a decline in participation in the "classic" e-bike trials in recent years compared to earlier periods (The 'early and later majority' may be reached, but how to reach the remaining 40%?) has led ZLB to rethink and restructure e-bike actions to continue achieving changes in mobility behaviour. Such a development underlines the importance of evaluating and rethinking initiatives as transportation behaviour and technology progress.

Limited outreach in cycling actions

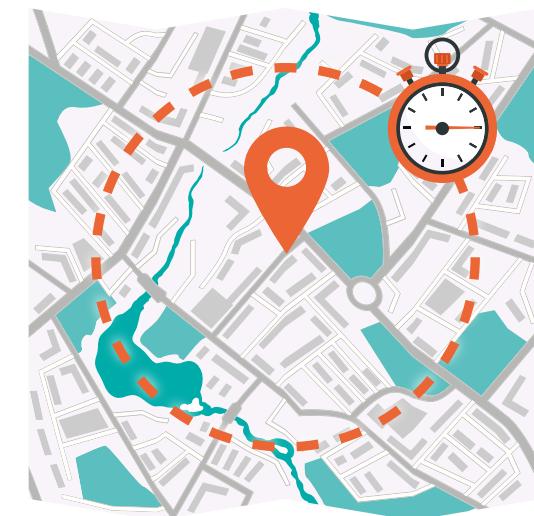
While various past and current initiatives include broad population groups, many e-bike initiatives for the evaluated period, as part of the large national programmes Beter Benutten, targeted employees of companies cooperating with the mobility-PPP in Maastricht and South Limburg. This limits opportunities for social groups who are not employed to gain experience with e-biking or to access opportunities to purchase an e-bike at a discount.

Lack of employee awareness of commuting support

Alternatives to car use supported by employers are important for sustainable commuting, e.g., through flexible reimbursement policies, financial support for purchases or other incentives. Travel policies vary among employers in terms of multimodal reimbursement policies, parking permits and buying schemes. Not only can an inflexible travel policy present an issue for sustainable mobility, but also a lack of awareness of one's workplace travel allowance. As highlighted by ZLB, 18% of employees at participating companies were aware of the reimbursement possibilities at their workplace.

Complexities with larger bike routes

Long bicycle lanes improve bikeability by connecting cities, and the F2 extends the bicycle network across municipal borders. Such projects are lengthy and involve many and various stakeholders and regulations, which present a ever-present risk of administrative barriers and resistance, as seen in the case of a proposed cycle connection between the Dutch and German cities, Maastricht and Aachen, which was discontinued partly due to local resistance resembling "not in my backyard" (NIMBY).



Lessons for governance and planning

Past bicycle initiatives in Maastricht include campaigns, e-bike actions, and infrastructure enhancements to encourage behavioural change. While such efforts have proven effective (in particular their combination), they should not be taken as a fixed solution, but rather point to continuous adaptation to achieve substantial impact.



This project has been funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Innovate UK, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), the National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR), the Dutch Research Council (NWO), and the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) under the Driving Urban Transitions Partnership, which has been co-funded by the European Union.

A promising approach for public agencies to encourage more sustainable mobility is a multi-step programme covering the entire customer journey and building on public-private partnerships: co-creating initiatives with employers or third-sector organisations, focusing on awareness, travel policies, bicycle access (or other alternatives to car use), and digital monitoring. For the success of such programmes, supportive policies and infrastructure (e.g., parking norms) are essential. Employers can empower cycling among employees by subsidising initiatives, such as bicycle-equipment support, as seen in evaluated actions. Cycling initiatives beyond employees' commuting are crucial, as they enhance inclusivity, as seen with initiatives such as Fietsbank. On a planning level, considering different (conflicting) interests may mitigate barriers to sustainable endeavours, for example, engaging with shop owners about a shift from grey, car-accessible city centres to green and still multimodally accessible centres.



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Co-funded by
the European Union

