



How Ghent changed the way people move

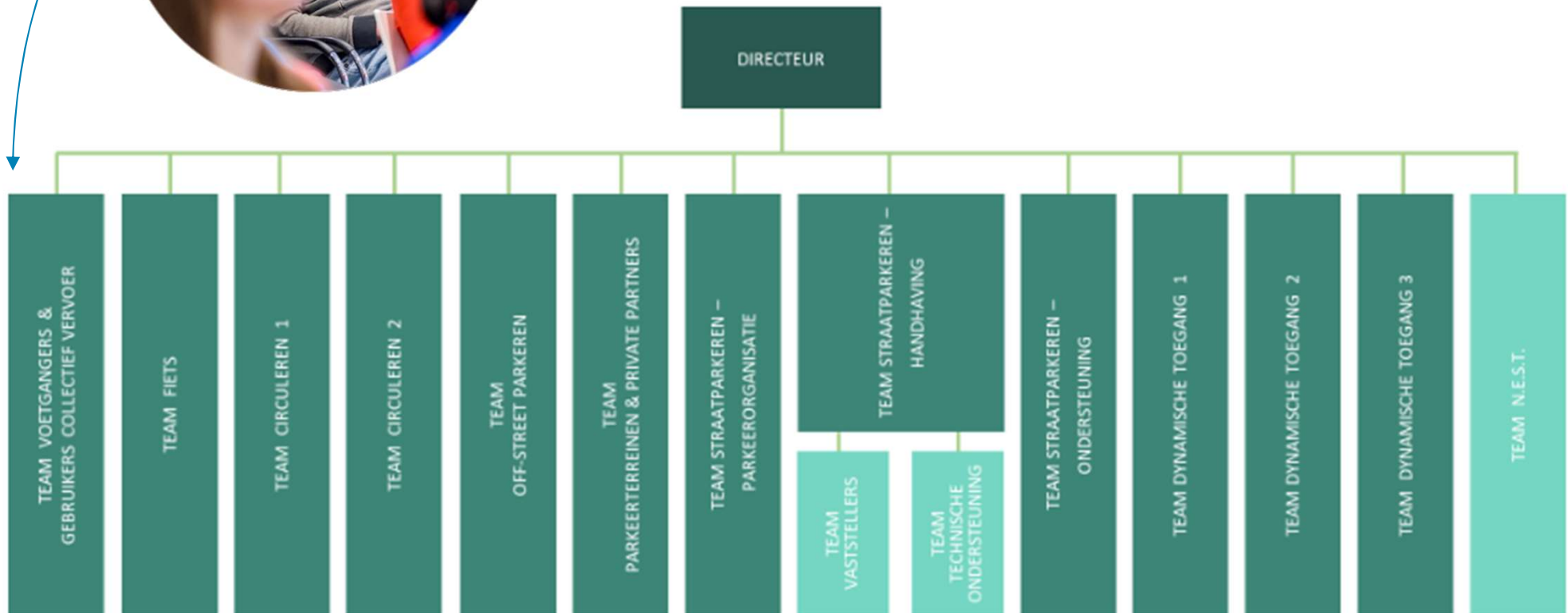
Learnings & challenges

Study visit CLImove – 16th april 2026

Who am I?



Merijn Gouweloose
Mobility Agency city of Ghent



Mobility Agency

- > Part of the Department of Urban Development
- > +180 people
- > 13 teams, horizontal structured
- > More autonomy than other departments, a.o.:
 - HR
 - Finance:
 - × Income: Parking on street, 9 parking garages, parking retributions, fines car free zone & illegal parking
 - Initiating new projects



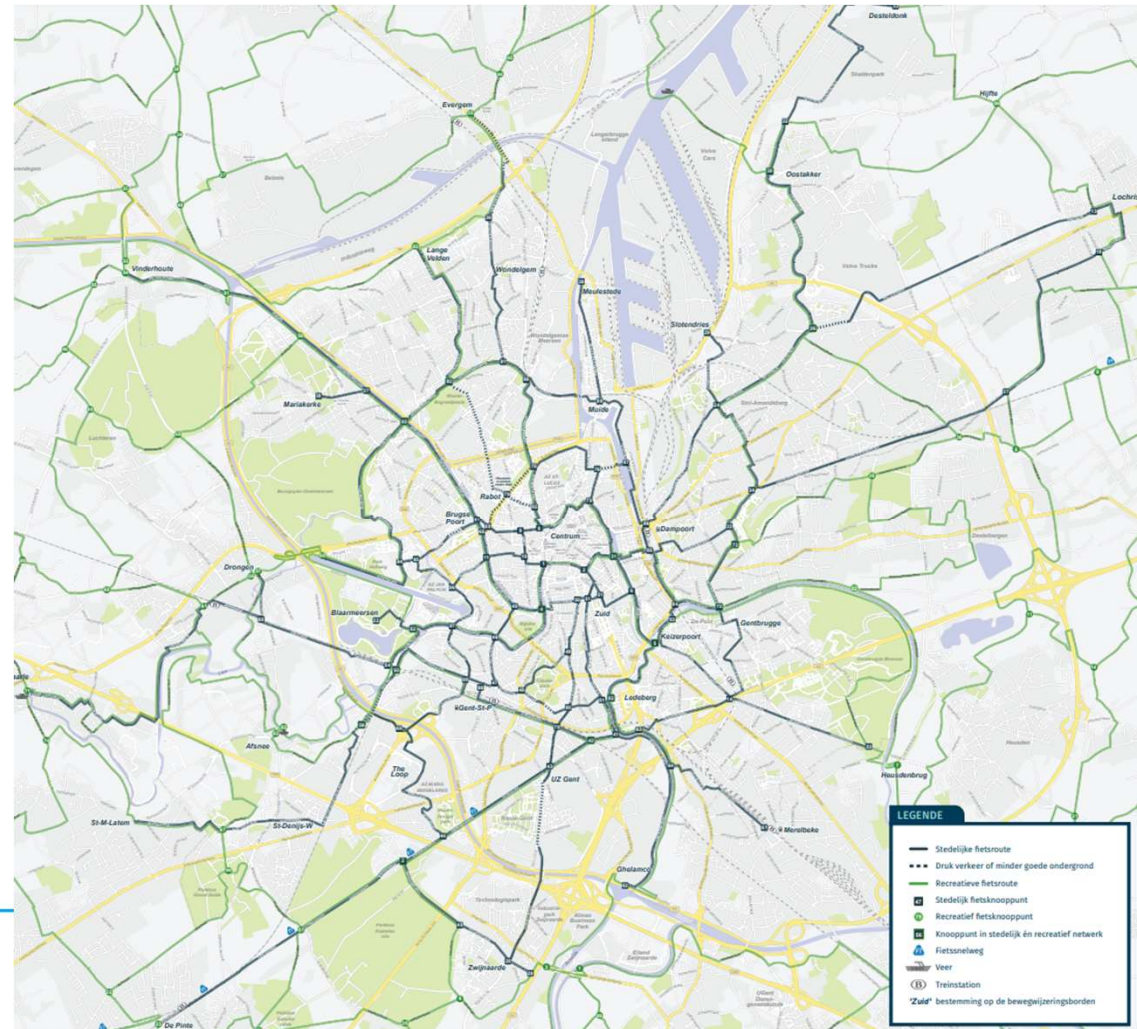
City of Ghent

2^d largest city in Flanders

- > 270,000 inhabitants (and increasing)
- > Economy:
 - Sea port and industry (north)
 - University and higher education => 75.000 students
 - Biotech / High tech (south)
 - City centre: shopping, leisure, culture, tourism, ...
 - Services, administration, ...
- > 190.000 work places, 100.000 incoming commuters
- > Medieval city centre, rivers and canals

City of Ghent: Cycling network

- Bicycle network: bicycle “highways”, low-traffic routes, ... bicycles lanes, cycling streets, underpasses, bridges, ...

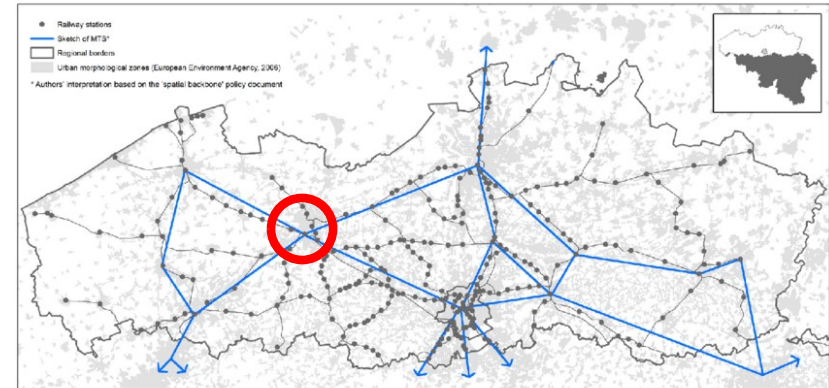




Public transport

Railway hub

- > 2 IC stations
- > Main station 'Sint-Pieters': 110 000 passengers/day, 23 trains leaving/h
- > 4 smaller train stops



Bus-tram

- > PTO 'De Lijn' > region Flanders
- > 4 tramlines, 5th by 2035
- > City bus, metropolitan area busses

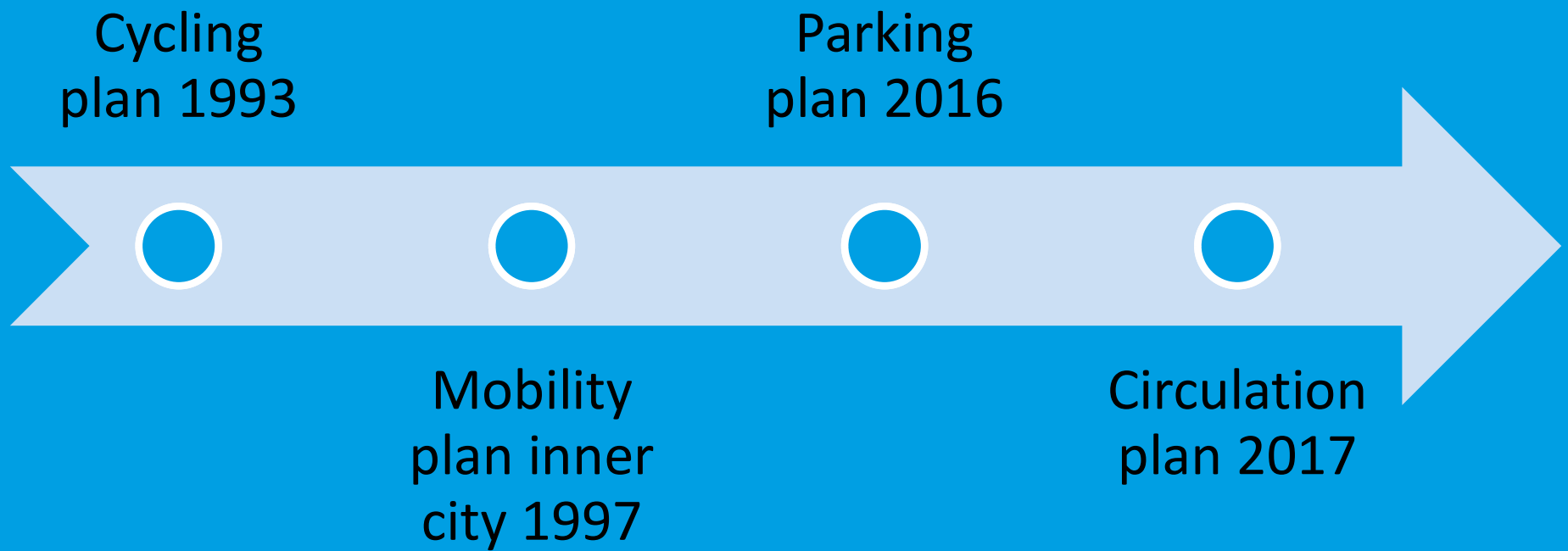
City of Ghent: Car and waterway network

- E40 X E17 motorways; outer and inner ring road
- Road network
 - Regional roads (main roads)
 - Municipal roads
- Waterways (Lys/Scheldt – Sea Canal, Ring Canal)

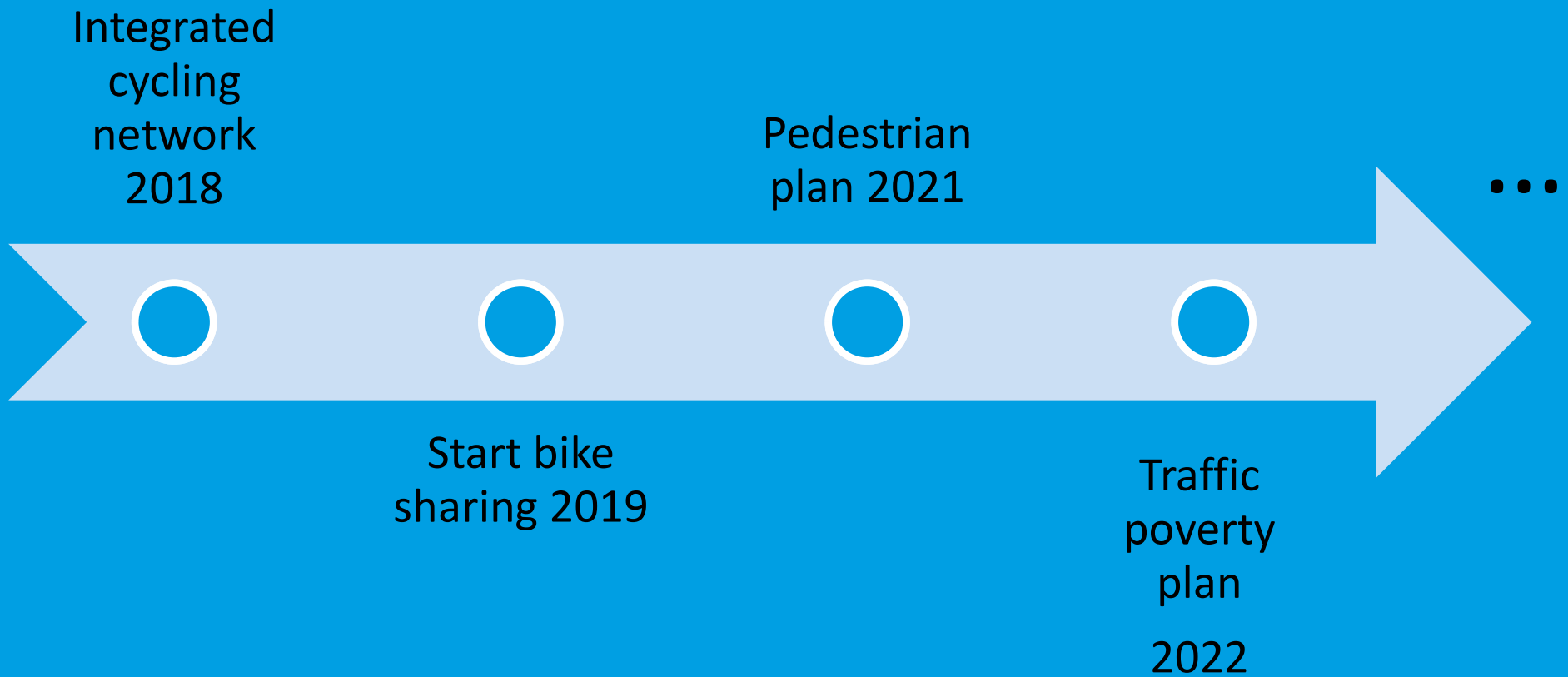


Green mobility – Challenges and solutions

Key moments in mobility planning



Key moments in mobility planning



Key moments in mobility planning

- Car sharing programme
- Redesigning public space
- Maximum speed of 30 km/h in urban areas
- Start *Fietsambassade in 2017*
- ...

Graslei



From parking-
lot



To meeting
place



And postcard



St-Baafssquare

From square



To parking-lot



To square,
again



St-Michielsbridge

From postcard



To traffic jam



And back to postcard



Emile Braunsquare

From parking
lot



To landmark



And meeting
place



The first bicycle plan of 1993

- > Focus on Infrastructure: Network of 4 functional routes, new cycle lanes, bridges,...
- > Bike parkings
- > Promotion, marketing & awareness campaigns
- > Cycling in two directions in almost all one way streets



Mobility Plan 1997: No through traffic in the historic city centre



- Creation of an extended pedestrian area
- No access for car traffic in general, no through traffic anymore
 - Limited access possible
 - Permits for delivering goods, work, professional reasons, inhabitants
 - Bikes and public transport allowed
- Control of the car free area by automatic detection system
- Refurbishing public spaces
- Stand still in public parking places



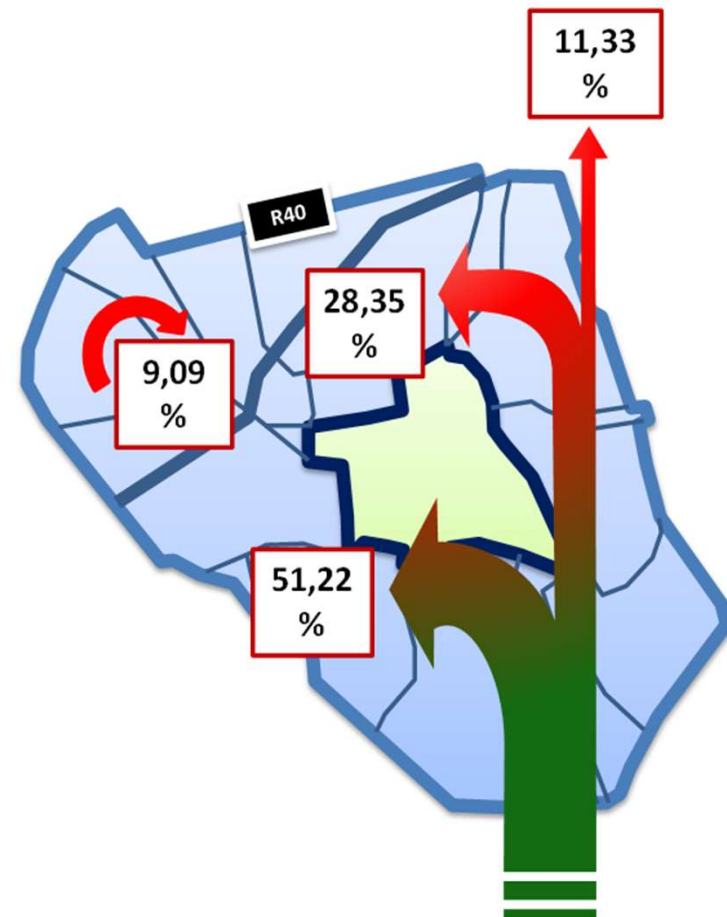
Circulation plan 2017

gent: Circulation plan city center ° 3/4/2017



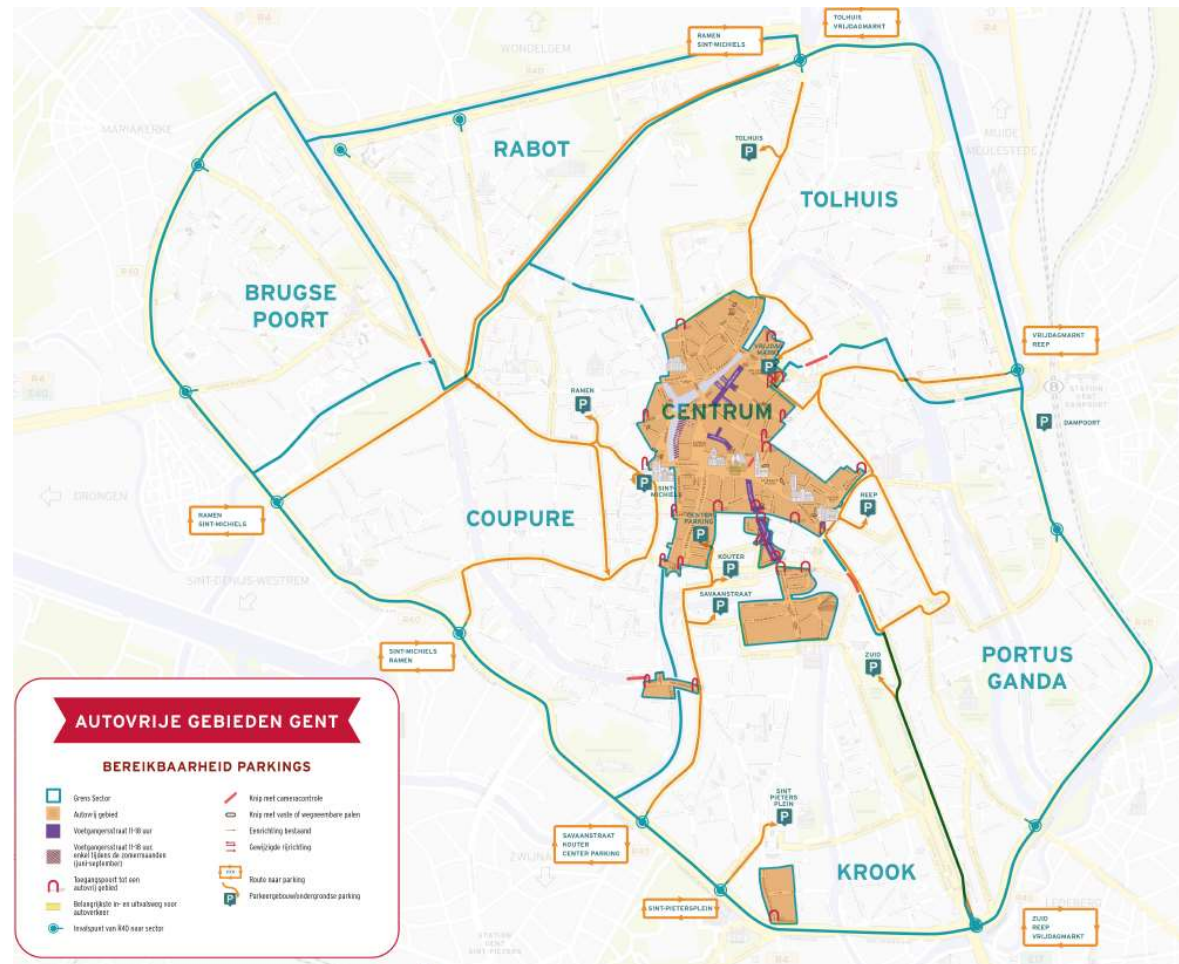
Goals?

- > Better accessibility for all modes
- > Improve liveability
- > Modal shift



How? What?

- > Keep out through traffic
- > Cars have to use city ring road to reach their destination
- > Going from one sector to another is only possible by the ring road
- > Extra measures to facilitate modal shift: P+R's, *wandelbus*, bike sharing scheme, shuttles,...
- > Not all measures and conditions were 100% ok from the beginning
 - Permits car free zones
 - Pedestrian streets
 - Wandelbus / fietstaxi
 - Bike sharing schemes
 - ...



“filters”

- > Barrier between sectors
- > Accessible for cyclists, public transport, taxi, emergency service & care-professionals
- > NPR camera

Car free zone

- > Doubled in size
- > Accessible for cyclists, public transport, taxi, emergency service & care-professionals & inhabitants
- > Deliveries restricted time-frames
- > NPR camera



Short term

- > Concrete block, bollards, paint
- > NPR Cameras
- > Planters, benches, flagpoles
- > Movable play-containers

Medium term

- > Redesign public space



D-day – 1 Sunday night



Ghent wakes up in a new context

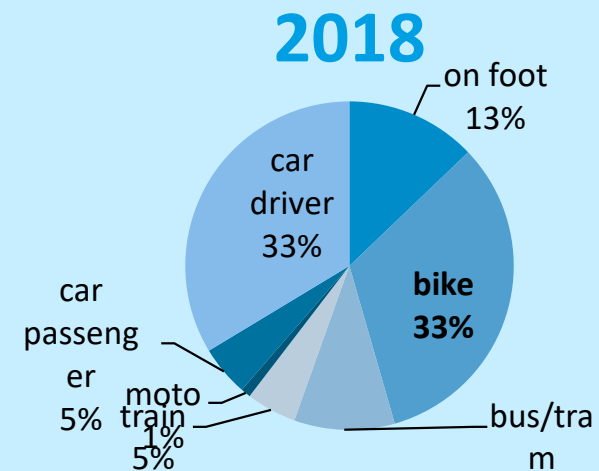
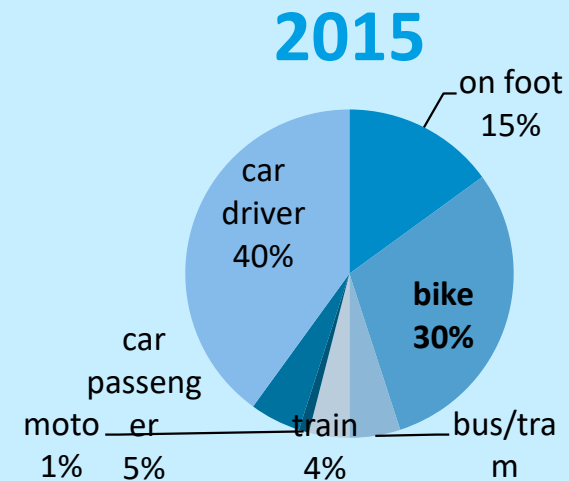


Results

Modal Shift? Yes.

2016 vs. 2018

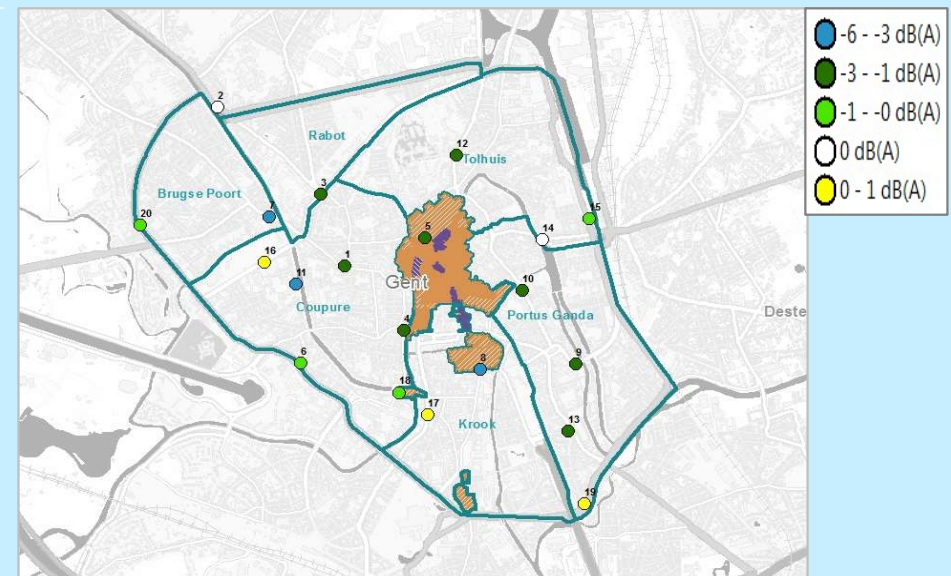
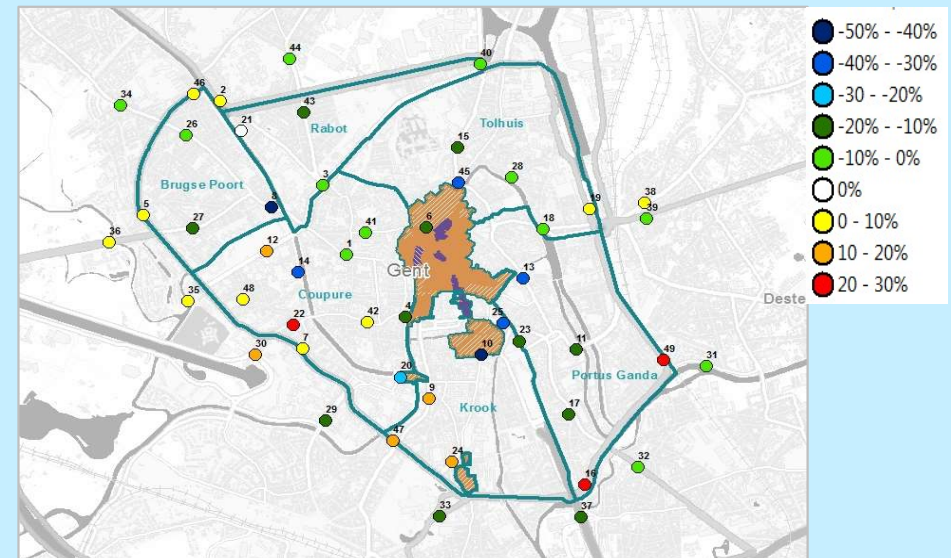
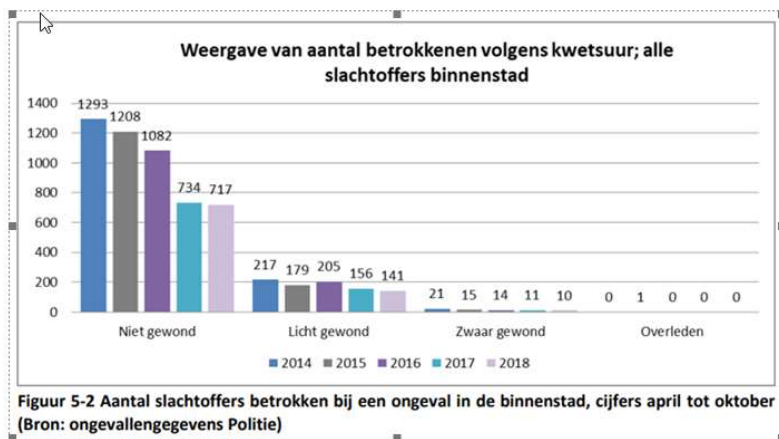
- > +60% cyclists in en out city center
- > +50% cyclists in center
- > -17% motorised traffic in & out center
- > 6% more users public transport
- > More pedestrians? No.



Verkeersleefbaarheid?

- > Air quality (less Nox)
- > Noise
- > 60% less through traffic
- > Strong reduction congestion

Safety → less accidents



Accessible city

- > Driving time to center: -35%
- > Driving time on ring road: +10%
- > Driving time from city center to ring road: -26%

- > No more congestion in center
- > Longer distance but shorter driving time for most destinations
- > Cycling: Less motorised traffic = safer & more enjoyable cycling



Permits for the car free zone

- > Permits required 24/7
- > Digital permits
- > Strict supervision
 - ANPR cameras
 - Fines 58 euros
- > Accessible for destination traffic e.g. inhabitants, deliveries, medical personnel, works and maintenance, transport of disabled people, emergencies,...
- > Permit regulation has been adapted several times:
 - Day pass for entrepreneurs
 - Retro-actif permit request
 - Easier procedures
 - Access for caregivers
 - Stricter enforcement



Pedestrian streets = no cycling (11 AM – 6 PM)



- > Stricter enforcement by the police needed
- > Permanent and visible instructions needed





From Wandelbus to Fietstaxi's



- Started in 2017
- Fixed route in the city centre
- Free to use
- Initiated for less mobile people, but often used by tourists
- Yearly budget of 480.000 euro
- Stopped in 2021



- Started in 2022
- Action radius within R4
- 2,5 euro for a trip, to reserve in advance
- Exclusively for less mobile people
- Yearly budget of appr. 200 000 euro
- More then 5000 trips in 2023
- Part of a traffic poverty plan

Bike sharing



Trapido

- Started in 2017
- Back-to-one system
- Focused on P+R's
- 100 bikes at 10 locations
- System owned by the city
- Yearly budget of appr. 160000 euro
- Stopped in 2019

Non-subsidized permit system

- Started in 2019
- Permit regulation
- Two operators, but only one started
- Hubs linked to bike parkings spots in the city
- No subsidies from the city

Subsidized permit system

- Started in 2022
- Renewed permit regulation
- Three operators
- Hubs linked to bike parkings spots in the city
- Subsidies from the city, with a maximum of 150 000 euro / year
- Subsidies linked to services in specific neighbourhoods, P&R's and events

Bike sharing

Importance of data! – number of trips per bike share operator

	Donkey Republic	Dott	Bolt	Totaal
2019	19 721			19 721
2020	29 337			29 337
2021	29 456			29 465
2022	85 812	114 826		200 638
2023	121 469	400 568	20 561	544 858

7 District mobility plans

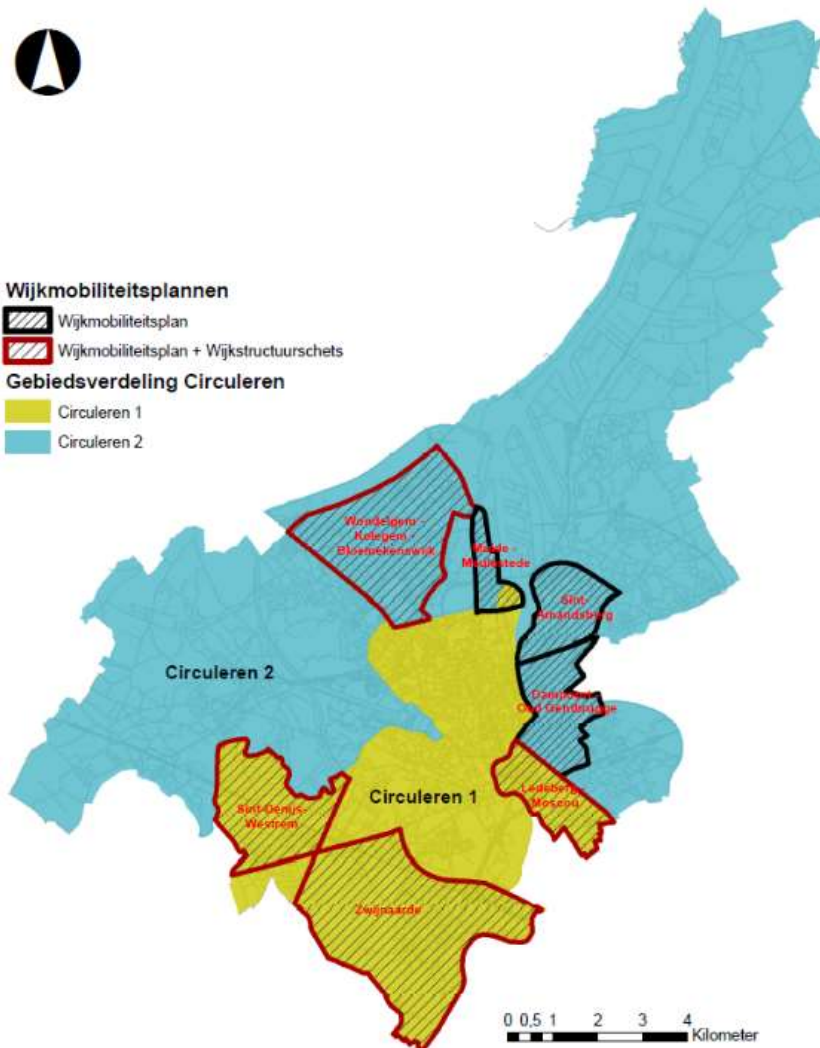


Wijkmobiliteitsplannen

- Wijkmobiliteitsplan
- Wijkmobiliteitsplan + Wijkstructuurschets

Gebiedsverdeling Circulieren

- Circulieren 1
- Circulieren 2



- > Applying lessons learned
- > Solid proces with participation

#ALSGETMIJVRAAGT

- > Different goals for each district

What's next?

7 District mobility plans

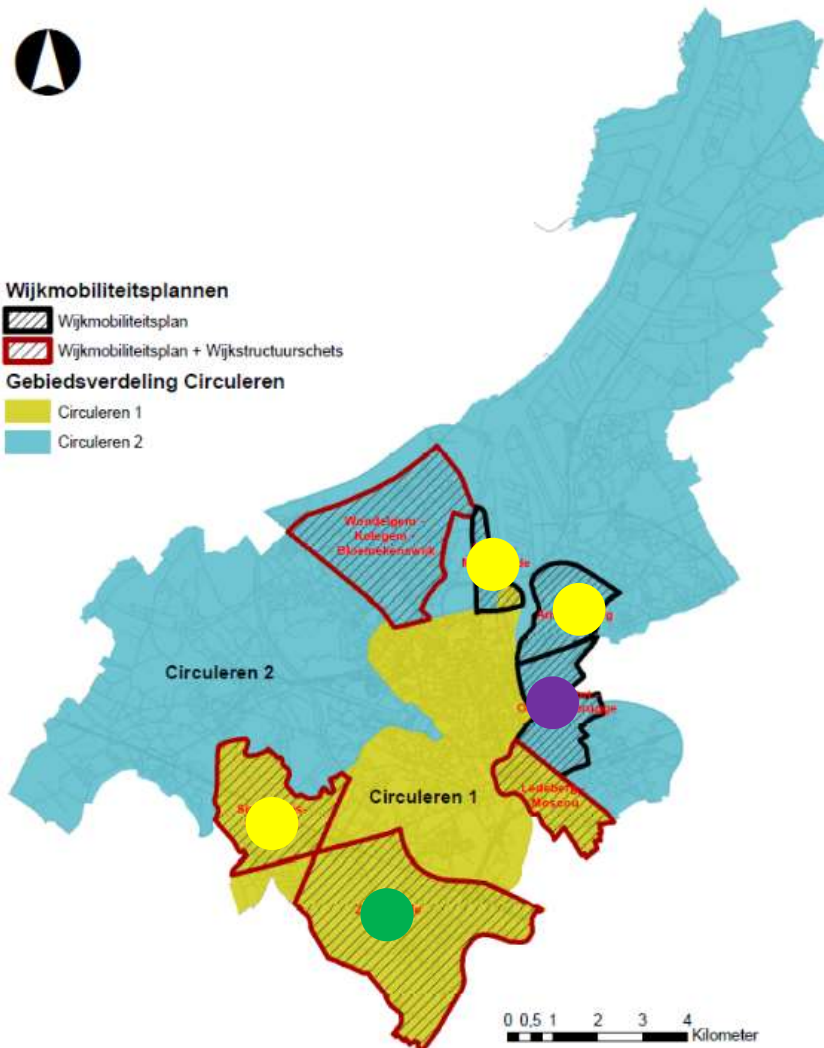


Wijkmobiliteitsplannen

- Wijkmobiliteitsplan
- Wijkmobiliteitsplan + Wijkstructuurschets

Gebiedsverdeling Circulieren

- Circulieren 1
- Circulieren 2



- > Implementd Zwijnaarde in spring 2024
- > Implemented Oud-Gentbrugge Dampoort in spring 2024
- > Research fase for 3 more plan halted, focus on “neighbourhood quality plans” in stead.

Learnings



Different context from city center



Participation is on-going quest



Not only mobility: broader approach needed



Parking

A plan – a reality

2016 => 2026

From challenges



mobility in Ghent

More cars than parking space

Better balance between parking space for inhabitants and visitors

Too much traffic looking for free parking space

To solutions



More paid parking zones

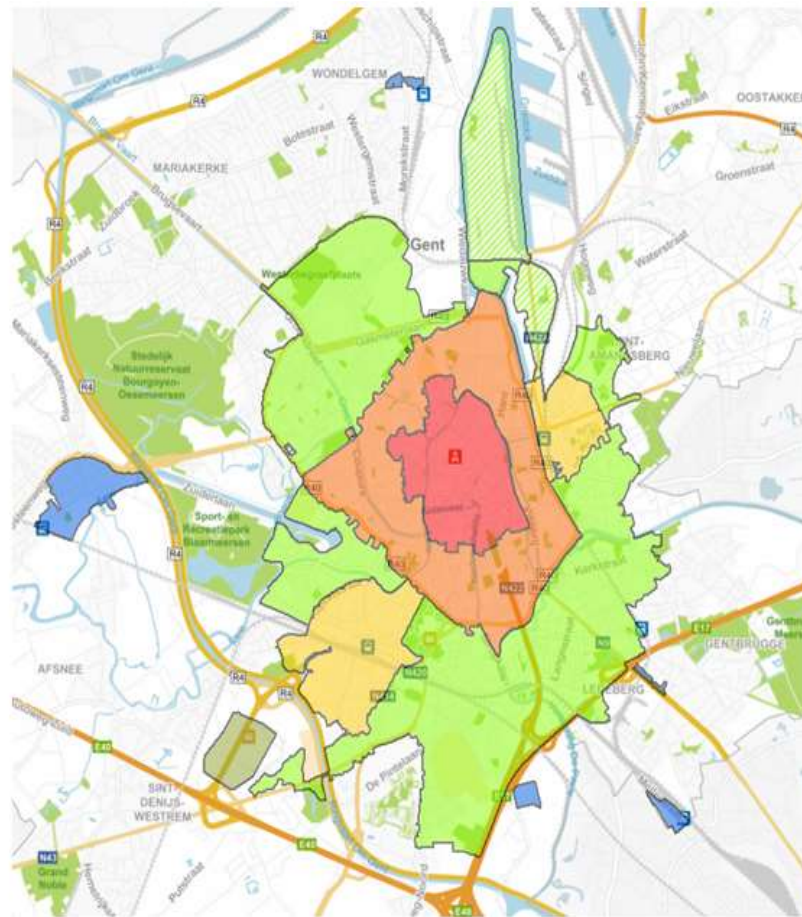
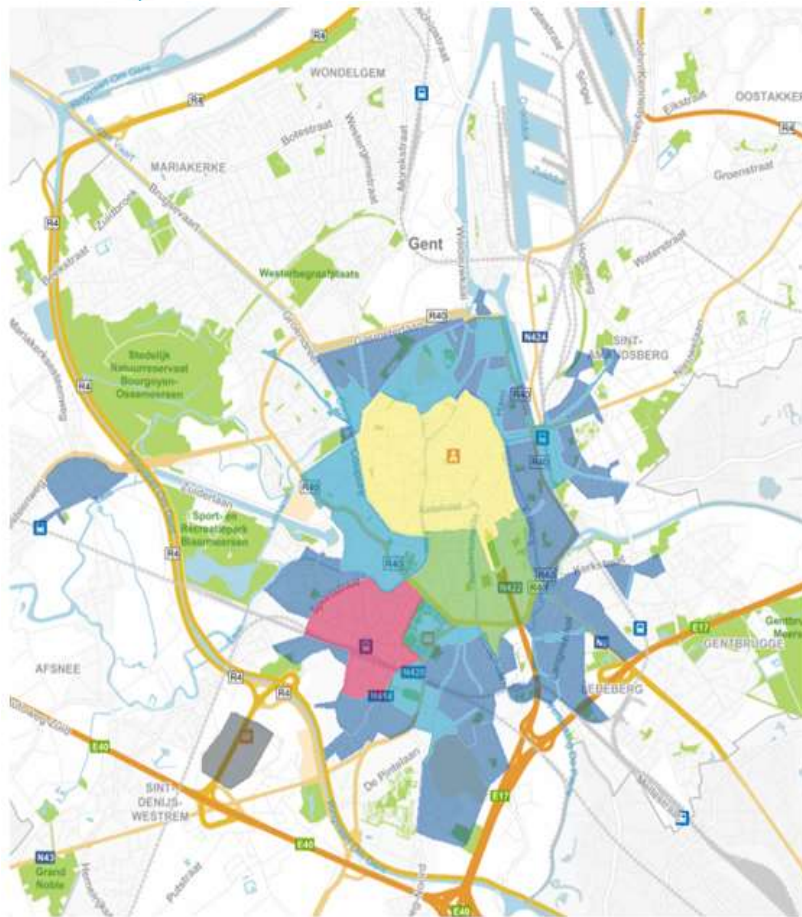
Only free parking for inhabitants (first car)

Higher fees for parking on street and in car parks

Promotion of P+R, cycling, public transport

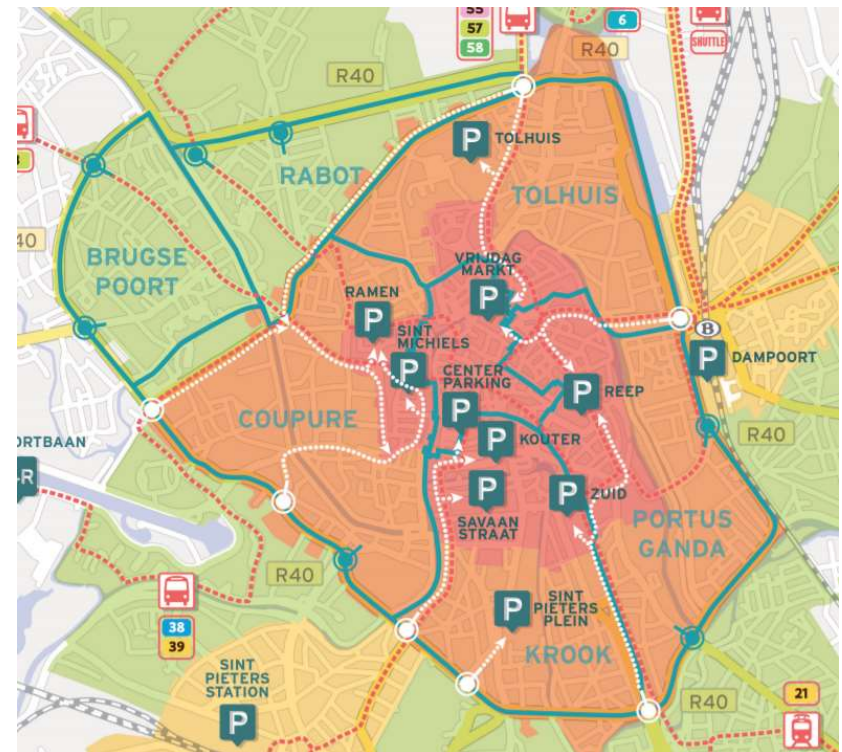
Rate zones

before – after



Off-street car parkings

- **Increasing rates**
 - Closer to city centre = more €€
 - Difference:
 - Rotation – on-street, red zone = max. 3h
 - Long stay – car parkings



Car charging

- 750 charging stations, 1500 spots
- Concession
- Since februari 2026: rotation rates:
 - >4 hours = €3,6/h



Learnings

- > Side effects:
 - Pressure on free parking zones
 - × Expanding the paid parking zones in 2023, 2024 & 2025
 - From payment terminals to mobile payments
 - × End 2023 more than 50% mobile payments
 - Enforcing on parking fees and illegal parking
 - × Scan car from mid 2024
 - × Since 2024 8 civil servants on illegal parking
 - × Succes: expanding



Future?



About 6000 parking spots different use since 2018 (13%)



Policy now: compensation off-street if needed



More clustered parking



Paid parking on sundays



Vision parking 2040

Dia 46

MG1

Parkeervisie?

Gouweloose Merijn; 2026-04-14T10:19:53.486

Principle 1: Use bicycle & car parking as leverage

Principle 2: Private parking contributes to better neighbourhood

Principle 3: more certainty for those who have to park on street

Principle 6: We transform our parking together

Principle 5: We prepare parking for the future

Principle 4: Comfortable distance parking for those who are able to



Cycling network Ghent



Public space transformation & active mobility

From the bicycle plan of 1993 to a cityregional cycling network

- > 1993: Network of 4 functional cycling routes
- > 2018: Approval of an integrated city regional cycling network



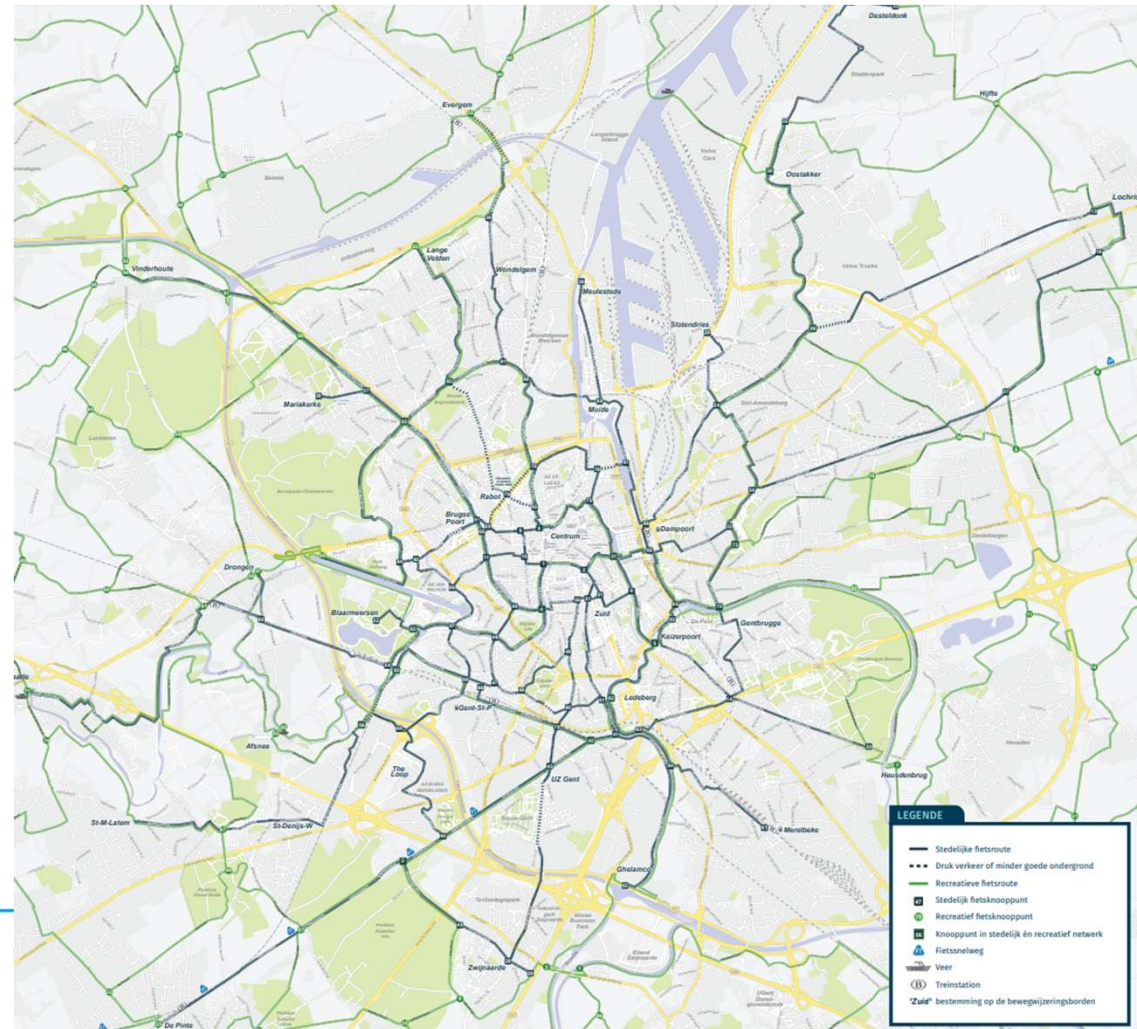
City of Ghent: Cityregional cycling network

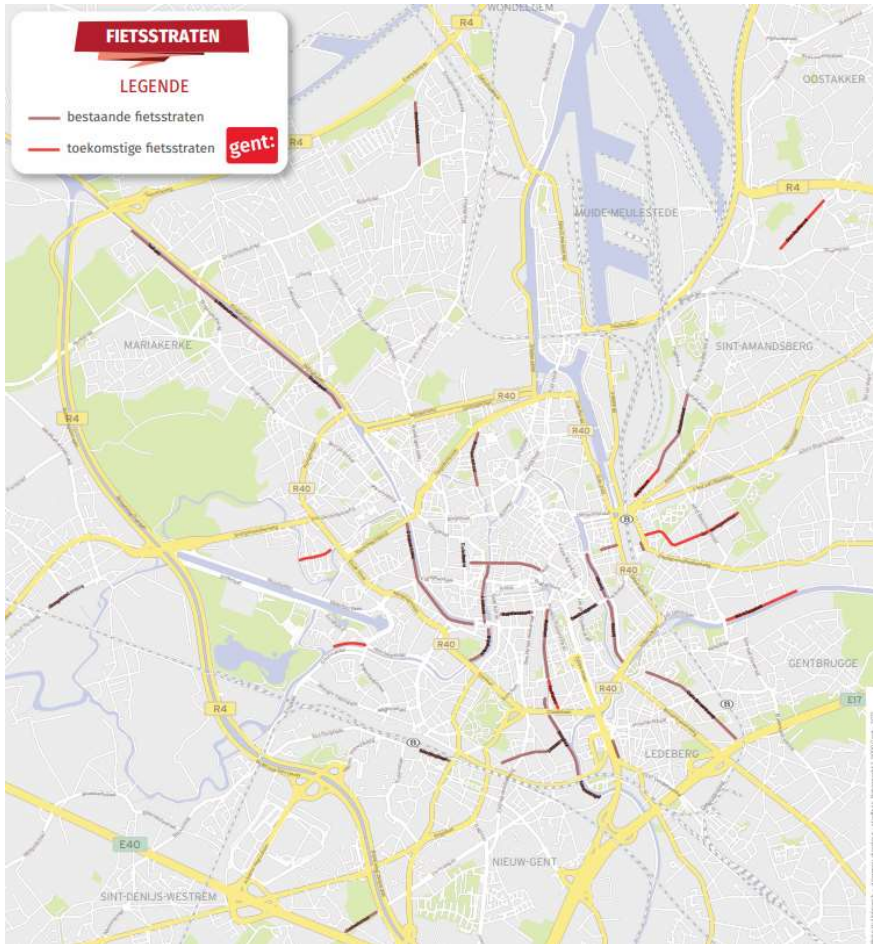
- > Four categories:
 - Cityregional connections
 - Primary city routes
 - Additional city routes
 - Local cycling routes
- > Connected to the cycling routes of the neighbouring towns
- > First 2 categories are part of a signalized network with car-free routes
- > Helps us to prioritize



City of Ghent: Cityregional cycling network

- > Bicycle network: bicycle “highways”, low-traffic routes, ... bicycles lanes, cycling streets, underpasses, bridges,... But also small measures!





Bicycle streets

- > Introduced in Ghent in 2011
 - First 'illegal'
 - Since 2012 part of the Belgian road code
- > A lot of communication needed!



New underpasses



New underpasses



New bridges





Bike parking in Ghent

Bike-parking on-street



> Neighbourhood-oriented approach

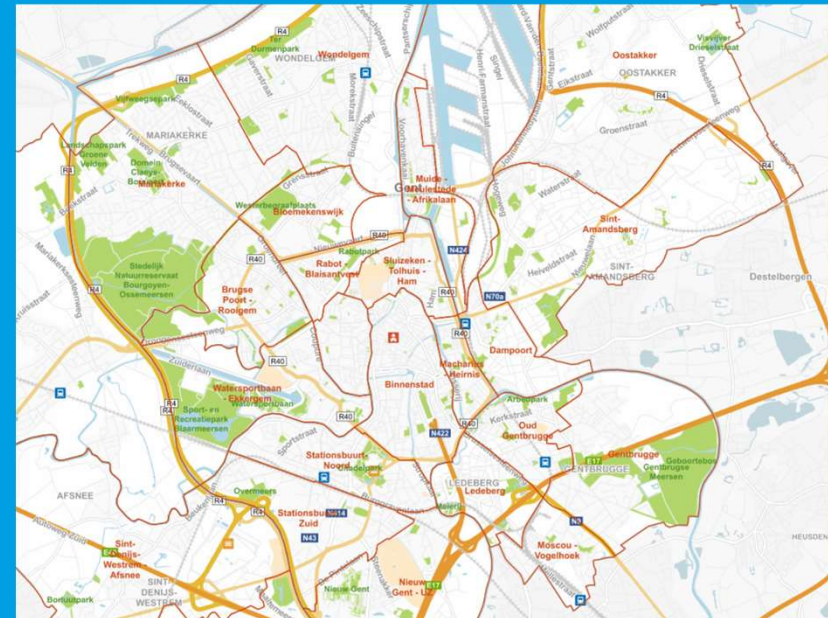
- pre-existing delineation
- easier identification

> Citizen input and feedback

- easier detection of bicycle parking needs
- less aftercare

> 100m-norm

- fills in 'the blanks'
- some needs are less visible, some citizens less vocal



Results



- > +/- 8.500 bicycle parking spots were created this way between 2015 and 2022, on a total of +12 000 extra bike parking spots
- > Repurposing a total of +/- 450 car parking spaces
- > Approach 2.0 => More focus on:
 - non-standard bikes
 - call to entrepreneurs if they need bike racks close to their shop / bar / restaurant
 - Structural bike parking countings

Important to innovate where necessary

- Bike parking spaces for short parking



- Flexparking



- Bike parking spots for children



- Neighbourhood bike parkings



Private garages



Former car parking
Mobility Agency



Modular on public or
private domain

- Bike parkings during events



School Streets

Only pedestrians and cyclists can use the street of the entrance of a school during 30min in the morning and in the evening



Cycling Embassy (Fietsambassade)

NGO non-profit organisation

80+ personnel

- 5 bicycle points
- bicycle rent – students, tourists, visitors
- repair
- collecting and safeguarding “orphan” bikes
- placing bicycle racks (permanent and temporarily)
- some cycle campaigns (bicycle culture)
- Bicycle taxis





Success factors

Succes factors

Starting position

- > Almost flat city
- > Temperate climate
- > Compact City centre
- > Medieval urban fabric with very few multi-lane access roads in city centre
- > Student population

Succes factors Policy

- > Continuous political support
 - and long term vision
 - dedicated budget
- > Experienced and dedicated staff (+180 people mobility agency, 15 member in bicycle team)
- > Succesfull co-operation with all authorities involved
 - Regional road agency, regional waterways agency
 - Public transport company, railway company
- > Allocating more space for bicycles, even at the expense of the car
- > Non-Infrastructural measures as a fast and cheap tool
- > Details: smale scale measures
- > Pioneering

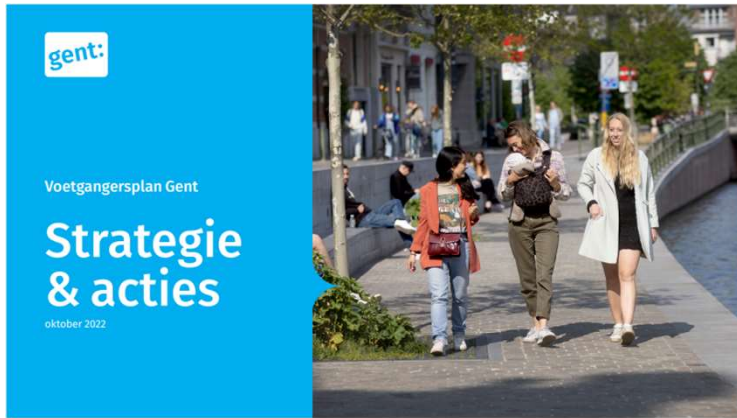
What's next?

Challenges

- > Building more infrastructure, especially to neighbouring municipalities. Increase the average distance of cycling trip
- > Upgrading existing infrastructure
- > Address new target groups > transport poverty
- > Conflicts pedestrians, (electric) cyclists
- > Monitoring and data collection
- > Build/Provide more safe bicycle storage facilities
- > Park & Ride/Bike lots
- > More traffic calming and selective access



Walking



gent: VOETGANGERSPLAN GENT

1.1 Wie is de voetganger?

Iedereen die te voet aanwezig is in de openbare ruimte, zowel stilstaand als bewegend, al dan niet gebruik makend van hulpmiddelen zoals een rolstoel, een rollator of andere stapvoetse voortbewegingstoestellen zoals een skateboard, step of rolschaatsen.



shoppen met 2 zakken in de hand



groepje aan het wandelen



persoon op een bank



ouder en kind hand in hand



ouderie met rollator



persoon in een rolstoel



persoon met een koffer



Ambitie 1 Een Integraal voetgangersbeleid.

Voetgangersbeleid raakt aan heel veel beleidsdomeinen binnen de stad Gent

1. Senioren
2. Jeugdbeleid
3. Gezondheid
4. Toegankelijkheid
5. Cultuur
6. Economie
7. Stedenbouwkundige kwaliteit
8. Sportbeleid
9. Toerisme



5 Actie- programma 2021-2024

Jaartal meting

Alle

Straat meting

Zoeken

- A.Van Laethemstraat 3, 9050 Gent
- Acaciastraat 2022
- Ajuinlei 2021
- Alfons Biebuycklaan 2023 (noord)
- Alfons Biebuycklaan 2023 (zuid)
- Antwerpsesteenweg 31, 9000 Gent
- Antwerpsesteenweg 4, 9000 Gent
- Antwerpsesteenweg 834 (Carelsho...
- Arthur van Laethemstraat 17, 9050...
- August van Lokerenstraat 2022
- Bagattenstraat 130 Zuid 2025
- Bagattenstraat 141 Noord 2025
- Bagattenstraat 2022
- Bagattenstraat 2023
- Belfortstraat 2023 (oost)
- Belfortstraat 2023 (west)
- Bijlokevest 2023 (noord)
- Bijlokevest 2023 (zuid)
- Brabantdam 1, 9000 Gent
- Brabantdam 28, 9000 Gent
- Braemkasteelstraat 2023
- Brugsesteenweg 2021
- Burgstraat 2023 (noord)
- Burgstraat 2023 (zuid)
- Cataloniëstraat 2021
- Corneel Heymanslaan 2, 9000 Gent
- Corneel Heymanslaan 9A, 9000 Gent
- Coupure links 2021
- Coupure links 2023

Datum meting

Alle

1-01-2021
Eerste Date

14-04-2026
Laatste Date

dagen gemeten

1497

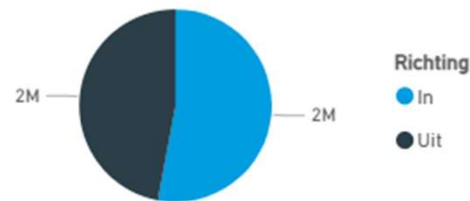
passanten

4429207

drukste dag

28742

Aantal per Richting



Totaal in

2345762

Totaal uit

2083445

Gemiddelde/dag

2.958,72

Gemidelde/weekdag

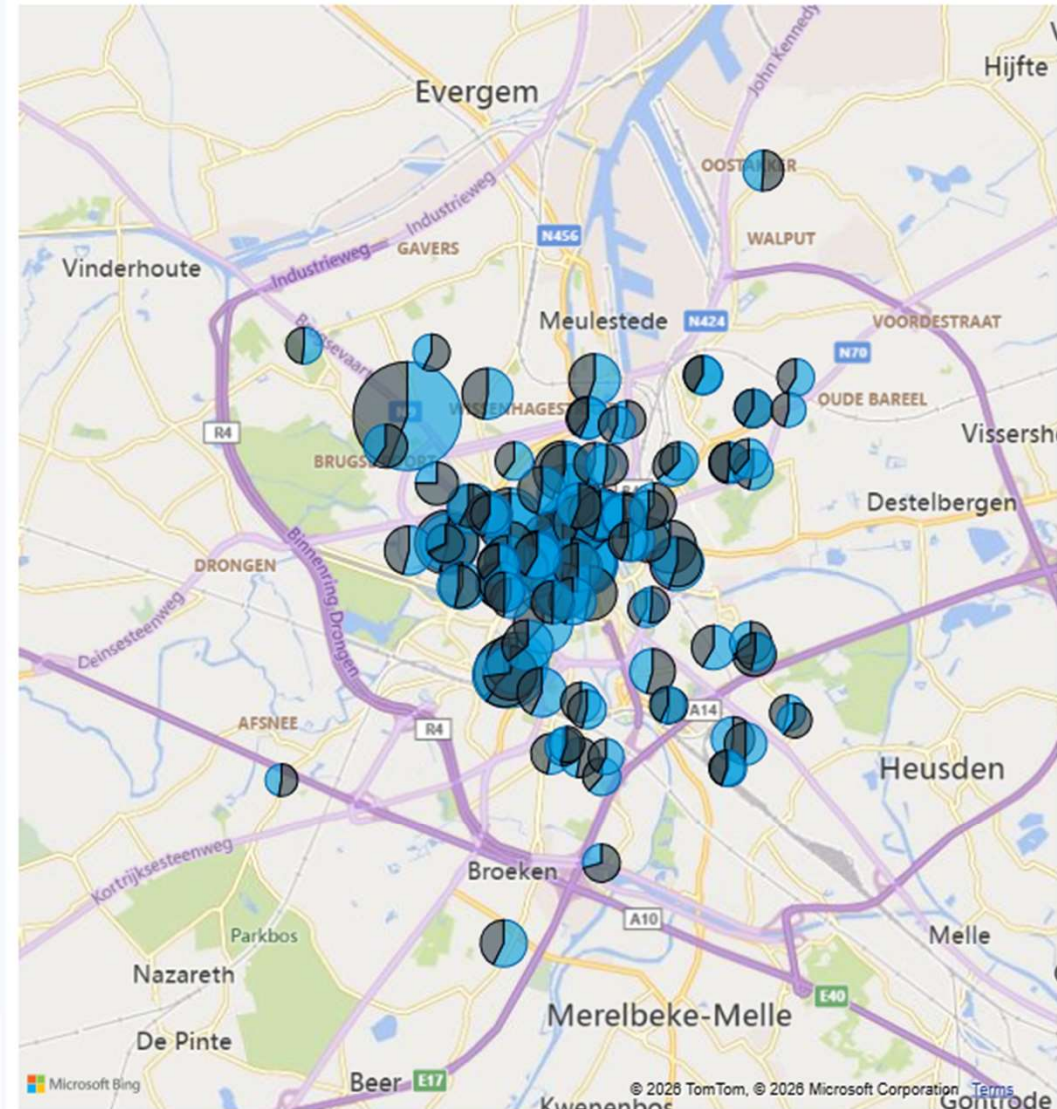
2.957,77

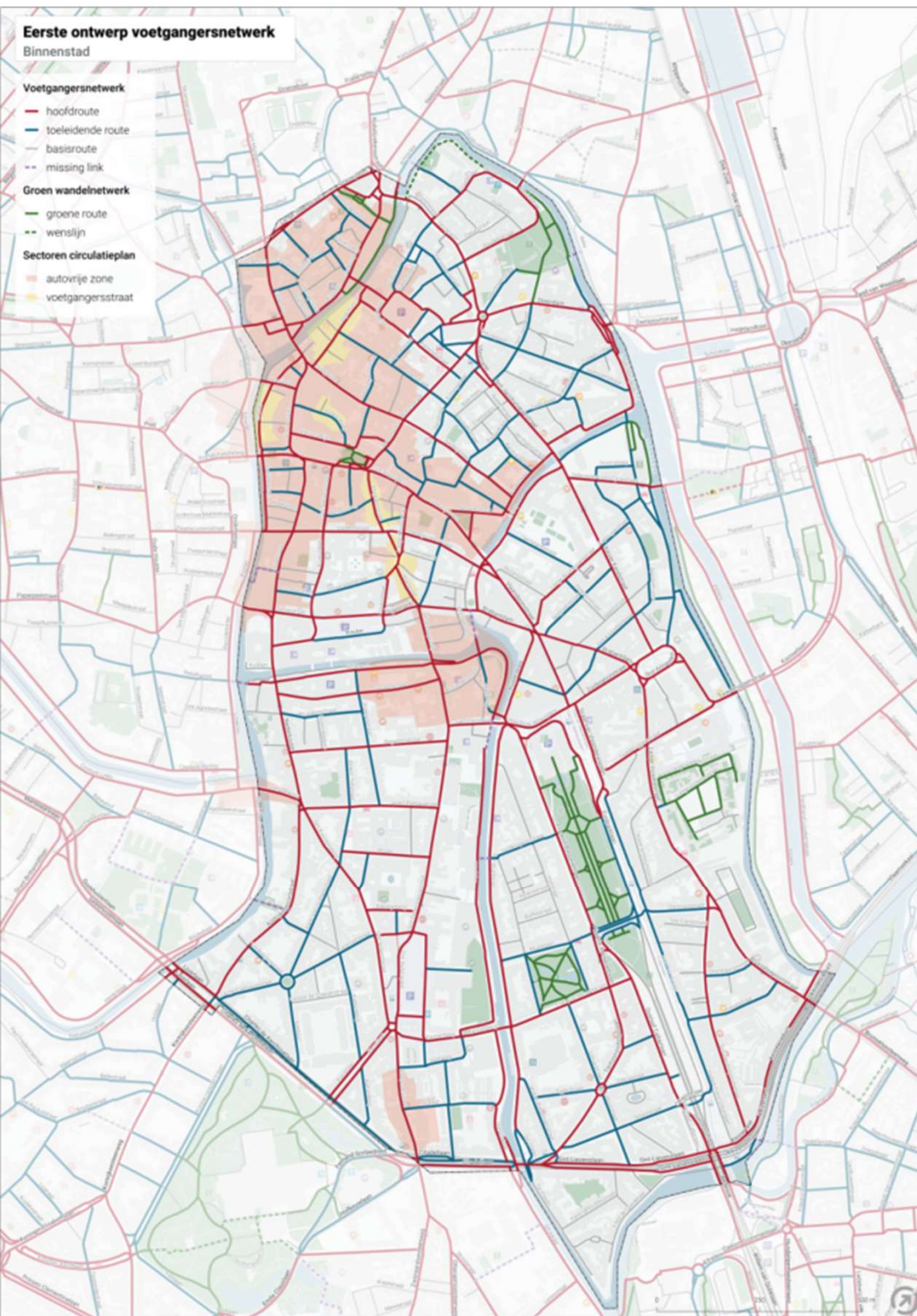
Gemiddelde/weekend

2.961,12

Aantallen per locatie

Richting ● In ● Uit





Pedestrian network

- experts, local knowledge
- validation ongoing
- design principles

Hoe breed moet voetpad zijn

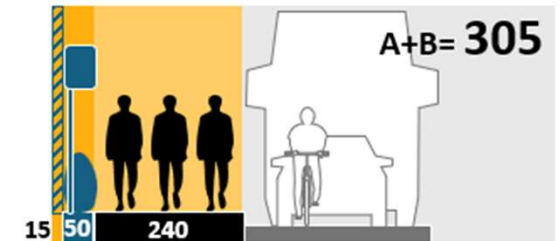
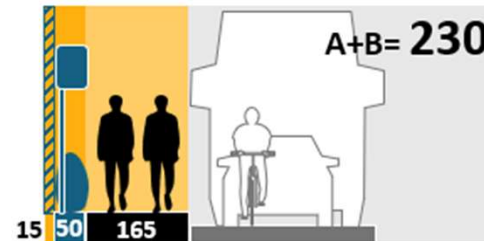
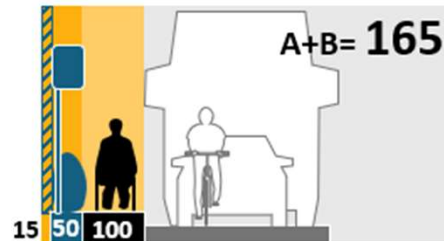
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voetg/u

151 - 300
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+300
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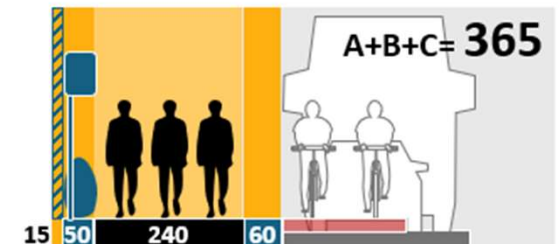
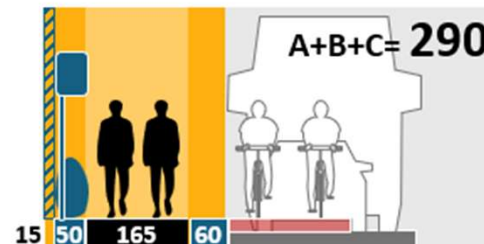
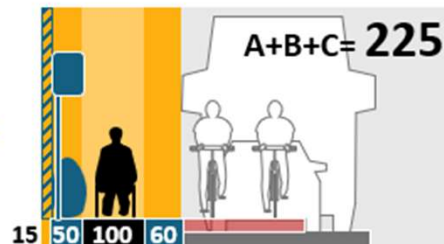
Voetpad in woonstraat

Zone 30



Voetpad langs weg met verkeersfunctie

of +200mvt/u
of $V_{max}=50/70/90$
of +100 fietsers/u op fietspad



A B C

A B C

A B C

A : Gevelzone

Ruimte voor :

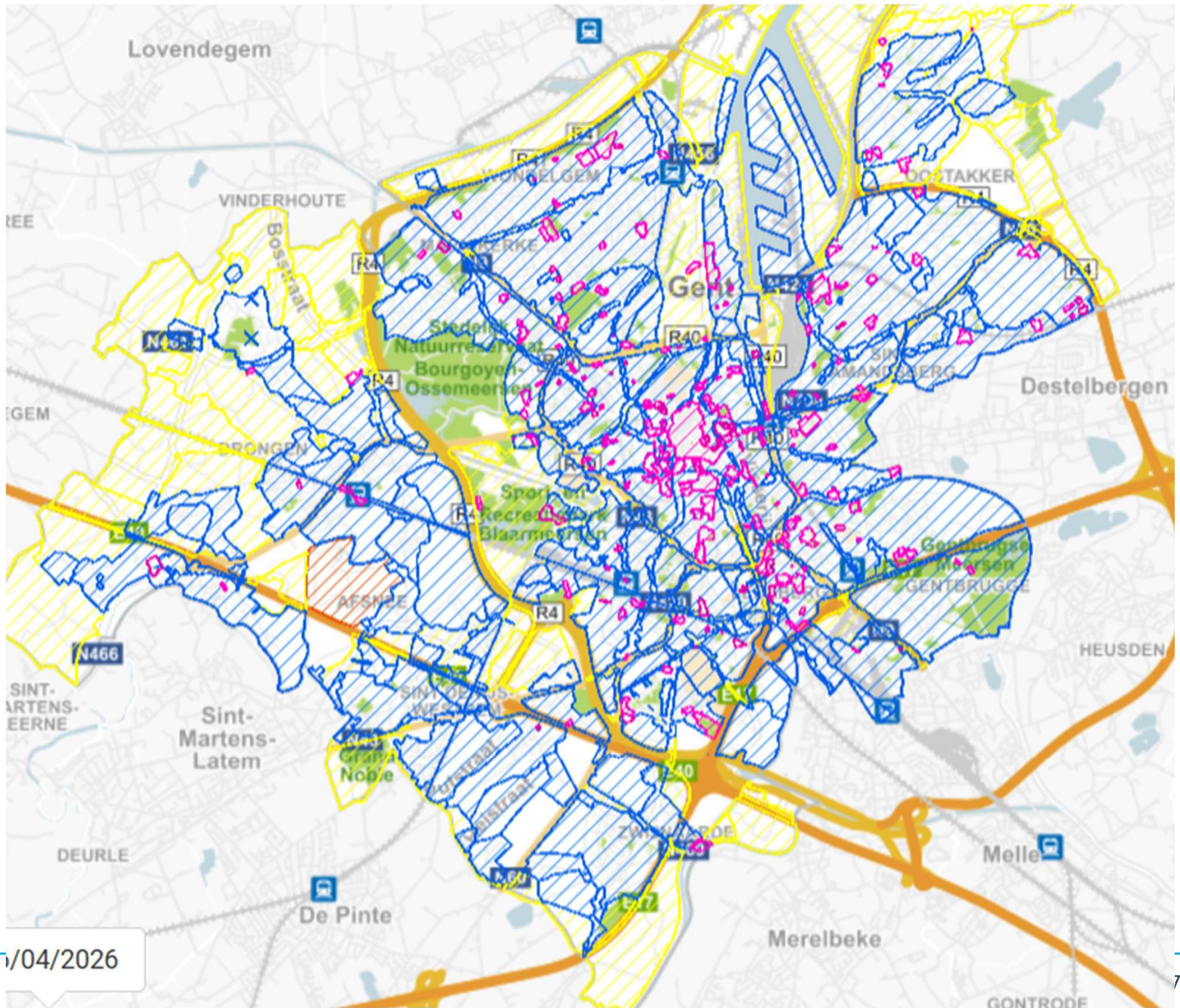
- Verkeersborden
- Parkeerautomaten
- Vuilbakken&zakken
- Tegen de gevel gestalde fietsen
- Aankondigingsborden
- Parijs terras

B : Obstakelvrije loopruimte

C : Objectenzone

Ruimte voor :

- Verkeersborden
- Parkeerautomaten
- Laadpalen
- Fietsenstallingen
- Terrassen
- Parkeerstrook
- Zitbanken



04/2026

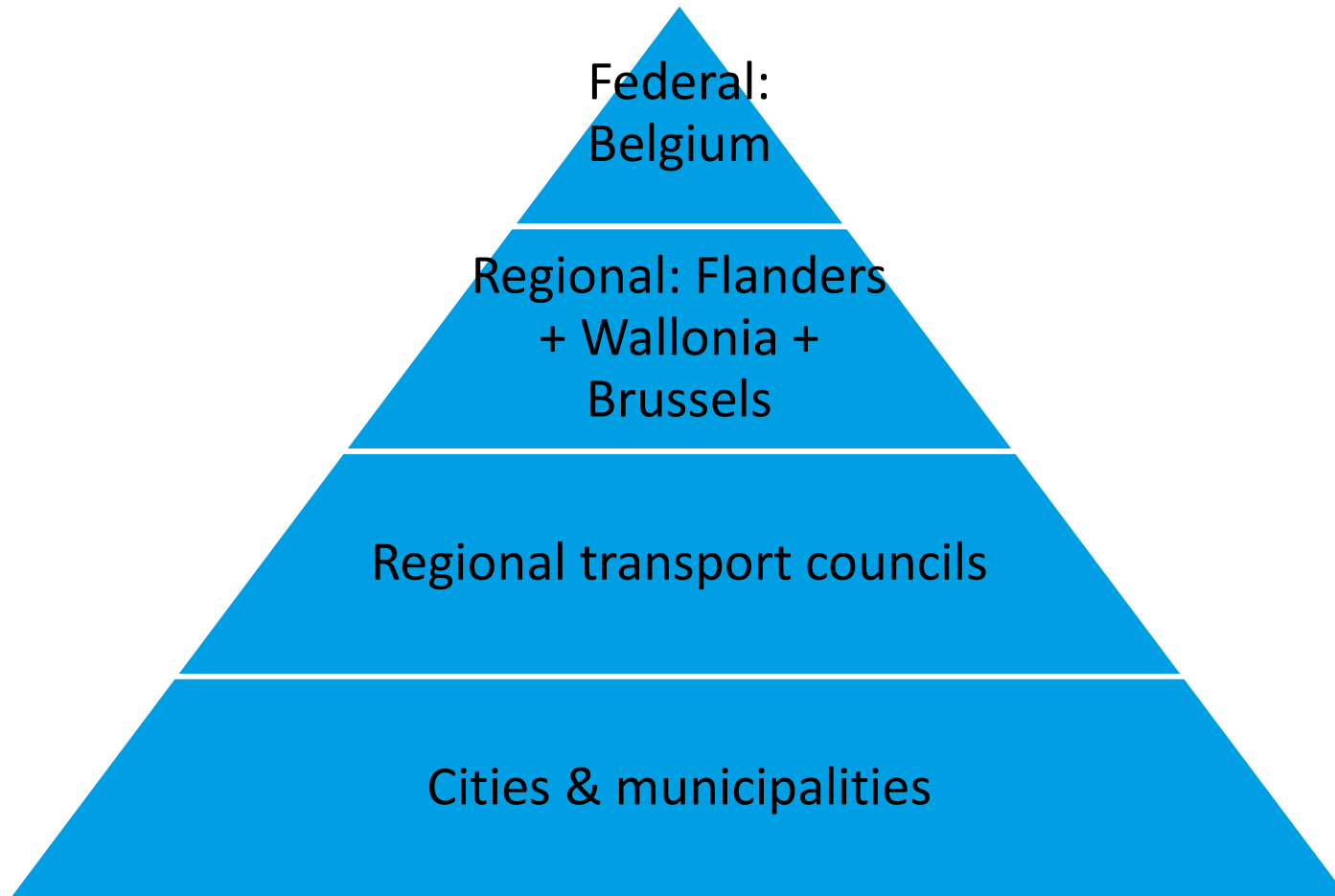


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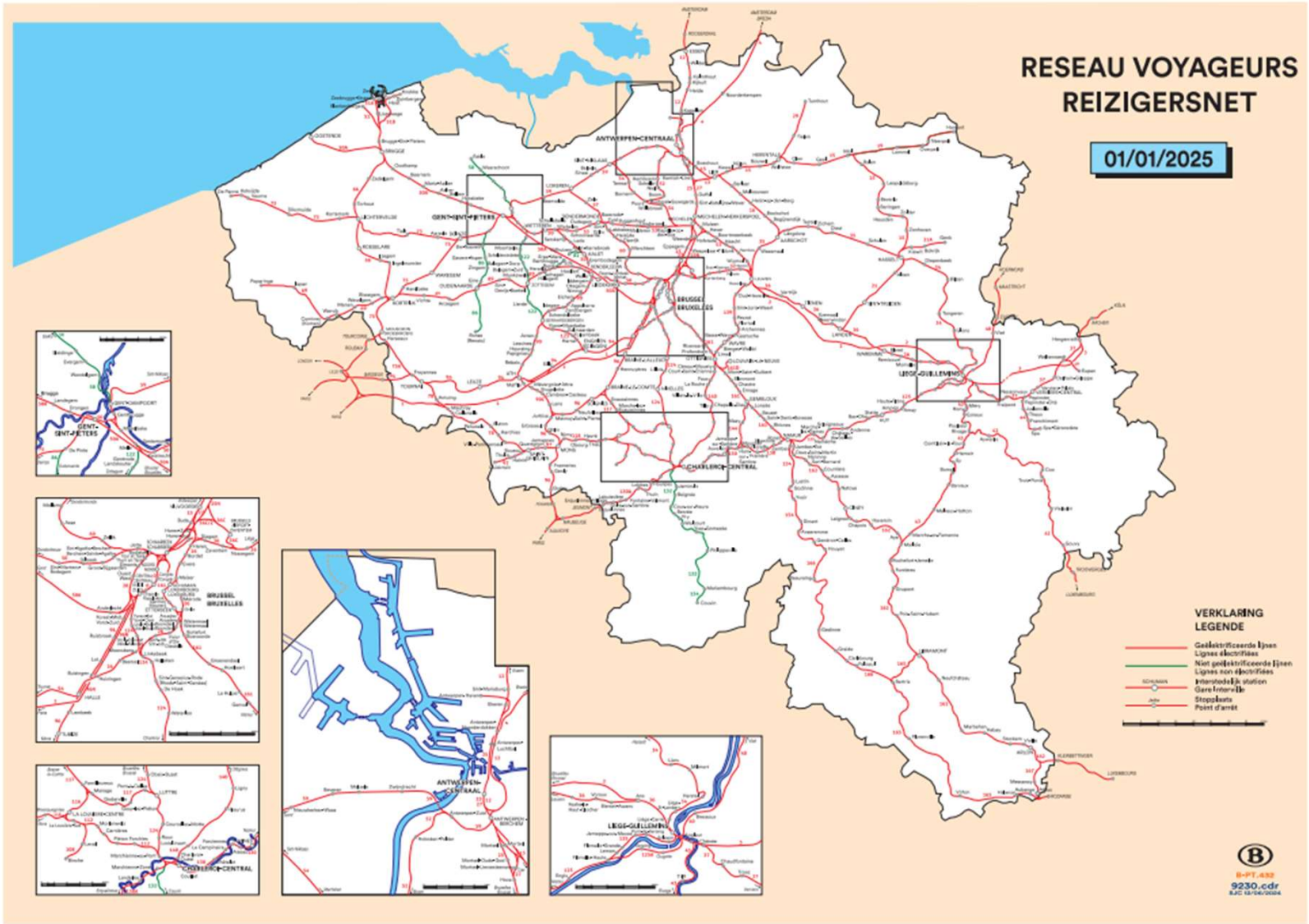
Public transport integration & multimodality

Many different levels

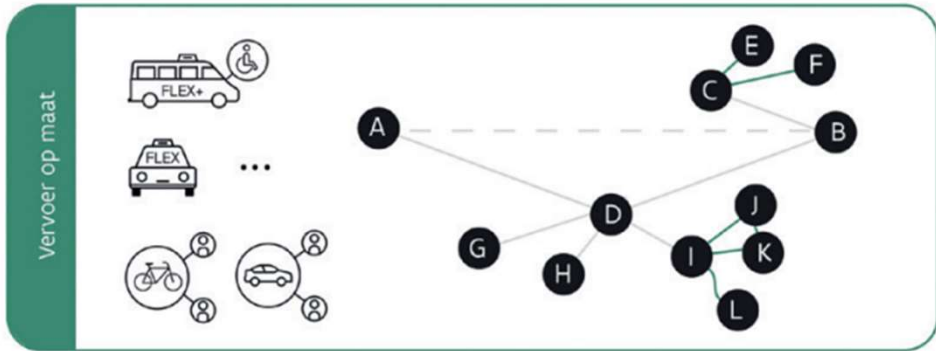
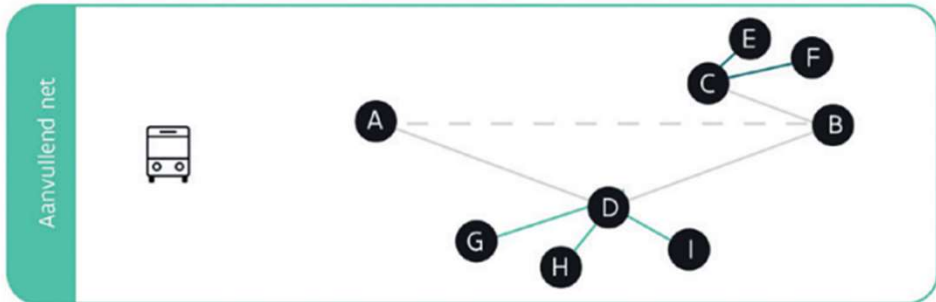
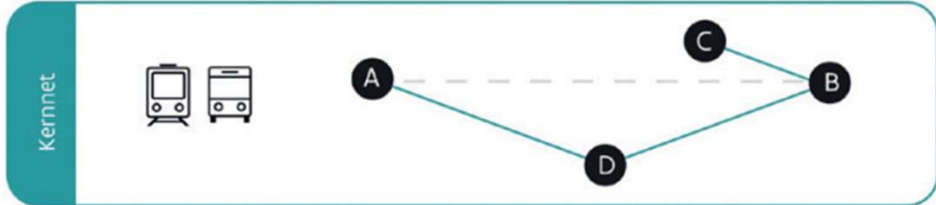


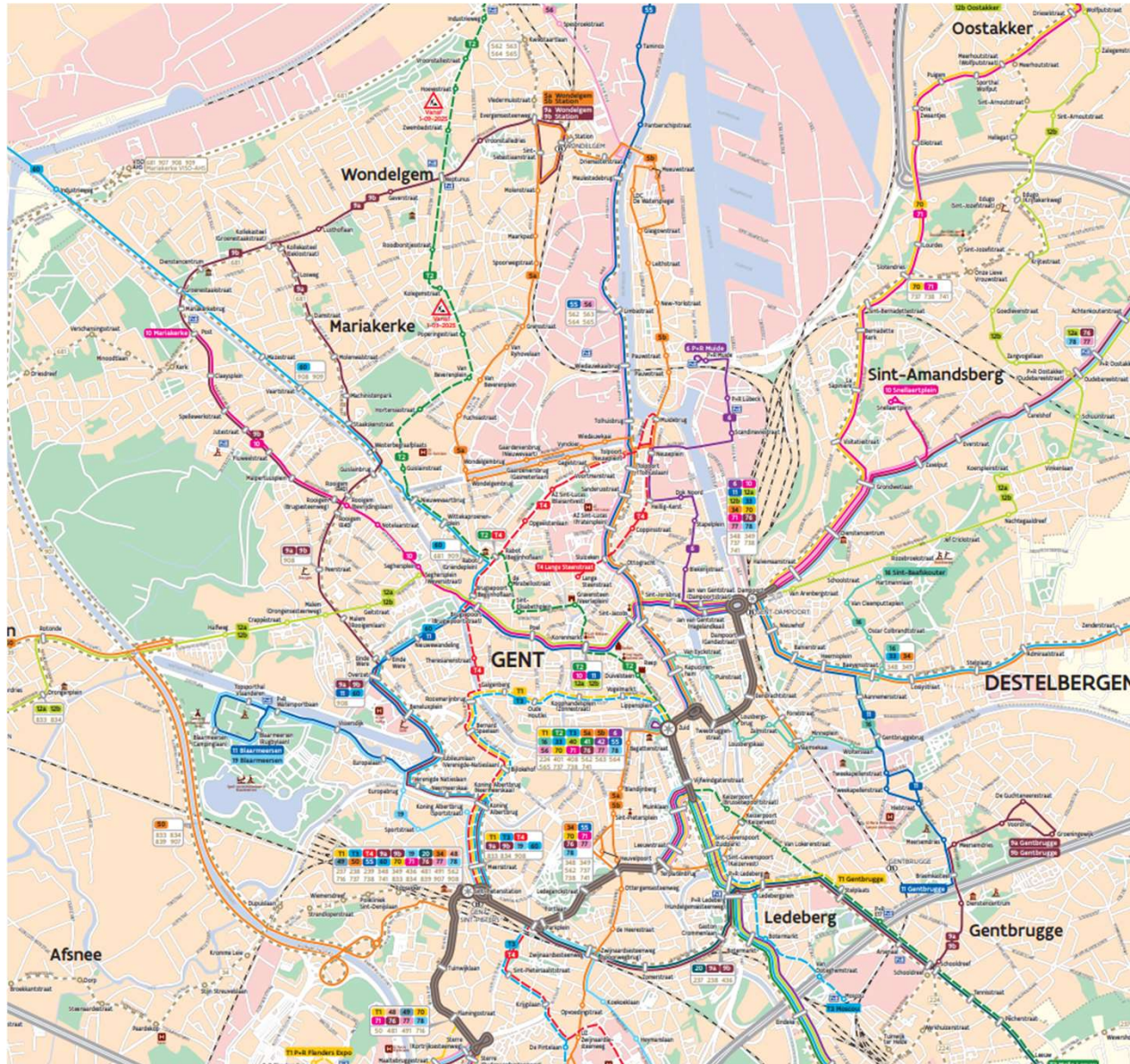
Many different levels











Our goals?

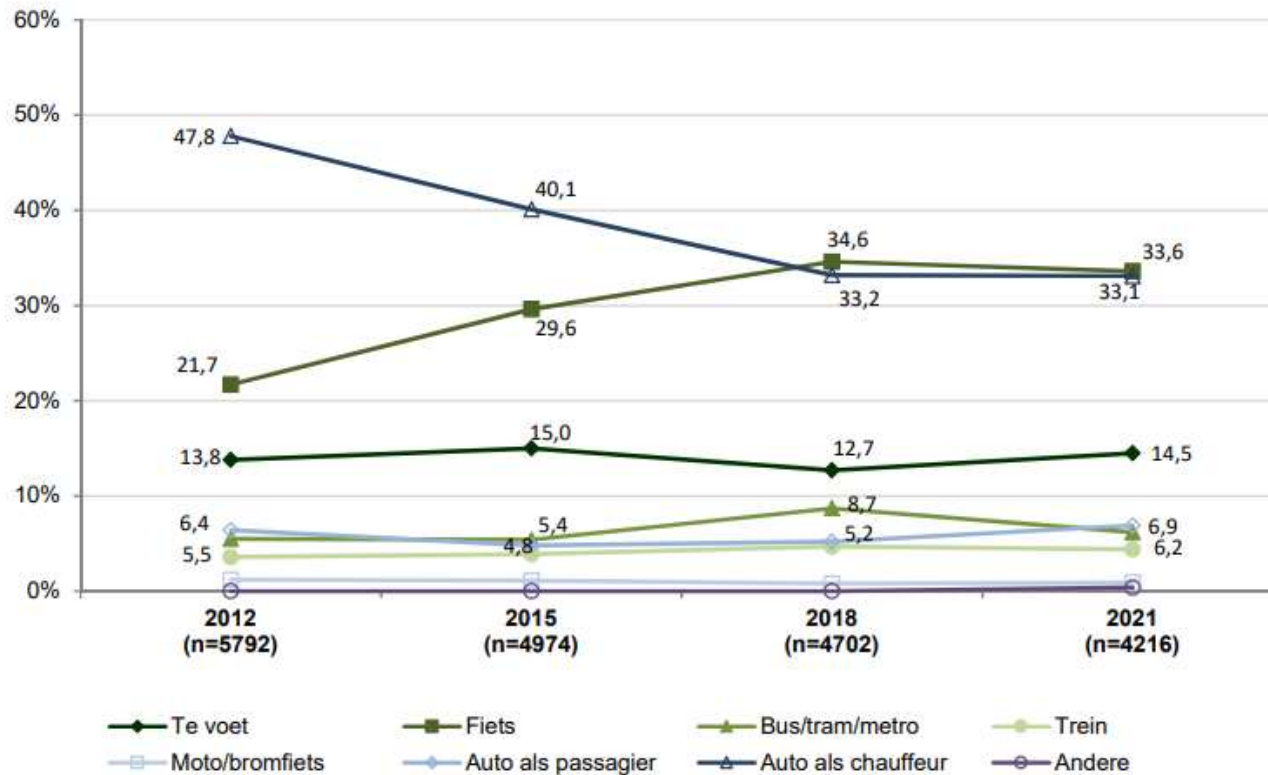
Making public transport more attractive so more people will use it.



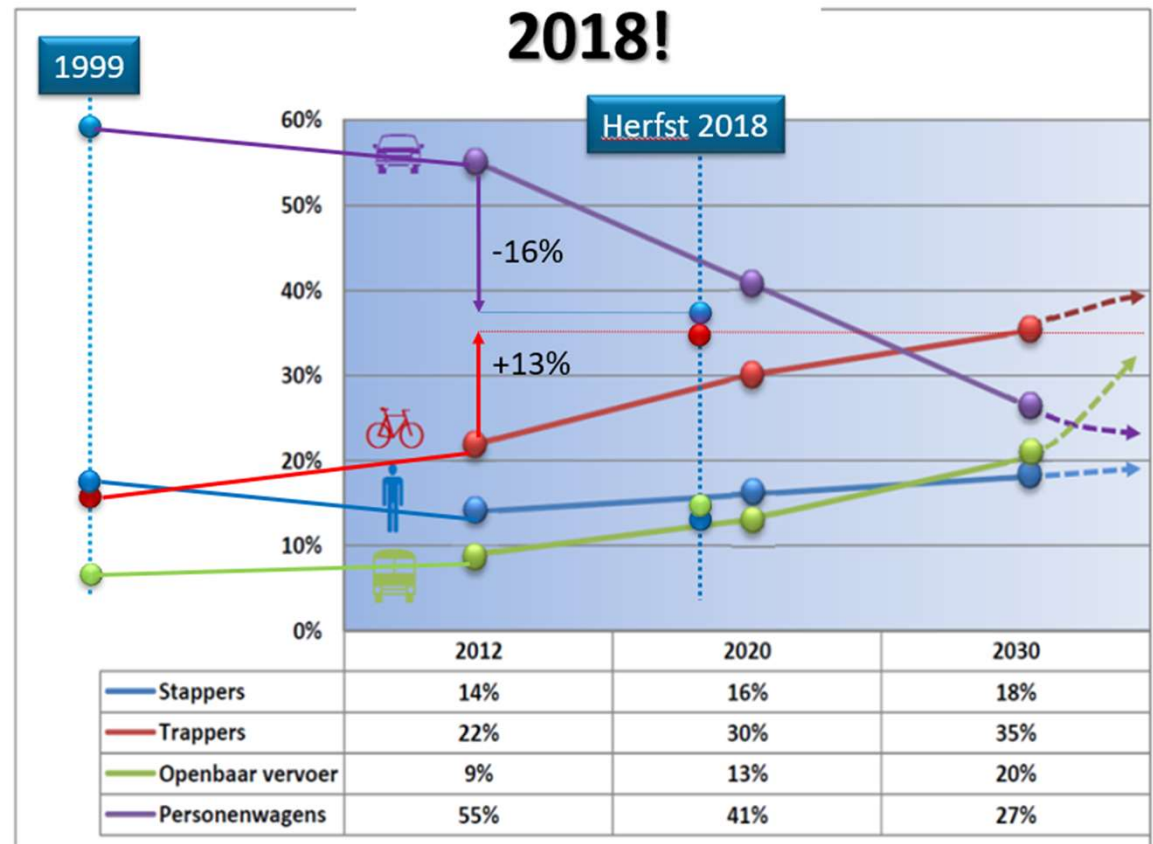
Cities have not much power over public transport authorities.

Usage of public transport in Ghent

Figuur 1: Modal split naar hoofdvervoerswijze van de verplaatsingen Gent Totaal, 2012-2021



**Modal split
goal: 20%
public
transport in
2030**



Plus

Busiest railway station in Flanders

3 more railway stations

We build bus & tram stops

We can optimise walking routes to stops

We can improve flow of public transport

We can subsidize tickets & subscriptions

We have a voice in de regional transport council

Vice-mayor for mobility is also chairman of the board of the PTA

GentSpoort (GhentRail) on its way

Minus

PTA decides

PTA is chronically underfunded

Underinvestment in infrastructure: only 1 of 4 lines in “normal” operations

Lack of tram/bus-depot

Challenges?

1. Convincing people to switch from car to public transport (bus & tram). But...

too slow

Unreliable

Uncomfortable

Not always accessible

Perceived as “poor”

Bad service to industrial zones

2. Connecting rural areas with urban areas

Solutions? 1

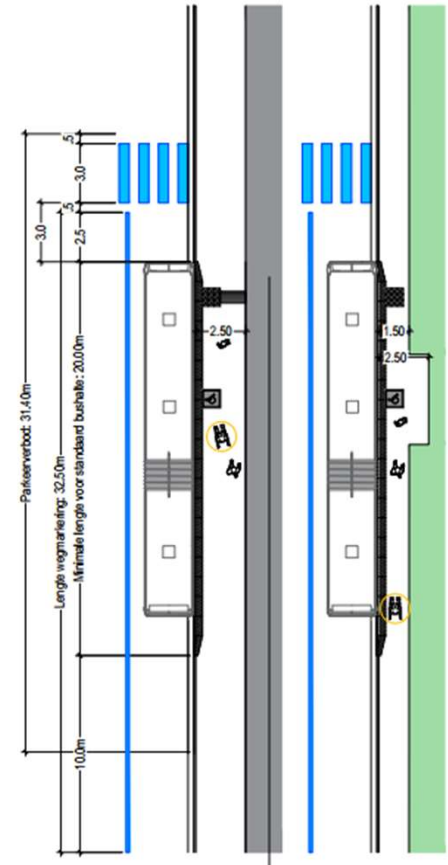
Making busstops accessible

Tactile tiles

Guide lines

Level with floor

Accessible ramps



Solutions? 2

Making it cheaper.

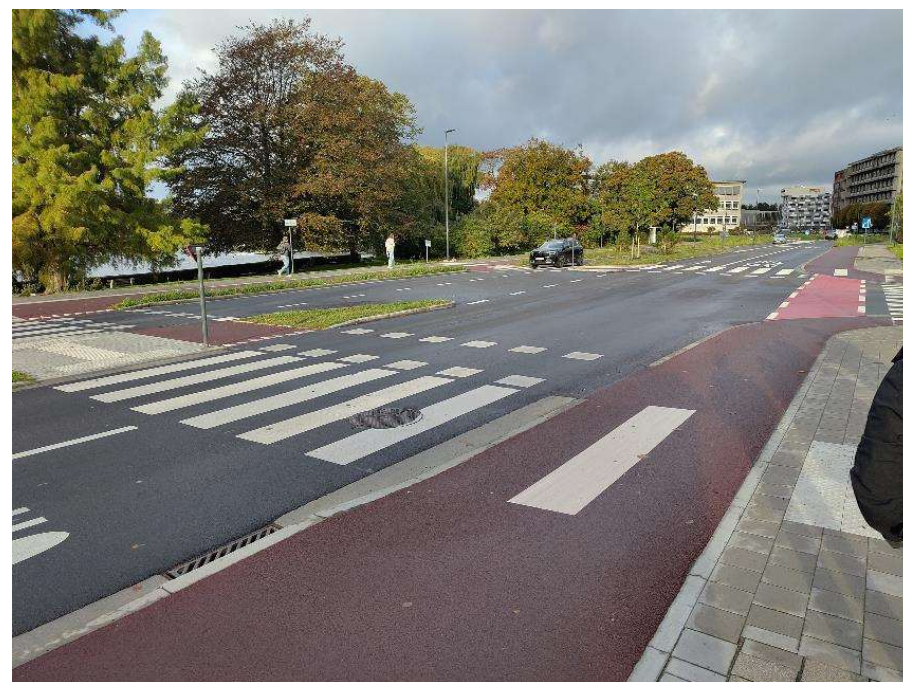
-6 years: free

7-14 years: free (city pays)

15-18 years: free, starting september 2026 (city pays)

Solutions? 3

Improving the flow



Before & after



Before & after



Solutions? 4

On-demand public transport + bike-sharing (+ car sharing)

Relatively new

Perceived as a plus by those who had no regular bus before, as a step backwards by those who did have a regular bus connection.

Bike-sharing becomes more popular

Car sharing: more urban

Future?

A few critical components will deliver during the next 5-10 years:

New bus & tram depot “Wissenhage”.

Railway Station Gent Sint-Pieters finished

Gent Spoort

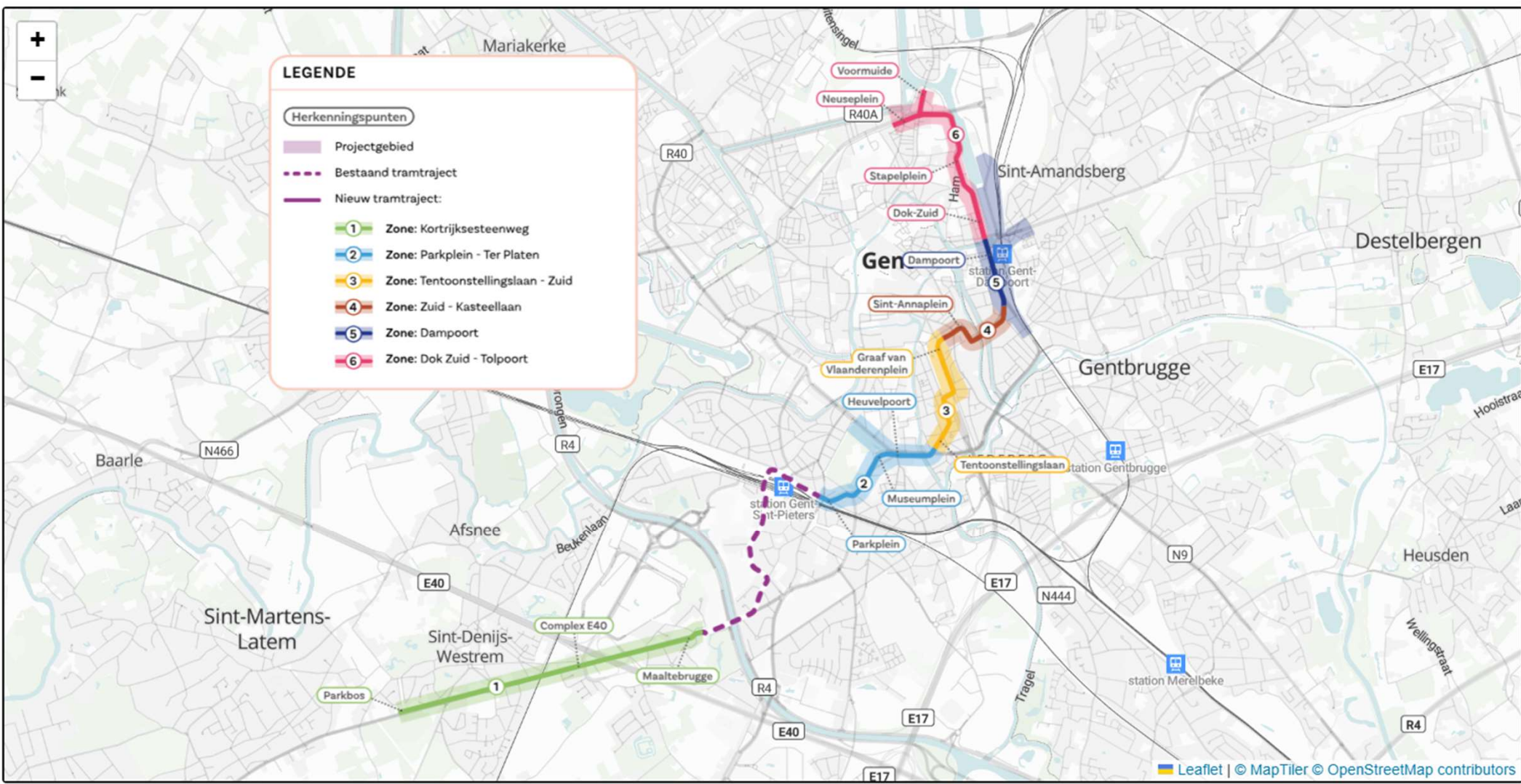


LEGENDE

Herkenningspunten

- Projectgebied
- Bestaand tramtraject
- Nieuw tramtraject:

- 1 Zone: Kortrijksesteenweg
- 2 Zone: Parkplein - Ter Platen
- 3 Zone: Tentoonstellingslaan - Zuid
- 4 Zone: Zuid - Kasteellaan
- 5 Zone: Dampoort
- 6 Zone: Dok Zuid - Tolpoort



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Thank you!

Merijn Gouweloose
Merijn.gouweloose@stad.gent