



European Commuters for Sustainable Mobility Strategies

## Report of the 3<sup>rd</sup> work visit – Belgium, ABVV

### 1. General framework in Belgium

The competences in the field of transport and mobility are divided between different authorities:

- The federal level (the Belgian state) deals with fiscal and legal issues and the railways (NMBS/SNCB) and also obliges all Belgian companies (>100 employees) to provide data on mobility and accessibility issues on a three-yearly basis.
- The regions (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels) deal with local and regional transport: De Lijn in Flanders, MIVB/STIB in Brussels, TEC in Wallonia. Highways and regional road infrastructure falls also under the competence of the regions. Concerning mobility management, they play a supporting role by organizing awareness raising campaigns, facilitating courses on mobility management and financing mobility management projects (e.g. the commuter fund in Flanders). The Brussels Region plays a particular role with compulsory company mobility plans for companies with more than 200 employees (>100 employees from 1/5/11 on).
- The ten provinces (e.g. Flemish Brabant) play a role in designing the general bicycle network (connections between municipal cycle networks) and in facilitating mobility management on company or industrial area level (e.g. the Mobidesk in Flanders).
- The municipal level is responsible for road infrastructure (including bicycle infrastructure) and local/urban mobility planning.

Belgium has a legal and fiscal framework that is in favor of sustainable travel modes for home work trips: there is an obligation for employers to refund at average 75% of employees public transport costs. This intervention is exempt from salary tax. Additionally, a (non-obligatory) tax free cycling fee up to 0,21€/km can be given to employees who cycle to work. Most companies refund also car drivers for their homework trips but this refund is partially taxed except if employees choose to carpool in an organized carpool scheme. In the latter case, the refund is 100% free. On the other hand, the fiscal regime is very favorable for company cars. Therefore, there is a real tradition of giving company cars (including fuel cards) to white collar workers.

There are differences regarding mobility problems and politics between the three Belgian regions. In general, the Brussels region is characterized by an important share of public transport in commuting travel (a lot of workers commute daily to and from Brussels region), fewer bicycle use than in Flanders and major congestion compared to the other parts of Belgium. A main characteristic of work-related mobility in Flanders is the rather high share of cycling, especially within cities like Leuven, Ghent and Antwerp. In Wallonia, partly because of the geographical characteristics (hilly and a less dense population) cycling is less common. Most people drive to their work place.

Only the Brussels region has an obligation on green commuter plans for companies with more than 200 employees (will become 100). The other regions play a more facilitating role with regards to workers mobility plans.

## 2. Brief report on the works

**6 april 2011**

**Sarah Hollander – Brussels Institute for Environmental Affairs (BIM)** explains the legal framework on MM for companies in Brussels Region

- since 2004 all companies > 200 employees need to develop a green mobility plan (MP). From 30/6/11 the obligation will be broadened to all companies > 100. The Brussels obligation goes further than the Belgian Federal obligation ("mobility diagnosis") where companies only have to provide data on their work-related mobility.
- Of 650.000 employees in the Brussels Region, 1/3 (270.000) will fall under the obligation. Most of the involved companies are in the center of Brussels with good accessibility by public transport
- companies have "to pay" themselves for the mobility plan but there is a maximum of free support by the BIM. Companies did not need to hire external advice from e.g. consultants
- results: compared to 2005 there are more companies in 2008 that have implemented MM-measures
- a new element from 30/6/11 is the obligation to implement measures instead of (only) having a mobility plan. Before 2012, 2 of the following measures have to be implemented:
  - internal mobility coordinator (to be announced to all employees and trade unions) ; the BIM organizes courses and gives information / support to these mobility coordinators
  - obligation to inform employees on the MP and to organize awareness raising campaigns. Control is done via regular audits
  - a multimodal accessibility information (plan)
  - measures facilitating the use of public transport (choice from 6 different measures: bike sharing system, co-financing PT-supply, free PT for employees, mobility budget instead of company car (\*)...)
  - high quality bicycle racks for employers and visitors: number = 120% of the actual number of cyclists ; min. 1 bicycle parking place for every 5 car parking places
  - car policy aiming at reducing the Ecoscore (CO2, NOx,...- emissions) of the company cars
  - action plan for pollution peaks (smog days). Those days, in the Brussels region, the speed limit is 50km/h ; companies need to inform their employees about sustainable alternatives for the car. There is a warning sms and email-system 24h before a predicted peak
- companies will have to provide audit reports, for control but also for the BIM to learn from best practices

Q: are locations with > 100 employees, but including different employers obliged to make a plan?

A: no, this is not the case. It is nearly impossible for small and medium sized companies to have a mobility plan or mobility coordinator

Q: can the Brussels Region introduce an obligation on mobility plans while this is not the case on the federal level?

A: Yes, because mobility and environmental affairs are regional issues

Q: are trade unions involved in the process of mobility plans on general level or on company level?

A: here is no obligation and the BIM has no idea if this happens within the companies. However, the timing of the obligation is parallel with that of the "federal diagnosis" which needs to be discussed on the level of the company council

Q: was there a lot of opposition against this obligation?

A: not really, because the measures are still "light". Another option could be to reduce the number of parking spots but it is clear that companies prefer the actual obligation...

Q: is there a reduction of number of parking spaces in the companies? we did not analyze it till now. There is however a clear increase of company cars.

note: the Brussels region is studying if part of the parking spaces companies offer, can be taxed. E.g. if, based on a study, 50 parking spaces were sufficient, and a company had 70, there would be a taxation on the 20 extra spaces. There would be three options for a company: 1/ agree with the proposed number of spaces, 2/ pay taxes on the amount of extra parking spaces or 3/ make the parking spaces available for inhabitants. In the latter option, the extra public spaces will be taken from the current number of parking spaces on public ground.

(\*) remark concerning company cars from Bart Neyens: trade unions are not 100% in favor of cancelling the system of company cars as ¼ of white collar workers have a company car...



**Thomas Vanoutrive – University of Antwerp** gives a presentation on the federal "home to work travel-survey" (diagnosis on mobility).

- in Belgium every company with >100 employees has the obligation to provide some basic data on mobility and accessibility of the company to the federal government (30% of all Belgian employees fall under this obligation)
- he explains that in general, there are 5 ways for public authorities to influence employees travel behavior via the employers:
  - mandatory travel plans
  - town and country planning (\*)
  - taxation
  - information, communication,...
  - social dialogue

(\*) The EU Services guideline prohibits certain measures (ikea-law). However, a limit on parking spaces near the new development is still possible.

Q: who decides (e.g. via a mobility impact report) about the number of parking spaces?

A: this depends on the level of the development. Small development is on the municipal level, bigger developments are on the regional level

Q: which is an efficient measure for promoting sustainable mobility within a company?

A: having a mobility coordinator is a the most necessary measure

note: in Catalunya, more than 300 *sindicales* are given courses (20, 50 or 100 hours) on sustainable mobility. Part of the courses is followed during "free time". There is also an examination at the end of the courses

## 7 april 2011

### Frank Van Thillo, president of the Flemish Mobility council (MORA) explains the role and the activity of the MORA

The MORA, created by decree, is one of the results of the Flemish Region Policy on better governance. It is created within the social economic council of Flanders (SERV), and is therefore strongly linked to the social dialogue. Its members are

- 12 social partners proposed by the SERV (6 representing the employers and 6 the employees, with a maximum of 6 interprofessional partners, the others being representatives of the private transport sector)
- 6 mobility organizations
- 2 environmental organizations
- the associations of Flemish municipalities and of Flemish Provinces
- the regional public transport company "De Lijn" and the National Railway company
- 3 experts

Besides that, the MORA has a secretariat, a daily management board (composed of the president, 2 mobility organizations and 2 SERV-partners) and two special commissions: one for goods and one for person transport. The tasks of the MORA are to

- advise on the general mobility policy lines of the Flemish Government
- contribute to the development of a policy vision
- reflect on policy documents and advise on proposals of laws and regulations
- advise on budget and investment policy, including those of public transport
- advise on (application of) European policies and on international treaties
- Publish a 5-yearly mobility report on mobility in Flanders including recommendations about future policy

Its most important recommendations are:

- An integrated mobility policy
- Monitoring as a basis of policy
- An integrated intermodal transport system
- Policy of person transport focusing on commuting traffic
- A modern infrastructure policy
- A policy aiming at traffic safety
- A sustainable policy

In the discussion about road pricing for freight transport, the MORA really took the lead in the debate.

The evaluation of its activity after about 5 years is that the MORA has a high legitimacy among its members and the members of the Flemish Parliament. The MORA clearly contributes to improve decision making on the level of the Flemish Government, making it more democratic by objectifying the discussion.

But it seems to have poor direct influence on the Government, which is more driven by public opinion than by the advice of the intermediate organizations.

Reacting to this conclusion, Llorenç Serrano of the Spanish delegation explains that the involvement of intermediate organizations not necessarily leads to a more democratic process (there is danger of corporatism with an appearance of representation of the people).

Q: Does the MORA have a budget?

A: Yes, besides the budget for daily working, there are budgets for studies

Q: How would the revenues of road pricing be used?

A: The Government would put it in the general budget, the MORA advises to reinvest it in mobility.

**Alain Vanden Plas is responsible for person mobility at the secretariat of MORA and explains the Flemish “commuting plan”**

He explains first the distribution of competences among the different Belgian policy levels (federal, Regions, Municipalities). This is one of the difficulties for mobility management, for example because workers very often commute between Flanders and Brussels. There are also competences (e.g. fiscal framework) that are on two levels at the same time.

The Commuting plan wanted to reduce modal share of the car from 70 to 60%, but it didn't succeed until now.

The main elements of the plan were:

- More support to employers who want to work on sustainable mobility, mainly through provincial Mobidesks
- Better alternatives to the car: more bicycle lanes, missing links in PT network, promotion of carpooling and carsharing, teleworking.
- “Tailor made commute”: integrating commuting in municipal mobility plans, the commuting fund, integrate accessibility in urban planning, allow company buses on bus lanes
- Sensitization and education

The commuting fund gives employers the possibility to obtain a subsidy of max. 50% during 4 years for the implementation of measures encouraging employees use more alternatives to the car. Already 19 Million € has been spent on very diverse actions (going from transport supply to increasing financial interventions of the employer to encourage the bicycle). The social partners play an important role in evaluating submitted projects. All the projects are monitored by the Government, in order to make sure the money is well spent. The commuting fund is being revised now.

The visions of employer and employee representatives are not the same. The latter would like more strong commitments of the employers, while employers are strongly opposed to any obligation. However everyone agrees “mobility scans” as a tool for employers to decide on measures to take, are necessary and effective.

Frank Van Thillo concludes that, in general, the involvement of employees in the decision making process is crucial for the success of mobility management in companies. But in many companies, the trade unions merely give their agreement.

Right now, a concretization of the “PACT 2020” (with objectives similar to the Commuting plan) is being prepared by the MORA. It would include the commitments of employers and employees in order to realize the objectives of the new commuting plan.

**Karin Dries – Antwerp City Administration** explains the green commuter plan of the City Administration at the occasion of the centralization move to the new location.

For the City Administration, there were two reasons for developing a mobility plan:

- employers satisfaction
- responsibility towards the neighborhood: avoiding traffic impact on the surrounding streets caused by the move to this location

A preparatory survey showed that a focus on cycling and the use of (existing) public transport were the most efficient measures. The general focus was on informing people about the sustainable modes: accessibility guide,

personal travel advice, travel info on intranet... Also investments in internal cycling infrastructure (bicycle parking, reparation service,...) were made. This to take away possible "excuses" of employees not being able to cycle to work

the existing underground parking was "too small" compared to the number of car drivers before the centralization move. Thus, only service cars, carpoolers and visitors are allowed in the underground parking. The principle is "solo drivers have no access to the parking". This rule is for all, except a few directors – who have a "company car" .

Q: has there been thought about the introduction of paid parking?

A: no, choice was to restrict access for solo drivers. There are enough options ao. free parking on walking distance (within 1km). There was a clear choice for preserving the livability of the neighborhood and "paid parking" would not help to reach this goal.



**Steven Dierckx – manager I-bus** tells about the starting up, implementation and current status of the I-bus project.

- I-bus is an optimisation of existing bus services from 6 enterprises in the Antwerp port area
- an advisory council consists of 12 members + the I-bus manager. Every company has a delegate from the management-side and one from the employers (trade unions). Every change in schedules or bus routes is discussed and approved by the bus-committee
- there are 29 bus lines for daytime workers and 12 for shift workers ; there are 55 vehicles, operated by one company, for these services. The buses are as environment friendly as possible.
- 4000 employees in the 6 companies, 3166 of them are in the I-bus database (used for developing the bus lines) ; between 1/1/10 and 28/2/11 2572 unique users (at least one time)
- occupancy:
  - day buses: average of 17,44 passengers per bus (min 10,5 – max 24,5)
  - shift workers: average of 7 passengers per bus (min 3 – max 13)
- I-bus has led to an optimization: 6 buses less for day workers and 6 buses for shift workers. The total number of passengers remained the same
- advantage of I-bus is also the "track&trace"-system which allows to have data on the number of passengers. Useful for making separated invoices for every company but also for optimizing the bus lines on the basis of the number of users.
- The optimisation resulted in an economical benefit for the 6 companies but it was also an advantage for the employees of the single companies, as the covered area is much larger than before: there are bus lines to more destinations.

Q: how do you explain the fluctuation between the number of passengers in jan 10 and jan 11?

A: partly because of changes in employment (decrease of number of employees), but also because of weather (if it snows, cyclist tend to use the I-bus more often)

Q: does the advisory council limits itself to I-bus? and if so, why?

A: at the moment only I-bus. Maybe in near future there will be actions towards a bus for bicycles and cyclists (for use of the motorway-tunnel) but other sustainable mobility actions are not intended in near future.

Q: was there an evaluation amongst users?

A: not yet but it is planned

Q: are external workers (security, cleaning,...) allowed to use the I-buses?

A: the board of administration of I-bus decided to limit the service to workers employed directly by the 6 companies, in order not to complicate the supply. At the moment, third parties are partly allowed to use the I-buses services (eg neighboring companies, external contractors etc.) as long as there is no structural influence on the schedules etc. BASF (3000 employees) has its own busses but is looking for collaboration with I-bus. This means however a structural change in the system and needs more studying. But the I-bus committee wants to further optimize the system by looking at opportunities to include more participating companies.

Q: why not using vanpooling for vehicles for fewer passengers

A: main reason is the fact that you are working with 6 different companies, 6 different cultures... It is not so easy to implement these systems.

## 8 april 2011

**Hans Floré – Province of Vlaams Brabant** explains the role the Province plays in mobility management.

- in 2003 the mobility desks (MD) were founded by the Flemish Ministry of Mobility. The focus of the MD was on real practical support for MM-projects and less on studies. The switch from studies to assistance for implementation was a good decision.
- main activities:
  - recommendations based on short term studies (quick scans)
  - support in the implementation and evaluation of MM-projects
- most initiatives are taken by the company management but also trade unions can contact MD and/or make use of the Commuter Fund (*Pendelfonds*)
- quickscan: short term study on MM under the form of a Powerpoint-presentation with results and advices
  - step 1: data collection via questionnaire and excel-sheet with mobility data employees. Data to be provided by the employer
  - step 2: analysis of data
  - step 3: proposal of measures with high potential
  - step 4: elaboration and implementation (possibly via Commuter Fund-subsidies)
- commuter fund:
  - co-financing till 50% (shared responsibility)
  - facilitation of start up of projects (subsidies for 4 years)
  - only implementation costs are eligible, no study costs. May include staff costs (e.g. mobility coordinator)
  - trade unions and employers are members of the advisory committee
  - specific projects have to be negotiated between employers and trade unions on company level. A report on at least one enterprise council on the subject has to be part of the application form for getting subventions from the commuter fund.
- Hans gives some examples of commuter fund projects:

- Aviapartner:
  - limited free public transport tickets for cyclists in case of bad weather
  - parking card with limited access to parking lot for public transport users when circumstances are not favorable (e.g. in case of night shifts)
- Fugzia fietst!: small company (only 5 employees) that purchases folding bikes for commuter traffic (combination with public transport)

Q: are there Commuter Fund-projects that aim at bringing companies together around MM?

A: companies working together is a very efficient way of working on MM. The problem is you need one company that wants to take the lead. And that is not always easy to find.

Q: is there any consultation with the municipalities on MM-measures (eg bicycle infrastructure,...)?

A: this is done at the level of urban mobility planning but it would be better to involve the local municipality, also in the commuter fund. Timing is always a problem: companies start working on their proposal only last minute...

**Philippe Jacobs – Flemish Public Transport company De Lijn** gives a presentation on the START-project for Brussels Airport. An action plan on mobility was part of a general strategy to preserve the economical accessibility of the airport and the industrial areas around.

- accessibility is important for employees but also for the passengers of the airport. The strategic choice of the PT-company was to focus on the passengers of the airport. By providing a good PT-access for the passengers, the accessibility problems for the employees would also be resolved. 20% of the passengers came from within 20km of the airport. They were the main target group.
- there are 13 highly frequent bus lines to the airport (also during weekends). The number of bus passengers to and from the airport is increasing every year (+6.4% in 2010). Expectations are that the number of bus passengers will further increase once the new railway-connection (*Diabolo*) from Antwerp to the Airport will be realized
- since 2010: an additional night line making access to labour market possible for the unemployed. There is a high unemployment rate in the City of Brussel and a high need of workers (especially for the night shift) at the airport. Therefore, the decision was made to organize a night line from Brussels neighborhoods to the airport. Occupancy at the moment: 1000 passengers/month.
- a lot of efforts have been done to inform and communicate about the buslines

Q: how many employees are there in the airport region?

A: 65.000 employees (18.000 on airport itself)

Q: this project is about positive incentives (increasing supply) but are there also disincentives (parking management?)

A: the strategy is to "penalize" employees coming by car and to push them to public transport. The aim is to increase access for the clients of the airports (economical benefit)

**Jan Paesen – University of Leuven** explains the mobility plan and policy of the Leuven University.

- there are several mobility initiatives for students and for staff: free use of public transport, cheap bicycle rent for students.
- Commuter fund "2WD project": free commuting bicycles for employees, including maintenance and repair. Commitment of the employee: use of the bike for home-work and for short business trips and no access to parking. For the employer, this system is 3x cheaper than giving a 0,15€/km bicycle allowance (which is quite common in public sector but not compulsory).
- there are some obstacles in the project: cyclists who come by own bike cannot benefit from the project, no flexibility between "sometimes car, sometimes bike",...



- benefits of the project:
  - benefits of the scale (cheap rental prices)
  - financial treatment of the system (accounting costs, provision of future costs) guarantees the continuity of the system
  - maintenance and repair of the bicycle is done by mobile workshop

Q: how many employees use this system?

A: 30%

Q: why is there free public transport but no free bikes for the students?

A: very good question! but this will need new financing sources



**Jos Vandikkelen, Velo bicycle point** gives a short explanation about the services of the bicycle point, organized by Velo: supply to commuters and to companies. He shows the visitors around in the public bicycle parking at the station, including a bicycle repair service. This is part of a social economy project where people from risk groups (lower education, long unemployment,...) are employed to do little reparations and services so the distance between unemployment and regular economy is closed.

**Hans Goesens, CIP – project development** guides a visit around the *Kop van Kessel-Lo*, a new urban development project adjacent to Leuven station. Like in other Belgian cities (Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges, Liège,...) huge investments are made around station areas: offices, apartments, hotels,... The development of station areas for working and housing is part of a sustainable urban and mobility policy.

### **3. General conclusions (Traject)**

The site visit in Belgium had a clear added value for the E-cosmos project. While in other visited countries mobility management is more about planning and studying, it seems that – especially in Brussels and Flanders – Belgium takes the next step. Focus is less on studies but more on implementation and follow-up of measures.

The obligation of company mobility plans in the Brussels region is an interesting example of an implementation oriented mobility management policy. In Flanders, the focus is on supporting companies - financially and via advice – in implementing mobility management measures.

The legal and fiscal frameworks in Belgium stimulate the use of public transport, cycling and carpooling. The commuter fund (in Flanders) and the federal diagnosis (Belgian level) are effective ways of bringing mobility management into the discussion between employers and employees on company level.