

Anders op Weg

Case for Media Future Week 2013

Introduction

On the road network in the Utrecht region there is a large number of traffic jams and congestion. Time lost is expressed in lost vehicle hours (Voertuig Verlies Uren = VVU). In other words, there are bottlenecks in terms of traffic flow on some roads that are of great economic importance. This congestion costs the government and business money. It takes longer to travel from A to B for both employees and for freight. It is detrimental to international competition, but building roads is very expensive and more asphalt in the Netherlands is also socially undesirable. Traffic jams are also detrimental to the "well-being" of people (stress, you're late, you do not know what time you or arriving) and there are major disadvantages to the environment through the emission of CO₂. For the latter, not only reducing congestion is a solution, but also the decreasing the amount of individual traffic. At the same time mobility itself is not a subject of discussion as in a modern society, people want to move between locations. For a healthy economy that is an important "given".

Who is asking the question

The Better Utilisation programme (Beter Benutten by the Rijksoverheid) aims to improve the flow of traffic on the A-road network and the N-road network through applying innovative measures (ie, not asphalt, but make better use of what exists) that trigger mobile people to make choices to that benefit flow. These measures do not focus on a specific problem. These funds from the central government are again distributed to the provinces.

In the area package Better Utilization Middle Netherlands (province of Utrecht), we are thinking especially toward other forms of communication such as:

- Implementing gaming elements
- Campaigns and traveller information.
- Usage of new media to measure (the traveller).

This project is steered by both the province of Utrecht, the U15 (20 largest organizations in the province who work in the field of working smarter, smarter travel) and knowledge institutions (UU, HU and HKU). The group that organizes the entire project in the practical sense, consists of:

- Paul Mallens, strategic advisor and program manager ICT province of Utrecht
- Martijn van de Leur, mobility consultant, Mobycon
- Irmgard Noordhoek, Project Manager for the Task Force Innovation Utrecht

The key concept in Anders op Weg

The central idea in these three measures is to cut VVU's through influencing behaviour through alternative approaches and innovative ideas. Given the strong correlation between these three measures, it was decided to combine them in a plan, under the name of "Anders op Weg".

The starting point is the fun theory - an initiative of Volkswagen, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lXh2n0aPyw> and <http://www.thefuntheory.com>

The fun theory assumes that people can be encouraged to change their behaviour in a playful way, they are lured into alternatives and not forced. This type of measure can for example be used to encourage better driving, avoiding rush hour, alternative route choices and alternative travel options. In other words, we can make it more fun to do it differently. The possible solution is primarily focused on behavioural aspects: can we let mobile people make other choices, to make them go "Anders op Weg". The intended effect of a number of pilots (sept.2013-Sept 2014) is reducing lost vehicle hours on the (main) road network of Utrecht and encourage alternative means of transportation as a positive side effect. The second intended effect is the development of viable business cases by companies.

Question

To arrive at the starting points for the pilots it is good to look beyond just the trends and opportunities of the coming year. Five years ago there were no smartphones or tablets and those are the agents that are now increasingly used for mobile information. Also, "het nieuwe werken" is also only a trend of the past few years. If you want to change behaviour then it is important to know the "traveller" well and connect to his / her life pattern and needs. Our central question is therefore:

What does (national) mobility look like in 5 to 10 years and what first step must we make continue next year on the two scenarios to influence travel behaviour and to improve traffic flow.

The sub-questions are:

- How do people travel to work and in their free time.
- What are their needs?
- Who's turn is it to instigate change, will this be top-down or bottom up?
- What role can "experiencing" play?
- Will "het nieuwe werken" be here to stay and what does it look like?
- Is using gaming and new media elements meaningful and if so in what way?

The trend that we see is that the pressure on traffic and the environment is still increasing. Meanwhile, everyone is talking about "het nieuwe werken", but is this here to stay and will it really lessen the amount of VVU's? The technical possibilities also grow, but what are technologies that change mobility behaviour? It is important of course that roads remains safe! It must also be borne in mind that purely offering a lot of information and apps does not change behaviour by itself! One must know how to find and use the possibilities!

To yield

At the end of the Media Future Week we like to see:

- A scenario of what mobility looks like in 5 and 10 years in commuting and recreation and with what profile you are on the road.
- A future vision of the means that are then used to stay away from traffic jams and how they influence behaviour
- A recommendation for a specific pilot (accompanied by the means and a concept) that we have to develop as a step towards the future
- A business case for the above advice
- Someone that presents these findings to a group of experts on June 13 in the afternoon

ANNEX

Behaviour change and in particular changing habitual behaviour is not easy. There are doubts whether behaviour is permanently changed through the fun method (The piano staircase is now rarely used). Some behavioural scientists indicate that the best behavioural changes occurs when something really needs to change. Others find only stimulating incentives are able to change behaviour. The use of game principles is another story, overcoming something is fun, but the road to it certainly does not have to be fun, so how "fun" you can make the road towards the result also? Giving more and more information about all of your options does not seem to be the solution. Getting feedback on what you do, is often more motivating to change your behaviour (think of the tools out there now to see which home appliances consume how much energy). There are all kinds of apps that help you make decisions (Routes, meeting places), but they are not massively used. The big question is: why they are not used, do they satisfy a need and how do you make sure that they are going to be used?

Behaviour change is possible in two ways:

1. Offer the alternative at the moment someone makes a decision (example: you want to eat healthier, it then helps if on the counter in the canteen fruit is offered and ordering unhealthy food requires more effort). Actually you are manipulating and thus this is a tricky method for a government, because a government cannot manipulate, it must communicate transparently. Transparent communication, however, only has limited effect;
2. Inciting people to a personal mobility plan (with feedback), as tested in a Spitsmijden campaign in Brabant. Participants were people who wanted to change their behaviour, they filled in such a plan. Filling in and checking out the alternatives, already resulted in a change in behaviour, mostly in travelling at alternative moments. Furthermore, they not only found money a reward, but also quieter or better roads were seen as a reward.

Elements with effect:

- The importance of the experience, a journey with experiences is perceived as shorter
- People are fond of habits, so you have to learn them new habits
- Receiving feedback stimulates (compare this with the measuring of your home energy use per unit, this does change behavior)
- Influencing each other with tips and experiences (via websites and social media)
- Clever combinations of something you already love to do or have to do, with what is necessary
- Stay in line with the "natural" habitat, ie the possibilities immediate vicinity

The government does not want to take control but organize people to define problems and find solutions.