Exploring the City of Rotterdam's current mobility strategy

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Introduction

At Rotterdam, shared mobility is an important topic and the city is working on an innovative approach to address the city's current transport system. In this interview we speak with Richard van der Wulp, John Akkerhuis and Mariet de Haas to discuss Rotterdam's current mobility strategy and the city's involvement in the MOBI-MIX project.

Meet the interviewees from the City of Rotterdam

John Akkerhuis

Mobility policy advisor

John Akkerhuis is a mobility policy advisor for the City of Rotterdam working on different subjects within the field of sustainable mobility. John joined the MOBI-MIX project at its inception and initiated the organisation as it stands today. John was closely involved in facilitating the rapid growth of electric cars in the city and was a bicycle coordinator for several years.

Mariet de Haas

Coordinator of shared mobility and mobility hubs

Mariet recently started working for Rotterdam as a shared mobility and mobility hub coordinator; in 2018 she ensured that the second Dutch Green Deal Car Sharing initiative came alive. Together with her colleagues she brings shared mobility to the next level.

Richard van der Wulp

Senior mobility advisor

Richard van der Wulp is a senior mobility advisor. The emphasis of his work surrounds the subjects of smart mobility, sharing, mobility hubs and parking. Working for a city in transition there is a strong need to bring all these spatial and mobility elements together.

What is the current shared mobility strategy in Rotterdam?

Richard: "Rotterdam is growing rapidly. A significant amount of new houses are being built, and so, we are aiming to climate-proof the city, to make the city greener, more liveable and accessible. One approach to tackle several issues in the city is a mobility system to make a more inclusive city and to give certain groups more access to mobility. One of Rotterdam's more prominent principles is to increase the dedicated space for cyclists and pedestrians, to accomplish this we aim to decrease car speeds, decrease inter-urban traffic and experiment with more car-free zones. Hub-systems and vehicle sharing will also contribute to these goals as for several years, Rotterdam has worked on these aspects".

How is Rotterdam currently dealing with shared mobility providers?

Mariet: "Rotterdam works closely with mobility providers. Shared mobility is innovative, so both sides need to learn. We meet quarterly with each of the providers of the shared cars, bikes, and mopeds in our city to monitor the development, identify upcoming problems and understand each other's points of view. In case the provider has a sudden issue, contact is made with the Rotterdam team and we can assist them. Similarly, they also help us, for example, if we have a long-term plan, we may approach them for feedback".

John: "Rotterdam has always had an open attitude towards new shared mobility providers and we take the approach of not blocking new initiatives but to give them a chance. We learned, what worked and what didn't, what the public acceptance was in these circumstances and when to implement a "red button". With these measures, we designed our permit system for shared bicycles and shared mopeds and recently also for shared cars."

What are the lessons learnt from MOBI-MIX within the 1st year?

John: "The learning immediately started during two high-level round table sessions. International experts discussed issues such as how cities can improve the collaboration with private mobility providers through a result-driven approach. Furthermore, we had an in-depth discussion into their business cases, how the market can be mobilised and examples that are currently used throughout Europe and the US. This gave us a better understanding of the market which was very useful for our internal discussions. The implementation guide for effective public-private collaboration in Smart Mobility which was developed within MOBI-MIX gave us a stronger sense of confidence on how to approach the different mobility providers. Positioning the MOBI-MIX project into our organisation forced us to find and address the key players. MOBI-MIX also helped us when monitoring our different shared mobility projects and made us think about questions such as what are the general lessons we want to learn and what are some specific extra subjects?

Also, of course, lessons were learnt from the inspiring examples...

of the other project partners and cities. We are now starting a period where our pilot project with shared cars will really start up and I expect the learning curve to continue along the way where we have comfort in being able to find international expertise through the MOBI-MIX network if necessary".

What has the collaboration been like within MOBI-MIX and how has it been working during COVID19?

John: "Given the boundaries that occurred because of COVID19, I feel that the cooperation within the project is good. Partners remained motivated and because of the regular meetings, we have had enough possibilities to connect with each other. I am, however, looking forward to meeting each other face to face and visit the projects of the different MOBI-MIX partners".
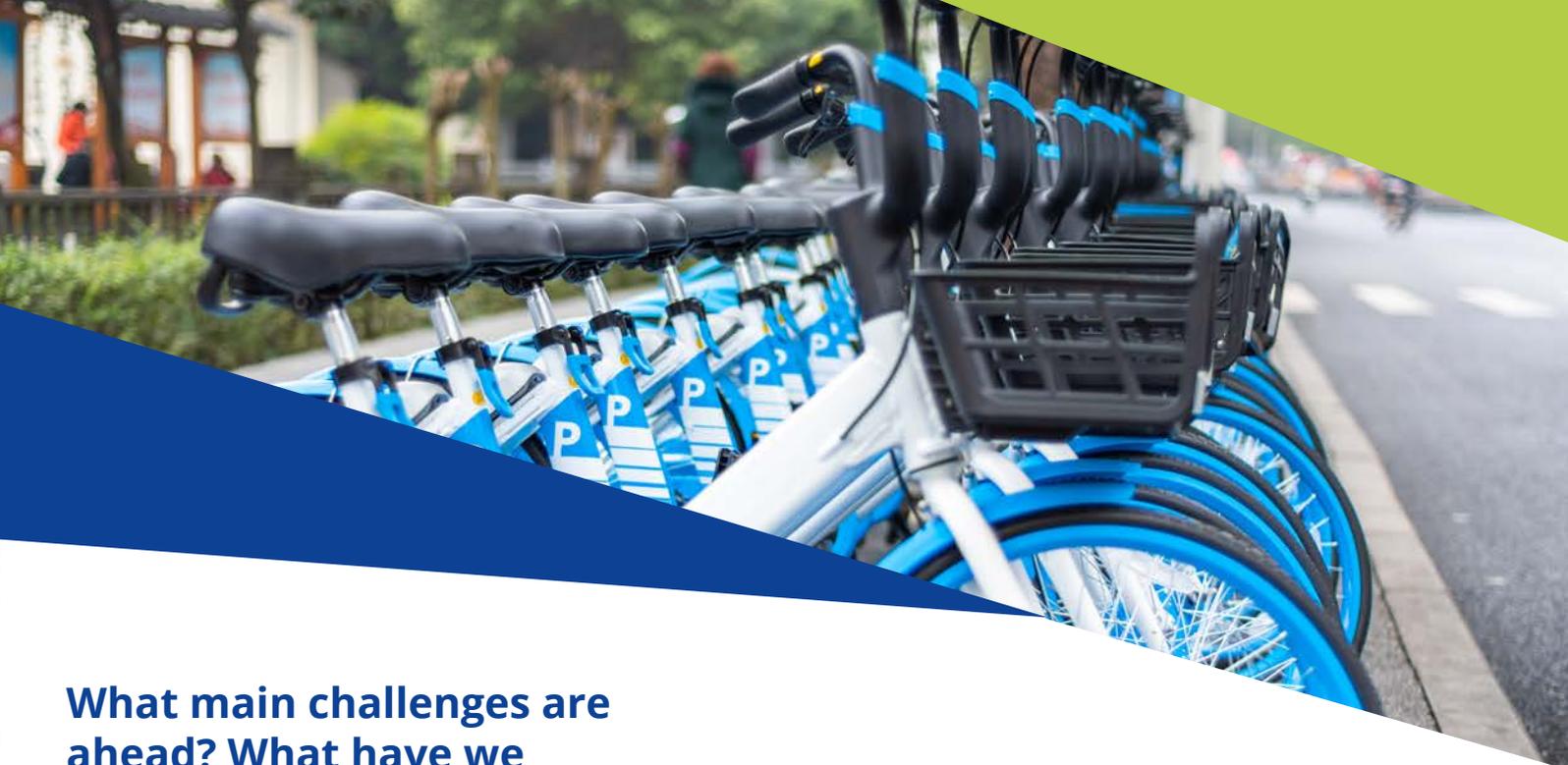
What main challenges are ahead? What have we already addressed in the project?

Richard: "One of the potential benefits of shared vehicles is the decreased use of cars overall. Several calculations show that this could have a significant impact on climate goals. This is especially important since Rotterdam has the ambition that every shared vehicle in the city needs to be electric by 2025. This is one of the more urgent and largest targets we have".

Mariet: "This is an important challenge for the near future: are we able to facilitate and stimulate shared...

mobility sufficiently for the service to grow to one that is used on a large scale? Will this innovation move from one used by 'early adopters' to one that is used by the 'early majority?'"

Richard: "This means more interactivity between cities and standards is required. In this next step, the service sharing of mobility needs to address more specific demands to be able to scale up. Costs, ease of use and perception are a few examples of these new demands."

Information

City of Rotterdam website: https://www.rotterdam.nl/
MOBI-MIX website: https://www.interreg2seas.eu/en/MOBI-MIX
Future Mobility Expert website: https://www.futuremobility.expert/