

Who I am and where I am going

Summary

Reason: Developments demand a different take on mobility

Over the next couple of decades we are expecting shifts in the size and composition of the Dutch population and in our lifestyles, which will affect mobility. For instance, the ‘baby boom’ generation will retire and the people of that generation are considerably more mobile than their parents. In some parts of the country the population will continue to grow, but this growth will be more and more reduced and may even turn into shrinkage. After 2040 the population of the Netherlands as a whole will start to decline. We will also see changes in the size and composition of population groups of immigrant origin (*allochtonen*). As the socio-economic position of these groups improves, their mobility behaviour will change as well.

Another group that deserves attention are young people – referred to here as ‘the new generation’. Today’s youngsters are the adults of the future. The way in which they live their lives and deal with mobility will set the trend for the future. It is beyond dispute that the lifestyle of this new generation differs from that of their modernist parents and their traditional grandparents. As a result, the requirements imposed on mobility in the future will not be the same.

Another notable development is the changing lifestyles of the various social segments. Over the coming years a shift is expected whereby modern values such as ‘possessing’ and ‘pampering’ will become more important, while traditional values such as ‘preserving’ will be considered less relevant. It is also likely that there will be an increasing focus on technology, media and image culture. These changes in social segments and the accompanying value attitudes will affect people’s mobility behaviour as well. This has prompted the Council to view the effects of these developments on mobility from a different perspective.

Objective: Focusing more on demographic developments and lifestyles

The objective of this advisory memorandum is to provide guidance on how to focus more on developments in the size and composition of the population, on socio-economic factors and on lifestyles when devising mobility policy. By means of the present advice the Council wants to kick-start a discussion about the added value of a lifestyle approach for mobility policy.

Analysis: Wishes and requirements insufficiently taken into account

From the autonomous developments described above it appears that the popularity of the car will increase in the future, while the popularity of public transport and cycling is in danger of declining.

The elderly of the future will make more use of cars than those of today, and they will also continue to use cars for longer. The popularity of public transport will decrease among this group. In regions where the population is expected to decrease, the use of public transport will come under pressure due to reduced density, while car use will gain more ground. In regions with a growing population, the pressure on roads and public transport will continue to grow due to increased mobility between city centres and suburbs. People of immigrant origin who use public transport relatively frequently at the moment will transfer to car use as their prosperity increases. Moreover, it is expected that the use of bicycles by people of immigrant origin will move towards the level of the native (i.e. ethnic) Dutch population (*autochtonen*), but will continue to lag behind. Young people of today, the so-called new generation, make heavy demands on information and on experiential value. Public transport in its current form seems to be poorly geared to their requirements. If we look at lifestyles, we particularly see an increase in the size and number of social groups that attach great value to factors such as status, convenience, speed, flexibility and independence. These are characteristics that are mainly attributed to the car.

The growing popularity of the car and the declining popularity of public transport and bicycles as a result of the autonomous development described above may have consequences for the accessibility of urban areas in particular, for the degree of CO₂ emissions reduction, the accessibility of the countryside by public transport and the costs of mobility, to name but a few, and may endanger landscape values due to the realisation of even more

infrastructure. The outcomes of these trends seem to be contrary to the current sustainability goals. Therefore, the Council sees plenty of reasons why policy makers must take these trends into account.

Conclusions and recommendations

It can be derived from the analysis of demographic developments and lifestyles that the popularity of the car will increase in the future, while public transport and bicycles are in danger of falling out of favour. Mobility patterns are not set in stone, however. By taking the wishes, motives and experiential values of mobile individuals into account as much as possible and by providing the right incentives at the right time, people can be induced to adjust their mobility patterns. In other words, there is no need for desperation. However, extra efforts will need to be made to respond to trends and to turn them around if necessary. The Council considers it essential in this regard that policy focuses more specifically on potential users' wishes, needs and experiential values which result from their lifestyles. What are the motives of the various social segments? What mobility preferences do these result in? And what needs to be done to meet those needs or influence those preferences?

Recommendations with regard to demographic developments

1 Gear modes of transport more specifically towards the wishes and requirements of the elderly

For elderly people, independence, safety (both socially and in terms of traffic safety) and easy accessibility (both physically and in terms of complexity) are important reasons for opting for a specific mode of transport. In the opinion of the Council, it will be essential for public transport to make buses, trains etc. accessible to the elderly, and to organise timetables in such a way that the departure and transfer times are feasible for elderly people. At the same time we must prevent a shift in the image of public transport towards 'transport that is only meant for old people'. On the roads the position of the elderly can be improved through education and provision of information to both the elderly and other traffic participants, by technological support in vehicles and by creating a well-structured, self-evident traffic environment including clear signage.

2 Anticipate population shrinkage in regional traffic and transport policy

In regions where the population is decreasing, we must take account of a decreasing demand for a finely meshed public transport network and of reduced means for investments. Close regional collaboration will be required to retain or strengthen the functions of regional centres and thus provide a basis for a viable transport system. Here we need to focus more on customised solutions, such as demand-oriented, on-call public transport and made-to-measure ICT applications. The Council advises the regions to anticipate these developments rather than to ignore them.

3 In regions with a growing population, tackle the pressure on roads and public transport by means of robust networks and entrepreneurial public transport. Beware of overinvestment in view of declining growth in the long term.

In regions with a growing population, increasing pressure on roads and public transport must be taken into account for the medium term. The Council refers to its advisory memorandum entitled *De Randstad altijd bereikbaar* ('Guaranteed accessibility for the Randstad region'), in which we advocate robust transport networks in order to reduce all traffic jams, including incidental ones. The Council furthermore refers to its advisory memorandum entitled *Ondernemend regionaal openbaar vervoer voor meer reizigers* ('Entrepreneurial regional public transport for more travellers'), in which we make recommendations for inducing public transport providers to gear their services more towards the wishes and requirements of travellers. In the long term (after 2040) population growth in these regions will also turn into shrinkage, resulting in reduced congestion of the roads network. The Council recommends keeping a close eye on these developments in order to prevent possible overinvestment in infrastructure in the future.

4 Promote the use of bicycles among people of immigrant origin

When it comes to mobility needs and behaviour, there are relatively few differences between people of immigrant origin and native Dutch. People of immigrant origin currently often travel together, but this is likely to diminish as their socio-economic position improves and their car ownership and usage levels increase. The use of public transport among this group, which is currently still relatively extensive, will then probably decline. Measures to meet the wishes and requirements of (young) people of immigrant origin do not differ from those for other population segments. An exception is the attitude of people of immigrant origin to bicycles. The Council recommends getting groups of immigrant origin more used to cycling. Attention will then also need to be paid to traffic safety and promoting good traffic behaviour.

5 When developing modes of transport, gear them towards the wishes and requirements of the new generation and ensure image improvement

Young people communicate differently from their parents. Thanks to digital media they have extensive social networks. Like their parents, they derive status from material things and social standing, but they do not value the same things. For instance, an important status indicator for young people is the number of friends on the social networking website Hyves. Convenience, speed and flexibility are becoming increasingly important. The new generation is independent, wants to spend its time in a comfortable and useful way whenever possible, and does not like being subjected to power and authority. If public transport and cycling are to gain ground among young people, these modes of transport will need to develop in such a way that the aforementioned needs are met and that their image is significantly improved. In order for these goals to be achieved, transport providers must invest in communication, convenience and a clear identity. The recommendations below elaborate on this.

Recommendations with regard to lifestyle

Looking at the lifestyle aspect, the Council also notices an increasing focus on speed, convenience, flexibility and independence among the growing population segments. Mobility systems will need to adapt to this as well. Policy will need to focus even more on supporting ‘transport chains’, the application of new digital technologies to mobility, and the promotion of bicycle use. Promoting different ways of working (working from home) and enabling travellers to use their travel time in pleasant and useful ways are also in line with the lifestyles of potential travellers. The Council makes the following recommendations in this regard:

6 Support self-direction

In view of the demographic developments and lifestyle changes outlined above, the Council concludes that the growing need for self-direction is a central development in mobility behaviour. This is a logical consequence of the attitudes of the various social segments mentioned above. Self-direction means taking personal responsibility. This requires that people know what is expected of them, that there are sufficient options and frameworks within which self-direction can be realised, and that people receive feedback on their behaviour or insight into the consequences of their choices. Government bodies and public transport companies must support this trend through their policy if they want to stay in touch with the coming generations. To achieve this, the Council makes the following recommendations:

7 Ensure that people have a choice in terms of mobility

General: In order to enable people to take personal responsibility and apply self-direction, it is necessary that people have sufficient options. This ends the monotony of having more of the same everywhere. The following is asked of government bodies, businesses and service providers: to offer freedom of choice rather than fixed arrangements, in combination with financial rewards for the choices which are (collectively) desirable. Government must facilitate various modalities, making the most desirable alternatives (from a collective point of view) most attractive. At the same time businesses must stop offering uniform transport options, such as only a company car, but must instead offer multimodal options, such as a mobility card for car plus public transport. For transport service providers it will be essential to provide good service, transparent information and attractive special offers. Collaboration between all parties involved will be of crucial importance in this regard. The result must be improvement of the status of multimodal travel behaviour. Specifically for the various modes of transport, this entails the following:

Car: In view of the experiential value of the car for various social segments, the Council feels that it is realistic to assume that the popularity of the car will continue to rise. The Council does consider it desirable to promote efficient use of the car by:

- improving the status of clean and economical cars;
- approaching the car as a link in the transport chain and facilitating quick transfer to other modes of transport, e.g. by means of park & ride facilities and transfer locations on the outskirts of cities.

Taxi: Transport by taxi could become a valid mobility option and play a greater role in transport chains than is currently the case. In order for this to be achieved, the following conditions must be met:

- taxi services must be better aligned to travellers' needs and requirements with regard to quality, price and flexibility;
- the provision and transparency of information must be improved, e.g. by means of modern ICT applications;
- the image of the taxi must be improved. Taxis must come to be associated with qualities such as speed, convenience, affordability and safety.

Public transport: The subdivision of potential travellers according to lifestyle has been part of the marketing strategy of the Dutch national railway company NS for a number of years. It seems that NS is now starting to reap the benefits of this strategy. When it comes to regional public transport, marketing strategy is not a self-evident part of operational management. This is connected with the way regional public transport is put out to tender. In its advisory memorandum entitled *Ondernemend regionaal openbaar vervoer voor meer reizigers* ('Entrepreneurial regional public transport for more travellers'), the Council made a number of recommendations to change this situation. The Council argues in favour of extra efforts to improve the quality of public transport by:

- setting up a task force to investigate in what way regional public transport can be better geared towards future developments in terms of demography and lifestyles of potential travellers.

Bicycle: The Council is of the opinion that the use of this typically Dutch means of transport must be cherished and promoted, in view of its advantages for the environment and our quality of life. This can be done by:

- improving the status of the bicycle;
- getting people of immigrant origin more used to bicycles and continuing to emphasise the health benefits of cycling;
- appointing a 'cycling ambassador' who can be deployed to promote cycling among people of all ages;
- making more financial resources available for the realisation of safe routes and bicycle parking facilities, both in the city and in the countryside, and for targeted marketing campaigns directed at people with specific lifestyles.

8 Promoting convenience and making choosing easy

Consumers, including travellers, are fed up with needlessly complex products and services. They no longer have the patience to deal with unreadable manuals, bureaucratic procedures and inconvenient travel times. Preconditions for self-direction are therefore: enabling people to choose, being transparent about the consequences of choices, and offering reliability, so that choices can be made with confidence. Certain choices can be rendered (temporarily) more attractive in the interest of the community as a whole. In order to meet the need for self-direction, mobility systems must be characterised by speed, convenience, flexibility, transparency, freedom of choice and predictability. In this regard, the use of images, media and visual information will become increasingly important. Mobility systems can take a leap forward in quality by making the best possible use of digital elements (GPS systems, images and visual information). Communication, also between travellers, will gain importance. Customer-focused action and (where possible) a personal and up-to-date approach are central aspects.

9 Monitor the boundaries

The need for self-direction is increasing, while at the same time values like decency, obedience and compliance are on the decline. This combination of factors can endanger (social) safety in traffic and transport. A tension seems to be developing between offering freedom on the one hand and monitoring boundaries on the other. The Council recommends the following:

- laying down clear rules and standards that demarcate the boundaries of individual freedom. In this regard the government must apply itself more to the role of coach and less to that of educator;
- promoting developments that are relevant to the tension between self-direction on the one hand and strict regulation by the government on the other. This can be achieved, among other things, by strengthening the role of intermediary organisations, by developing solutions supported by these parties as well, by means of intensive communication and feedback providing insight into the consequences of behaviour, and by meeting the need for flexibility, for instance by means of variable speed limits on motorways;
- making additional investments in communication on rules of conduct in traffic, in self-explanatory principles and in supervision and enforcement.

10 Involve citizens in solutions

The Council considers it advisable to regard mobility from the perspectives of the various social segments, particularly the new generation. We must look for opportunities for innovation. After all, young people have the future. To increase citizen involvement and satisfaction, the Council recommends the following:

- intensively involving citizens in the discussion. This fits in with the new generation's need for dialogue and participation in the development of solutions. A good example is co-creation in public transport;
- making (government) discussions more accessible and giving them more attention. Keywords in this context are openness and communication. This may be facilitated by the development of standards and the establishment of a central portal;
- increasing citizen involvement by means of 'eParticipation', such as citizen initiatives via the Internet, a 'web antenna' for policy-makers, and making better use of existing applications like Google Maps, Wikipedia, Hyves and Twitter.