

/trends & hypes

Mobility management: from punishment to reward

>>alternative methods for behavioural change

Too many drivers are making use of the roads at the same time. However, road pricing is a controversial political issue. Furthermore, an indirect approach has been shown to be more efficient: if you give commuters a mobility budget, reliable information and flexible working hours/workplaces, then mobility can be much more efficiently spread.

In the daily struggle to organise a seemingly never-ending series of activities and responsibilities into your diary, the importance of predictable and reliable journeys is becoming ever greater. The chances of achieving a reliable journey time are getting smaller due to congested crossroads, traffic jams on main roads, road works and traffic incidents. The broadening of motorways provides some respite, although it does little to combat problems such as waiting times at traffic lights or time spent searching for a parking spot. In both cases, the responsibility for solutions lies with the road authorities. However, what can drivers themselves do?

Charging for usage of cars/roads

Drivers can be encouraged to avoid the rush hour by imposing road pricing during the rush hour. You could even supplement this by converting the fixed road tax for car owners into a variable charge based on car usage. This will encourage drivers to seriously consider taking public transport or going by bike instead of driving. Various governments have attempted to introduce similar price incentives, such as rush-hour stickers, road pricing, kilometre levy etc. The main disadvantage of approaches such as these is that they are effectively government-imposed punishments for drivers. Although charges are the means rather than the end and they are not strictly intended as punishments, they are perceived as such by driver. Drivers complain about the charges, saying that they have no choice other than to take the car during the rush hour. However, do they truly have no choice?

Rewards for avoiding the rush hour

The previous Dutch cabinet initiated a series of regional mobility projects. These projects involved incentives rather than charges.

Drivers that participated in the project were rewarded with a small payment for every time that they avoided taking the car during the rush hour. Paying money is seen as punishment, while receiving money is a reward, which is much a more effective tool. Furthermore, once the driver is given reliable information about alternative transport methods, it turns out that there are far more alternatives than was first thought! The SpitsScoren (Rush Hour Reward) project conducted on the A15 near Rotterdam proved that the combination of information and reward really works. Participants were rewarded with €5 every time they avoided this patch of road during the rush hour. Thanks to this trial period, the number of vehicles during the rush hour reduced by 8%, which amounted to 1,900 vehicles. This enables significantly better traffic flow during the rush-hour periods.

Organisation: the New World of Work

These mobility projects clearly show that plenty of drivers actually do have a choice if their environment (employer/family) offers sufficient flexibility. The fundamental discussion is therefore 'how organised are we in the Netherlands?' We get up at the same time, we sit in the same traffic jams to get to work, and exactly the same is true when we go home. It is no fluke that a debate is under way in the business sector regarding whether things could be arranged more efficiently. Especially given all of the opportunities offered by modern employment arrangements and modern ICT, also known as the New World of Work. It is technically possible to work completely free of your physical workplace. These days, you can begin your working day at home by dealing with your e-mails, and then set off for work after the rush hour. However, this is not feasible for everybody. The search for the New World of Work and the reward



scheme for avoiding the rush hour are seamlessly combined in regional mobility projects such as SpitsScoren (Rush Hour Reward) and Spitsvrij (Rush Hour Free).

Working, scheduling and travelling require information

Anybody who frequently travels to a variety of destinations will still find it worthwhile to own a car. However, a large number of commuters travel the same route every day. It remains a big step to adjust departure times or to take a different mode of transport. For this reason, information is important. A good web service, app and service desk can help get the info across that is of personal relevance to the user, such as what are the journey times of the various modes of transport and how do they vary throughout the day? The optimum mode of transport could be the train today, but a rental car tomorrow. Mobility management gives a complete picture of your options for transport from your breakfast table to your office.

Other target groups

Road pricing is a typical business-to-business market for technology firms. The broader implementation of mobility management requires different partners such as specialists in recruiting participants via marketing or PR and a professional customer-service department that users can consult if they have any questions or problems. Nowadays, social media are essential in providing information to and linking participants, for example, for car-pooling. During the SpitsScoren project, this intentionally focused on smartphones. This meant that you didn't need built-in equipment in the car, but that you could

simply get the information via your mobile phone. It meant that the information was always at the fingertips of the participants, who would register their plans for travel that day. This actively involved people in the management of their own mobility and it is an extremely accessible method.

Government initiative for the business sector

These regional mobility projects were initiated by the government, who also currently provide the financial impetus. However, for it to be a sustainable solution, these projects must be able to be run commercially and independently. The financial impetus must originate from the employers and employees themselves. Employers are increasingly realising either that they have a social responsibility in this issue or they see it as a way to strengthen ties with employees. Not to mention the financial benefits: fewer company cars, fewer parking spaces, less office space and a socially responsible and more sustainable profile.

Examples of incentives include parking spaces next to the front door for car-poolers or a mobility budget to replace company cars, public transport tickets or travel expenses. The latter scheme would enable you to decide for yourself whether to travel by bike, private/company car, train etc.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that mobility management is no longer hype, but a trend. The development of services relating to mobility has even resulted in a new profession: mobility agents for businesses. These agents can handle all issues surrounding the creation and execution of mobility plans within businesses.

