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City of Ghent urban mobility project to receive substantial EU financing

Traffic Management as a Service (TMaaS.eu), an urban mobility project driven by the Mobiliteitsbedrijf of the City of Ghent, has been selected by EU initiative Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) to receive financing. The Traffic Management as a Service-platform is a new and revolutionary traffic centre-concept for small and medium-sized cities. The European Commission will financially support the development of the Traffic Management as a Service-project by way of the UIA for a three-year period.

Setting up a traffic centre is an important part of the City of Ghent's latest mobility plan (Strategic Mobility Vision 2015). The Ghent Mobiliteitsbedrijf developed 'Traffic Management as a Service', which is radically different from previous traffic centres: the Traffic Management as a Service-concept is based on a fully digital and virtual platform that processes traffic data and provides real-time information to the residents of Ghent. To achieve this up-to-date flow of information the data are dealt with and distributed to the users automatically, so operators are no longer required to continuously monitor screens.

The project was selected among 206 competing European projects by the Urban Innovative Actions–initiative (UIA). Urban Innovative Actions is an initiative of the European Union, which provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address a variety of urban challenges.

Filip Watteeuw, The Ghent Alderman responsible for Mobility, is extremely pleased with the European Commission's choice: "By providing us with funding, the European

Commission confirms how our strategy to develop an innovative traffic centre, is the right one for the City of Ghent.”

Watteeuw continues: “The EU’s financial support will on the one hand guarantee we will be able to realise our vision with the help of a number of strong partners. On the other hand it will allow large-scale collaboration with other governments on the development of cutting-edge multimodal traffic management.” Thanks to the European Commission’s funding (the total proposed project budget is 4.3 million euros) the City of Ghent, together with selected innovative companies and knowledge institutions based in the Ghent area, will be able to realise its plans. Ghent University and KU Leuven are important knowledge and innovation partners, as is global leader in navigation and mapping TomTom, which has a large branch office in Ghent. The City is looking forward to spending the majority of the funding on supporting and promoting innovative companies and start-ups. Ghent-based start-ups which will be involved are software company Waylay, market leader in smart mobility Be-Mobile and communications agency B.Bloom. In addition, Barco, supplier of screens, led-displays, video walls and projectors, the European Passengers’ Federation (EPF) which is based in Ghent, and MBI Project Management are also on board.

The project aims to develop the Traffic Management as a Service-concept for the City of Ghent, and to operationalise a virtual and digital traffic centre. Current urban mobility centres are notoriously expensive, and focus on installing costly hardware in order to monitor traffic. Moreover, those systems are unable to provide personalised information to the city’s residents. The Traffic Management as a Service-system on the other hand uses data that are readily available from various partners and companies, and works multimodal. In other words: it takes all manner of transportation modes into account. To achieve this, the system automatically checks all data coming in on journeys by bike, bus, tram, train, or on foot. Based on those data the platform will send all information necessary to each commuter by way of social media, while considering each

individual's personal preferences. Citizens are also able to provide Traffic Management as a Service-platform with feedback. As soon as a problem arises, the platform will automatically take action.

Advantages of Traffic as a Management System for the City of Ghent and the residents who subscribe are myriad: citizens can gain immediate access to information about their means of transport or their trajectories of choice. Subscribers will receive real-time and personalised traffic advice about their neighbourhoods or journeys (i.e. accidents, traffic jams, delays, availability of vehicles in car sharing networks, train scheduling, bicycle parking, available parking spaces, weather updates, etc.). Commuters will not only be informed about their journeys, but will be notified of alternatives if need be. This way, all citizens will be able to travel in the most efficient, safest, most sustainable and most agreeable way. On top of this, City of Ghent employees will be able to monitor all mobility data, and use these to adjust traffic lights, inform residents, evaluate and prepare mobility measures, etc.

While developing the Traffic as a Management Service-concept it became clear that it could be advantageous for many other cities. Owing to the European Commission's funding Traffic Management as a Service can realise its goals, and explore whether these can be of added value for various small and medium-sized cities.

The City of Ghent is undoubtedly a pioneer when it comes to innovative urban mobility. Its proposal was therefore supported by all kinds of national and international partners, such as the cities of Dnipro (The Ukraine), Antwerp, Eindhoven, Rotterdam, Brussels, Stockholm, Cologne and Copenhagen. Companies such as Polis, De Lijn, NMBS and the Vlaams Verkeerscentrum have been standing by the project from the start. In addition, mobility experts in the cities of Paris, Porto, Pisa, Chemnitz (Germany), Debrecen (Hungary), Miami, New Hampshire, Los Angeles, Kentucky (USA), San Pedro Garcia (Mexico), Juiz de Fora (Brazil) and Selangor (Malaysia) have expressed interest

in the Traffic Management as a Service-concept, and are eager to check-up on the project's development.

In short, the EU's funding of Traffic Management as a Service will make multimodal traffic management an achievable goal around the world. By steamrolling the project, the City of Ghent will put itself firmly on the map of Europe as a trailblazer for innovative and smart mobility. Ghent residents and other interested parties can track the project's progress by subscribing to the newsletter or by taking a look at the blog on www.tmaas.eu.

The EU funding explained:

Het total project budget: 4.3 million euro

80% Of the project will be financed by the European Union, 20% will be co-financed by the project partners

72% of the total EU funding will be divided by the partners

28% of the total EU funding will be allocated to the City of Ghent, of which 60% will be allocated for public procurement

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Traffic Management as a Service

