The Urban Lab of Europe!

Conference is final agreement of the TMaaS project

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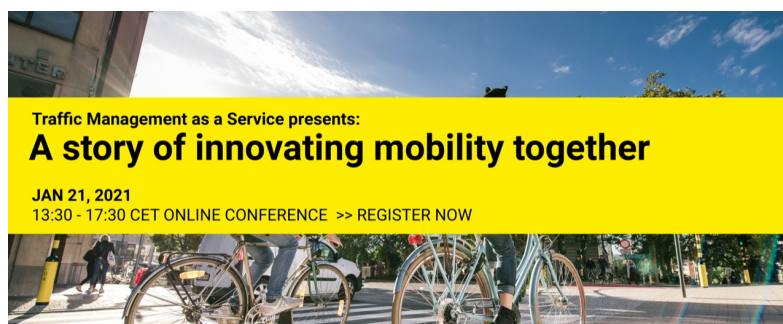
On 21st January the TMaaS Project will conclude with a final conference entitled "A Story of Innovating Mobility Together". Given the circumstances, it will be a virtual event, but that does not mean it will be less exciting. On the contrary, a full programme has been put together – including networking opportunities – with numerous activities tailored to those interested in innovative mobility.

The conference will look back on a three-year trajectory and offer cities and companies the opportunity to get to know the concept more closely. "The highlights of the trajectory we have travelled will be discussed, as well as the challenges involved in the development of a platform such as LINK.Gent," explains TMaaS team member Sidharta Gautama from UGent. "We will also pay attention to the many invaluable lessons learned from this project, which we will be sharing with other smaller and medium-sized cities. In this way they too can learn from these lessons if they have plans in this direction."

Flexible platform

One of the main objectives of TMaaS was to propose new mobility management technologies to companies and cities that do not necessarily have the largest budgets. This conference offers an outstanding opportunity to further emphasize this aspect. "Due to limited budgets it's not possible to develop a unique solution for each city," adds Sidharta Gautama. "You have to look for a platform that is flexible enough to respond to specific situations and questions. In this conference we want to make that perfectly clear. We want to show what mobility management can mean and which tools are available to tackle it in a cost-efficient way."

Realism

The challenges that this approach entails will also be discussed. "Many cities don't fully realize the challenges and sometimes end up with wish-lists that are not realistic, certainly financially," says Sidharta Gautama. "With this conference we want to share our learnings about such aspects. The TMaaS process also started with a wish-list. During the course of the process it became apparent that it was not always realistic, so evolved over time. We can now share this knowledge with other cities. A good example concerns collaboration between various partners. In theory it all seemed very straightforward; in practice a lot of obstacles appeared."

Blueprint

In addition to debates in which these subjects are discussed, there is also a (virtual) space for networking, as Sidharta Gautama explains. "We want to give participants the opportunity to get to know each other and share their findings. The TMaaS story is not an end-point, it's a blueprint based on what we have learned ourselves about what urban mobility can become. Networking is ideal for cities that are interested in the concept or who want to get started with it themselves. They can make new contacts that may lead to new collaborations. These can be contacts between cities, as well as between cities and companies or the academic world. With our conference we want to give a boost to that dynamic."

Expert moderation

The talks during the conference will be guided in the right direction by moderator Jean-Paul Judson, founder of Nowmore: "The intention is that during panel discussions we mainly look ahead. We want to discuss how this project can act as a catalyst for other, future projects, and how we can put it on the agenda of other cities and of Europe as a whole. As moderator I will ensure that the participants discuss this in everyday language that is understandable by everyone – including myself. In such projects you sometimes notice that team members have their own jargon that outsiders don't always understand."

Debating in corona times

A final conference of a European project like this goes beyond the actual topics covered; human interaction is key. However, a conference in corona times differs from what we are accustomed to, as everything is done virtually. "Unfortunately, we are still waiting for hologram technology to be perfected," jokes Jean-Paul Judson, "so in the meantime we have to make do with a virtual conference! The challenge is therefore to stimulate interaction as much as possible, despite the circumstances. One advantage is that it is easier to get people from all over the world around the table. We are therefore focusing more on the advantages than the disadvantages."

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