

Pedal Power

Cycling the Utrecht Way

 **Utrecht** Region





Get on your bike

Healthy Urban Living is the starting point for Utrecht Region. Cycling contributes to the principles of healthy people, minds and environment, and to the goals of reducing noise and air pollution, while improving safety and quality of life.

As a sustainable and non-polluting mode of transport, cycling is more affordable (no road tax, petrol costs), healthier (increased physical fitness, reduced risk of accidents and lower stress levels) and greener (less emissions, greater connection with nature) than driving. Cycling is also a great social leveller. It is a means of transport available to all, creating social equality and a sense of connection. Everyone benefits from more cycling due to reduced traffic and parking congestion, fewer accidents and lower pollution levels.

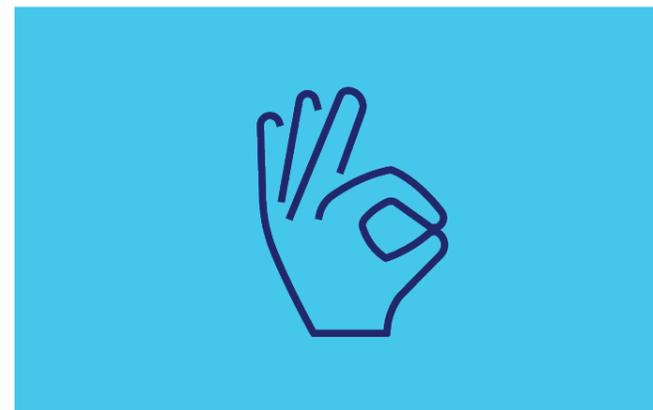
You are already convinced of the economic and environment benefits of cycling, so how does Utrecht Region contribute and support these policies?

Cycling the Utrecht Way

Cycling is engrained in the Dutch DNA. The Netherlands has world-leading bike infrastructure and the most bikes per capita in the world. According to latest research from the World Economic Forum, the Dutch city of Utrecht is the world's most bicycle-friendly city. Utrecht Region is not only a leading bike region in the Netherlands, but it is also one of the European front runners in smart urban mobility. This enterprising region works hard to stimulate bike-related businesses with a positive impact on the economy, social inclusion and health. The aim is to find innovative, sustainable solutions for Healthy Urban Living, and continue to improve and encourage bike usage.

Cities are becoming more congested and polluted, and global pressure to cut carbon emissions is mounting. Radical plans, business plans and technologies are needed to prevent the worst effects of climate change. By investing in a robust cycling infrastructure and supporting network, we can take a step towards reducing the environment impact created by our current transportation systems. The mobility mix is changing in our cities. Governments recognise that we must reduce our dependency on cars, but is creating a diverse and efficient bike ecosystem as easy as riding a bike?

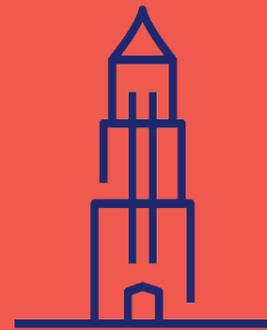
This whitepaper will outline how Utrecht Region is investing in bicycle infrastructure, why an integrated cycling policy is key for sustainable urban planning and how the region can support your business to grow.



Start pedaling

Utrecht is one of the fastest growing cities in the Netherlands. Situated in the heart of the country, it is projected to have a 20% population increase by 2030. With Healthy Urban Living at its core, Utrecht Region is dedicated to finding innovative solutions in smart mobility and infrastructure. The region is one of Europe's most competitive regions, consistently rating in the top 3 of the Regional Competitiveness Index, according to the European Commission.

Utrecht is situated in the middle of the Netherlands and benefits from excellent public transport links, in addition to the extensive interconnected network of bike routes. Utrecht Central station is a major hub with more than 70 million people passing through each year. This accessibility offers local businesses a competitive edge, along with access to a highly skilled workforce. Close to 50% of workers in Utrecht have a university degree, and 85% speak two or more languages. The thriving multilingual work culture in the region makes it attractive for overseas business to operate efficiently within the Netherlands and across national borders.



Informal networks exist alongside organisations such as the Dutch Cycling Embassy. Much work is being done to build a network for professionals to jointly create proposals, contribute to business development and export products and knowledge.

The Utrecht Bike Community is a professional network that brings together everyone from bike manufacturers and mechanics to insurance companies and government policy makers. It is also a welcoming place for newcomers to the region. Initiatives from the Utrecht Bike Community include the Utrecht Bike Ecosystem, a series of design sessions connecting more than 20 companies in the region all working towards finding solutions around bike mobility, infrastructure and safety. This steadily growing group enthusiastically organise knowledge-sharing initiatives and community sessions. You can find out more information on the website www.utrechtbikecommunity.nl.

Max Mooij - Project Manager Cycle Friendly Employer - Fietsersbond & Strategic Business Development Manager - MobilityLabel: *"At Mobilitylabel, we provide insights on potential improvements of employee mobility through interactive mobility scans. My role is to encourage companies and organisations to analyse their cycling potential and show the impact of different mobility choices, on different levels. I've also been working on the Bike Friendly Employer programme with the Dutch Cyclists' Union. Giving advise on how to facilitate, motivate and reward their employees with bike-friendly services and other employment benefits, making cycling the obvious choice of commuting. Utrecht is an ambitious region, where universities, municipalities, bike networks and companies focus on active mobility improvement with a supportive, inclusive and informal approach."*



The Fietsersbond is the Dutch cyclist's union representing the interests of cyclists, with 34,000 members, more than 1,600 volunteers and 150 local chapters. They advocate for better bicycle facilities and lobby at regional and national level.

The Dutch Cycling Embassy is a public private network for sustainable bicycle inclusive mobility. With more than 80 members, they partner with international organisations to promote cycling and share expertise. As an intermediary, they can help find partners for research, planning, policymaking, product development, manufacturing and building. They provide expert information in lectures, presentation, tours and regularly promote Dutch cycling at trade fairs. They also provide training for developing cycling policy and planning cycling infrastructure.

Improving bike infrastructure and creating a healthier and more sustainable environment requires bold and coordinated actions from all sectors. Utrecht Region strives to connects interested stakeholders such as social enterprise, entrepreneurs, residents, academia and local authorities.

Join the peloton

Not only is Utrecht the most bike-friendly city in the world, it is also the only city to host all three of the major cycling Grand Tours: The Tour de France, the Giro d'Italia and the Vuelta España. A wonderful thrill for cycling fanatics, but what are some local examples of best practise in building cycling infrastructure in the Utrecht Region?

One local innovation in Utrecht achieved a global attention when it opened in 2019 because of its sheer size. The bike park at Utrecht Centraal Station is the largest indoor bicycle parking facility in the world. Complete with one way cycle paths, larger spaces for bikes with child seats and innovative real-time sensors that guide cyclists to vacant spaces, it has capacity for 12,500 bikes. The project was jointly financed by railway company ProRail, the city of Utrecht, the Ministry of Transport, NS and the CEF.

A great example of successful cycling infrastructure (and sublime design) is the Dafne Schippers bridge which links the historic centre of Utrecht with the new residential area, Leidsche Rijn. Named after the Dutch athlete and world champion who grew up nearby, the bicycle bridge is 110 meters long and crosses the roof of a local primary school before spanning the Amsterdam-Rhine canal.



Ronald Crombag - owner and director - De Boom en het Meer: *"At De Boom en het Meer, we believe in the power of the e-bike. As Dutch market leaders in mobility incentive programmes, we have been persuading people to leave their cars at home since 2013. We provide custom incentives to stimulate sustainable transportation, and we work for over 400 organisations in healthcare, education, financial and business services, government and industry. Behavioural change is at the heart of what we do, and our expertise in behavioural psychology sets us apart from other mobility companies. We focus on mobility transition to two-wheelers."*

"We made a conscious decision to move to Utrecht because of the city's vibrant cycling community and the different organisations and other mobility consultants on the doorstep. We are based at CityHub, a sustainable logistics organisation for green urban transportation. With so much cycling and mobility expertise around, it's easy to work together. We appreciate the central location and the short lines of communication with the municipality of Utrecht. Thanks to its willingness to experiment, Utrecht has a well-deserved international reputation as the 'bicycle specialist'."

The Bike Transferium in Houten, 9 km southeast of Utrecht is a modern bicycle parking facility in a train station where the bikes are parked directly under the railway tracks. This makes the transition from bike to train as seamless as possible, living up to its name.

In July 2021, the world's longest solar bike path opened in Maartensdijk, near Utrecht. Solar cells are encased in concrete blocks and covered with a transparent layer. The dual-use bike paths generate solar energy and serve cyclists. There is an appetite for new technologies like this to be integrated into the economic decision making in the region.

National bike policy also plays its part in the region. OV Fiets is national bike share service that connects with the public transport system. The distinctive blue and yellow bikes can be found all over the Netherlands.

Safety schemes, such as streets where the car is a 'guest' are becoming more widespread in the region's main cities such as Hilversum, Amersfoort and Utrecht. These repurposed streets give cyclists priority over cars and can be recognised by their red coloured asphalt. They provide big improvements in the quality of life for local residents.

Gear up for the cycling revolution

Implementing surprising innovations are part of the lifeblood of Utrecht. The region attracts young entrepreneurs who live and breathe technology. Multidisciplinary collaboration between tech companies, knowledge institutes and businesses is encouraged and facilitated. Such openness leads to the desire to find creative solutions to keep cities moving cleanly and efficiently. Examples include advance detection methods to optimise traffic lights to shorten the waiting time and discourage overtaking and using real-time analytics to anticipate and avoid congestion.

Additional areas of research and development include bike detection sensors, smart parking solutions, electric bike charging, coloured road surfacing, chain mobility and data technology.

On a national level, the Dutch government offers companies tax incentives to get commuters on their bikes. This makes financing an employee's bike a fiscally attractive option. Especially as cycling to work strongly contributes to the reduction of CO2 emissions and has numerous physical and mental health benefits.



Arno Saladin - European Business Director - Rad Power Bikes : "Rad Power Bikes is an award-winning, direct to consumer ebike company from the USA. We have set up our European head office in Utrecht as this city is at the forefront of the mobility movement. We have embraced the challenge to operate from what we believe is the best cycling city in the world. Plus, the location is also beneficial as we supply to over 40 European countries."

Come and ride with us!

The Netherlands is a proud cycling nation and investing in bike infrastructure, adopting new technologies and expanding cycling-related projects continues to drive the region as it moves towards net-zero emissions.

Join us in Utrecht Region whether you are taking your first steps as a business in the cycling world or are already working in cycling infrastructure, strategy, policymaking, urban design, product campaigns or data collection.

We can help you settle in the region and provide support from A to Z about incentives, business locations, regulations, procedures and much more. Now is the time to become part of a growing and vibrant community. Let's ride together!



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Sources:
Dutch Cycling Embassy
Fietsersbond
MobilityLabel
Utrechte Bike Community
European Commission
World Economic Forum