

# City of OSS

The Netherlands



## 1. Introduction

Oss is one of the 415 municipalities in the Netherlands. The city of Oss is located in between the larger cities of 's Hertogenbosch (20 km) and Nijmegen (30 km).

The current municipal area is twice the national average, the result of an iterative merger process, and covers five former municipalities. The latest merge dates back to January 2011. The spatial structure is dual: an urban centre with 56,000 inhabitants and a rural hinterland inhabited by another 29,000 people. The entire area is practically flat. Village councils for each of the former rural municipalities and five urban neighbourhood councils offer the structure for public participation and consultation.

While Oss's internal and external accessibility by car and bicycle is good, the urban bus system is not an option that citizens find appealing. This is reflected by the modal split. Two railway stations and two highway junctions connect Oss with the cities of 's Hertogenbosch (South-west), Eindhoven (South), Nijmegen (North-east) and further.

The main divisions, Public Affairs, Policy, and Operations, make up the municipal organization. The Policy division is divided into four departments: Urban Development, Rural Area Affairs, Social Assistance & Neighbourhood Affairs, and Environment, Housing & Economy. Transport policy is the responsibility of Environment, Housing & Economy

while traffic management systems, parking regulations etc. is the duty of Operations. The municipality Oss is located in the sub-provincial Noordoost-Brabant region and takes part in the institutionalised Spatial Regional Consultation on that level.

In 2009 Oss compiled a Vision on Mobility ('Mobiliteitsvisie'). The vision seeks a balance between accessibility, safety and liveability. Subsequently, sub-plans were developed on Cycling, Roads, Public Transport and Behaviour. In October 2011, these sub-plans were united in a coherent and comprehensive Mobility Plan covering today's area of jurisdiction. A vision on the future of the spatial structure of the municipality ('Structuurvisie'), compiled in 2006, underpins all documents mentioned. Recent substantial budget cuts, a common phenomenon across the Netherlands and related to the contemporary crisis, put constraints on what can be achieved in implementing the mobility plan.

## 2. Process

### 2.1 Preparing for the assessment

The municipal area as a whole rather than merely the city has been the subject of the assessment, so as to tally with the most applicable level of policy and planning.

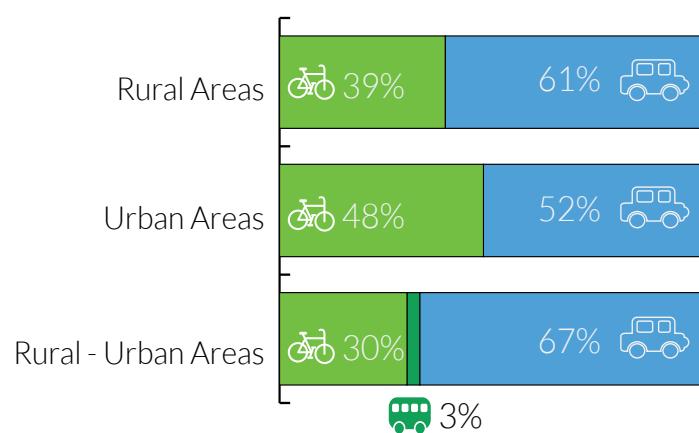
**"With each indicator, the best question to start the discussion seemed to be: do we have a problem to solve? But a 'no' didn't always mean we don't need to take any action..."**

- Ms Ellen Neelen,  
Transport Policy Officer, Oss

This decision has had consequences for data availability and has lowered the overall score. The alderman for Transport endorsed the idea without further political involvement and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Oss, Mobycon (as advisor in the self-assessment) and Traject (as external auditor) on the basis of no exchange. The municipal project leader formulated a SHIFT Working Group made up of transport officials in the Policy Division and Operations Division and requested them to start collecting data on individual indicators. First, the indicators were divided in two groups. One group of indicators required tacit knowledge of the group members to enable scoring. The other group of indicators required only the collection of quantitative information to be scored.

### 2.2 The self-assessment

For the first group of indicators, the working group members shared their experiences and interpretation of the situation. This knowledge was then compared to the respective indicator descriptions and the way of scoring that is prescribed by the SHIFT framework. Only when the whole group reached agreement was a score given to an indicator.



For the second group of indicators, the results or the difficulties in collecting the information were dealt with and, again, only when agreed upon by the entire group were decisions taken about what information to use and which score to attribute to the situation.

The self-assessment needed four working group sessions between 15 May and 4 September, lasting usually three-hours each. The first three sessions resulted in an agreed and justified score on most of the 28 indicators. During the last session the group members reflected on the

results and compiled an action plan. The entire group discussed the Enabler indicators; subsequent indicators were discussed in a smaller group for efficiency reasons. The participation of two of the policy staff members and Mobycon was consistent; others joined when their participation was desired. Discussing the six Enabler indicators took a third of total time invested in working with the indicators. In contrast, Transport Systems & Services indicators needed little time to be discussed but considerable time to collect the necessary data.

### 2.3 The external audit

The external audit took place on October 2nd and October 15th.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Overall result

Below the results of applying the system are shown as per main category. The results of the self-assessment and the audit are discussed together. The external audit resulted in adjustments to four scores. One score was pushed up (Affordability of public transport) and three scores were set back to zero. Facing the lack of data due to impractical indicator definitions rather than municipal incapacity, these scores were estimated at first. Overall, Oss achieved a final score of 55%, after a self-assessment score of 62%. See graph 4. Applying the city profile factors did not change the overall score. Later it turned out that the calculation method of the city profile factors needed a revision to enhance their effectiveness.

### 3.2 The Enablers: internal municipal processes

The scores on criteria are shown in dark colours; the underlying indicators in light colours. Discussing the Enabler criteria (see graph 5) revealed that Oss has a mobility plan but there is no emphasis yet on EcoMobility. Stimulating cycling and public transport are mentioned as goals but there are no clear objectives and measures to become a more ecomobile city. The integration of mobility and spatial planning is improving. Oss is doing well in making human and financial resources available for mobility, and in listening to citizens and other stakeholders. The municipality judged its current performance in monitoring and reviewing as an area where there is a lot of room for improvement. Dutch modal split figures are too rough to serve effective planning. Parking is monitored well, and the adoption of a traffic model is around the corner. But the more fundamental question is whether policy objectives are clear enough, and whether the instruments provide the right information to assess progress on these objectives. All in all, the in-depth self-judgment and audit resulted in a sufficient mark.

While discussing the qualitative Enablers criteria in depth, insights were obtained on the effectiveness and utilization of instruments such as the policy documents, the

**"We can still do so much more..."**

- Ms Ellen Neelen,  
Transport Policy Officer,  
Oss

social monitor and the digital panel. Also procedures for safeguarding timely involvement in spatial planning and for due civil participation were evaluated in view of the desired process of continuous improvement in sustainable mobility.

### 3.3 Transport Systems & Services: the measures taken

Oss judged itself as needing to make greater efforts to reduce the need to travel. The regional function of the city requires accessibility by car and this has already been realized to a large extent. The car-friendly urban form and the political will to improve conditions for car users even further conflict with the goal of a modal shift towards cycling. Furthermore, the view is to have the network for external car traffic in order first before embarking on further traffic restraint measures in residential areas. Past efforts in mobility management were hindered little interest from the private sector, but assessment and audit generated new ideas

*"Where is the limit of promoting cycling among car drivers stuck in traffic jams? People can think for themselves!"*

- Ms Carmen Willems,  
Policy officer, People-oriented Measures, Oss

within the city's circle of influence. Cycling is already quite convenient and excellent compared from a European point of view, and the municipality continues to invest in it.

A major achievement is a long north-south 'cycling street' where bicycles have priority over cars, and an east-west bicycle main street is under

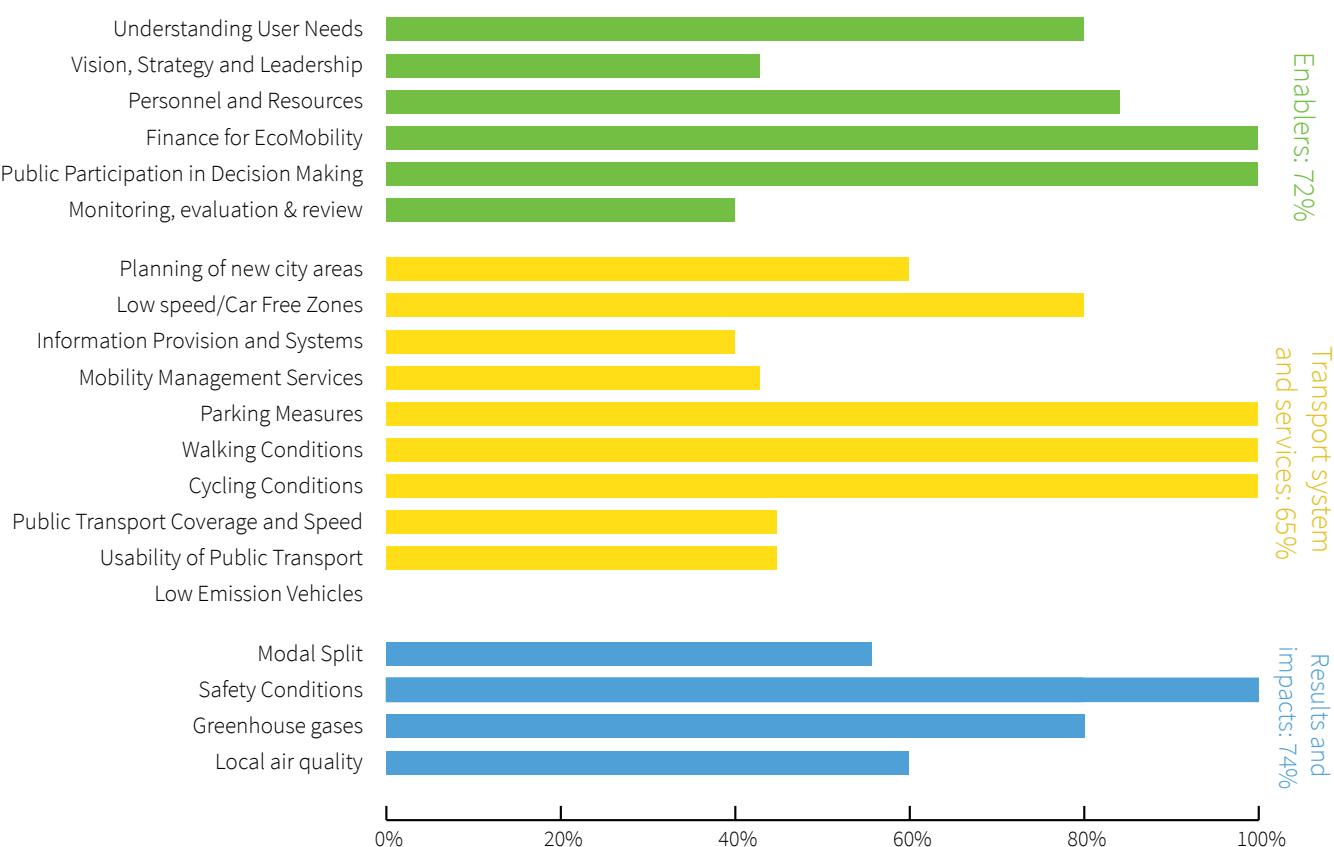
construction. The municipality is not in charge of the public transport system. The bus service is arranged at sub-provincial level; the train at national level. The regional bus service is well used; the city bus service is not viable but serves the few that cannot drive or cycle. The share of environmentally friendly vehicles could not be assessed and it was felt to be outside the municipality's sphere of influence.

The overall score achieved for transport systems and services would be just insufficient for being awarded a label. However, an evaluation of the exercise resulted in the recommendation to reduce the weight of public transport and bring its relevance more in balance with walking and cycling as truly ecomobile modes.

### 3.4 The Results & Impacts: the long term effects

The graphs on results and impacts of planning (graph 7) shows insufficient performance overall. Looking in more detail, major factors pulling down the overall score are the high share of car trips (67%), the low share of public transport trips and the lack of data on the safety for vulnerable road users at municipal level.

## EcoMobility SHIFT Result for Oss, the Netherlands



## 4. Evaluation

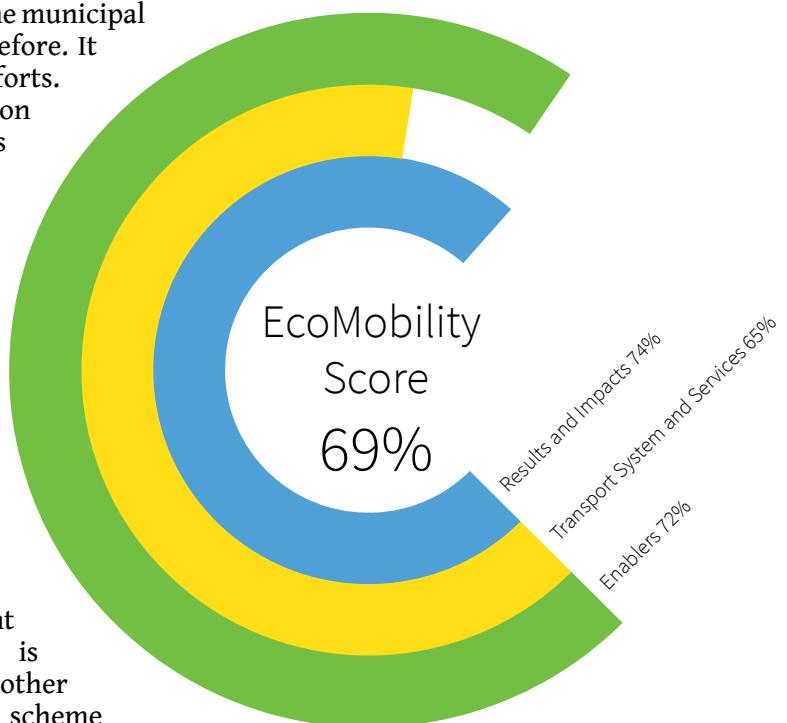
The municipal staff is positive about applying the EcoMobility SHIFT scheme. They liked it for the opportunity to review the municipal performance more critically and objectively than before. It enabled the staff to determine where best to put efforts.

Individual indicators show the way in information generation; it becomes clear what information is relevant enough to be generated. On a higher level, the scheme provides direction in adjusting working processes, e.g. with other departments.

Overall, Oss concludes that the exercise increases the awareness of the entire planning process for sustainable mobility. What was in the minds of each person involved has now been put on paper. The most helpful element is the set of EcoMobility SHIFT indicators providing the direction for improving performance. The overview of scores facilitates making choices regarding how to allocate the limited resources.

For municipal staff, generating an overview of, and insight in, what can best be done is most important whereas for the municipal leadership the score is important. The score will feed into the ambitions in other policy areas. Oss reckons the EcoMobility SHIFT scheme to be a practical tool that is complementary to the European Commission's SUMP guidelines. An external audit is regarded as useful only in the case the municipal leadership wishes to communicate the score to the outside world.

There were also some critical notes. The time it took to discuss the enablers caused a moment of concern about the investments needed to complete the exercise. However, the information needed for the Transport System & Services indicators was more straightforward resulting in shorter discussions, although individual efforts were needed for some indicators to retrieve the relevant data. The weight allocated to public transport pulled the overall score down.



## About EcoMobility SHIFT

EcoMobility SHIFT is a total quality management scheme for cities, with an assessment and an external audit. During the assessment stage, 13 criteria are assessed using 28 indicators. A municipal stakeholder group evaluates the effectiveness of a city's sustainable transport policies and actions in terms of environment, accessibility, safety and equity. It is the first scheme of its kind to include all of the following three elements: the policy environment (Enablers), the actual measures (Transport Systems & Services) and the effects of these on the transport system (Results & Impacts). For each indicator, descriptions of performance levels on a scale of 1 to 5 help the group to discuss and decide using quantitative and qualitative information. The resulting 28 levels of municipal performance are given a weight and grouped into criteria before being added up to an EcoMobility score.

For more information on EcoMobility SHIFT:

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