



**Amsterdam Leading the Way: Towards Car-lite Cities**  
**27 August 2020, 4.00 pm – 4.40 pm SGT (GMT+8)**

Speaker:

Sharon Dijksma, Deputy Mayor for Traffic and Transport, Water, and Air Quality of the City of Amsterdam

Moderator:

Margriet Vonno, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Singapore and Brunei

**Good afternoon Madam Mayor, please explain how do you curb the car population in Amsterdam? Regarding the key goals, please explain how do you create more spaces when the densely populated streets are rigid and lots of old buildings?**

There are different ways Amsterdam is curbing the car population in the city. In the next few years, over 10.000 parking lots are making way for extra space for pedestrians, cyclists, trees and for children to play. In order for us to create this extra public space without increasing the parking pressure in a neighborhood we need to offer alternatives to street parking and tempt people to use other forms of mobility.

To do so we are building underground garages. This way we can move cars out of the public space. We have also lowered the cap on the amount of parking permits for citizens. This does not mean people have to hand in their parking permit, it means that people who want a new permit are on the waiting list a bit longer. A third tool we used in order to lower parking pressure is increasing the parking rate for visitors. This way it becomes financially attractive for people to use public transport or shared mobility.

**Did you face backlash from car owners when you closed parking spaces and allow cyclists to use car lanes to create social distance? If so, how did you manage these sentiments?**

In some cases we closed the bicycle paths to create more space for pedestrians. By doing so, the cyclists had to use the same lane as the cars did. In streets with light traffic, this is not so much of a problem. But in peak hours we saw cyclists having the most problems with this situation, because they had to wait behind the cars at crossings, had to wait behind unloading vehicles or felt unsafe when cars tried to pass them by. Closing parking spaces is done mainly in situations where the so called parking pressure is 90% or less (i.e. 9 out of 10 parking spaces is occupied).

In case of negative sentiments or complaints, we mainly focused on explaining the way we balanced interest under these unique circumstances. Many people are willing to accept temporary inconveniences – like having to park elsewhere or share the road with cars and cyclists- if it helps the containment of the virus or if it helps to keep our local economy going. We monitored the traffic situation closely, to judge objectively if the temporary changes in the road use were safe enough. This helped us in our communication and our response to complaints. However, in order to maintain support for the temporary measures, it's very important that people see a positive result. In some cases, we had to conclude that the traffic situation was becoming dangerous or the objective (more space for pedestrians) wasn't reached effectively. In those cases we decided to take other measures (better communication, more enforcement) or return the situation back to normal. This flexibility helps to manage negative sentiments; when something truly doesn't work, we are willing to act on it.

**Dear mayor, can you share how the transition to a car-lite city has been valued by shops and other businesses?**

When we increased the parking rates for visitors, of course some business owners were worried that there would be a decrease in customers. However, Amsterdam has a long tradition of cycling in the city. We mainly see that the most turn-over for shops in the city centre comes from cyclists and pedestrians. Other visitors still have plenty of opportunities to use different kinds of transport. Many businesses are now actually reaping the rewards of our policy. In our car-lite areas, the public space has improved tremendously. Making these neighborhoods a lot more pleasant and attractive for potential customers.



***Your excellency Margriet, you cycle quite extensively in SG. What do you think we can do to accelerate the cycling agenda and be more car-lite in SG?***

Although the weather in Singapore is often mentioned as reason why cycling has not been picked up, I am able to enjoy cycling on car-free Sundays. In the Netherlands many employers install showers so people can freshen up before work and still use the bicycle as transport from home to the office and vice-versa. I think it is important to create space for cyclists and make sure they feel safe on the road or dedicated cycling path. It is a challenge to adjust infrastructure in an already crowded city, but still doable if you look at the road and infrastructure as an integrated system. People might be choosing the car because of convenience, but if you make cycling safe and convenient this might change.

Relevant links:

- <https://www.amsterdam.nl/en/policy/policy-traffic>
- [https://www.dutchcycling.nl/images/downloads/Dutch\\_Cycling\\_Vision\\_EN.pdf](https://www.dutchcycling.nl/images/downloads/Dutch_Cycling_Vision_EN.pdf)