



Country:	Belgium
City:	Ghent
Number of inhabitants:	252,300 (year 2014)
Area:	156,18 km ²
Population density:	1,597/km ²

Parking Policy and the implementation of the core funding mechanism

Legal circumstances/constraints and how the City resolved these

a.) In your country, does a city have the power to decide on the rates of paid parking by itself (without national or regional interference)?

The City of Ghent can decide on its own parking rates, without regional or national interference.

b.) Does a city have the opportunity to earmark revenues from paid parking to finance sustainable mobility solutions?

The City of Ghent has the power to decide on how to use the income from parking revenues. As such, it can be used to finance solutions for mobility problems.

c.) Please elaborate on the legal situation regarding enforcement (please consider the following questions: Is there effective enforcement? Who can carry out enforcement? What exactly is enforced – only paid parking or all types of parking violation such as parking on crossings, sidewalks and so on)

The City of Ghent has a legally binding enforcement policy.

Enforcement is performed by the city when it concerns:

- Public parking spaces where the allowed duration of parking is limited
- Public parking spaces with a paid parking regime
- Public parking spaces reserved for owners of a municipal parking permit

Enforcement is performed by the police when it concerns:

- Violations of the regulations concerning stationary parking and parking in general (e.g. parking at crossroads or on the sidewalk)
- Violations of the regulations concerning half-monthly alternate parking and of the restrictions concerning long-term parking on public parking spaces
- Fraud with parking discs

d.) If you are facing legal constraints, have you been able to resolve these and

if so, how did you achieve this?

A distinction has to be made between 'parking fines', which are established by the police and derived from national law, and 'parking retributions', which are established by our parking guards and derived from local regulations.

As these are two different fining systems, national restrictions on parking fines indeed have no consequences for our local policies concerning parking retributions.



Was there any difficulty in the implementation of the core funding mechanism? Did you need to change the law or alter financial structures to perform the implementation? If yes, what activities did you undertake and how did you convince decision makers? Which arguments worked in your city?

To properly answer these questions, we have to go back to the actual founding of the predecessor of our current Mobility Company, the 'Parking Company', created in 1980.

1980: creation of the Parking Company

The Parking Company was created in 1980 through a decision of the city council and a ministerial decree of the federal government (which was, at the time, responsible for these matters – this power nowadays resides at the regional level). At the time municipal law stated that cities and towns could found companies for activities that had a partial commercial interest. Other examples of these sorts of 'community companies' were the 'energy company' and the 'company for markets and festivals', both of which no longer exist today. City council thought it wise to bundle all parking-related activities into one company. In the 1980's, this mainly concerned parking exploitation, a very pragmatic approach to the issue of parking, without real policy-driven decisions.

What did it mean to be such a 'community company'? It allowed the Parking Company to have a high level of autonomy in respect to its finances. A community company had its own bookkeeping and its own

budget. The only link between the company and the City of Ghent were the regulations concerning personnel and the annual financial results. Losses had to be offset by the city through the city treasury. If the net results were profitable, city council could decide to (fully or partially) transfer these profits to the city treasury.

In 1982 the Parking Company started its actual activities, due to the opening of Ghent's first parking garage, 'Parking Vrijdagmarkt'. The City wanted to keep the operation of this parking under its own management. Later in 1982, all responsibilities concerning the running of on-street parking (more than 1000 individual parking meters at the time) were also transferred from several city departments to the Parking Company.

The Parking Company expanded considerably throughout the years. A partial explanation of this is the fact that the City fully funded the building of the first parking garage, which made sure the newly founded Parking Company wasn't burdened with debt at its start-up. In the first years of its existence, the company didn't manage to be

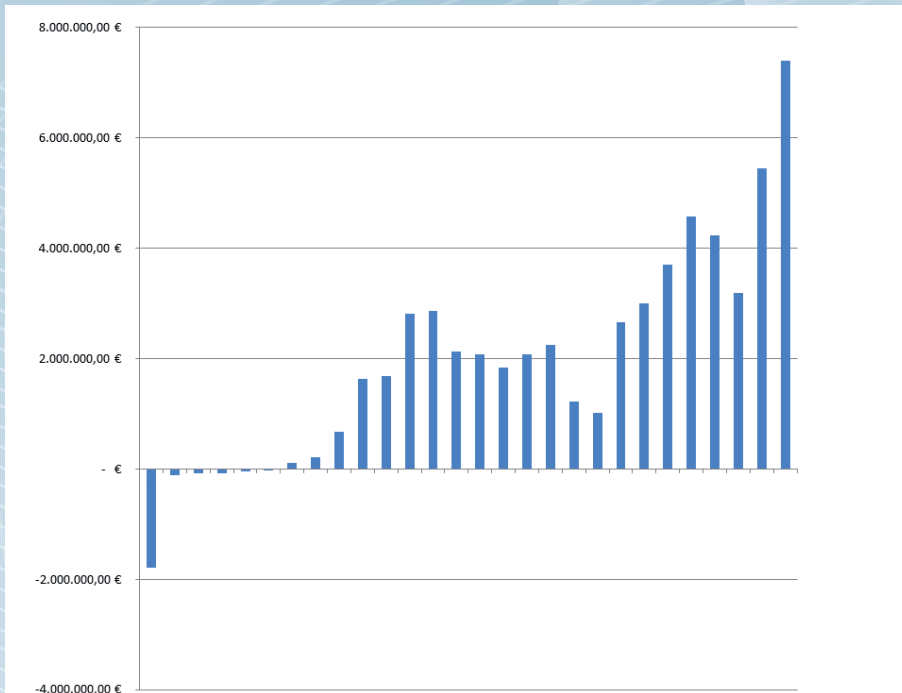
profitable. Labour costs and operating costs exceeded the revenue of the parking garage and parking meters. The parking garage was only partially filled with cars most of the time, and on the streets people could still easily find 'free' parking spaces. Some voices within city council even proposed to partially use the parking garage for other activities, like organizing an indoor market.

Then came the big surge in car use and ownership. Parking control was optimized, the number of paid parking spaces grew and by the second half of the 1980's the Parking Company started to make (modest) profits, which have grown steadily ever since. Important to its success was the fact that city council allowed the profits of the company to largely remain within the company, which were used to buy new parking pay and display machines and build 4 new parking garages (2000 pl.). Initially, profits were almost entirely derived from on-street-parking. Nearly all investments came from its own cash reserves.

Growth has been impressive over the years, as can be seen in the graph on the next page.



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Evolution of profits of the Parking Company, 1982-2009

In more recent years, a new regional decree ordained that, although municipalities could still create autonomous entities, a choice had to be made between an internalized or externalized entity. The City of Ghent chose to create an internalized autonomous entity that united the old Parking Company and the mobility policy division of the

City. This entity no longer has real financial autonomy, as its cash flow is part of the city treasury.

2009: creation of the Mobility Company

When the Mobility Company and its new financial structure were created in 2009, it became possible to directly use income from parking infrastructure for

policy measures concerning mobility. This move placed the mobility policymakers from the city and the operation of the underground garages & on-street parking in one company, with a great level of independence. This is made possible through regional (Flemish) law.

The Mobility Company of the city of Ghent has the responsibility (and ability) to decide on how to use the funds it gets through parking exploitation and enforcement. A set amount of the money earned each year is agreed on to flow back to the city treasury. The remaining funds are used for maintenance of the exploitation & development of the mobility infrastructure. Part of the income goes to solutions towards more sustainable mobility.

Please note that, although we have a great level of independence, the spending estimates for our budget still need to be approved by the city council.



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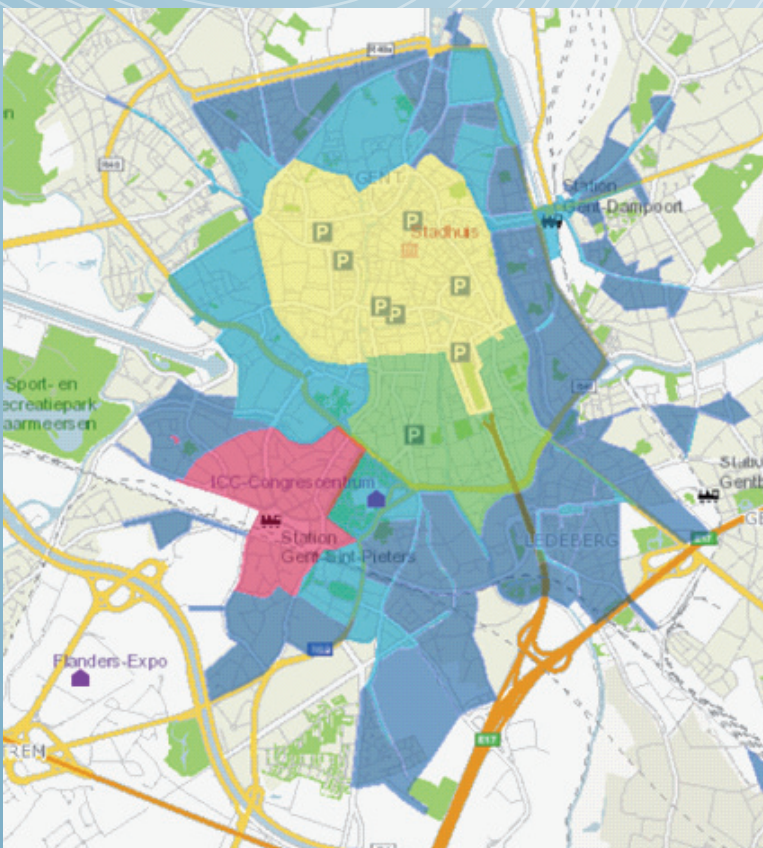
How many paid for parking – where and how much?

How many parking spaces on and off-street are controlled by the City and how many have regulations requiring people pay to use them or to have a resident's or other permit? How much do people need to pay per hour or per year (for a permit)? Do charges vary according

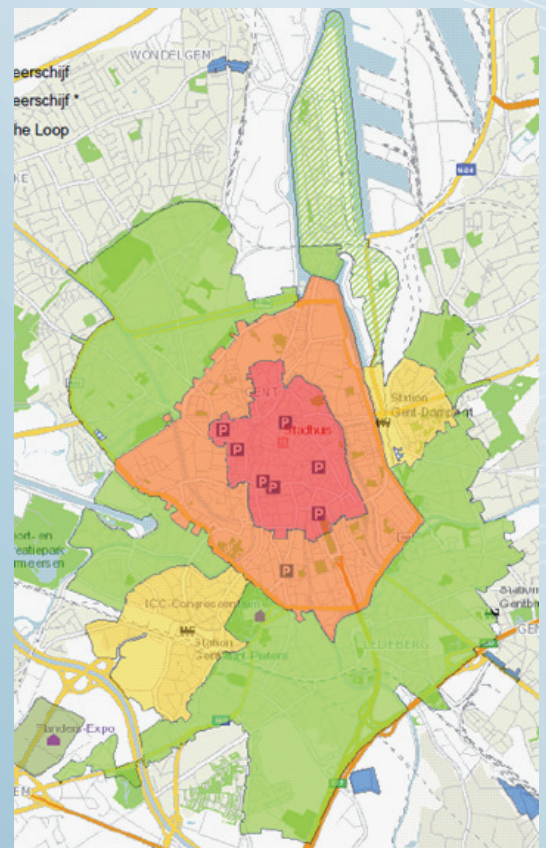
to the type of vehicle and/or how many permits does each household have? Explain whether any types of household or user are not allowed to obtain a permit or to buy hourly parking.

The City currently manages 55904 parking spaces within its paid parking zone, of which 7613 in our parking garages

and 1146 reserved parking spaces for residents with a parking permit. This doesn't cover all parking spaces in public space, since there still remains a large non-paying parking zone outside the paid parking zone. The paid parking zone will be expanded in 2016, the graphs below show to what extent.



Current paid parking zone
(colors indicate different price ranges)



Future paid parking zone
(from September 2016 onwards)

Simultaneously with the expansion of the paid parking zone, prices of on- and off-street parking will rise too. The exact prices and the policy decisions behind them can be found [here](#) (in Dutch). In summary:

- **The red tariff-zone** covers the historical city center. Priority is given to residents and short-term users. There are a lot of parking spaces reserved for residents and non-residents are only able to park here for 3 hours at a time, at a price of 10 Euro.

- **The green tariff-zone** surrounds the yellow and orange zone. Again priority is given to residents, but both short- and long term parking by non-residents is possible, at a price of 3 Euro for a day.

- **The orange tariff-zone** surrounds the red zone and corresponds to the area within the city beltway (R40). Priority is given to residents, but both short- and long term parking by non-residents is possible. Cars can park here for longer periods, at a price of 6 Euro for a day.
- **The yellow tariff-zone** covers the areas surrounding the two main train stations. Priority is again given to residents. Non-residents can only park for 3 hours in a row

for 4.50 Euro. The reason for this parking limitation is the high presence of commuters in these areas and the subsequent parking pressure.

- **Park&Rides** are also an essential part of our current and future parking policy. As we try to reduce car parking close to the city center, free or cheap parking areas outside of the paid parking zone provide a good alternative, where people can continue their journey by public transport

or by bicycle. More of these park&rides (or park&bikes) are being created in 2016 and this will continue during the years to follow.

Residents of the city can get two parking permits that allow them to park on reserved parking spaces for residents. The first one is free, the second one costs 250 Euro per year.



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Enforcement

Currently is there effective enforcement of parking regulations in place and if so, where and for which types of parking (e.g. paid parking only, or parking for residents)? How and by whom is the enforcement carried out?

Enforcement is executed by private traffic wardens that were appointed by the Mobility Company through a public tender. They establish in-

fringements on the streets, while the city takes care of the administrative follow-up (back-office) and the enforcement of the payment.

Retributions are established for not paying parking fees in paid parking spots, for exceeding the allowed parking duration and for parking without a permit on parking spaces reserved for residents.

This is done through the use of hand terminals, through which

they can enter the license plate and find out if the car in question has a digital parking permit.

If people refuse to pay their retribution, the case gets forwarded to the bailiff, who takes over responsibility for collecting the payment sum and additional charges for late payment. In a few cases, the City goes to court to settle a dispute with a person who disputes the charges.

What are the objectives of your mobility policy and how are they supported by parking regulations?

What are the objectives of your mobility policy? Do you want to fight parking violation? Do you want to gain money? Do you want to free residential areas from parked cars of commuters? Do you want to reallocate public space and make it available to the citizens instead of cars? Do you want to fill (half-empty) underground garages? Do you want to reduce congestion and increase the modal share of alternative modes of transport to the car? What is your mobility policy seeking to achieve and how do parking regulations support it?

The mobility policy of the City of Ghent wishes to promote more sustainable modes of transport (such as (in this particular order) walking, cycling, public transport, personal car transport). We apply this by encouraging car drivers to park on park&rides and park&bikes if possible, by giving preference to short-term-parking inside the city center and obviously by improving the walking-, cycling- and public transport routes and conditions.

Of course we want to fight parking violations, as they undermine our mobility policies. To gain money is not the ultimate aim of our policies, but it does facilitate them. Sometimes making money stands directly opposed to our policies: many paid parking spaces are being removed in favour of more green space in the city, bicycle parking spaces and improving the flow of public transport. We



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also partially keep cars out of the city center, which can have a negative influence on the earnings derived from our parking garages. A certain financial equilibrium has to be reached to reconcile all these conditions..

We want to free residential areas from parked cars and commuters. We do this by increasing the number of reserved spaces for residents & by increasing the parking tariffs.

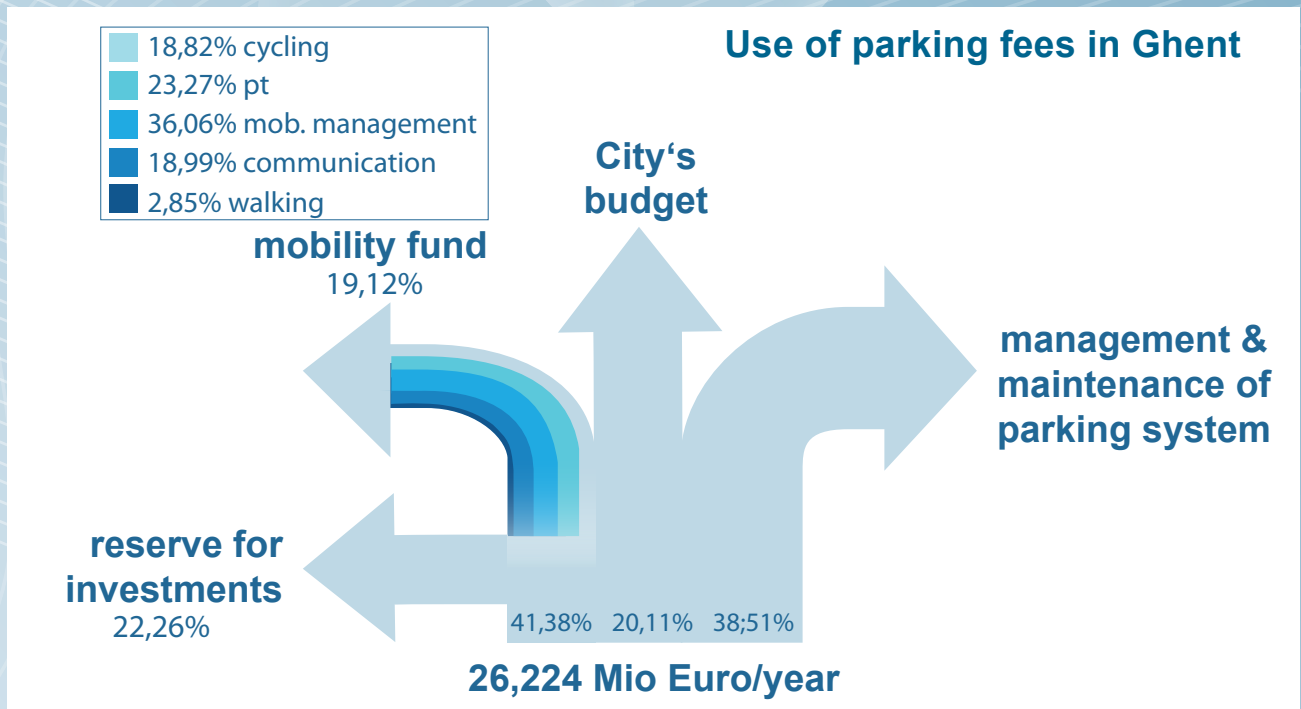
Obviously we want to reallocate public space to the citizens. We have a long standing tradition of reallocating public space to promote the liveability of the city. A great example of this is the big pedestrian zone we installed in our city in 1997. Another is our current SUMP, which will almost double the

pedestrian zone. And then there's also the project of the 'living streets', in which citizens can get a car-free street for several months a year, and completely redesign their own street.

Filling half-empty underground garages is not an aim as such, but when we see opportunities of removing above ground parking spaces and getting these cars to park underground, we will do it. Profit maximization is not the first aim, these choices are always policy-driven.

And of course we want to reduce congestion. We focus on better driving routes for public transport and bicycles and try to avoid unnecessary through-traffic in the inner city.

Expected income and (planned) spending from the core funding mechanism



Source: Municipal Mobility Company of the City of Ghent

Who decides on how the money in the mobility fund are spent?

The alderman decides this in consultation with the Mobility Company.



What projects / measures did you finance since the implementation of the core funding mechanism and which ones are you going to finance in the next 1-2 years?

This is a difficult question to answer, as all measures concerning sustainable transport modes are funded through our own resources (with exception of measures funded through subsidies of course). Examples include:

- The recruitment of a mobility planner for schools
- The construction of Park&Rides
- The funding of a bike sharing system
- The expansion and modernization of our parking meters
- The funding of a late night public transport network

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