

13. THE 'GREEN CARPET'

AN INTEGRATED PLAN FOR THE A2 MOTORWAY THROUGH MAASTRICHT

In 2003, several cooperating government bodies – the Directorate General for Public Works and Water Management, the municipal council of Maastricht, the provincial government of Limburg, and the municipal council of Meerssen – began their quest for an integrated plan for the city of Maastricht and the A2 motorway. In 2009, following a consultation process involving the entire city, a plan was finally selected: the 'Green Carpet' (Groene Loper) plan presented by the Avenue2, a consortium of Strukton and Ballast Nedam. The plan will make Maastricht much more accessible and will greatly improve traffic flows at the Geusselt and Europaplein junctions. By improving traffic safety and the quality of life in Maastricht East, the project will also create new opportunities for developing the surrounding districts. The project involves an investment of approximately one billion euros, 850 million of which are being provided by the public sector.

The innovative approach of the A2 Maastricht project is quite unique. Not only were the regional development issues and the traffic issues integrated into a single overall plan, the various planning procedures were also dealt with in an integrated fashion. The Dutch Infrastructure (Planning Procedures) Act (Tracéwet), zoning plans, and tendering procedures were all addressed simultaneously. By the end of 2011, after seven years, all the necessary planning procedures for the A2 Maastricht project had been completed.

THE BASIC FRAMEWORK OF THE 'GREEN CARPET' PLAN

- A dual-layered tunnel, which will move 80% of the current traffic volume underground and allow for the creation of a residential zone above ground
- A green, park-like boulevard for pedestrians and cyclists, winding its way from the Landgoederzone (Country Estate zone) to the Europaplein junction
- Two unique and striking entrances to the city at the Geusselt and Europaplein junctions

Work in progress

In 2010, the Avenue2 consortium already took the first preparatory steps. A great deal of preparatory work was also carried out in 2011 and 2012, in particular in the districts adjacent to the A2. In 2013, the preparatory activities were completed and the work focused on the N2 corridor and the Europaplein and Geusselt junctions. Most of the work took place in the excavation pit, concentrating on the actual construction of the A2-tunnel.

2014 saw the opening of the intersection between the A2 and A79 motorways at Kruisdonk and the new road to the Beatrixhaven industrial area. The concrete shell of the dual-layered tunnel was also completed during the past year.

2015 was a challenging year for Avenue2, both economically and financially. Avenue2's partner Ballast Nedam experienced financial difficulties and was acquired by Renaissance, based in Turkey. This meant a change in the allocation and division of duties between the Avenue2 partners Ballast Nedam and Strukton. While this was happening, the construction teams continued working. Underground work continued in particular, where the completion team and installation team worked on completing the tunnel and install the traffic and tunnel technical equipment. Above-ground, the roadworks and engineering teams continued their work.

2016: an exciting and successful year

2016 was an important and exciting year for A2 Maastricht in which all efforts were dedicated to opening the tunnel. Rijkswaterstaat (Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management), the Municipality of Maastricht, the province of Limburg, and the Municipality of Meerssen worked together in Projectbureau A2 Maastricht. Avenue2 was responsible for design and construction and is also responsible for the maintenance of the tunnel now it has been opened. Rijkswaterstaat is the manager. Maastricht municipality granted the opening permits. The emergency services, including the police, fire services, and ambulance services, will also be servicing this tunnel.

In January we were still working on opening the tunnel in two phases. Between phase 1 and phase 2, Avenue2 had to complete many road connections and asphalt works. In summer we announced that we needed more time for testing the technical traffic and tunnel equipment. The testing phase had to demonstrate the safety of the tunnel for road users and the reliability of the systems. Our motto was and stayed: 'quality, safety, and precision before speed.' In November we

were able to announce that we were aiming to open the tunnel on the night of 15-16 December. The tests leading up to this date had to run smoothly, the opening permits had to be obtained, and the weather gods had to be in our favour. Through smart road phasing we were able to open four tunnel tubes in one night.

In the 2006 Collaborative Agreement, our government partner had established that they wanted to open the majority of the infrastructure by the end of 2016. In 2009 the contract with Avenue2 was signed in which the date for 16 December 2016 was set. Thanks to a great partnership, the most important infrastructural parts of the A2 Maastricht project were completed within the ten-year planning and government budget. We are proud that we were able to realize this tight schedule as a result of everyone's hard work and dedication.

While the main focus of 2016 was on the tunnel, we continued to work on new connections for pedestrians and cyclists and the new Maastricht-Oost centre above the tunnel.

2017 and beyond

But we're not done yet. The important milestones for 2017 are:

1. Completion of the total infrastructure
 - Completion of the Europaplein flyover
 - Flyover Noord and Zuid at Viaductweg/Meerssenerweg
 - Sibematunnel bicycle tunnel
2. Start of the planting of the Groene Loper
This coincides with Nationale Boomfeestdag (national arbour day) on 22 March
3. Closure of the above-ground road
The former temporary N2, once again President Rooseveltlaan, Nassaulaan, Oranjeplein, Koningsplein
4. Developments new centre Maastricht-Oost
 - Completion of the Albert Heijn, Gall & Gall, and Etos. Construction by Albert Heijn and Ontwikkel- en Bouwcombinatie Laudy-Strukton.
 - Construction of new city park next to Koningsplein/Oranjeplein, commissioned by the Municipality of Maastricht
 - Restoration of Gemeenteflat (municipal apartment building) by Avenue2.

The public space between Geusselt and Europaplein will be completed in the first quarter of 2018. Property development on different plots located along the Groene Loper may contractually continue up until and including 2026.

English summary



Top to bottom: Madrid - Rio / Boston - Big Dig / Paris - Rive Gauche / Antwerpen - Ring

INTERNATIONAL INSPIRATION

The result of this renewed approach to integral regional development for A2 Maastricht has attracted international interest. At specialist conferences four projects in particular are often discussed as examples for a comprehensive plan for cities and infrastructure. The R1 Ring road in Antwerp, Belgium, has opted for a similar solution as A2 Maastricht.