

By [Hannah Figg](#) / Updated: 22 Oct 2021

## [Graz Mobility Contracts for sustainable mobility in new developments](#)



**Author:**

[Claus Köllinger](#)

**City:**

Graz

**Country:**

Austria

**Topic:**

Traffic and demand management

**In brief**

The City of Graz has experienced a strong population growth for at least the last 10 years. The development of new residential and mixed-use areas has added traffic pressure to the city's road network, some of which is already critically congested. The situation is exacerbated by the provincial construction law that requires a minimum number of car parking spaces per building (one car parking space per new housing unit).

Graz makes use of an exception to the provincial law that allows a development to deviate from the required minimum number of car parking spaces if there are good alternative options (such as public transport access). The city is signing 'Mobility Contracts' with developers of residential and mixed-use areas to reduce the need for the provision of parking. In addition, these contracts foster the supply of alternative mobility options using infrastructural and organisational measures as well as the provision of services and information. The Mobility Contracts allow for the planning and implementation of projects that would not otherwise successfully pass through the building permit process, since they would add too much traffic to the existing road network.

The sustainable mobility options fostered by the Mobility Contracts are also fully in line with the city's general transport objectives. In addition, they enable developers to construct and provide flats at prices that are lower than the market rate and help to reduce the need for flat buyers to buy a car parking space alongside their flat. As a result, the Mobility Contracts result in better mobility choices for residents and other users in the new development. Overall, the City of Graz has concluded about 35 Mobility Contracts since 2011.

### **Context**

Graz is the capital of the Austrian Province of Styria and is the economic centre for the south of Austria. In recent years, the city has faced a significant population growth - rising from around 250,000 in 2006 to nearly 300,000 in 2020. Projections anticipate that Graz's population will continue growing to almost 330,000 by 2034. Graz has many residential development projects of different sizes to cater for the population growth. These range from small, single-house developments to the prominent new city district, the '[Reininghausgründe](#)'. The latter will provide

homes for more than 10,000 inhabitants and also includes 5,000 new workplaces just 1.8 km from the centre of Graz.

Consequently, Graz is facing growing pressure on its transport services and infrastructure. New developments add to the existing pressure on the transport network due to the Province of Styria's construction law that requires a minimum of one car parking space per household in any new residential development. Larger developments that potentially add a considerable number of car users to specific sections of the traffic network are particularly problematic. This is because the standard legal requirements for the provision of car parking spaces would mean that some of these developments would not be successful in their application for a building permit due to the projected overload created for certain sections of the road network.

At the same time, Graz is striving to reshape urban mobility based on fewer car trips and more sustainable modal choices, with the aim of reducing the modal percentage share of motorised individual trips to 37% by 2021 according to the city's mobility strategy. The most recent modal split assessment saw a decline from 46.8% in 2013 to 41.6% in 2018, so further progress is needed to meet the objective of 37%. Graz introduced Mobility Contracts in 2011 as a way of reducing car use and supporting the provision of transport infrastructure and services.

### **In action**

Facing the challenges of population and traffic growth, the City of Graz decided to use the option of exemptions to the provincial requirement relating to the minimum number of car parking spaces in new residential developments. The provincial construction law allows municipalities to set up their own regulations on car parking space provision or to use exemptions if there is a good quality of supply of public transport services. Graz has no such alternative regulation in place, although it created Mobility Contracts to support the exemptions. The Mobility Contracts bring together the local public administration and developers in a joint effort to strive to provide better accessibility for new projects using sustainable transport modes. The main reasons to make use of a Mobility Contract are to:

1. Ensure that new developments do not result in the limits of the traffic networks being breached. Otherwise, such developments with the standard provision of car parking spaces would not be allowed due to their impact on the road network.
2. Actively reduce the number of car parking spaces per unit since the projected need is well below the standard provision of one car parking space per household.
3. Comply with the development requirement to ensure accessibility for sustainable modes of transport.

Mobility Contracts can work as standalone solutions tailored to a specific development or act as a collective solution for a defined urban area. In the latter case, Mobility Contracts can form part of a more holistic urban development contract that regulates more aspects than just mobility. Either way, they are well aligned with the municipal construction plans for the respective projects. To qualify for a Mobility Contract, a new development needs to create a new built-up area of at least 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> gross floor area. Additionally, the area's accessibility by public transport needs to comply with proximity and service level criteria, such as being no more than 300 m walking distance from the next public transport stop. Finally, the Mobility Contract needs to cover at least 75% of the relevant plots, which specifically relates to contracts covering more than just one development project.

Mobility Contracts make use of the 'push & pull' principle to influence the modal choices of future inhabitants, visitors and users. The main element of the 'push' side is the reduction in the number of parking spaces per unit below the legal requirement. Providing car parking in communal garages for

the development can be a part of this, although these are a prerequisite for developments in dense built-up areas in most cases anyway. The main elements of the 'pull' side are the optimisation of access to the public transport and active mobility networks, and the provision of relevant mobility information, along with services such as providing public transport tickets or bicycles for future residents and users. Using the 'push & pull' approach, Mobility Contracts aim to change modal choices in favour of sustainable mobility options as soon as people move into their homes, offices or retail stores, thus instilling sustainable mobility behaviour right from the start.

In detail, Mobility Contracts work with nine packages of measures agreed between the city and the developers, including: 

- **Parking spaces:** applying a maximum provision of car parking spaces below the legal standard, such as a maximum of 0.8 parking spaces per household.
- **Walking:** providing public walking (and cycling) paths running through the development area that are financed by public funds.
- **Cycling:** providing good quality bicycle parking facilities, located close to or directly at the entrance to buildings; providing an increased volume of bicycle parking spaces compared to standard provision figures; providing bicycle maintenance facilities and self-service stations, and holding bicycle repair and service events.
- **Motorised traffic:** reconstructing critical road sections to cater for the new traffic volume added by the development; constructing collective garages with a limited number of entry points; no provision of direct connections between the garage and flats to ensure that the access conditions for cars and public transport are the same in terms of walking distance.
- **E-mobility:** installing charging options in garages and at visitors' parking spaces.
- **Car sharing:** installing a car-sharing service, including electric car sharing, for the development, with a guaranteed service duration of a minimum of 2 years in an easy-to-access location.
- **Mobility management:** providing information packages on mobility options, including personal mobility coaching for new residents and other users; providing annual public transport tickets for new residents; installing electronic information panels on public transport services at the entrance to buildings.
- **Delivery services:** providing packing stations and boxes in which parcels can be dropped at any time.

The Mobility Contracts are evaluated biannually after the construction of the development has been finished and people have moved in. This is to learn whether and how the measures worked, and to identify what adaptations would help to deliver the original goal.

## Results

Mobility Contracts hold advantages for all three main players involved or affected: The City of Graz can allow larger development projects that would otherwise fail the accessibility conditions in relation to adding further demands on the road network given the local traffic situation. As a result of the Mobility Contracts, there will be fewer car trips added to the existing traffic volumes. Additionally, the focus on sustainable transport options fosters the creation of infrastructure that facilitates multimodal mobility needs. This infrastructure also takes account of the trends of the younger generation in particular who put less emphasis on car ownership and car use. For their part, developers benefit from lower construction and maintenance costs that translate to lower property prices and more affordable housing, as well as to providing housing that better meets the needs of future generations. Residents and other users of the new developments benefit from a better choice of mobility options, and from common green space and space dedicated to social activities (such as playgrounds or places to meet people) instead of using space for car parking.

The first Mobility Contract was concluded in 2011 and concerned the further development of Styria's largest hospital area, the 'LKH-Quadrant'. Up until September 2020, a further 34 contracts have been established on a wide range of development projects. The contracts are becoming more and more popular among developers who increasingly contact the City of Graz on their own initiative. The feedback of partners in existing Mobility Contracts has been positive. Developers see the advantage of Mobility Contracts as they need to construct fewer car parking spaces and are able to maintain or improve accessibility using diverse mobility options. The lower number of car parking spaces also enables house prices and rents to be lower, while breaking the link between buying a new flat and the need to buy a car parking space.

## **Challenges, opportunities and transferability**

The main lessons learnt from the Mobility Contracts in Graz are:

- Evaluation is key to compliance. The biannual evaluation of the implementation and effects of Mobility Contracts was introduced due to the experience of the first contracts. It was introduced to incorporate the option of assessing and providing support to, developers that had concluded a Mobility Contract.
- The need to support developers in the implementation of the elements of the Mobility Contract, particularly in ensuring that the measures are well aligned. This is provided in Graz by the city's Department for Transport Planning.
- It is essential that good information is made available for residents on the options and services that are available thanks to the Mobility Contract. This information should be prepared and disseminated by the respective developers, and be up-to-date when people move in.
- A successful Mobility Contract needs good cooperation from all the involved actors - the land use planning department, the transport planning department, the real estate owners, the developers, the building permit authority and political players.

Mobility Contracts are potentially a good option for many cities, but their feasibility and details of their implementation depend on the relevant legal framework, specifically the construction laws and regulations of respective countries and regions. In the Styrian case, the construction law contains the option for municipalities to deviate from the standard minimum provision of car parking spaces given certain criteria, such as there being good access by public transport. This enables, for example, the City of Graz to include Mobility Contracts as part of urban development.

You can find information in German and an illustration of the location and size of the projects for the 35 Mobility Contracts in Graz [here](#).

You can find a short video description of the Mobility Contracts produced by Civitas Park4SUMP in English [here](#).

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