

THE BART LUBBERS FASTNED STORY

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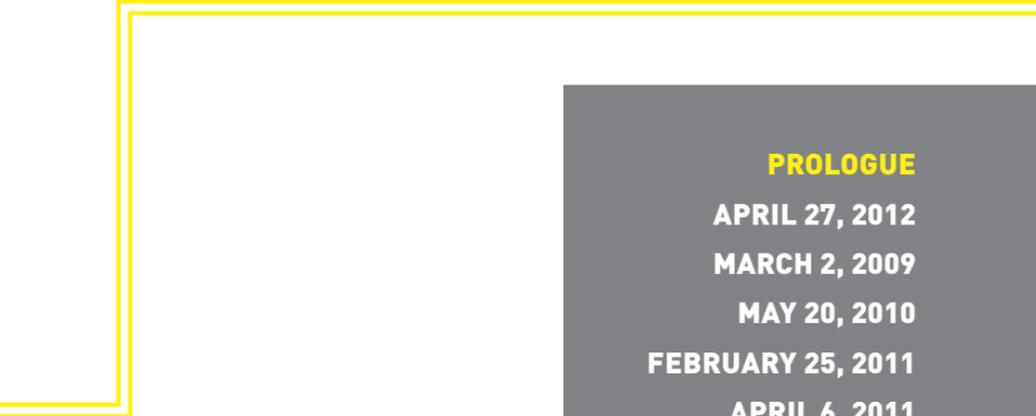
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PROLOGUE

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EPILOGUE

GLOSSARY

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PROLOGUE

It was only when I'd seen pictures on a digital camera, that I understood why Kodak was doomed. It was only when I had my own cell phone, that I realized why it was practical. It was only when I'd used an iPhone, that I got the point of a smartphone. Seeing is believing. Or in the words of the famous Dutch footballer, Johan Cruyff: "You won't see it until you get it."

Four years ago I had a similar experience with electric cars (electric vehicles, or 'EVs' in the jargon). Until that time I'd associated driving EVs mostly with 'environmentally friendly' and 'a fantastic driving experience'. And then it hit me: driving is freedom. All car advertising is about freedom, all road movies tell a story about the freedom to go wherever you want, and all car stories embody the ultimate feeling of freedom. It's precisely this sensation - or even just the promise of it - that makes driving so attractive.

The penny had dropped. I realized that EVs would never amount to much without this exhilarating sense of freedom. Or to put it in another, more positive way: if you can give EVs the aura of freedom, you're sitting on a pot of gold.

What do you need to experience freedom with a car? Firstly, it has to be an easy way to cover plenty of ground. And for that you need to be confident you can drive and refuel anywhere, at any time. Without confidence there's no freedom. For EVs that implies fast charging – everywhere en route.



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Next, I addressed the question of where the fast-charge stations would have to be built. That was an easy one: the past century has shown that the most popular stations by far are those on the highway. Oil companies are willing to pay large sums of money to gain control of these sites. The easily accessible highway stations are able to charge higher fuel prices – saving time is freedom for the driver, and people will pay for that. In addition, these sites are scarce. Only 245 of the 4,500 petrol stations in the Netherlands are located on the highway. The law forbids other sites from being developed there. Fifteen-year concessions for highway sites are auctioned each year, for an average of € 6 million per site! That amounts to a total of € 1.5 billion for the entire network.

Getting hold of these sites is no easy matter for oil companies. But now, the emergence of the EV has thrown the playing field wide open. The best sites are gold mines. It's all about location, location, location. And as luck would have it, this happens to be Fastned's cornerstone.

Bart Lubbers

Amsterdam, March 2014



A good draw

I'm watching the state notary, Robbert Gallas, in suspense. He shakes the biscuit tin and draws a lot, followed by a second one. "Bergh-Zuid service area: number 1 ANWB; number 2 Fastned." His assistant carefully notes the result, as do we. The notary briskly produces another lot. "Knorrestein service area: number 1 Fastned; number 2 MisterGreen." I glance at my Fastned partner Michiel Langezaal. He can't help grinning. We've got that one too!

It goes on like that all afternoon. We've been summoned by the State of the Netherlands to the office of Pels Rijcken & Droogleever Fortuijn, the public attorney, that Friday, April 27th 2012. A few months earlier, on December 20th 2011, the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment published an article in the *Government Gazette* inviting parties to bid for the construction and operation of charging stations for EVs at the 245 highway service areas. There are several candidates for a number of the sites, so a draw has been organized.

HISTORIC MOMENT

I film 48 seconds of this historic moment with my phone. It's hard to believe that the plan we showed the ministry, is now becoming reality. Sites that oil companies fought over for decades are being dished out on a single Friday afternoon. I point my smartphone camera at the attendees. Their concentrated faces pass the screen one by one, as they carefully record the names and numbers being announced by the notary. Michiel waves unobtrusively at the camera.

Michiel and I look pretty relaxed in the picture. We applied for concessions for all 245 sites back in December 2011. The other five parties - the ANWB, The New Motion, MisterGreen, GreenFlux and Liandon - took a more modest approach, focusing on a few dozen sites. When the auction window closes on January 16th 2012, there are applications for every site – some even receive several of them. A comprehensive nationwide EV infrastructure is going to be built. It's a resounding success, far exceeding the ministry's expectations.

At the end of the afternoon the notary allocates the final service area. Time to take stock. According to our estimations, we were hoping to get two hundred sites. We got 201 – not bad.

We didn't just apply for all 245 sites for nothing. Our plan was – and is – a comprehensive nationwide network of highway charging stations. It all started a few years back.