



KRAKOW, POLAND

Tele-bus: Demand-Responsive Transport Service

Background/context

In 2005 with the start of the CIVITAS/CARAVEL project Krakow decided to implement innovative, flexible public transport based on the experience of Genoa's DRINBUS. The main objective of demand-responsive transport (DRT) in Krakow was to better serve passengers by giving them more personalised service that could be adjusted to their actual needs regarding journey time and destination, and without generating significant costs for the service launch and daily operation. According to assumptions, the DRT service could replace conventional public transport in low density areas where regular service is inefficient.

The DRT service in Krakow, called Tele-Bus, was launched in July 2007 after the transfer of technology and know-how from Genoa to Krakow. The preparation of the service operating design, adaptation of the software for managing flexible service, and staff training were all conducted in collaboration of Polish and Italian CARAVEL project partners.

Case description

Tele-Bus is "many to many" public transport service with fixed stop points and flexible routes and timetables. It operates every day in the southeastern part of the city and during defined operating hours. The service is carried out by

the local public transport operator Miejskie Przedsiębiorstwo Komunikacyjne SA on the basis of a service contract with the Public Road and Transport Authority (PT&RA). The operator is paid on the basis of vehicle-kilometres delivered. Daily operating costs include: personnel (dispatchers and Tele-bus drivers) and vehicle maintenance.

The service covers three districts: Rybitwy, Podwierzbie and a part of Bieżanów. This area consists of residential and industrial zones of low population density. Conventional service here is not efficient and runs infrequently. A main goal of the DRT service is to make it easier for inhabitants to reach communication junctions where changes to other lines are possible.

Results

Since mid-July 2007, the Tele-bus service has been developing and the number of transported passengers has been gradually increasing (starting with about 300 passengers in July and August 2007 and exceeding 2,000 in January 2008). The pilot phase will allow all the involved actors to evaluate the impact and the functionality of the flexible service with a view to future development of DRT in the city of Krakow.

Problems

Significant problems that occurred during implementation of the Tele-bus were related to organisational issues as well as social acceptance of this innovative solution. The first issue was to agree on a share of responsibilities for DRT service between two public transport actors: MPK, the operator, and PT&RA. Another difficulty was to persuade potential clients that the flexible public transport service has many advantages and is a good solution. The innovative character of the Tele-bus required a well-planned communications and marketing campaign targeted at inhabitants of the service area. The main objective of the campaign was to let potential clients know and understand the rules of the flexible service.

Transferability and success factors

The launch of the Tele-bus service in Krakow was based on technology and know-how transfer from Genoa. This kind of public transport flexible service with different target groups (e.g. people with reduced mobility, students travelling to schools, etc.) is successful in many European countries. The key factors for the DRT service success are the following: definition of the objectives of the service implementation, a good choice of the service availability area, implementation of good DRT technology, clear regulations between involved public transport actors and a corporate image of the service that distinguishes it from regular public transport.

Lessons learnt

The implementation of the DRT service must be preceded by a profound study of the specific character of flexible transport and existing examples in order to better use its benefits in a certain public transport system and reach a target which really needs and will appreciate such customised service.

Conclusions

Krakow Tele-Bus, the first flexible public transport service in Poland, is now in the pilot phase. Although its final shape and directions of further development in the city and in Poland will be known only when the evaluation process is finished, it has already been shown to be a transferable solution.

References and contacts

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