

Good Practices

FOR TACKLING TRANSPORT POVERTY

in Remote Areas of
Central and Eastern
Europe



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INTRODUCTION

Transport poverty has been a problem for some time already, but the risk is increasing with the current energy and climate crisis, especially in the context of the green transition. With the European Green Deal, the EU has committed to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, which also includes measures for a socially just transition. The “Fit for 55” package updates European legislation in the transport sector, including the Climate Social Fund, which mitigates the social impact of the green transition. Due to potential price increases for fossil fuels and new environmental taxes, transport poverty may disproportionately affect vulnerable households and users who do not have access to alternative solutions.

Transport poverty, as defined in Social Climate Fund Regulation, means that individuals and households are unable or have difficulty meeting the costs of private or public transport, or have no or limited access to the means of transport they need to access essential socio-economic services and activities. Hard-to-reach regions, rural or peripheral areas, mountainous areas or underdeveloped areas can increase the vulnerability of households and transport users to transport poverty.

Eastern and Central European countries such as Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary and Croatia share some similarities in terms of transport arrangements: an outdated transport infrastructure dating back to the Austro-Hungarian or socialist past, considerable investment in the construction of highways and road connections in recent decades, the dominance of private car transport, a less developed public transport infrastructure and limited access to alternative modes of transport. As a consequence, the private car remains the main mode of transport, increasing congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. Although buses and trains are available in larger cities, public transport in smaller towns and villages is often less frequent and less reliable, limiting people's mobility outside urban centers.

In this booklet, we have compiled some examples of good practice in alleviating transport poverty for different vulnerable groups from Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary and Croatia. The booklet is aimed at policy makers from different regions in Europe who are planning measures to reduce transport poverty at local and national level. It was produced as part of the "Transport Poverty in the CEE Region" project, which brought together research organizations and individual researchers to find the best solutions to alleviate transport poverty in the CEE region.

While the success of certain practices in the selected countries does not mean that the same form of action is feasible in other European regions, it can serve as an inspiration or idea to be adapted in the selected area.

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1. INTEGRATED "SLOVENIA" TICKET

ABOUT THE SERVICE

The integrated ticket, which Slovenia introduced as part of the renewed integrated public transport system (IJPP), allows passengers unlimited use of public transport throughout the country. This comprehensive solution includes the use of trains and intercity buses and makes it easier for citizens to access transport services. The main beneficiaries are regular users of public transport who, due to their social or demographic status, are not entitled to special subsidised tickets, such as student or pensioner cards. With the introduction of the integrated ticket, the Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Energy wanted to improve accessibility to public transport, reduce car dependency and ease traffic congestion in large cities. Children between the ages of 6 and 15 receive a special 50% discount, which improves access to transportation for extracurricular activities in the afternoon such as arts and sports.

HOW IT WORKS

The integrated ticket is available in various time-based formats – daily, three-day, weekly, monthly and yearly – offering flexibility and customization for different user needs. Ticket prices are based on distance or route, but have a price cap: once a user has reached the maximum ticket value for their route, they receive a "Slovenia ticket", which allows them unlimited travel across the country. A day ticket costs 15 euros, a three-day ticket 20 euros and a weekly ticket 35 euros. A non-personalized monthly pass, which can be transferred, costs 90 euros, a personalized, non-transferable pass 70 euros. The annual pass costs 720 euros for non-personalized cards and 560 euros for personalized cards. This system is particularly suitable for daily long-distance

commuters or frequent travelers, as it allows unlimited travel within Slovenia, resulting in significant savings compared to buying individual tickets.

The ticket is designed to enable savings as soon as the maximum fare is reached, so that multiple tickets are no longer required for different routes. Although the integrated ticket is valid for intercity buses and trains, it is not currently valid for all local public transport. From October 2024, it will only be valid for urban transport in the capital Ljubljana.

KEY STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. **Development of the system and pricing policy:** The Ministry has set a maximum price for tickets, which allows the purchase of a ticket “Slovenia” at a fixed price to travel throughout the country. The maximum prices for daily, three-day, weekly and monthly passes have been adjusted to ensure affordability for regular travelers, with the non-transferable monthly pass capped at 70 euros for unlimited travel.
2. **Advertising and public awareness:** Effective advertising and public communication were crucial to the successful launch of the integrated ticket. The Ministry launched a broad campaign via municipal newsletters, websites and social media to inform users about the new benefits and affordability of the ticket. The focus was on informing users about the flexibility offered and the suitability of the ticket for long-distance and regular journeys.
3. **Extension to urban transport:** There are plans to extend the integrated ticket to urban transport in order to achieve comprehensive coverage of public transport in the bigger Slovenian cities. Ljubljana city transport was the first to be integrated into the ticket “Slovenia” system in October 2024.
4. **Evaluation and monitoring:** The authorities will regularly monitor and

assess the impact of the integrated ticket on users, financial sustainability and environmental objectives. Systematic data collection on usage, travel habits and user satisfaction will facilitate the optimization of the ticket and adaptation to user feedback and needs.



“I have been using the monthly ticket Slovenia for some time now and I am very happy with it. I can use all trains and buses, and now also the city transport in Ljubljana. Before the ticket was introduced, my employer covered the cost of a monthly ticket for my route from home to the office, which was much higher, and the ticket could only be used for this specific route. Now that the ticket is covered by my employer, I can make all my personal trips without additional costs (e.g. visits to my parents in another city or weekend trips with my partner)”

— *Dijana, regular user of the ticket “Slovenia”*

2. ON-DEMAND TRANSPORTATION FOR PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY IMPAIRMENTS



ABOUT THE SERVICE

The on-demand transportation service for people with mobility impairments is being tested in two major Slovenian cities, Ljubljana and Maribor. The initiative began in 2021, when the Ministry of Environment, Climate and Energy (MOPE), in cooperation with the National Council of Disability Organizations of Slovenia (NSIOS) and the Geodetic Institute of Slovenia, launched the project “Spatial Data Support for Managing Public Transport – People with Disabilities in Public Transport” The project was developed to improve accessibility to public transport, as Slovenia has committed to ensuring access to public transport for people with disabilities under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The project focused on the development of an appropriate model for the transportation of people with disabilities, including the adaptation of infrastructure and vehicles and, in the absence of such infrastructure, the creation of a new on-demand transport model. the “on-demand transport” enables people with disabilities to travel from home to the final destination, as long as the destination is within the coverage area of the call centre or service route. This project aims to improve access to all services for people with disabilities, as increased mobility enables better integration into society and everyday life.

In 2022, the public transport management company (DUJPP) was founded, which participated in the project in 2024 by setting up a call centre. The

pilot project was launched in September 2024 and was initially non-profit and specifically intended for people with mobility impairments. The National Council of Disability Organizations, together with the Slovenian Society for Disabled Students, the Slovenian Muscular Dystrophy Association and the Slovenian Multiple Sclerosis Association, is responsible for implementing the transport services.

In the pilot phase, data will be collected and users' needs analysed to enable improvements and possible expansion of the project throughout Slovenia based on different types of disabilities and impairments (including the elderly).

HOW IT WORKS

Transport on demand facilitates the journey from the starting point to the final destination, provided that both are within the defined transport area in Ljubljana and Maribor. However, the final destination must not be more than 50 km from the starting point. For journeys beyond this area, the service provides transportation to the nearest accessible public transport stop and enables onward travel by other means of public transport. Users who require transport can contact the call centre by phone or email. The call centre is available from Monday to Friday between 8:00 and 14:00 and must be reserved at least 24 hours in advance. Depending on availability, transport can also be organised if it is booked less than 24 hours before departure.

The vehicles used for on-demand transport are equipped in such a way that the safe and needs-based transport of people with disabilities is guaranteed. Drivers are trained in the use of technical aids used by people with disabilities, such as wheelchairs. On-call transport is primarily used to facilitate health care visits, medical appointments, visits to authorities and other important activities, but can also be used for other purposes. In the first five weeks of the service, an average of 75 journeys per week were recorded.

KEY STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. **Assessing the mobility needs of vulnerable groups:** Mobility-impaired persons are among the most vulnerable groups in Slovenia, as public transport remains largely inaccessible, except in urban areas. A pilot project was therefore initiated for this group. It is necessary to analyse the existing situation (means of transport provided by disability organisations, use of on-demand transport, method and timing of transport requests, etc.).
2. **Establishment of a reservation system:** The establishment of a call centre for ordering rides is crucial. The centre operated by the DUJPP in Slovenia needs to be staffed by people experienced in call management, transport coordination, disability support and working with vulnerable groups.
3. **Inform users about the service:** For a successful implementation of the service, it is essential to inform users about the service, the booking procedures and the terms of use. Promotion should be done through the media, with an important role for disability organisations that have well-developed networks.
4. **Securing sustainable funding:** The Ministry will secure funding through various financing mechanisms. Sustainable financing will be supported during project development through revenues from user fees for on-demand transportation.
5. **Data analysis and evaluation:** Regular monitoring and analysis of traffic data and user demand is crucial. In this way, potential weaknesses can be identified, and further adjustments can be made.

MORE INFORMATION

Ministry of Environment, Climate and Energy (gp.mope@gov.si) and Public Passenger Transport Management Company (info@dujpp.si).

3. VOLUNTARY BASED FREE TRANSPORT FOR THE ELDERLY

ABOUT THE SERVICE

To prevent the isolation and loneliness of older people in remote villages and towns with poor public transport connections, more than half of the municipalities have set up a free transport service. This service enables older people to take part in cultural events, visit friends, go on a trip, go shopping and, above all, visit the doctor. In this way, they can run their errands independently and carefreely, make new friends and maintain social contacts with the wider community that would otherwise be out of reach. Transport is provided by volunteers, typically younger, active retirees who have extra time and are eager to contribute. The service organizers are responsible for managing the service, establishing a call center, and promoting it through various channels accessible to the target population. Reservations for the shuttle service generally need to be made a few days in advance. The service is usually unavailable on weekends and public holidays.

HOW IT WORKS?

There are several free transport models for the elderly, each tailored to the specific requirements of the municipality in question. The Sopotniki Institute (operating in 17 municipalities) and Prostofer (operating in 105 municipalities) are the most prominent providers in Slovenia. It is essential that the test period is sufficiently long to allow users to become accustomed to the service. We will now describe an example of creation of the service provided by the Sopotniki Institute originating in the Kras-Brkini region, specifically in the municipalities of Divača, Sežana, and Hrpelje-Kozina.

The Sopotniki Institute was established in 2014 by a group of young people from the Karst and Brkini region with the objective of assisting isolated

elderly individuals from rural areas to reintegrate into active social life and to facilitate intergenerational collaboration. The institute was also established in response to the remoteness of the towns from urban centers, demographic deprivation and the inefficient and inadequate public passenger transport available. Young people provided a dedicated vehicle with their own funds to transport the elderly on errands, especially to the doctor. They established a position for handling phone reservations and coordinating transport, developed an operational model, promoted the service within the local community, and recruited volunteer drivers. Users are highly satisfied with the service and have great trust in the Sopotniki Institute. The service has significantly enhanced their quality of life. The success of this initiative led to the model being transferred to other municipalities in Slovenia.

KEY STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. **Assess Mobility Needs:** The municipality is responsible for evaluating the mobility and on-call transport needs of the local population, particularly for elderly residents.
2. **Collaborate with a Service Provider:** Partner with a provider of the free transport service for the elderly, which will supply a business model and technical support for implementation.
3. **Initiate Tender Process:** Conduct a tender process to select a service provider, which could be a local association, institution, or public body. Following selection, sign a contract with the chosen provider for a fixed term.
4. **Procure Vehicles and Set Procedures:** Acquire (electric) vehicles and determine their parking locations. Establish operational procedures for handling vehicle breakdowns.
5. **Appoint Call Centre Supervisor:** The contractor must appoint a staff member to oversee the call center. Preferably, this individual should be an existing employee.

Recruit Volunteers: Identify volunteers willing to transport elderly people through various channels, such as local community groups or municipal outreach programs. These volunteers are typically younger retirees. Draft and sign a volunteer contract with each individual.

Promote the Service: Disseminate information about the service, including the contact number, through multiple channels: the municipal newsletter, social work centers, voluntary organizations, and posters in key locations.

Secure Funding and Evaluate Service: The municipality should seek suitable funding solutions for the service and implement an evaluation system to monitor performance, improve the service, and potentially expand it to additional areas and users if needed.

MORE INFORMATION

Zavod Sopotniki, zavod za medgeneracijsko solidarnost, Kraška ulica 2, 6210 Sežana, EU – Slovenia, info@sopotniki.org

“So far, I’ve mainly used the Sopotniki service for longer journeys to medical appointments in the distant hospitals of Ljubljana and Valdoltra. I really like the idea of Sopotniki and I’m impressed by whoever came up with it. Because sometimes you wish you could go shopping on your own. Because your relatives never say anything to make it a burden, but if you don’t go out alone, after a while you can’t even communicate, for example in the bank. If you go out on your own, you stay independent. The volunteer drivers are also very good, and sometimes a volunteer comes along who you already know, and that’s even more pleasant.”

— Verica A.



4. HUNGARY: VILLAGE AND HOMESTEAD GUARDIAN

ABOUT THE SERVICE

The services were established in response to the fact that in Hungary a significant part of the population lives in small villages, on the outskirts of cities and in some other hard-to-reach areas that are severely underserved by services and facilities and also have poor access to public transportation that could connect residents to such facilities. Such services have a legal background in the Social Services Act, according to which local governments can provide a “village and homestead guardian service” (faluvagy tanyagondnoki szolgálat) in small villages (under 1000 inhabitants or up to 1100 inhabitants as the population increases) and in settlements with inhabitants on the outskirts of towns or in other hard-to-reach areas.

These services aim to reduce the disadvantages resulting from the lack of services and facilities and poor access to public transport and to ensure access to services to meet basic needs, as well as to help with other individual and community needs.

HOW IT WORKS

The operation of village and homestead guardian (or village or farm caretaker) service is regulated by local decrees. In addition to local authorities, other organizations such as churches and non-governmental organizations can also operate village and homestead guardianships, although this is rarely the case. State funds are available to finance such services. In recent years, the purchase of motorized vehicles – a prerequisite for the operation of such services – especially vans, has been supported by the state budget and EU funds through successive tenders.



KEY STEPS TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

1. The basic tasks of village and homestead caretakers include providing meals, home care, providing information on local community issues, ensuring access to medical care – including transport services – as well as transport services for children to kindergartens, schools and other destinations.
2. As additional tasks, village and homestead caretakers may also help organize and manage community, cultural, sports and recreational activities, assist clients with administrative matters, refer client applications to institutions, and participate in the provision of basic social, child welfare and other services to residents.

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In practice, in addition to the provision of local services, the transportation of the inhabitants of such areas to healthcare facilities, official appointments and community events is an important part of the operation of such services. All village and homestead guardian services are free of charge and available to all residents of the affected areas without further (e.g. social) conditions. However, capacity restrictions apply and transport services should be provided within the limits set out in the relevant local decree.



5. HOME ESCORT PHONE (HAZAKÍSÉRŐ TELEFON)

ABOUT THE SERVICE

This practice reflects concerns about the safety of women and young adults when traveling at night and in the early morning hours in Hungary, which is related to the lower frequency of public transport (or lack thereof) at these times. Women in particular are at higher risk of gender-based violence, especially sexual harassment, when using different modes of transportation (such as buses, cabs, etc.), which limits their mobility and ability to use public transportation and intermediary services independently. This idea has already been successful in Stockholm and Berlin and has also been in operation in Hungary since November 15, 2017.

HOW IT WORKS

The most important elements of this service are:

1. It is aimed at people (often young adults and women) who are out alone at night or in the early morning, e.g. on their way home and do not feel safe;
2. The service involves a phone call with an operator to give them a sense of security and support that they are not alone and to alert the police in case of danger;
3. It is available Monday to Saturday from 10pm to 4am and on Sunday from 10pm to 1am;
4. The calls are free of charge; and
5. The service is only available in Hungarian and covers the entire country.

KEY STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The project is run by Home Escort Phone on a voluntary basis and relies on volunteers as operators.

1. It relies on donations to maintain its services.
2. The Home Escort Phone service can be seen as a best practice that responds to the need of women to feel safe when walking at night or using public transportation, as well as the need for more reliable and better available public transportation in Hungary.
3. It can even be interpreted as a response to transport poverty, especially in terms of availability and safety.

The Home Escort Phone service in Hungary was motivated by the unmet need to provide a support service for women who find themselves in unsafe situations on their way home at night. Two thirds of women feel threatened when walking alone at night. According to this service provider, the home escort service is most needed by young people who cannot afford a cab or do not have a driver's license.

MORE INFORMATION

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6. TELEBUSZ, TELEFOGAS - DEMAND-RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT (DRT) IN A LARGE URBAN AREA

ABOUT THE SERVICE

Telebuses respond to the need to provide public transport services in smaller residential areas and are environmentally friendly as unnecessary journeys are avoided during off-peak hours. It is a demand-responsive service used in Budapest and the metropolitan area to complement and extend the existing network by reaching smaller communities in the suburbs.

It aims to reach smaller suburban communities and reduce unnecessary trips during low-demand periods. Passengers can request a ride online through the Telebusz or Telefogas websites, or by calling the customer service number. This system ensures that buses only run when there is a demand, making the service more economical and environmentally friendly by reducing fuel consumption and emissions.

Currently, thirteen BKK routes operate either partially or entirely on a demand-responsive basis. For example, some buses only run during specific times or on weekends if a request is made in advance.

HOW IT WORKS

These are the essential components of Telebus:

1. The travel intention can be indicated online via the BKK website, in person, via the BudapestGO app or via the customer service telephone number;
2. The on-demand service can be used with a regular ticket or a BKK ticket, and eligible persons can travel free of charge;

3. The travel request can be made no earlier than one week and no later than half an hour before the departure of the bus; and
4. Cancellations are possible up to 15 minutes before departure.

KEY STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

There are 13 different travel services offered by BKK (public transport organiser in Budapest).

Telebus ensures that the required travel services are available and on-demand by considering at the same time the environmental impact of transport, so that both the provision of transport services and environmental concerns are taken into account.

The first users of this service in 2013 in the Aranyhegy area had waited a long time for the telebus service to start, as they could only reach the area on foot or by car. According to their impressions, a major advantage of the bus is that it provides a connection to the city's H5 suburban line.

MORE INFORMATION

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7. DEMAND-RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT (DRT) SERVICE IN THE URBAN OUTSKIRTS

ABOUT THE SERVICE

The on-demand bus service was introduced in Zalaegerszeg, a medium-sized city in western Hungary, as part of the overhaul of the city's public transport network planned by the transport planning and consulting company Mobilissimus.

HOW IT WORKS

The ZERGE initiative is a new minibus transport service in Zalaegerszeg. It aims to improve accessibility and connectivity in urban areas not covered by regular bus services. ZERGE minibusses operate on three different routes (Z1, Z2, and Z3), connecting key points in the city such as the railway station, city centers, and residential areas. The service is designed as a pilot phase, where transportation is free, but prior reservation is required to ensure a seat on the minibus.

Additionally, ZERGE minibusses facilitate easy transfers to other city bus lines, enhancing the overall efficiency of public transport in Zalaegerszeg. Users can book their seats via phone or a web application, providing flexibility and convenience. The initiative is part of the broader SHAREPLACE project, funded by the European Union and the Hungarian government, aimed at improving regional mobility and integrating transport services.

The problems addressed include: difficulty to access, hilly outskirts of the city, narrow streets, lack of public transport, increasing use of private cars

8. SLOVAKIA: CARPOOLING SOLUTION FOR STUDENTS BY THE STUDENTS

ABOUT THE SERVICE

The problem of transport poverty can severely affect school-age children. Children/students living in areas with inadequate transport connections have to get up much earlier than their peers from areas with good transport links. A similar situation arises when they return from school – they get home much later than their classmates. Parents try to solve this problem by driving their children to school, which has a negative impact on the environment due to increased emissions and car noise, drives up travel costs and requires extra time from each parent. In addition, these children are often unable to take part in extracurricular activities.

The students of the grammar school in Žiar nad Hronom, who faced similar problems, have developed their own application that helps them share personal transportation. The transportation services are provided by parents or adult students of the school. The service is currently on hold as legal uncertainties surrounding the transportation of minors and obtaining the necessary permits need to be clarified. While the students are working on the solutions, the program developer is working on improving the application.

HOW IT WORKS

Žiar nad Hronom is a district town in central Slovakia, where more than 60% of the population live in the surrounding villages. This results in a high demand for transportation to the town, which offers various services, including secondary schools.

As part of the “Inovujme.sk” project and later as part of the PBL challenge,

the students of the local grammar school decided to develop a project that could help the school by helping to improve the availability of transportation in relation to their needs. First, they analysed public transport possibilities – which surrounding villages the students commute from the most and how often public transportation arrives in the required time slots. The increasing number of cars parked in the schoolyard showed that there is a lack of adequate transportation options. Given the need for additional transportation options, it was decided to develop an app “GymCar” to make commuting easier for students.

The app offers protection to both passengers and drivers – they can only register in the app after approval by the app administrator. Drivers then register the route they are taking, including estimated arrival and departure times, as well as the number of passengers they can take. Passengers/ students can choose from the available vehicles in the mobile app. Passengers share the cost of transportation by mutual agreement.

KEY STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. **Assessment of mobility needs:** The municipality and higher territorial authorities are responsible for urban and regional transportation and should identify transportation needs. In the case of the school, this can be assessed by the school operator.
2. **Work with parents and students:** Identify unmet transportation needs and approach parents and adult students who would be willing to share their vehicle with other students.
3. **Prepare the Carpooling Application:** The application must include protections for both passengers and drivers so they feel safe.
4. **Ensure a responsible application administrator:** This person oversees the screening of participants, filters out inappropriate drivers and riders, and prevents inappropriate use of ride services.

- 5. Ensure technical and financial support for the development and maintenance of the application:** Various types of mobile devices are required to develop and test the application. The database must be hosted on a server with sufficient data security. The application must be controlled and improved according to the customer's requirements. It may be necessary to increase the number of programmers and train them.
- 6. Promote the service:** Disseminate information about the service via the school's website, social media and within the school. This information is also important for potential students as it helps set the stage for better access to transportation, which could be a deciding factor in their decision.
- 7. Offer financial assistance to socially disadvantaged students:** Not all students can afford to contribute financially to shared transportation. The school/municipality should be able to financially support the service for certain groups of students.

"So far, I've mainly used GymCar's online service to get to school when I've missed my bus or when I need to get home and public transport in the city isn't adequate. I really like the idea of GymCar and I'm impressed with whoever came up with it. I travel with people I know from school and who I can trust. Sometimes you wish you could go to school without the stress of missing your bus. I like the idea of travelling with our classmates because it's more peaceful and you have the opportunity to get to know each other better. Overall, I really like this project as it allows people from distant villages to travel to school comfortably without being dependent on bus timetables. I wish that every school had this option"

— **Zuzana W.**



MORE INFORMATION

Project website: gymcar.webnode.sk; IG TikTok: [@gymcar_zh](https://www.tiktok.com/@gymcar_zh); promotional videos: [GymCar - Zvezieš ma?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zvezieš_ma?)

9. TRANSPORT ON DEMAND IN RURAL AND LESS ACCESSIBLE AREAS

ABOUT THE SERVICE

The “Bus on Demand” service was launched in the Trnava region on September 2, 2019, to meet the need for more efficient transportation in areas with low numbers of passengers, such as Prieťr and Rovensko. The aim of the service was to provide residents of these less well-served areas with a more flexible means of transportation, thereby reducing overall transport costs and improving the accessibility of public transport. One month later, on October 1, 2019, the service was extended to weekend routes to give residents better access to public transport at weekends and on public holidays. The following year, due to increased demand and positive feedback from residents, the service was extended to Šaštín-Stráže, Koválovec and Tekoľďany. The service is primarily used by residents of rural areas who need reliable connections to schools, workplaces or other services.

In the Košice region, the “Bus on Demand” service was introduced on December 15, 2019, to improve transport services in remote areas such as Hažín, Koňuš and Kašov. The initiative was designed to provide transportation only on the basis of specific demand (buses are only deployed when there

is a confirmed interest in the trip, which saves time and resources). The expansion of the service reflects its success and efficiency in meeting the needs of residents in less well-served areas.

HOW IT WORKS?

In the Trnava region, the “Bus on demand” service is operated by ARRIVA Trnava and SKAND Skalica. Buses are dispatched on the basis of telephone reservations, which can be made up to 48 hours in advance and no later than 30 minutes before the scheduled departure. This system ensures that the buses operate efficiently when there is actual demand. Fares are calculated based on the distance travelled, which allows for fair and transparent pricing in accordance with the tariffs set by the Trnava Region. The service is available both on weekdays and weekends, which improves accessibility for residents.

In the Košice region, where the service is provided by the companies Eurobus and ARRIVA Michalovce, the administrative system is similar. Transportation requests must be reported at least 60 minutes before the scheduled departure. The aim of the service is to improve the accessibility of public transport in areas with low passenger frequency, resulting in more efficient transportation and lower operating costs. The buses only run when demand is confirmed, so that the transport service is tailored to the actual needs of residents. The fare is the same as the regular suburban bus service according to the applicable tariff.

Advantages of the service: In the first year of operation in the Trnava region, a total of 6,174 kilometres were travelled at the request of almost 1,400 passengers, which is 14,954 kilometres less than would have been travelled with the regular, less efficient timetable.

KEY STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. **Needs analysis and planning:** Identify areas with low number of passengers and insufficient transport services. Conduct a survey to determine the

commuting needs of these residents and develop a plan to implement the service, taking into account geographic and demographic factors.

- 2. Build partnerships and collaboration:** Form partnerships between the regional government, municipalities, regional transportation providers and other stakeholders. Establish cooperation agreements that ensure the sustainability and efficiency of the service.
- 3. Reservation management technology:** Select appropriate technology solutions that enable effective reservation management and vehicle tracking.
- 4. Test and pilot phase:** Run a pilot project in a selected area to test the functionality of the service. Gather feedback from passengers and drivers to optimise processes.
- 5. Evaluation and adjustments:** Analyse the data and feedback collected during the pilot phase. Adjust the implementation of the service and the operational plan based on the insights gained.
- 6. Official launch and marketing:** Officially launch the service in the target area. Implement a marketing strategy to raise awareness of the service through local media, online platforms and community networks.
- 7. Monitoring, continuous improvement and expansion to other areas.** Continuously monitor the performance and availability of the service. Introduce a system to regularly collect and evaluate feedback. Regularly update and improve the service to ensure its long-term sustainability and efficiency.

MORE INFORMATION

Trnavský samosprávny kraj, Arriva Trnava, SKAND Skalica, Košický samosprávny kraj, ARRIVA Michalovce, a. s. a eurobus, a. s.

10. SOCIAL TAXI

ABOUT THE SERVICE

Many Slovakian cities and private companies offer the “social cab” transportation service. The social cab offers transportation services for medically disadvantaged or elderly people. This service is often available to seniors over a certain age, people with disabilities, their companions and other people with reduced mobility. The aim of the service is to give these groups better access to medical and social facilities as well as cultural and social events.

HOW IT WORKS?

The social cab is usually managed at the level of the municipal administration, which can provide the service directly or through subcontractors. Some cities provide financial grants or subsidies for the maintenance of the service, which reduces the costs for users. In some cases, the management of the service can be transferred to non-profit organisations or private cab services, which then provide vehicles and drivers.

KEY STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. **Needs assessment:** Conduct community surveys or consultations to identify the mobility needs of potential users, such as older people, people with disabilities and other people with reduced mobility. Identify common destinations that these groups need to travel to, such as medical facilities, social services, community centres and shopping.

2. **Planning and budgeting:** Decide whether the service will be operated by the city, contracted out to private companies, or run in partnership with non-profit organisations. Estimate the cost of vehicle procurement, maintenance, employee salaries and other operating costs. Secure funding through city budget appropriations, grants or sponsorships.
3. **Regulatory framework:** Develop policies that define who is eligible for the service, how it will be used, and the responsibilities of all parties involved. Ensure that the service complies with local transportation laws and safety standards, including vehicle accessibility.
4. **Infrastructure and resources:** Procure vehicles equipped for the special needs of users, such as wheelchair lifts and low-entry vehicles. Recruit drivers and support staff with the necessary skills and training in dealing with passengers with special needs, including training in first aid and emergency procedures.
5. **Implementation:** Start with a pilot program in a specific area or for a specific population to address any operational issues. Gradually expand the service to the entire metropolitan area based on feedback and success of the pilot program.
6. **Marketing and communication:** Use various communication tools such as local newspapers, radio, community newspapers and social media to inform the public about the service. Regularly engage with community organisations, healthcare providers and potential users to gather feedback and improve the service.
7. **Monitoring and evaluation:** Continuously monitor the use of the service and collect user feedback to evaluate effectiveness and satisfaction. Make necessary adjustments to routes, schedules and operations to better serve the community based on ongoing evaluations.

- 8. Sustainability and expansion:** Explore opportunities for continued funding through public-private partnerships, government grants, or community donations. Consider expanding service to meet growing demand or to cover additional areas within the city as population and needs evolve.



“This is a great relief not only for the elderly, but also for the disabled. That is, for those for whom it is more difficult to get around on foot. I took advantage of it today to do some major shopping. My husband and I, who also has health problems, would otherwise have had no way of getting the shopping home. That’s why we used to order a cab regularly.”

— *Mrs. Otília*

(Source: spravy.pravda.sk)

MORE INFORMATION

Municipalities Brezova pod Bradlom, Brezno, Hlohovec, Galanta, Myjava, Martin, Nitra, Sered, Komarno, Trencin, Topolcany, Ziar nad Hronom, Sliac, etc.

11. CROATIA: FROM DOOR TO DOOR - ACCESSIBLE SERVICES FOR A DIGNIFIED OLD AGE

ABOUT THE SERVICE

The “From door to door” project offers users free on-demand rides, e.g. for visits to the doctor, dealing with the authorities, shopping for groceries and attending social and cultural events. Launched in 2020 with the support of the European Social Fund, the initiative targets the existential needs of older residents in rural, isolated and economically underdeveloped areas of Croatia, especially those affected by war damage and depopulation. Due to the positive feedback from users, the project was expanded from the original 3 to 12 field vehicles with drivers. These vehicles transport users daily in the regions of Lika, Dalmatia, Banija, Kordun and Western Slavonia, where public transportation is either unavailable or inadequate.

The project is primarily aimed at people over the age of 65 who are at risk of poverty in order to reduce social exclusion while meeting basic living and health needs. Each user is entitled to use the service a few times a month, which is agreed with the driver, and usually several users travel together to common destinations. In some cases, assistance with shopping or delivery of essential goods is offered, depending on availability, but the focus is on preserving the dignity of older people and promoting their social inclusion. In addition to improving the quality of life of users, the importance of the project also lies in contributing to local economic sustainability by employing drivers in areas with high unemployment rates.

HOW IT WORKS

The project is implemented by the “Serbian National Council”, which supports the field workers financially, administratively and organizationally. Field workers, i.e. driver assistants, are locally recruited team members who are responsible for transportation and user support. Their daily tasks include carrying out planned trips, planning future routes based on user needs and keeping user and trip records. Familiarity with local conditions, culture and user needs makes the service more accessible and efficient.

Communication with users is mainly by phone, as digital literacy remains a challenge for this population group due to their age and difficult socio-economic conditions. Currently, 12 drivers serve around 1300 users in regions of different sizes and populations, resulting in a workload of 60 to 210 users per driver.

The head office in Zagreb provides financial support for expenses such as salaries, fuel and vehicle maintenance and has relied on various European and national funding sources for several years. The annual operating costs per vehicle amount to around €5000 for fuel and €2000–3000 for insurance, maintenance and repairs. All vehicles are currently powered by fossil fuels as there is no infrastructure for alternative fuels and there are financial barriers to purchasing such vehicles. In some areas, it would make more sense to replace the field vehicles with vans due to demand and user numbers, but financial constraints have so far prevented this.

KEY STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. **Assessing community needs:** identifying target groups and geographical areas of greatest need.
2. **Procurement of resources:** Procurement of vehicles and equipment appropriate to local conditions and recruitment of qualified personnel.

3. **Working with local stakeholders:** Involving local authorities, civil society organizations and social institutions to identify users and facilitate implementation.
4. **Operational planning:** developing a user registration system and training staff on the specific needs of working with older people.
5. **Promotion of the service:** Inform the public through local media and social networks to ensure visibility and greater participation.
6. **Monitoring and evaluation:** Regularly analyze feedback and adapt services to users' needs.

MORE INFORMATION

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