

New Seamless Mobility Services

Urban Lift-sharing Services



Policy notes

What is it about?

Characteristics

Urban Lift-sharing Services are:

- matching services that bring people together who are travelling in the same direction, aiming to encourage individuals to share private vehicles for particular journeys;
- using advanced technologies (e.g. matching software, the internet and optional call centres) for trip matching. This increases the potential to reach the necessary critical mass of users;
- targeting as a main group commuters in urban agglomerations and the surrounding regions, but also improving mobility options for other trip purposes and areas.

Urban lift-sharing schemes, also known as carpooling schemes in continental Europe, are widely transferable throughout Europe. Existing mature schemes (e.g. Liftshare.com, Pendlernetz), on which NICHES has focused, prove the potential of urban lift-sharing schemes.

Key benefits

The implementation of an Urban Lift-sharing Service...

- helps users to save considerably on gas and parking;
- increases mobility choices and accessibility in areas that are not well served by public transport, with comparable low start-up and running costs;
- has the potential to reduce the number of parking lots at companies with lift-sharing schemes;
- reduces the need for a private car;
- has the potential to reduce congestion, energy consumption, air pollution and CO₂ emissions.



Liftshare.com: Online matching of people that want to share a ride

Source: www.liftshare.com

Example: Liftshare.com (UK)

Liftshare.com Ltd is a commercial company that was founded in 1997 by Ali Claburn, who had the idea of a web-based matching service after having used a lift-sharing scheme in Germany. Today, liftshare.com is a national service in the UK that also provides separately branded lift-sharing schemes to hundreds of businesses and communities.

Users simply enter their liftshare offer or request online via a national portal (www.liftshare.com) or locally branded websites (e.g. for the London region). Liftshare membership stands at more than 141,000 members nationwide and is continuously growing.

In 2006, a series of new services was launched, widening the range of modes covered (BikeBUDi, WalkBUDi, TaxiBUDi and TravelBUDi).



The German Pendlernetz helps people to link up e.g. for daily commuting

Photos: EuropeAlive



Is this something for us?

In general it can be stated that the implementation of an Urban Lift-sharing Service is relatively cheap and has low entry barriers. Therefore the concept can work nearly everywhere where you want to address problems of congestion, limited parking space or accessibility.

Urban Lift-sharing Services are suitable for a wide range of context conditions. They can for example be offered by local authorities, big companies and institutions (e.g. hospitals and universities) or event managers.

Support from local politicians and decision makers to finance and promote a lift-sharing scheme is however a crucial factor for success. The involvement of a "local champion" who pushes the idea has also in many cases proven to be decisive for successful implementation.

«The benefits of urban lift-sharing are considerable within our community. We currently have 1817 registered members and not only has their accessibility been improved but collectively they are saving over £300,000 annually. The environment is also being helped with annual CO₂ savings in the region of 600 tonnes.»

Brian Moreland
Head of Travelwise
Northern Ireland, Belfast

Check list

City size	Preferably at least a large regional "journey-to-work area" should be covered.
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Comparatively low start-up and running cost of service; ● Additional marketing cost, which may be higher depending on chosen strategy.
Implementation time	Short term (<3 years).
Stakeholders involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Private service provider sets up and operates scheme; ● Public authorities, companies, schools and other organizations buy in; ● Public sector supports financially and politically.
Undesirable effects	None

Benefits & Costs

Benefits

Urban Lift-sharing Services offer a wide scope of potential benefits for individuals as well as local authorities, companies and organisations:

Individuals

- Users save on gas and parking, e.g. in the UK up to £1,000 (approximately 1,500€) per year;
- Increased mobility choices in areas that are not well served by public transport;
- Improved quality of life for commuters through less stress (passengers) and in some cases reserved parking;
- Improved sociability by meeting new people and talking during trip;
- Reduced need for a private car.

Companies

- Reduced need for parking spaces, e.g. for some companies an effective Lift-sharing scheme can reduce the demand for spaces on their site by 50%.

Public

- Reduced number of cars on the road (without reducing the number of actual car users) and thereby reduced congestion (e.g. in the UK increasing the occupancy from 1.2 to 1.4 passengers per car would decrease congestion by 10%);
- Increased accessibility under consideration of transport cost, location and transport safety;
- Reduced energy consumption and emission of air pollutants from single occupancy vehicles.

Financial benefits for companies and organisations

Lift-sharing has the potential to reduce the need for parking spaces and widens the recruitment catchment areas for businesses.

A study from the Department for Transport (DfT) in the UK estimated the cost of a parking space at around £300-500 (approximately 440-740€) per year.

Costs

Lift-sharing schemes need to be **financed by public authorities, companies, schools and other organisations**. They usually pay a service provider for setting up and operating a locally branded scheme and website. Lift-sharing is a comparatively cost-efficient solution to provide increased mobility choices and to reduce the environmental impact caused by the high number of vehicles carrying only the driver as sole occupant.

In the case of the German **Lift-sharing Service Pendlernetz** for example, a local authority pays around 2,000 -3,000€ per year for participating in a large regional scheme and for a locally branded website (without marketing). This is comparable to the annual cost of operating a set of traffic lights.

Lift-sharing Services have **economies of scale** and become cheaper with increasing spatial coverage as locally branded schemes are linked through a central database and use the same software product.

Marketing is crucial to make a scheme successful. Depending on the marketing strategy chosen this may cause considerable cost. However, many schemes have found cost-efficient ways of low budget marketing activities (e.g. advertisement signs at congested roads, media involvement, support of politicians in PR activities).

Users & Stakeholders

Users and target groups

Urban Lift-sharing Services target **a wide range of user groups** - commuters, students, children that need to be taken to school or people who want to travel to large events (e.g. soccer games).

Schemes provided on a national, regional or local level are usually **open** to all through a website where the user can offer or seek a ride.

Other schemes are **restricted** to specific users, e.g. the employees of large companies that have introduced their own lift-sharing scheme.

The matching service is usually **free of charge** to the travellers. Surveys have shown that the introduction of a user fee would deter people from registering.

To achieve a higher acceptance among users, most schemes offer the **option to register only in a specific group**, e.g. all-female, specific interests, and private groups protected by passwords shared by a small number of people.



Sharing a ride

Photo: liftshare.com

Key stakeholders for implementation

The successful implementation of an urban lift-sharing scheme needs the cooperation of different stakeholders:

- **Local authorities** wanting to provide their citizens with a locally branded scheme and provide financial resources and staff time;
- **Higher level authorities** (regional, federal) supporting the implementation;
- **Politicians** on all levels supporting the implementation (including a "local champion");
- **Lift-sharing software and hosting companies** developing and offering mature lift-sharing solutions;
- **Companies and organisations** providing locally branded services within their mobility management schemes;
- **Schools** participating in school-run schemes;
- **Event organisers** wanting to bundle streams of visitors;
- **Soccer and other sport clubs** promoting the service for journeys to their games;
- **Media** which have a crucial role in promoting lift-sharing schemes.

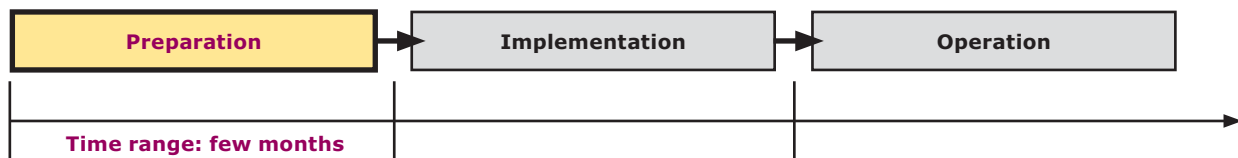
Example: Pendlernetz NRW

The Bürgerservice Pendlernetz NRW (commuters' network for citizens) is a web-based matching service for lift-sharing which is available in more than 165 municipalities in the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. The service is available through a central Pendlernetz website and the websites of participating local authorities. The Pendlernetz scheme was developed out of a local agenda 21 process and was implemented in a wider region through cooperation of a variety of local authorities in a policy-driven process. The software solution is provided by the commercial company Europe Media Alive.

The catchment area of the service has 7.2 million inhabitants, 2.2 million of whom are commuters. Currently there are 8,000-9,000 lift-share offers and requests online daily. Pendlernetz is open to all. The main target group is commuters, but people with other trip purposes also show interest in the service.

From concept to reality

Preparation



An urban lift-sharing scheme needs to be well prepared to be successfully implemented. A local authority needs to apply a different strategy than a company or organisation. However, some general key aspects can be summarised as follows:

Key aspects at this stage

Address tangible problems and set

targets: Urban lift-sharing solutions have good chances to be implemented where a tangible problem exists. Congestion, lack of accessible public transport, air pollution, shortage of car parking – these are all good arguments for considering the introduction of a lift-sharing scheme. Before starting the preparatory work for implementation, it should be clear which problems need to be addressed. Set concrete targets that you want to achieve.

Define scheme requirements: The requirements of a scheme need to be defined in a way tailored to each case. It is necessary to determine the target group and the perimeter of coverage. Is the scheme aimed at employees of a company, soccer fans, or should it be a locally branded scheme that is open to all? To reach a critical mass of users for an urban lift-sharing scheme that is open to all it is required to cover at least regional journey-to-work areas including important urban agglomerations with concentrated work areas. Success is most likely in case of service provision on the national level supported by locally branded schemes. It is also important to determine which role a scheme can play in existing local transport planning strategies.

Evaluate existing solutions: Mature lift-sharing solutions exist in many countries. Often private companies or public coordinators offer local authorities, companies and organisations

the opportunity to buy into existing schemes and provide them with a locally tailored strategy and website. Stakeholders interested in implementing a scheme should evaluate which solutions exist in the market. If there is no adequate offer on the national level, it may also be a good idea to contact a foreign provider, as it is relatively simple to set up a lift-sharing service in another language. Prices and quality may differ considerably and should be compared (e.g. via a tendering process). Many stakeholders try to develop their own software product and strategy for an urban lift-sharing scheme. This may be more costly and less successful in the end than using existing products and services that have been optimised over time. Stakeholders should only consider to develop their own solution if no suitable option to buy into a mature scheme is available.

Activating support and networking: Urban lift-sharing schemes can only be successfully implemented if many stakeholders work together. A coordinator should be in charge to bring the relevant people together and to activate support for the implementation of a scheme. It is crucial to involve a "local champion" (e.g. a politician) who can help to activate the necessary support. In the case of Pendlernetz, the use of existing Agenda 21 networks was crucial to bring together representatives of different municipalities and to achieve the necessary regional coverage of the service.

Teamwork: A motivated project team with a range of different skills (e.g. project management, marketing) is needed to make a lift-sharing scheme successful. Identify tasks to be performed and set clear responsibilities.

Allocate necessary resources: It needs to be clear how much a lift-sharing scheme will cost and how it can be financed in the long-run. Which human and financial resources need to be allocated for implementing a scheme? Is there any public funding available for such measures, e.g. from the regional or national level? It also needs to become clear which (financial) benefits can be achieved, e.g. by reducing the number of car parks. In many cases there is no specific budget for innovative mobility measures like urban lift-sharing schemes and it is difficult to “dig out” the necessary resources. In this situation it is crucial to build on good arguments and wide support to activate the necessary resources.

Develop marketing strategy: Making an urban lift-sharing scheme well known to potential users is absolutely crucial to reach a critical mass of users. Therefore a sound marketing and promotion strategy should be developed before implementation. As marketing can become quite costly, it is important to aim at good local media coverage and to find relatively cost-efficient marketing tools (e.g. signs promoting a scheme on congested commuter roads).

Ready for implementation?	✓
Key problems identified	
Scheme requirements defined	
Existing solutions evaluated	
Support and networking activated	
“Local champion” involved	
Team with different skills formed	
Necessary resources allocated	
Marketing strategy developed	

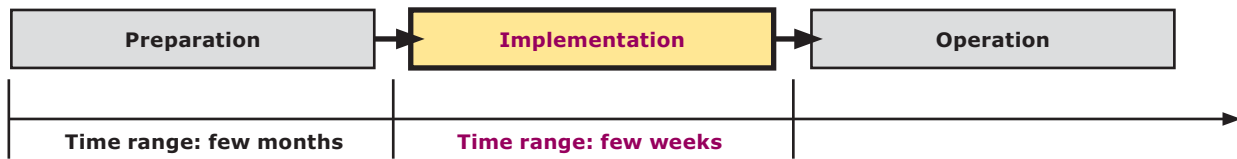
Getting Pendlernetz started

The German Pendlernetz scheme developed out of a Local Agenda 21 process in the district of Kleve. Existing contacts from the local agenda network in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia could be used to build up the Pendlernetz lift-sharing network that includes a large number of local authorities. This helped to achieve the necessary spatial coverage for the service. In a policy-driven process a working group of participating municipalities was established that was a main driver behind the implementation of the service. The establishment of a Pendlernetz coordination office was also an important element for the success of the project. The project co-ordinator was one of the main drivers behind the implementation of the service and its expansion. The coordination office contributed essentially to bringing different stakeholders together and to raising awareness concerning the service among the public.



Promoting lift-sharing on a road sign
Photo: liftshare.com

Implementation



The implementation phase of an urban lift-sharing scheme is a key element in achieving a critical mass of users, thus enabling long term success.

Key aspects at this stage

Aim at network approach with locally branded access: As mentioned, Lift-sharing Services can only provide good matching rates if a critical mass of users offers and seeks a ride. It is therefore favourable to link existing or newly implemented lift-sharing schemes in a network with one central database of users. This also helps to increase the coverage of a service towards regional and national travel patterns. At the same time it has to be stressed that schemes should be locally branded. This is done through locally branded websites, for example on the homepage of a local authority or company, and local marketing activities. The participation of local administrations and local branding contribute to increasing confidence in the services among users. The importance of local branding is underlined by the fact that access to liftshare.com and Pendlernetz is mostly registered through locally branded websites, which achieve higher matching rates than the general portal.



Photo: liftshare.com

Marketing and promotional activities:

Targeted marketing is essential to create awareness among potential users and to overcome perceptual barriers. This is particularly important when introducing a new service. Marketing however, is a major cost factor, which has to be controlled. Liftshare.com and Pendlernetz for example both rely on positive media coverage and events to reach their users. It is recommended to already establish good relations with the media in the preparation phase. There are no big marketing budgets available, and creative, cost-efficient ways to raise awareness have to be used to achieve the necessary impact. This also needs to involve support from other stakeholders, e.g. soccer clubs promoting the lift-share service to their games, or local politicians distributing leaflets in traffic jams and helping to achieve good media coverage.

Creating confidence: Users of a lift-sharing scheme need to be sure that their personal information is used appropriately and in line with data protection acts. Transparency on what is done with the information and who can access it needs to be ensured. Individuals should also be able to decide on how much information others can access, e.g. restricted access to e-mail addresses. Most lift-sharing schemes also enable users to share their data only with a defined group if they wish to, e.g. only women.

Supporting measures: The implementation of a lift-sharing scheme should be accompanied by supporting measures and be integrated with an overall transport planning. The tables below give an overview of possible measures.



Photo: EuropeAlive

"Carrots" - incentives to use Urban Lift-sharing Services

Parking management	Incentives by provision of special parking spaces for lift-sharers; financial incentives such as parking cash out.
Mobility guarantee	Guaranteed taxi provision when lift-sharing arrangement fails.
Award schemes	Bonus points for sustainable travel behaviour in companies.
HOV lanes	Exclusive access to HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) lanes in congested areas.

"Sticks" – discouraging the use of single occupancy vehicles

Parking restrictions	General parking management and restrictions at traffic attractors (e.g. city centre, big companies).
Workplace parking levy	License charge to employers providing workplace parking.
Road pricing schemes	Charging car users in urban areas (e.g. city centre – congestion charging zone), encourages users to share a car as it saves costs.

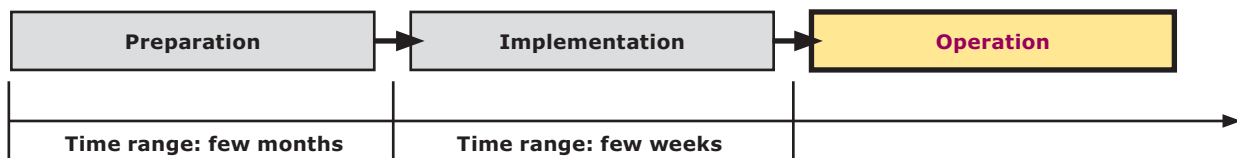
Multi- and intermodal integration

Walking and cycling buddies, taxi sharing	Already realised as additional service of liftshare.com (UK).
Built and organisational integration	Examples: link to public transport interchanges such as train stations, provision of integrated mobility pass; integration of Urban Lift-sharing Service in public transport (online) information services.

Information tools

Online information	Well accessible and designed information sources on urban lift-sharing options.
Mapping tools	Online mapping tools that help to visualise potential lift-sharing arrangements to the user.

Operation



Once an urban lift-sharing scheme is implemented, it needs ongoing efforts to secure its success in the long run.

Key aspects at this stage

Monitoring and user feedback: It is crucial to monitor the effectiveness of a lift-sharing scheme. This should take into account quantitative indicators such as user numbers, but also include user feedback on the acceptance and quality of a scheme. The continuous development of the service by incorporating feedback from the users contributes to a high service quality and an innovative product that meets user demands.

Ongoing marketing and promotion are important tasks to increase user numbers. Events such as the lift-share day in the UK help to regularly raise awareness for the concept.

Long term strategy to finance service:

The development and implementation of a Lift-sharing Service have comparatively low cost. A critical aspect to consider is however the financing of the service in the long run, which usually requires ongoing funding from public bodies, a company or an organisation. New business models like sponsoring of lift-sharing schemes may become an interesting way of financing in the future.

Integration in institutional structures:

The character of lift-sharing as Innovative Concept in transport often does not match traditional institutional structures. Its "in between" position, being neither individual transport nor conventional public transport, does not fit responsibilities and mentalities in public authorities and many companies. Often it is difficult to obtain public funding for a lift-sharing scheme. Lobbying for a better integration of urban lift-sharing in institutional and funding structures is therefore a crucial task in the long run.

National lift-share day

In the UK, the national lift-share day is a promotional event to raise awareness for Lift-sharing Services. More people registered a lift-share journey during June 2006 than in any month previously and this is largely a result of National Lift-share Day, which takes place each year on June 14.

The 2006 event was targeted at working towards increasing the number of lift-sharers in the UK by 20%. If the national average car occupancy can be raised from 1.6 to 2 people, the UK's CO₂ emissions from cars would experience a 20% reduction, helping the UK to achieve the 2012 target set out in the Kyoto Protocol. The slogan of the 2006 lift-share day was "Make Car Occupancy 2 and reduce CO₂".



Picture: liftshare.com

Further information & contacts

Further documents and guidance

Department for Transport (DfT), UK

Website with interesting documents on lift-sharing.

Note the difference in UK terminology: car sharing (UK) = lift-sharing or car pooling (continental Europe).

www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_susttravel/documents/divisionhomepage/035125.hcsp (English)

EU project ICARO

A research and demonstration programme on car pooling (1999).

www.boku.ac.at/verkehr/icaro.htm (English)

NICHES - further documents with more details

Reports on the state of the art, analysis of success factors and barriers for implementation, transferability potential and integrated strategies are available on the NICHES websites (English):

www.niches-transport.org

www.osmose-os.org

Further information

Selected lift-sharing schemes in Europe

liftshare.com, UK

www.liftshare.com (English)

Pendlernetz, Germany

(North-Rhine Westphalia, Rhein-Main, Stuttgart)

www.pendlernetz.de (German)

Information on Stuttgart scheme within

CIVITAS (EC initiative on cleaner and better transport in cities)

www.civitas-initiative.org/measure_sheet.phtml?lan=en&id=282 (English)

Covoituval, France

www.covoituval.org (French)

Taxistop, Belgium

www.taxistop.be/carpool (French & Dutch)

Compano, Austria

www.carpooling.at (German)

VCC Oost Carpoolen, The Netherlands

www.vccoost.nl (Dutch)

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The mission of NICHES is:

to stimulate a wide debate on innovative urban transport and mobility between relevant stakeholders from different sectors and disciplines across Europe.

NICHES promotes the most promising new concepts, initiatives and projects, to move them from their current 'niche' position to a 'mainstream' urban transport policy application.

NICHES team

The NICHES consortium is composed of a variety of experts in the field of urban transport, ensuring the knowledge of the academic sector (Warsaw University of Technology), the experience of cities (Stockholm), the expertise of consultants (Rupprecht Consult, PTV Planung Transport Verkehr AG) and the multiplier effect of the networks (POLIS, EUROCITIES, CEMR).



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Cover picture: liftshare.com

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