

Getting people on board!

Using active mobility consultancy
to promote public transport use in rural areas







Growing challenges

The EU-funded SmartMove project is working to advance innovative marketing and mobility solutions in eight rural and peripheral European regions. Through tailor-made strategies, it aims to provide information and encourage people to use public transport in their region.

Sparsely populated rural areas in Europe are facing tremendous social changes due to shrinking and ageing populations. Because of the scattered settlement structure in these areas, the public transport network density is low and service frequency is often poor. The problems are exacerbated by increasing private car use, which, in a vicious circle, leads to further reductions in services.

Even where an attractive public transport offer exists, it is often perceived negatively. However, simple tools such as direct marketing and minor adjustments to scheduling can help change people's perceptions. Direct marketing techniques have already been shown to increase passenger numbers by as much as 10 to 15 percent. Greater demand leads to higher revenues, making it possible to improve the system and attract even more passengers, turning the vicious circle into a positive loop.



Innovative solutions

SmartMove promotes the use of public transport via so-called active mobility consultancy (AMC) campaigns. The goal is to shift journeys currently undertaken by car to other, more sustainable means of transport. Better personal health as a result of walking and cycling; less car traffic; improved road safety; less noise; more efficient energy use; and climate protection: the benefits are clear!

In this type of direct marketing campaign, current and potential passengers are provided with customised information via various communication channels. However, AMC campaigns do more than merely provide information: interaction with citizens is ensured through events, personal consultancy and on-site assistance.

Subjective barriers to using public transport can be effectively overcome by employing this methodology. Citizens can be directly involved in practical and inspiring ways, such as passenger training programmes and guided cycle trips to the nearest bus stop. What's more, AMC campaigns are an excellent tool for collecting feedback from potential and existing passengers so that the public transport offer can be made even more attractive.



AMC building blocks

Public transport feeder systems

The AMC campaigns carried out during the SmartMove project focus on public transport feeder systems — that is, the various ways in which passengers can get to the nearest bus or train stop.

Particularly in rural areas, where the density of main-line bus and train stops is low, accessibility is often a significant barrier to the use of public transport. Indeed, walking some distance along a busy country road to the nearest bus stop may not be an attractive option compared to getting into a car parked right outside your house. Especially if it's raining...

Many European rural regions and transport providers have already recognised the challenge, and, as shown below, SmartMove has identified a number of innovative and attractive ways in which they have attempted to overcome the access barrier.

Public transport modes	Non-motorised individual modes	Motorised individual modes
● Demand-responsive buses, minibuses, taxis or private cars ● Flexible transit schemes such as route deviation services¹ and shared taxis ● Fixed-route transport systems	● Bike rental services ● Bike and ride ● Bicycles transported on public transport vehicles ● Walking to public transport stops	● Park and ride ● Kiss and ride² ● Car sharing ● Car pooling

¹ Vehicles on route deviation services operate according to a regular schedule along a well-defined route, with or without marked bus stops, and deviate, in response to requests, within a zone surrounding the route.

² The term refers to dropping someone off by private vehicle at a bus or train station.

Active measures

Integral to the SmartMove AMC campaigns are the so-called active measures, some examples of which are presented below.

Interactive and participative measures typically focus on a particular mode of transport and serve three main aims:

- to improve knowledge about rural public transport services and attract new passengers;
- to collect feedback from local residents through an interactive process in order to be able to adjust public transport services to their needs; and
- to raise awareness about other ongoing information campaigns in the area.

Non-motorised measures	Public transport modes	General measures	Measures focusing on older people ³
● Guided walk to the nearest bus stop ● Guided bicycle tours ● Walking for health ● Trying out electric bicycles	● Events to promote flexible public transport ● Opportunities to try out public transport ● Passenger training ● Training for elderly people on public transport use ● Provision of tailored public transport information using existing electronic tools	● Citizens audits ● Workshops with citizens ● Focus groups involving citizens ● Use of social media and smartphone apps ● Travel games for active mobility ● Information packs for new residents	● Mobility guidebooks ● Personal mobility assistants ● Mobility assistants at major transport interchanges ● Mobility checks (critical analysis of routes used)

³ Further examples related to older people's mobility can be found in the case study collection on the AENEAS website at www.aeneas-project.eu



Individual information campaigns

Active mobility consultancy campaigns are based on the concept of dialogue marketing. Personal contacts are established with members of a selected target group, who are encouraged to make more use of public transport rather than relying on a car for every trip.

Dialogue marketing involves multiple steps and intensive, demand-driven communication with current and potential public transport passengers. In particular, it aims to remove existing information deficits by demonstrating available alternative travel options. The main steps in dialogue marketing, as used in the SmartMove AMC campaigns, are outlined below.

The preparation phase:

- Definition of the geographic area covered by the campaign, the main public transport lines and their feeder systems.
- Agreement on active measures and selection of the target group (e.g. all inhabitants or only elderly people, students, or people who have recently moved to the area).
- Establishment of contacts with the provincial and local government, public transport associations, public transport operators and mobility managers, who can support the campaign by providing information materials, supplying residents' contact details or sending information to individual recipients.

The general contact phase:

- Distribution of a letter explaining the main objectives of the campaign. Recipients indicate their willingness to participate in the campaign by sending back their telephone number on the enclosed postcard.



The segmentation phase:

- Contacting of target individuals by telephone.
- Segmentation of target individuals into four groups, based on the information received by mail and telephone.
- Follow-up action appropriate to each group (see below).

	Respondents		Actions
1	People with no interest in the campaign.		These people will be excluded from any future steps.
2	People who currently use public transport and have no further need for information.		Members of this group receive a thank-you present and a letter of support to encourage them to continue using public transport.
3	People who currently use public transport and who require further information.		These people will be included in future steps in the campaign. They also receive a thank-you present and a letter of support.
4	People who do not currently use public transport and who require further information.		These people will be involved in future steps in the campaign.





The individual contact phase:

- Distribution of a printed order form to those people who requested individual information (e.g. individualised timetables, individualised travel plans, comparative calculations for trips using public transport and car).
- Distribution of thank-you presents to those already using public transport.

The delivery phase:

- Personal distribution of requested information packs, with face-to-face discussions.

The consultancy phase (optional):

- Personal home visits by a professional mobility manager, which provide an opportunity to discuss ways to improve people's daily mobility.

Evaluation

It is important to evaluate each AMC campaign in order to quantify the level of success achieved and the positive environmental impact of implemented measures. The evaluation of an AMC campaign typically comprises a process-oriented approach and an impact-oriented approach.

Process-oriented evaluation involves assessing indicators related to the performance of the AMC campaign itself. Examples include the number of people contacted, the response rate, and the amount of information requested.

In impact evaluation, the successes achieved by the campaigns are quantified. Examples of indicators include changes in travel behaviour, the amount of energy saved, the quantity of greenhouse gas emissions avoided, or the reduction in the number of car trips. Impact evaluation is based on an analysis of changes in individual mobility behaviour. Data are collected via surveys, ticket sales and passenger counts both before and after the AMC campaign.

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Engineering, Planning and Consulting

Bureau (ISUP, Germany) — support to Oberlausitz-Niederschlesien and Wittenberg

Rupprecht Consult (Germany) — training programmes

Regional Environmental Center

(Hungary) — dissemination and networking

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