

# Transport Organisation and Service Quality

## Summary of the UITP conference organised in Florence on 29 and 30 September 1999

*Faced with the mounting demands of users in respect of service quality, public transport networks are now grasping the need to devise and introduce Quality Approaches in order to provide satisfactory services. Such action is not easy since it affects every level of a company, from the operational and commercial sides through to human resources management. It also entails increased collaboration with other transport protagonists, particularly the local authorities, with a view to taking an integrated and multilateral approach to quality. Ultimately, it relies on having detailed knowledge of the market in order to meet the specific needs of each customer.*

Against this background, UITP in collaboration with ATAF (the Florence area's PT operator), staged a conference on transport organisation and service quality which took place in Florence on 29 and 30 September 1999. The conference provided an opportunity to discuss the role and responsibilities of operators and authorities as well as the expectations of customers within a Quality Approach. It also gave the parties involved a chance to express their views as well as allowing delegates to study present-day thoughts and ideas on quality and present the initial results from experiments in the field.



Hans Rat, UITP General Secretary

The goal of taking a Quality Approach in the public transport sphere is to increase customer satisfaction so that, on the one hand, customer loyalty is developed and, on the other hand, new customers are won over. In his introductory paper, Mr Philippe Segretain defined

quality as a set of concepts, systems and tools aimed at mobilising the whole company in the cause of customer satisfaction at optimal cost in order to reinforce or create sustainable mobility. The Florence conference demonstrated that, in order to achieve this goal, a number of parallel actions need to be taken at the institutional, operational and commercial levels.

At the institutional level, it is a matter of introducing strong partnerships on quality between the public transport organising authorities and operators. Such an approach will

allow a balance to be struck between the obligations of operators and those of the public authorities so that each partner can contribute to

reaching the level of quality demanded by citizens. Mr Rodney Dickinson outlined the approach adopted by the UK private operator, FirstGroup, which advocates the pooling of types of funding between operator and local authority. This approach has enabled public transport infrastructures and services to be expanded in over 20 cities. Another concrete example, presented by Mr William J. Tyson, involved the Manchester region, where a partnership on quality has been achieved that involves operators, the authorities in charge of road infrastructures, those responsible for planning, traffic police and transport organising authorities.

Another form of partnership involves the introduction of quality indicators in contractual relations between transport organising authorities and operators. In this instance, performance criteria that the operator must achieve are defined, as are the obligations facing local authorities. As a result, financial penalties or bonuses are applied depending on the results obtained. This is the case under the approach taken in Nantes, presented by Mr Camille Durand. In this French city, the operating contract establishes the targets to be achieved by the operator, Semitan, through a series of measurable indicators relating to operating quality, passenger comfort and ease of access to the network. Mr Marc Gorter indicated that a debate is underway in Germany at the federal level towards adopting a similar approach. In the Netherlands, the transport minister has decided to try an experiment by issuing a call for bids for the rights to operate bus networks in the Limburg and Zeeland regions. According to Mr Francis Cheung, this experiment will allow the effects of exposure to competition on the development of services and service quality to be determined more accurately.

Within a transport company, service improvements are achieved by obtaining contributions from all staff, who must be mobilised in the pursuit of quality. As service actors, it is essential for staff to be party to actions aimed at improving service and thus satisfy the customer. To this end, professional training and daily staff contacts with customers are important for ensuring quality service. The onus is on staff to become "customer-

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From left to right: M. Panettoni, Head of the Cabinet of the Minister of Transport, E. Mingardi, President of Federtrasporti, A. Frangioni, President of ATAF, H. Rat, UITP General Secretary, B. Vatteroni, General Director of ATAF and P. Segrétain, President of Transdev



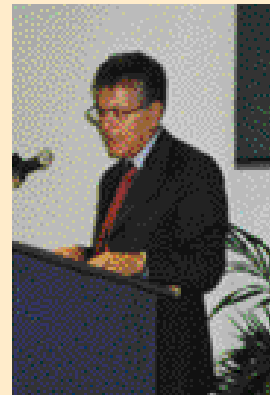
orientated". This entails responding to customer expectations while, at the same time, complying with official regulations and maintaining safety. At RATP, for instance, quality is perceived as a tool for transforming the company in order for it to provide better customer service, as outlined in his paper by Mr Maurice Jallageas.

Service certification in accordance with the ISO 9001 standard is one way of showing customers and the authorities that a transport company has implemented a quality system and is committed to upholding a number of uniform conditions laid down by the standard. This system is designed to produce better control on a permanent basis over the processes influencing service quality.

Quality also means action aimed at complementing the transport company's commercial strategy. Indeed, PT companies have moved on from being mere producers to being the suppliers of mobility and services geared to the customer. Therefore, one of the challenges is to respond to the increasingly personalised demands via a product as collective as public transport. To do so, Mr José Viegas took the view that operators have no choice other than to adapt and diversify their range of services in order to respond to market segmentation. From this perspective, quality and marketing are at one - a fact demonstrated during papers by Mrs Suzanne Østergaard and Mr Patrick Vautier. The goal is to not simply to attract new customers, but to develop loyalty among existing ones. This is the aim of relational marketing, as presented by Mr Gerhard Probst. Since 1987, the ATM company in Turin has conducted a series of surveys in order to evaluate satisfaction among existing and potential customers. According to Mr Gian Piero Belletti, these surveys have improved awareness of requirements on the demand side and, above all, determined the aims of improving service quality, as represented in the form of a "Citizen's Charter". The MARTA transport company in Atlanta has also adopted an approach based on measurements of customer satisfaction. Mr Don S. Carnell explained how MARTA uses an ongoing procedure based on customer surveys in order to evaluate how customers perceive the quality of the services on offer and, equally, to establish performance indexes. Thus, the customers are the ones who



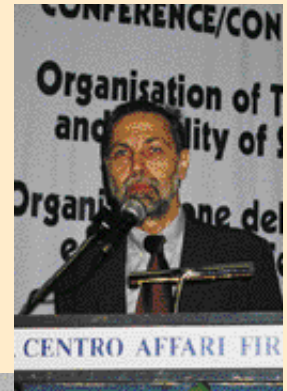
Enrico Mingardi, President of Federtrasporti



Marcello Panetoni, Head of the Cabinet of the Minister of Transport



Philippe Segrétain, President of Transdev



Aldo Frangioni, President of Azienda Trasporti Area Fiorentina, ATAF

determine the quality standards that the company has to comply with. A similar approach has been pursued by ATAC COTRAL (Rome) since 1998. According to Mr Roberto Cavalieri, the main lessons to be learned from this action are that negative perceptions of public transport have a powerful effect on overall satisfaction ratings over and above the actual quality of the service, and that interventions on the ground can improve the external image but do not resolve customer dissatisfaction, which is inextricably linked to service quality. Meanwhile, customers are forming associations to remind the authorities of their mounting expectations - a fact highlighted by Mr Graham James during the closing session of this conference, which was punctuated by a summarising paper from Mrs Kirsti Nøst.



D. Carnell

**UITP would like to thank ATAF and Federtrasporti for their precious collaboration for the preparation of this conference.**



Translated from original French to UITP1999