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Car-sharing and Public Transport: Together for a comprehensive mobility

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First of all, I would like to thank the organiser (POLIS & ATC Bologna) for inviting UITP to take part at this conference.

Now, let me turn back the clock to overview the widespread changes, which have occurred in the mobility market the last decades:

- The organisation of transport in general, and public transport in particular, has fundamentally changed. The public transport sector has developed itself to answer to regular daily journeys like home – work, home – school. Yet, the urban rhythms have sped up and most cities are now “open” 24 hours on 24, to answer the demand of the city users. They want to access urban services when and where they want. For example, part-time jobs have increased in the Netherlands, to occupy now more than 35% of the working population.

In Germany, when Volkswagen established, in 1993, the week of 28 hours, with 150 different time organisations, the Public Transport Company of the city lost 50 % of its season-ticket holders. It hadn't anticipated the impact of this decision on the use of public transport, not anymore concentrated at peak hours but completely spread during the day. A permanent communication structure has then been set up between the different actors (Volkswagen, the city of Volksburg, the PT company, the schools, the main services and the citizens) to manage the use of the urban space.

- At the same time, there has been a considerable qualitative and quantitative change in the demand for mobility during the last ten years. Today every one wants as good or greater mobility. In the region Ile-de-France, the average individual mobility has increased by 11% between 1991 and 1998 (average number of daily journeys per person). We all need to be more flexible about the distances travelled to our work or place of employment, to schools and education, and other ‘essential’ journeys such as to hospitals and shopping centres or to other leisure and cultural activities. In France, the part of the leisure transport in the global mobility has increased from 33% in 1981 to more than 40% in 1994.

The needs for transport – or mobility – are thus more frequent and varied in time and in destinations.

Therefore we now need to plan public transport networks to respond to those new demands in terms of mobility, in order to provide a ‘customer-orientated service’, which is a relatively new concept.

The question is, how can we reconcile these changes with the fact that we have reached the point of saturation in terms of traffic congestion in many urban centres with less and less possibilities to build more roads?

It means that we need to broaden our attitude to what we offer to come into line with the new philosophy on mobility. Public transport operators, in particular, must develop a service that truly responds to the customers’ needs, and really try to understand what these needs are.

In general terms, these customers’ needs could be stated as:

- as short a trip time as possible;
- a high frequency of service;
- clear and reliable information;
- a comfortable ride;
- a clean and nice and, shall we say, modern environment to travel in, and;
- of course, last but not least, an acceptable level of security.

In the context of fulfilling these customers’ needs, public and private, or individual, transport should not always been seen as competitors, but should rather complement each other and act as partners.

The market has developed in such a way that citizens expect 'comprehensive mobility'. The private car to be has been the major provider of this up to now. But, today, we have the opportunity to change this situation, particularly if public transport adapts to a demand responsive market and provides flexible solutions.

The fact is that, in the future, neither the private car nor public transport alone will be capable of satisfying all needs for travelling from one place to another, in a sustainable way.

There is a slogan I particularly like, it's "When you want a glass of milk, do you buy the cow ? When you want to drive, why buying the car ?" It is the slogan of the Denzeldrive car-sharing agency. I think it reflects the point of the discussion of today. If we want to create a comprehensive mobility offer, which includes the private car as part of it but not all of it, we have to avoid the purchase of the car, maybe not of the first one of the family but at least the second and the third ones. Can you imagine the saving of space if only half of the European families would drop their second cars ? Yet, once people have bought their car, it's too late, they will use it because it appears as "the easiest way of travelling."

Therefore, we need to create a flexible and user-friendly mobility system. It's a question of showing how easy it is to live without owning a private car, but having one at ones' disposal if necessary.

For example, the concept of 'Zurimobil' in Zurich has proven to be a very successful one. Zurimobil, as you are probably aware, combines light rail, bus, train and the car. This product is jointly offered between several partners including the local public transport operator and Europcar, the car rental company. This means that it no longer becomes necessary to own a car. It in turn makes users more aware of modal choice. It is not by chance that a resident of Zurich now uses Public Transport almost three times as often as in other cities of a comparable size. Zurimobil was awarded by UITP in our 1999 Congress in Toronto for their innovative approach.

This brings me to the question of what is the role of the public transport operator in car-sharing schemes such as the ones described here today? It is up to the public transport operator to find ways :

- to integrate the mobility ‘menu’,
- and therefore to help the customer - or user - to find his way around in an easy and stress free manner.

It can only do so by combining individual transport, with public transport, car sharing, car leasing and taxi. Yet, it isn't his role to provide car-sharing services, which remains a private service.

So in order to be effective in the market place today, operators need to position themselves as a competent and general contractor for mobility. They should build co-operations between actors that were previously not involved with the market. Each partner brings a particular service or speciality to the concept and the operator can therefore sell a mix of different types of mobility and, in addition, is also the best competent source of mobility advice.

I don't just mean better interoperability – we really need to provide a combined transport offer. This includes, car-sharing, car leasing, bicycles as wide an offer as possible of public transport and taxis. If we make it easy for the customer, people are ready to change their habits to include the full choice available.

So, in short, for car-sharing schemes truly to meet customers' needs, public transport companies must be encouraged to integrate these into the range of services they offer. They must do so in close co-operation with existing car-sharing, leasing and rental companies. The latter is particularly important to avoid any competition between the public transport and car rental sectors and to ensure that each brings its core competencies into the partnership. In this context, RATP, Paris public transport operator, has recently signed an agreement with AVIS the car rental company. It will allow RATP's loyal customers to benefit from special conditions when renting a car.

Widening the range of mobility services also has an important impact on the perception of the operator within a community. The operator moves away from its old image of an inefficient public service provider to being a dynamic and modern source of mobility solutions.

The main economic impact that car-sharing can have on operators, if it is properly set up, is to increase the fare revenue. The tendency of the user will be to use public transport more frequently as it occurs to be cheaper than the car. In Bremen (as it was just presented by Michael Glotz-Richter), since the implementation of the combined season ticket PT – car-sharing (in June 1998), the average number of km in public transport done by the car-sharing member has increased by almost 6%. Now, 78% of the subscribers use an annual ticket in combination with car sharing. Only 54% of those subscribers had an annual ticket before.

At a national scale, a German study has estimated, in case of an optimal use of car-sharing in Germany (2,45 millions current drivers as potential users), a diminution of 1,2 million cars, a reduction of the kilometres driven by car of around 7 milliards per year and an increase of the public transport kilometres of almost 4 milliards.

In other words, car-sharing schemes reduce car ownership and therefore stimulate a rational choice of transport modes. Car-sharing will reinforce the current mobility integration between the different public transport modes. It's one link more in the chain to provide a seamless travel at any time the user requires it.

Thank you for your attention.