Increasing peoples' awareness and use of public transport through active mobility consultancy with focus on feeder systems

SmartMove

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. SmartMove promotes the use of public transport via active mobility consultancy (AMC) campaigns. 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. Eight rural and peripheral regions in Europe prepare, implement and evaluate a local “active mobility consultancy” campaign. The goal is to shift journeys currently undertaken by car to other, more sustainable means of transport. This will lead to a substantial decrease of greenhouse gas emissions caused by road traffic.

Results

The SmartMove project successfully encouraged a significant number of people to shift, or to feel motivated to shift, from car use to public transport use, resulting in both energy savings and CO₂ reductions. Experience from the eight SmartMove implementing regions shows a wide variety in the shares of participants who changed their travel behaviour as a result of the active mobility consultancy campaign. The results differ among the implementation areas, as the success of a campaign is dependent on various exogenous factors, such as the economic situation in the region and the quality of its existing public transport supply. A positive impact on the frequency of bus usage can be seen in all implementing regions, up to 25 percent of the participants declared to use the bus more often (with an average of 16% across all implementation areas). On the average, 36 percent of the campaign participants stated that they now feel motivated to use their car less often for daily mobility. However, a wide range in the proportion of motivated people clearly illustrates the influence of the exogenous factors mentioned above. Among those who changed their travel behaviour, an average shift in trips from car to public transport of 2.4 trips per person per week (of people who shifted) can be identified. If the results are combined, more than 110.000 car trips per year are being saved in total across all implementation areas, with savings in annual travel mileage of 1.6 Mio kilometres a year. This translates into a reduction in fuel consumption of 115.100 litres per year. Due to the savings in fuel consumption, total CO₂ emissions have been reduced by around 288 tonnes per year across all campaigns. Some participants were motivated to buy a public transport season ticket,
thus, for this particular group of participants, a long-term mobility behaviour change can be expected. In addition, a large majority of the target population (between 75 and 97 percent) confirmed that, having participated in the campaign, they now feel better informed about the public transport system in their region. About half of the participants on the average talked about the campaign at home or with other people. This means that they will contribute as multipliers, increasing the impact of the campaign in the future.

Lesson learned

The detailed preparation of the AMC campaign is a crucial issue. Prior to the AMC campaign the characteristics of the areas need to be analysed. A basic public transport supply with specific number of connections per day is necessary; otherwise people will not be attracted even with the provision of tailor-made information. The design of the first contact phase is important as people are to be convinced to participate. Thus, several possibilities of approaching people were developed considering the cultural framework conditions (initial information letter sent by surface mail or e-mail, knocking at the door or establishing phone contacts with potential participants). Stakeholders are a valuable support for the implementation of an AMC campaign. For example, public transport associations or operator can provide information material, which already exists, to be distributed among participants. Governmental staff at municipalities can help to approach inhabitants, e.g. by providing addresses lists. Local key players (e.g. interest groups or the non-governmental institutions can promote the campaign and thereby raise the awareness. Active measures are essential for supporting the campaign in terms of recruitment, but also to overcome access barriers for public transport use, e.g. pedelec try-outs show people the advantage of this mode of transport to reach the next public transport stop, mobility checks identify access barriers for a particular group of persons etc.

Partners and coordinator

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Contact

Institute for Transport Studies, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences
Website: http://www.boku.ac.at [12]
Peter-Jordan-St 82
Vienna
Austria

Contact point

Name: Oliver Roider
E-mail: smartmove@boku.ac.at

Budget

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In brief

Sector: Energy-efficient transport
Duration: 01/02/2014 to 31/07/2016
Contract number: IEE/12/970/S12.670555
Website: http://www.smartmove-project.eu/

Tags:
- mobility
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