

6. CONCLUSIONS

In their recent book, *Travel By Design: The Influence of Urban Form on Travel*, Marlon Boarnet and Randall Crane pose the rhetorical question: What about cars is bad? They provide the following answer: “The problem with cars is not that they are bad as such, but that car travel brings with it undesirable side effects for which the market does not provide compensation. These externalities include air quality problems, traffic congestion, and undesirable impacts on neighbourhood quality of life.”¹⁷⁶

In many European cities suffering from urban sprawl and the above mentioned problems the car as a transport means can not be the perfect solution; on the contrary it leads to a dead-end. Especially regarding that the urbanisation process will continue in the foreseeable future.¹⁷⁷ The development away from the current situation and towards the promotion of PT has to be supported in a multi-faceted way. PT authorities, operators and policy makers have to come to the common ground that PT is a chance to offer ways out of today’s worsening situation.

First of all, sound conditions for PT have to be provided within a clear framework, which gives on the one side enough security in terms of clear conditions, rules and responsibilities and on the other side enough leeway where a sound competitive market situation can evolve.

Unstable or missing regulatory framework conditions, unclear task assignments and missing leadership hinder entrepreneurial behaviour and the development of effective and efficient PT services. This unfavourable situation is about to change with the introduction of the new EU regulation on public passenger transport services which will lead to a growing market transparency regarding public service obligations and compensation.

A further step should be the integration of networks, timetables, tariffs and services, which reduces parallel efforts and connects several transport modes at interchanges. A high level of integration with “one-ticket-for-all” and co-ordinated time tables does not only lower costs for operators it also attracts new customers and keeps old ones.

As PT operators are often not compensated appropriately for heavy fare concessions and operational costs can often not be fully covered by revenues from tickets the focus should lay on innovative, reliable and suitable financing models as well as alternative sources of revenues. Besides setting up additional business models to create supplementary commercial revenues (e.g. through advertising) PT companies should use the means of value capture to increase their earnings. Another solution for reducing the impact on own investment funds is the cooperation within PPP or the use of IFI loans.

This additionally created revenue for PT can be used to develop the infrastructure and rolling stock in a way to offer the required service from the users’ side. But increasing of PT patronage could not only be gained solely through the increase of infrastructure and rolling stock quality. At first good knowledge about the PT market especially the mobility behaviours and needs of the customers is necessary. This is achieved by a thorough analysis and an on-going dialogue with PT users and ends in a corresponding planning of measures. As the number of captive users is continuously decreasing due to perpetual increasing motorisation rates the satisfaction and the

¹⁷⁶ *Travel By Design: The Influence of Urban Form on Travel*, Marlon Boarnet and Randall Crane, 2001

¹⁷⁷ The future of the world is urban, Deutsche Bank Research, 21.05.2007

management of PT customers is of utmost importance. Integrated marketing campaigns based on a market analysis promoting a good image of PT and emphasising its advantages are able to attract new customers.

Managing the perceptions of patrons, introducing service quality guarantees and personalised customer contact transforms simple “product-orientated” into fully-fledged real service providers. These measures must be accompanied with the establishment of a new urban mobility culture promoting PT. With education, training and awareness raising activities, both PT staff and users – captive and non-captive ones – have to be persuaded of the concept of PT as the only long-term solution.

The above described switch from a technical culture to a service culture is mirrored in the change from an administrative culture to a performance/management culture. External forces such as increasing competition and privatisation resulting in deregulation and labour conflicts are heavy burdens for PT companies which are answered by them with general restructuring movements including downsizing and outsourcing. But cutting costs by simply laying off staff reduces automatically the quality requested from the customers and demoralises the rest of the employees. Therefore the restructuring process needs to have a common strategy and guidelines taking into account staff demands and customer needs. A strong commitment and conviction to back the transformation has to be established on both the management and staff level.

If staff cuts are indispensable the quality of the provided services must not diminish and therefore quality of staff has to be kept on a high level. One possibility is the introduction of staff development programmes, which not only handles the quality issue; the company on the other side remains an attractive employer and is likely to close possible gaps between the organisation’s skill needs and the current capabilities of its workforce.

Finally the above mentioned issues of infrastructure and rolling stock have to correspond to the changed demands of the customers. Due to the lack of money operators cannot afford to simply discard old rolling stock and buy appealing new PT vehicles. Therefore upgrading and renewal should be performed in a smart way by meeting different customer needs simultaneously. While upgrading or buying new rolling stock higher accessibility should be taken into consideration with low floor compartments, visual displays and voice message delivery.

PT operators should use the wide coverage of everyday electronic devices (such as mobile phones and PDAs) and interchanges to inform their customers on disturbances and possible alternative routes. While renewing infrastructure the possibilities of dedicated lanes and signals giving priority to PT vehicles should be implemented. This will both raise the commercial speed and reduce the dead times, which in turn will lower emissions. All the presented measures will raise the travel comfort of PT users and promote PT as a sustainable and reliable mean of transport.

The annual European Mobility Week¹⁷⁸ is a good start, but there is still a long way to go as a recent survey shows that a majority of citizens believe that the use of less polluting vehicles and PT should be promoted, but one in five would refuse to use their car less in exchange for better PT.¹⁷⁹ More attractive, flexible, reliable, seamless, accessible and secure local and regional PT systems pave the way to more liveable, healthy and sustainable cities.

¹⁷⁸ www.mobilityweek.eu

¹⁷⁹ Attitudes on issues related to EU Transport Policy, Eurobarometer, 26.07.2007
http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl206b_en.pdf