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Sustainable shared mobility interconnected with public transport in European rural areas (developing the concept of 'smart rural transport areas' (SMARTA))

"Time to Rethink Rural Mobility"

First SMARTA Workshop
30-31 January 2019

Workshop report

Joint tender consortium's members

MemEx S.R.L (Lead partner)

The University Court of the University of Aberdeen

Vectos (South) Limited

Transport & Mobility Leuven NV

EUROPEAN INTEGRATED PROJECTS SRL

Contents

Overview

The **"Time to Rethink Rural Mobility"** Workshop was the first of a series of events organized by the SMARTA consortium and showcased innovative, tested solutions from European rural areas, as well as analysis of the elements that drive successful rural mobility initiatives, ranging from social aspects, policy, financing to ICT solutions. The SMARTA event took place at the European Commission, Albert Borschette Congress Center (CCAB), from Wednesday 30th to Thursday 31st, January 2019.

The scope of this event was to bring together mobility stakeholders to hear, discuss and provide their perspectives and recommendations on the current situation of rural mobility in Europe. It was also a platform for verifying, validating and consolidating the findings and analysis performed in the SMARTA project so far.

Objectives, expected results, methodology

The key objective of the 1st SMARTA workshop was to bring together stakeholders to hear, discuss and provide their perspectives and recommendations on the knowledge gathered, the results and the provisional recommendations arising from each task.

A secondary objective was to kick start the SMARTA Network dedicated to the involvement of relevant stakeholders. This event was the first opportunity to meet face to face part of the members of the SMARTA Network and to involve them in this first network action.

EIP – European Integrated Projects – managed the organization of the event and used a range of tools to promote and secure the participation of relevant actors in the field of rural mobility in Europe. All SMARTA partners contributed to the promotion effort and provided contacts and leads to ensure a mix of participants that fostered valuable exchanges, as well as a solid base for validation and verification of the SMARTA work so far.

The Save the Date announcement was published on the 21st of November, both on the SMARTA website[1] and the project Twitter account[2]. Several rounds of e-mails were sent to possible participants with the draft agenda, speakers and topics, ensuring a solid participation, both in numbers and in the quality of attendees. Communication continued until the start date of the event with promotion of the key speakers and main topics.

More than 200 invitations were sent out resulting in 72 participants at the workshop from the European Commission (DG MOVE, DG AGRI, DG REGIO), European Parliament, The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD), European Committee of the Regions (CoR), CPMR – Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, POLIS Network, ERTICO - ITS Europe / MaaS Alliance, service providers (Taxistop, Autodelen, Newbility, Mobility Carsharing), mobility agencies and regional agencies. The complete list of participants is available in **Annex 1 – Participants List**.

The workshop was designed to be open and interactive, so that value is gained from bringing together the wide range of experience available within the sector and followed multiple tracks of policy, practice, services and innovation, all within a framework that recognises that the central issues are the rural communities and the lives of the people who live there. It hosted a series of plenary sessions where the major aspects on rural mobility were presented and discussed and break-out sessions where the participants could go in-depth on the Workshop themes.

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[1] www.ruralsharedmobility.eu

[2] @SMARTAmobility

Agenda

30 January 2019 - Day 1 – Introduction in Sustainable shared mobility interconnected with public transport in European rural areas		
12:30 – 13:00	*Registration of the participants*	
13:00 – 14:45	Rural mobility in Europe – today's reality	**Chair:** Laurie Pickup, *Vectos*
13:00 – 13:20	The SMARTA approach	Giorgio Ambrosino, *MemEx*
13:20 – 13:30	The EC view on rural mobility	Måns Lindberg, *EC, DG MOVE*
13:30 – 13:50	How rural societies are changing?	Laurie Pickup, *Vectos*
13:50 – 14:05	The Smart Villages initiative - revitalising rural areas through social and digital innovation	Paul Soto, *ENRD*
14:05 – 14:20	Mobility solutions for rural areas facing demographic change – experience from the MAMBA project	Vizma Ļeonova, *MAMBA project*
14:20 – 14:45	The current state of play in the organization of rural mobility across Europe and selected third countries: a SMARTA perspective.	Mark Beecroft, *UNIABDN*
14:45 – 15:15	*Coffee Break*	
15:15 – 16:45	Break-out session 1: *Identifying structural problems of rural mobility*	
	4 round-table discussions based on two themes developed by SMARTA, building on the presentations in the plenary session: • Defining the "rural mobility problem" and who/what is most impacted by it • Whether/how changes at the framework level can make a significant difference	Interactive session facilitated by the SMARTA consortium
16:45 – 18:00	Wrap-up of the first day	Chair: Laurie Pickup, *Vectos*
16:45 – 17:15	Plenary feed-back from the round-table discussions	Rapporteurs from break-out session 1
17:15 – 18:00	Making positive change happen for rural mobility in Europe – the need for an integrated approach: Laurie Pickup (Vectos), Mark Beecroft (UNIABDN), Mans Lindberg (DG MOVE), Paul Soto (ENRD)	Chair: Lucia Cristea, *EIP*
18:00	*End of the day*	

31 January 2019 - Day 2 – Rural Mobility in Europe		
9:00 – 11:00	**Rural mobility in Europe – policies and emerging practice**	Chair: Brendan Finn, *MemEx*
9:00 – 9:40	Towards a more accessible and inclusive rural mobility: emerging initiatives across Europe:	7 X 5 min. presentations
	Towards 1.000 mobihubs in Flanders in 2025	Angelo Meuleman, *Taxistop*
	Improving Rural Mobility in The Cairngorms National Park, the INCLUSION pilot in Scotland (U.K.)	Pasquale Cancellara, *Polis Network*
	Compact Overview: Opportunities and Challenges of Autonomous Vehicles Serving Rural Regions	Arnd Bätzner, *Mobility CarSharing*
	Rumobil - Rural Mobility in European Regions	Andrea Burzacchini, *aMo*
	Tuscany Region and rural mobility	Antonella Pollazzi, *Tuscany Region*
	Carsharing in rural areas: it's all about combining forces!	Jeffrey Matthijs, *Autodelen.net*
	HiReach fieldwork activities in rural and remote areas	Cosimo Chiffi, *TRT*
9:40 – 10:40	What could be the vision and the elements of policy for mobility in rural areas in Europe? – panel discussion	Chair: Brendan Finn, *MemEx*
10:40– 11:00	Developing an Evaluation Framework that can give guidance and answers to policy-makers, authorities and practitioners	Dirk Engels, *Transport & Mobility Leuven*
11:00 – 11:20	*Coffee Break*	
11:20 – 11:40	An overview of SMARTA identified good practice in rural mobility	Richard Mounce, *UNIABDN*
11:40 – 12:30	Rural shared mobility: key solutions for rural mobility challenges	3 X 15 minutes presentations followed by discussion
	Creation of a mobility center in Wallonia	Christiane Chermanne, *SPW Wallonie*
	The Texelhopper	Florien Molendijk & Maarten de Keijzer, *Texelhopper*
	Volunteer-based Community Transport in Germany	Martin Schiefelbusch, *NVBW*
12:30 – 12:45	Funding and implementation challenges for good practice in rural mobility	Andrea Lorenzini, *MemEx*
12:45 – 13:00	Innovation and transferability opportunities for good practice in rural mobility	Tim Durant, *Vectos*
13:00 – 13:45	*Lunch Break*	

31 January 2019 - Day 2 – Rural Mobility in Europe		
13:45 – 15:00	Break-out session 2: How to improve rural mobility?	
	4 round-table discussions based on the two themes developed by SMARTA: • Good practice in rural mobility and promising, emerging solutions • Enablers and barriers for widespread deployment of rural shared mobility solutions	Interactive session facilitated by the SMARTA consortium
15.00 – 15.30	Wrap-up of the second day	Chair: Brendan Finn, *MemEx*
15.00 – 15.20	Plenary feed-back from the round-table discussions	Rapporteurs from break-out session 2
15.20 – 15.30	Wrap-up session and future steps in SMARTA	Brendan Finn, *MemEx*
15.30	End of the day/event	

All presentations and related workshop information is available on-line at www.ruralsharedmobility.eu/index.php/time-to-rethink-rural-mobility.

Day 1- Introduction in Sustainable shared mobility interconnected with public transport in European rural areas

A. Presentations - Rural mobility in Europe – today's reality

This section was chaired by Laurie Pickup, Vectos, and consisted of presentations that set-up the frame of rural mobility in Europe and beyond.

No.	Presenter	Presentation
1.	Giorgio Ambrosino *MemEx* **Project coordinator**	**The SMARTA approach** Introduced the SMARTA approach towards a new vision of rural mobility in relation to the different aspects that shape its boundaries: framework (institutional, regulatory, financial), organization and key responsibilities on rural transport, integration of rural areas in wider areas (e.g. metropolitan areas), shared mobility services and related policies (at national and regional level), good practices for improving rural accessibility.
2.	Måns Lindberg *European Commission – DG MOVE*	**EC view on rural mobility** After a brief introduction on the main field of action of the EC Unit B4 Sustainable & Intelligent Transport, the presentation explained the recent transportation challenges and the approach of the European Commission for trying to tackle them. Moreover, the presentation introduced the EC key actions focused on rural contexts and highlighted the recent EC efforts for improving the mobility experience of rural population and promoting multimodal travel information services and last mile solutions integrated with Public Transport.
3.	Laurie Pickup *Vectos*	**How rural societies are changing?** The presentation was a general scene setting for what will follow during the workshop. The presentation focused on a more dynamic pattern of change in rural areas across Europe over the last decades – the changing rural/urban continuum and the new trans-European dimension to rural development and accessibility issues. Finally, the presentation underlined the importance of addressing 'best fit' in addition to 'best practice' – something that requires a broader perspective to our work.
4.	Paul Soto *Senior Policy Expert of the ENRD Contact Point*	**The Smart Villages initiative - revitalising rural areas through social and digital innovation** The presentation, through a brief presentation of a number of inspiring smart initiatives that sprang across rural Europe in the latest few years, tried to introduce the concept of Smart Villages and to explain how smart villages are about people, communities, digital technologies/services, new opportunities and innovations. Recognizing that around Europe there is a lot happening in rural areas (e.g. RezoPouce and Sopotniki examples of community-level good practice rural mobility) and that mobility is a sort of horizontal aspect, the intervention finally highlights the intention of ENRD to put some more efforts for promoting an integrated approach to mobility.

No.	Presenter	Presentation
5.	Vizma Leonova *Road Transport Administration (Latvia)*	**Mobility solutions for rural areas facing demographic change – experience from the MAMBA project** MAMBA is about maximizing mobility and accessibility of services in rural regions. It is a project under the Interreg Baltic Sea Region. The MAMBA project aims to meet this challenge by promoting sustainable "people-to-service" and "service-to-people" mobility solutions in rural areas. In practice, MAMBA partners will collaborate to improve the integration of existing mobility structures with innovative mobility solutions like citizen buses, mobility as a service (MaaS) and ridesharing applications.
6.	Mark Beecroft *University of Aberdeen*	**The current state of play in the organization of rural mobility across Europe and selected third countries: a SMARTA perspective.** This presentation offered a perspective from the SMARTA project on the current state of play in the organization of rural mobility across Europe and selected third countries, explained the approach taken by the SMARTA project which is based on the preparation of a set of insight papers documenting the organization of rural mobility for each member state and selected third countries. And it also synthesised preliminary findings from the insight papers, highlighting commonalities, differences and key messages from the research.

B. Break-out session: Identifying structural problems of rural mobility

All registered participants were distributed to a group prior to the event. This was done to ensure that each group has a good territorial balance, a mixture of professionals (technicians, policy makers, etc.). The distribution was done for both days ensuring that participants were shuffled between the 2 break-out sessions.

The sessions were a platform to verify and validate assumptions and results of the work performed in SMARTA. The main strands followed in the first day of the event were related to 'the rural mobility problem' – how to define it, what are its causes, who and what is impacted by it and how can its effects be mitigated, possible solutions etc.

The breakout groups tended to have their own dynamic, the discussions were generally complementary with some difference in emphasis but not divergent in views.

i. Defining the "rural mobility problem" and who/what is most impacted by it

The first theme of the workshop focused on defining the rural mobility problem, identifying who is affected by it and working to understand if changes at the framework level can make a significant difference.

a) What are the primary problems regarding mobility in rural areas and how do they manifest themselves? What causes these problems?

Different issues covering transport provision were raised by the participants, such as: limited access and connectivity, longer distances, lack of public transport and/or alternatives to private cars and lack of financing for mobility schemes. The specific rural land-use patterns (urban sprawl, scattered regions, lack of territorial planning for rural areas) are an important factor that leads to a high degree of car dependency in rural populations, and together with the poor infrastructure and lack of public transport provision lead to limited accessibility and connectivity.

The resulting frame has many implications. In respect to socio-economic issues, aging population, isolation of inhabitants, lack of opportunities (jobs), high digital division (i.e. digital illiteracy), low densities and limited amenities or services are key problems that influence transport options for the community. Adding to this is the lack of awareness about or unwillingness to use public transport.

There are challenges for deploying mobility services in rural areas, such as: lack of solutions or lack of access to them in case they are offered, lack of knowledge about which solutions are feasible for rural areas, lack of alternative business models to start-up services.

What we see all around Europe is very low-density population and very distributed settlements, and small villages that are slowly disappearing.

The lack of accessibility translates into a lack of (physical) access to all kinds of services. These services are to be seen much broader than mobility services, and encompass public services like postal services, health services, but also services like shops, grocery, pharmacy, barber, pubs and others.

Local communities are often well-aware of the fact that the cost of rural services can be challenging. They are aware that a rural service will not be able to reach service levels of urban transport. Some people live in rural areas because they cannot afford to live in urban areas. Often, they rely on their private car because they do not have any alternatives: the public transport offer is low, unaffordable and with low level of service.

Based on these problems, the participants debated available options to shape positive change for rural communities. A particular issue discussed focused on keeping and attracting young people to rural areas. This can be achieved through new housing and commercial developments, which can:

- Help retain and attract residents or businesses,
- Draw on private sector investment,
- Help keep jobs local,
- Lead to the development of co-working spaces so people spend more time and money locally.

New developments also lead to new services and amenities, i.e. schools, health centres, reducing the residents' need to travel long distances. Several other alternative solutions were identified: improve broadband infrastructure to support remote work and reduce travel needs, provide business models with different investment options, i.e. public, private, voluntary, sponsors, etc., put value on social interaction and mental well-being therefor increasing the chances for financial support from other governmental departments.

b) Are there real differences across types of rural areas, regions, Member States (as suggested by SMARTA); is a typology needed to properly define and understand the situation?

There is a clear understanding of the differences between rural areas. These differences can be observed across different countries, regions and areas. In some locations, rural areas can be characterised by the presence of high-income people, while in other rural areas there could be a large presence of poor households. Mountainous regions are very different from coastal areas; for some areas it is the sheer remoteness itself which is the cause of the problem. In others there are topographical challenges, a need for conservation or seasonality issues, e.g. due to tourism.

This fragmentation is making it difficult for one model to work in all areas. What arises is the fact that when facing with rural mobility issues, the definition of rural typologies should be considered, but with caution:

Using a typology to describe different types of regions from a rural mobility perspective looks dangerous as each situation will still be different; the problems and causes of the 'rural mobility problem' can vary significantly between locations.

The starting point should be an analysis of the local situation and the needs of the potential local users, then actions should be undertaken on the basis of dialog with local users or communities. Also, there is the possibility to identify certain types of areas with the same characteristics related to *"broad"* aspects (for example, regulatory and financial frameworks) and specific aspects, linked to the peculiarities of each area.

There are also positive examples, most of which focus on reducing the personal need for travel by offering services within the community:

- Grocery shops coming closer to rural communities is a good example from Spain
- Multiservice centres (gym, pharmacy, library...) which bring services closer to people and cluster them together is a good model from Finland, as these centres are set up around the country and make profit for investors
- In areas where tourism is an important revenue stream for the local community there is a potential to utilise that revenue (e.g. from fare revenue) to fund transport schemes and services

c) Who/what is most impacted by weaknesses in rural mobility?

There are a lot of aspects that have been changing in the society, but in many rural areas people are living as they did two decades ago. Everybody living in rural areas is impacted, directly or indirectly. There are certainly some people that are more impacted, but all members of the community may find themselves in one of the below categories:

- The elderly
- The disabled
- Low income families / The unemployed
- Single parents
- Teenagers
- Immigrants
- Newcomers to the area and
- People who are confronted with a sudden crisis

The different kinds of services that disappear from rural areas are also victims of the current development of rural mobility. This is probably a consequence of too much car mobility for most people in the rural areas, as car mobility enables them to use services that are relatively far way. In rural areas, there is a vicious loop in respect to limited financial resources: unemployment leads to poverty, which leads to lack of transport offers, which then limits the possibility to find employment and travel to work.

Moreover, in fragmented communities where certain segments do not communicate with each other, the potential for sharing mobility is reduced.

d) To what extent does weakness in rural mobility inhibit other strategies for rural areas and regions?

The main elements which are inhibited by the lack of rural mobility are certainly the life and the (economic) development of local society and local communities. The availability of services and transport links is key in determining the attractiveness of an area.

This weakness has a great impact on sectorial planning and strategies, i.e. tourism, education and health. In several countries there is a lack of strategies addressing rural areas at national and regional level, except for agricultural development.

Strategies in other sectors (e.g. social and health services) often ignore the need for transport, which can limit their effectiveness if there is insufficient transport available. Businesses need to have transport options available in order to attract potential employees.

Money being taken out of the rural economy, limited local knowledge or cooperation (i.e. for business models or shared mobility solutions) and the fragmentation of planning responsibilities across different levels of government are issues to be tackled in order to support rural strategies.

What can be done? First of all, rural mobility issues have to be faced with a holistic and multidisciplinary approach – it is a problem that needs attention at different levels.

- Need for sustainable mobility planning at the rural level (the problem is now getting worse as there is pressure on the public money)
- Support for local authorities to help them identify business models, shared mobility solutions are needed
- We need to have Community-Based Coordinators/Advisers with expertise on business model development to bring all the different services together.

e) Is it agreed that rural mobility is a problem that merits a high level of priority by political and administrative layers across Europe?

Rural mobility is a problem that that does need a high level of priority by political and administrative layers across Europe, as the problem is growing, and it does not even appear to be on the agenda. There are several possible options for gaining a higher level of priority, such as:

- Engaging with surrounding urban authorities and creating links with Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP) leading to funding and policy integration, e.g. joined–up interventions to support urban – rural commuting connexions;
- Using "rural proofing[3]" mechanisms on relevant strategies such as city or regional sustainable mobility plans;
- Using a multi-sectorial approach in order to find specific solutions for rural areas.

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[3] Rural proofing of policies was a key point of the "Cork 20 Declaration" and it implies always looking at issues from a rural point of view.

ii. Whether/how changes at the framework level can make a significant difference

The second theme debated was on the existing framework for rural mobility and aimed at identifying the weak points, the causes of the current situation and how they can be mitigated from a policy stand point, as well as the type of intervention needed (whether it should be at EU level, national or local level).

a) Is it fair to state that specific Policy for Rural Mobility is lacking throughout Europe (in different states and regions and at EU level)?

Yes, a policy framework for rural mobility is lacking throughout Europe, and a framework is necessary. However, the framework shouldn't be a prison and should avoid silo thinking. The framework needs to leave room for experiments and learning by trial and error and avoid innovation inhibition. The framework should develop a large vision and purpose, which encloses rural transport, but is not necessarily limited to it. The framework vision could integrate inclusiveness, flexibility, interoperability, safety, institutions providing the services, territorial development. All these points need further elaboration in the framework. For interoperability this means for example enabling links between urban and rural transport, between community, commercial and public transport.

Another problem identified is the lack of recognition of the diversity across regions, leading to instruments not being relevant or effective in some areas.

There are several policies related to urban transport and mobility, but specific rural policies are missing or constitute only a small part in the broader metropolitan areas. Policymakers usually prefer to develop some "visual" and "fashion" measures (like putting some electric vehicles on urban roads) rather than having a broader approach and really trying to improve the accessibility of rural areas and the mobility experience of rural population.

Ideally, there should be policy framework changes at a high level in order to have a big impact, and in order to do this there is a need for these changes to be politically attractive, since politicians would need to be able to see the benefit for them to get involved.

b) Are the institutional, regulatory and financial frameworks sufficient for rural mobility?

Even though these frameworks are well developed they are not used efficiently or in their entirety. They tend to be more urban-focussed and prioritise big infrastructure projects and urban projects over rural transport. Lack of synergy between frameworks and a lack of cross-sectoral integration are key problems, though there is potential to improve these without big changes to the frameworks. E.g. Rural affairs often focus on Agriculture, but the Smart Villages initiative is changing this and DG AGRI has this remit.

There is a need to "deregulate" rural mobility and the need for more flexibility (also in relation to the financial framework). In this aspect, the fragmentation of agencies and responsibilities is part of the problem.

c) Are these things fundamental root causes, or can rural mobility be significantly improved within the existing frameworks?

The problem is mostly related to the behaviour of the existing institutional stakeholders. Usually the institutions do not collaborate and engage with each other: that is the real problem.

Urban projects get 100% funding - CIVITAS, but rural get less - LEADER 65%. This is because of the associated risk of investing in rural.

Legislative frameworks often inhibit innovation in rural mobility, whereas they should support local initiatives and empower local communities to make changes and find solutions. There should be a culture of openness and creativity, combined with better communication to enable the exchange of solutions and to build capacity at a local level. In addition, there needs to be a better understanding and education in terms of how the existing frameworks work.

d) If we consider that they are root causes, then what are the priorities for change at framework level?

- Dialogue between involved institutions (DG REGIO, DG MOVE, DG AGRI)
- The policies from these DGs should be rural proof
- Access to funding and support needs to be improved
- Government departments need to be involved at all times
- From an EU level the process should be more streamlined; a common policy is a must
- Using the current framework both urban and rural areas can be tackled, e.g. PT service tenders could be launched both for rural and urban areas
- At local level, there should be regulations that allow for private companies to come in and provide services.
- In terms of innovation (the administrative burden for innovations) the frame must be more enabling and supportive.

e) If we consider that they are not root causes, what stimulus is needed for the existing frameworks to deliver more effective rural mobility?

The existing institutions do not focus on rural transportation (or when they do, this does not represent effective and sustainable solutions for tackling rural mobility issues). In particular, the same institutions that are now providing the most successful solutions in urban areas are not doing the same for rural mobility.

How do we enable or attract private investors? Only by having good business cases - perhaps through a good project. Cost- benefit analysis should always be done. If we look at best practices, but there's no cost-benefit analysis then we don't know if it will continue to exist or not. The sustainability of the model should be looked at.

f) Does rural mobility require some type of structured intervention, or it is sufficient for Member States and Regions to continue to deal with it as they see fit?

There is the need of a new vision, for making a "big step" for improving rural mobility. This is the only approach that could lead to long-terms benefits of shared and sustainable transportation. Ideally, there should be policy framework changes at a high level in order to have a big impact, and in order to do this there is a need for these changes to be politically attractive since politicians would need to be able to see the benefit for them to get involved.

Rural mobility should be prioritised to enable initiatives to take place; this would give direction and provide motivation at national and local levels, with the implementation being handled at a national or sub-national level.

C. Panel discussion - Making positive change happen for rural mobility in Europe – the need for an integrated approach

Session chaired by Lucia Cristea, *EIP*, with the participation of Laurie Pickup, *Vectos*, Mark Beecroft, *UNIABDN*, Måns Lindberg, *DG MOVE* and Enrique Nieto, *ENRD*.

The panel discussion aimed to draw the main conclusions of the day, focusing on the most important issues to be addressed for an improved mobility in rural areas, starting from the following questions:

- Why is now the time to address the issues related to rural mobility?
- How should we keep the momentum of this interest?

There was a general agreement among panellists that the time to address rural mobility is now and the current momentum should be capitalised.

Rural mobility matters and it needs more attention as it is critical to the economic sustainability of rural areas. Rural areas have been overlooked for too much time and there is a need for community empowerment, developing local knowledge and establishing a vision together with a clear path. Over time rural areas have suffered transformations from a social perspective, becoming more isolated and there is a need to understand how transport can assist social inclusion.

Rural mobility matters! We need to find the solutions that work on the ground. And these must be sustainable solutions!

Rural areas throughout Europe are very diverse and we have to recognise these differences and analyse them. There is the need for a mix of interest, both top-down, by identifying and analysing problems, but also bottom-up, by finding suitable solutions adapted to the local context. There is a good momentum for rural development as both rural mobility and smart villages are on the agenda.

The panel concluded with an open question to all participants: Imagine you are the mayor of a small remote village: what should be the first measure to improve accessibility in your village?

Understanding the travel needs and the dynamics of the community was seen as the first step, followed by building capacity and knowledge by fostering peer collaboration. The capacity building together with connecting local knowledge to broader knowledge is considered particularly challenging in rural communities, as there is limited direct contact with EU level expertise.

Day 2 - Introduction in Sustainable shared mobility interconnected with public transport in European rural areas

A. Presentations - Rural mobility in Europe – policies and emerging practice

No.	Presenter	Presentation
1.	Angelo Meuleman *Taxistop*	**Towards 1.000 mobihubs in Flanders in 2025** Mobihubs is the physical component of mobility-as-a-service: A mobihub contains at least shared mobility, collective transport and bike facilities. Today there are already concrete mobihubs in rural, peri-urban and urban areas in Flanders. Angelo Meuleman explained his roadmap towards 1.000 mobihubs in Flanders in 2025.
2.	Pasquale Cancellara *POLIS Network*	**Improving Rural Mobility in The Cairngorms National Park, the INCLUSION pilot in Scotland (U.K.)** The main objective of INCLUSION project is to understand, assess and evaluate the accessibility and inclusiveness of transport solutions in European prioritised areas. The project is identifying gaps and needs in order to propose and experiment with a range of innovative and transferable solutions. Accessible and inclusive public transport for all and especially for vulnerable categories is key to ensure equity of transport and social inclusion.
3.	Arnd Bätzner *Mobility.ch*	**Compact Overview: Opportunities and Challenges of Autonomous Vehicles Serving Rural Regions**
4.	Andrea Burzacchini *aMo - Mobility Agency of the Province of Modena*	**Rumobil - Rural Mobility in European Regions** The project RUMOBIL aims to improve planning and coordination of Local Public Transport systems for better connections to national and European transport networks, especially in remote and sparsely populated rural regions, affected by demographic change. This goal has been sought through a series of different pilot actions in the eight different regions of the project's partners together with the monitoring and evaluation of such actions.
5.	Antonella Pollazzi *Tuscany Region*	**Tuscany Region and rural mobility** The presentation focused on policies of Tuscany Region supporting public mobility in rural areas
6.	Jeffrey Matthijs *Autodelen.net*	**Carsharing in rural areas: it's all about combining forces!** Three concrete innovative solutions and 10 concrete tips to bring carsharing to the next level in rural areas.
7.	Cosimo Chiffi *TRT*	**HiReach fieldwork activities in rural and remote areas** HiReach is a project that explores the theme of Equity and Inclusion of Transport. It is funded by the Horizon 2020 European Research Program. HiReach aims at eliminating "transport poverty" by triggering new mobility solutions designed to meet the needs of multiple target groups. It leverages information technologies and social innovations, "open source" tools and start-up development, to identify and exploit new business ideas suitable for social groups and geographical areas with reduced accessibility.

No.	Presenter	Presentation
8.	Dirk Engels *TML*	**Developing an Evaluation Framework that can give guidance and answers to policy-makers, authorities and practitioners** The basic elements for a solid and overall evaluation framework to understand the potentials and effects of innovative services to improve the rural mobility in Europe as a basis for clear guidelines to be used on different levels of the SMARTA project.
9.	Richard Mounce *University of Aberdeen*	**An overview of SMARTA identified good practice in rural mobility** An overview of the good practice in rural transport which has been identified so far in the SMARTA project and summarise the common themes which are emerging. Issues affecting the transferability potential of good practice from one place to another will also be discussed. Specific good practice cases will be used for illustrative purposes.
10.	Christiane Chermanne *SPW*	**HiReach fieldwork activities in rural and remote areas** Especially in rural areas, mobility remains a major issue. Isolated, elderly, students or « social » citizens are sometimes condemned to not being able to move because the public transport supply is insufficient. The local mobility centres are born from this: identifying the gaps on a supra-municipal basis, coordinating the requests coming from different publics, sending back to the public transport when it›s possible or towards the local operators (social taxis, voluntary drivers, carpooling, Central of the Less Mobile, FlexiTec, taxis etc.).
11.	Florien Molendijk & Maarten de Keijzer *Texelhopper*	**The Texelhopper** The ins and outs of the Texelhopper: a flexible shared transport service for the island Texel. The Texelhopper realised an unprecedented up to 37 % extra passengers between 2015 and 2017 and combines an average of 5 passenger trips per vehicle. And this in a rural area where there is usually only decline. What makes this service successful?
12.	Martin Schiefelbusch *nvbw*	**Volunteer-based Community Transport in Germany** The presentation introduces the main features of the community transport services in Germany through an overview of the case history, service models and types, main users and stakeholders involved, providing the general guidelines for the transferability of the concept.
13.	Andrea Lorenzini *MemEx*	**Funding and implementation challenges for good practice in rural mobility** Starting from the overview of Good Practices that has been carried out in 2018 by the SMARTA project, this presentation discusses the implementation challenges and barriers for European good practice in rural shared mobility from organisational, financial, operational, and long-term sustainability perspective.
14.	Tim Durant *Vectos*	**Innovation and transferability opportunities for good practice in rural mobility** SMARTA seeks to identify the innovations that have led to the success of the Good Practices, as well as providing channels for these to be transferred to the pilot sites and stimulate new ideas. This presentation addresses questions including: What exactly do we mean by innovation? What types of innovation can be identified from the Good Practices? And, how do we go about assessing the significance of these innovations in relation to improving rural accessibility?

B. Break-out sessions:

iii. Good practice in rural mobility and promising, emerging solutions

The first break-out session in the second day of the workshop focused on validating and verifying the SMARTA findings from the good practices collected and analysed so far. The discussions revolved around some of common aspects identified in the good practices, such as the prevalence of DRT solutions, the lack of examples where rail is considered an option, but also what is considered as innovative and how can we evaluate good practices in the first place.

a) Many of our good practices involve Demand Responsive Transport - is this the critical domain for rural shared mobility solutions?

DRT is one of the key solutions for rural areas and could be the primary supplementary mode after to the conventional PT services. It is a crucial domain for rural shared mobility services, as it has the potential for more cost efficient, faster and more attractive services but it is not the only one.

Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) is "today" "part of" the solution. "Today" and "part of" are crucial words here. We should not focus on a solution such as DRT, that seems very well fitted today, but we should create a framework that enables all kind of solutions to emerge, including those we don't know of yet today. We need to leave room for the creativity of open minds. To illustrate this, we can probably also keep the quote attributed to Henry Ford in mind: "If I'd asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses."

There tends to be an over emphasis on DRT, which can detract from other solutions, such as active travel, which has the advantages of being better for people's health and for the environment, as well as it being able to link effectively with public transport. Although DRT can act as a feeder to other services, the door-to-door nature of many DRT services can be critical for certain users such as elderly and disabled people. The level of demand was identified as being key for DRT to operate, i.e. if the demand is too low then it is too costly to run, whereas if it is too high then it is not possible to satisfy all the trip demands without compromising the level of service in some way; and the level of service is the key factor to whether it is successful or not.

b) What kinds of innovation can we discern in good practice cases and what enables/frustrates innovation?

In terms of innovation, technology should be an enabler rather than the determinant. Innovation is most likely to emerge from community and local initiatives. Innovation building blocks are in place (DRT, mobi hub, shared mobility, volunteers etc.) but we need to better bring this together as a vision for the rural communities: Find out which are the needs and expectations of the community, then seek investment, attract private operators, developers etc.

What enables innovation? Some of the discussed points below:

- If there is going to be an innovative variation in rural areas, this has to be accompanied by a local champion who is going to lead the group and to involve the local community. If there is no local champion, innovation is not going to happen.
- To foster the innovation, it is important to have good examples of something similar that is going well

- New transport solutions and schemes usually "must" have a business case and must be profitable, although this can sometimes slow down or stop the widespread diffusion of the innovative case

What frustrates innovation? Some of the discussed points below:

- There is a tendency for more and more to be put on to the volunteer sector and for them to be taken for granted.
- Lack of resources could be a barrier to implementation of innovative measures.
- One challenge to make innovations last is to find body to support ongoing operating costs.

c) We have found very little good practice in relation to rail - is there a role for rail in smart rural mobility?

The SMARTA overview of good practices found very little examples of rail practice. Rail is usually much more attractive to the user than other forms of public transport such as bus, plus it is more sustainable than the other means of transport. Station access and egress are key factors in the attractiveness of rail as a mode, but there is a tendency for these to be set up to serve car users. However, establishing links and interfaces between rail and other sectors is very difficult. One of the main problems when trying to integrate the rail services with the public transport was recognised in the fact that usually rail is not in the hand of the local municipalities, thus is not easy to coordinate timetables, etc.

Exploiting rail in rural areas is not always easy due to the low density of the population in those areas. However, rail has certainly its role to play in rural areas thanks to its structuring role. Providing bus lines and DRT will very probably contribute to improved rural mobility, but however these services can easily be abandoned or changed. Once a rail service is in place, it is much more difficult to abandon it. It is therefore a good way to fight against suburbanisation. It allows a more structured organisation of the territory. Thanks to new technologies, like autonomous vehicles, it will be easier for people to reach the rail services, even in rural areas. Good bicycle infrastructure could also ease the good exploitation of the rail infrastructure thanks to a more intensive use of bicycles as a first and last mile means of

transport. There is also potential for legacy use of rail infrastructure, e.g. reusing stations as mobility hubs to support active travel.

Some ideas resulting from the rail discussion:

- Rail can be an important part of rural mobility such as where part of a city commuting strategy.
- Keeping rail can increase economic growth and land values
- SUMPs need to be rural proofed since commuters to the city come from rural areas – those commuters need to have the services to commute sustainable to town.
- Disused rail lines can be converted into cycle highways connecting new housing / leisure

d) How can we most effectively evaluate good practice in rural mobility solutions?

The most important evaluation criteria are probably whether people are happy/satisfied with the level of mobility services available. Another interesting, more objective, also overarching evaluation criteria is "accessibility to services and people" that enable rural residents to have a normal life. In addition, one of the most important things to be considered is to evaluate the benefits on the basis of what were the intentions of the measures (establishing a sort of "learning progress"). Another important aspect is to capture the 'hidden' social benefits, e.g. to health or well-being. Rural mobility solutions are often more about meeting social needs rather than just providing transport. Indeed, it is the activity that the transport supports which is important, such as accessing a service. Transport solutions need to be sustainable, so if a rural mobility solution encourages behaviour change towards more sustainable mobility, this provides an added benefit. Social exclusion and isolation can be addressed through rural mobility solutions that facilitate physical meetings, but clearly there needs to be locations where these can happen.

Key aspects to be considered when evaluating good practices:

- Population density (that is particularly relevant for characterising the rural area typology)
- Ridership
- Travel times
- Frequency
- Readability of transport services

e) Would it be necessary to increase physical relationships among people in different ways in rural areas and create opportunities to help one another? People like helping one another if the framework encourages it

Yes, relationships are necessary and crucial for people to live a good life. But, on the other hand not everybody wants to be social all the time. Too much sociability can be felt as negative by certain people. It is important to restore the proximity between people, that in the latest years has been decreased.

There was a general consensus that it is important to at least maintain the current level of interrelation between rural populations.

iv. Enablers and barriers for widespread deployment of rural shared mobility solutions

The fourth and final theme was on the enablers and barriers for widespread deployment of rural shared mobility solutions and the discussions followed the questions below:

a) What are the key funding and implementation challenges for rural shared mobility solutions?

The difficulty to find resources for funding transport services and, consequently, to guarantee the funding on the long-term. This challenge has multiple causes ranging from national level constraints (as governments have sectorial budgets that rarely permit shifts of funds between sectors or all together lack programmes designed with rural communities in mind) to legislative constrains regarding a minimum provision of service for remote residents, or to low demands which generate the need for subsidies, and to a limited ability to understand all the potential funding sources.

Other issues connected to the limited resources are the complexity of the procurement process (which can generate constrains for the scale-up of successful bottom up initiatives) and the complexity of the funding schemes (which requires a lot of administrative energy to ensure that bottom-up ideas get funded).

A common challenge for both funding and implementation is the need to establish cooperation between local municipalities and communities, as there might be a potential lack of skills in rural communities or the need to interact with peers and ensure good exchange of information. Compared to urban areas, where transport professionals have many opportunities to interact with peers at European or national level and get access to new ideas and solutions, for rural areas such possibilities are not available.

Directly connected to limited skills is an implementation challenge, namely the ability to demonstrate the social benefits when applying for funding. A second barrier is the conservatism during the implementation phase, which is not always overcome successfully.

b) What are the barriers and success factors in achieving integration with public transport for rural shared mobility services?

Several barriers in achieving integration of rural shared mobility services with public transport were identified, all of which are related to difficult cooperation between public transport and shared mobility operators. This can be determined by the public transport operator's reluctance to lose clients in favour of DRT services, or limited information on both parts and the unwillingness to exchange it.

The success factors identified gravitate around the need for improved cooperation between different operators, such as the ability to look across boundaries and catchment areas, as well as the willingness to exchange information and make compromises. An additional success factor is ensuring easy access and providing services that respond to the needs of the communities, which can be achieved through good coordination and planning concerning timetables and fares.

Some ideas resulting from discussing success factors:

- The potential for rural services to receive subsidy from the main urban centre, through inter-municipality cooperation, as all parties benefit from commuter patterns;
- When rural settlements are being developed (a garden village) investments into transport services should be considered. Such an example can be the comprisal of a mobility and work hub in the design of new developments.

c) ICT appears to play a key enabling role for smart rural mobility - what are its benefits and limitations?

Information Communication Technology (ICT) can play a key enabling role for smart rural mobility, either by supporting a more efficient physical mobility (by improving service level, facilitating access), or by providing virtual mobility, enabling people to work from home or local hub and keeping the income generation in the area. However, ICT is mainly viewed as an enabler which cannot replace a good service and should be used when it brings concrete improvements.

The main limitation to ICT is the potential digital divide it could cause. Compared to urban areas, rural areas are characterized by limited coverage of internet provision or lack thereof in case of remote areas and limited or non-existent digital skills among the residents.

d) What are the barriers and success factors to transferability of rural shared mobility solutions?

The transferability of rural shared mobility solutions is limited by the sheer diversity of rural communities and their mobility needs. Hence, it was agreed that it is better to think about 'best fit' rather than a literal transfer of solutions, and to focus on adapting solutions to different local contexts. The participants agreed that the best approach is to start small with bespoke solutions, which could potentially be scaled up later.

e) Are more comprehensive packages of measures required to ensure that the mobility needs of an area are truly met?

Yes, and these more comprehensive and integrated packages of measures are required to ensure that the mobility needs of an area are truly met. This can be achieved by providing extra means supporting rural mobility and a framework for improving and/or integrating it with other (mobility) services. There could be EU or national support to set up regional SUMPs encompassing the main urban centre and rural catchment area. Alternatively, the state could intervene better either by tax measures or regulations to encourage private sector investment and new developments or by providing subsidies to help set up DRT services. However, the package should be flexible, ensuring adaptability to people's needs or ideas and to local context.

Furthermore, the commitment of the local administration to improve the mobility experience together with the engagement of the local community was commonly recognised as an important condition for ensuring the success of a service.

C. Panel discussion - What could be the vision and the elements of policy for mobility in rural areas in Europe?

Session chaired by Brendan Finn, *MemEx*, with the participation of Laurie Pickup, *Vectos*, Paul Beeckmans, *EP*, Andrea Burzacchini, *aMo*, Martin Schiefelbush, *NVBW*.

What could be the vision and the elements of policy for mobility in rural areas in Europe?

a) Is policy at least a contributory factor to mobility outcomes in rural areas? Should availability of mobility be adopted as a principle for rural areas?

The group opened the discussion with some considerations on mobility as a whole. There was a consensus that mobility is one of the biggest freedoms of everyone. Mobility should be viewed as a basic need, possibly even as a right, because mobility can guarantee access to services, jobs, activities. It was also discussed that everyone, everywhere, should have the possibility of *"mobility without a car"*. These should be among the principles of mobility in rural areas (and urban as well). It was also raised that problems of rural mobility have not been considered by the national and European authorities for years, and this contributed to the diffusion of rural poverty. We need to do something to let people reduce their car dependency, especially in rural environments. It was agreed that there must be a principle for rural mobility, for setting the direction for the future.

b) Would it be sufficient to just define a required minimum level of mobility? If so, would regions and municipalities then find suitable solution by themselves? Or, is something more prescriptive needed?

It is not easy to find an answer to this question cause prescriptions usually can contrast the level of freedom of the individual actors. Considering that several differences can be observed across different countries, regions and areas in relation to rural environment, a certain level of freedom should be left

at the local stakeholders to better meet the needs of the target users. Anyway, it is important that policies force agencies and decision-makers to think about rural mobility, for example defining detailed standards of accessibility. It was generally agreed that the flexibility in policies and frameworks is important and that it is not desirable to be very prescriptive in rural areas (because of their differences); at the same time, there was a consensus that some prescriptions are probably needed, for example in terms of goals and objectives to be achieved and on rural mobility principles, leaving each area to then work out the details and solutions.

c) If there is a new policy context, what are the most important elements that should be included in the policy?

The discussion opened with a focus on the main aspects that a new policy context should address. First of all, it was raised that the key aspects are the integration, which includes intermodality between different means of transport and the interoperability of different systems, and the inclusion of all vulnerable users. Secondly, it was stated that for promoting public transportation in rural areas, the main aspects should be 1) the provision of affordable and accessible services and 2) have a transport offer that is attractive; public transport in rural areas has a bad reputation since years in so many countries, thus PT companies should try to be creative.

Secondly, the discussion was concerned with the identification of the issue of (only few) past policies. It was recognised that talking about integration between services and collaboration between different stakeholders could be easy, rather effectively implement integrated services and shared strategies is usually difficult (people are unwilling to share knowledge, practices and strategies with other sectors).

It was also suggested that people appreciate the possibility of having more transport alternatives, and while we see such a various offer in urban areas, in rural the transport offer is usually poor.

Finally, there was a consensus that it is of primary importance to start with a vision for rural environment, to discuss the future of rural population and of the functions of rural areas. If the vision can be agreed, it can drive the policy, which in turn would guide plans, programs and resource allocation.

d) Do we need the European level initiative on this? For example, if there is a directive to make "comprehensive" mobility plans? To stimulate the member states?

If from one side it is important to set up some "framework" project, with the aim of developing guidelines for rural mobility, from the other it is necessary to ensure the continuing involvement of local stakeholders, because it is at the local level that solutions are implemented. It should be a sort of combination between top-down and bottom-up approach. There was a consensus that European initiatives since 1998 brought tangible and great positive impacts on cities, thus it is desirable that such EU initiatives could bring real benefits for rural mobility. It was also raised that the "invention" of SUMPs came out around 15 years ago, and now the European Commission aims to focus the attention also to rural areas; the EC has already thought about the SRUMPs (Sustainable Rural-Urban Mobility Plans), a sort of integrated plan which includes urban and rural areas. In addition to the points already raised about mobility and the needs of people and communities, these plans should aim to reduce the CO_2 emissions, the traffic fatalities and to improve sustainable mobility. It is important to start the co-financing project for improving rural mobility. If some initiative is going to be done at European level, we firstly need a comprehensive and productive dialogue between high-level stakeholders (EU members, policymaker, etc.), the Regions, the Provinces, and the current project addressing rural mobility, together with strong communication and engagement with rural communities.

Finally, it was agreed that mobility should be viewed as a right because people should be able to move in accordance with their needs; and within mobility, the sustainability aspect is important, especially by combining trips and sharing vehicles. Despite there is probably not enough knowledge of all the work that has been carried out by the EP and the EC to date, there was a consensus that there is the need of some initiatives at the European level. A key lesson could be that the various implementing stakeholders (such as those represented at the Workshop) need to learn better how the various European institutions work and the instruments available, and what would be the most effective pathway to bringing about change.

Conclusions

The First SMARTA Workshop was a success both in terms of participants and in terms of the exchanges in the panels and break-out sessions. The presentations in the first day set the scene for the break-out session by explaining the SMARTA approach and presenting the first results and the questions arising from the work so far in the project.

The first break-out session revolved around defining the rural mobility problem, on how the different topologies of rural areas impact it and who are the groups most impacted by the lack of accessibility. Additionally, participants debated about the impact that poor mobility has on the overall development of rural areas and regions and proposed solutions for prioritising the rural mobility problem on the agenda of political and administrative actors such as: Using a multi-sectorial approach in order to find specific solutions for rural areas, introducing "rural proofing" mechanisms on relevant strategies and Engaging with surrounding urban authorities and creating links with Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP).

The second break-out session focused on the possible changes on the framework level that will positively impact the state of rural mobility. The consensus was that there is a need of a new vision, for making a "big step" for improving rural mobility. This is the only approach that could lead to long-terms benefits of shared and sustainable transportation.

The panel wrapped-up the first day and stressed the urgency to act now and to capitalise on the momentum. Rural mobility matters and it needs more attention as it is critical to the economic sustainability of rural areas. Rural areas have been overlooked for too much time and there is a need for community empowerment, developing local knowledge and establishing a vision together with a clear path.

The second day of the workshop focused on emerging good practices in Europe, through presentations from different initiatives, projects and services. The SMARTA consortium presented the evaluation framework, the good practices identified so far in the project as well as the challenges of funding and implementing and the innovation and transferability opportunities for good practice in rural mobility.

The second day break-out session aimed at debating what makes a rural mobility good practice and what are the challenges in funding, implementing, transferring and evaluating such solutions. Special attention was given to DRT, rail, interconnectivity with public transport and ITC.

The workshop ended with the "What could be the vision and the elements of policy for mobility in rural areas in Europe?" panel discussion that debated the role of policy in rural mobility and the need of European level initiatives to support mobility. There is a real need for defining a vision for rural environment, to discuss the future of rural population and of the functions of rural areas. If the vision can be agreed, it can drive the policy, which in turn would guide plans, programs and resource allocation.

Annex 1 – Participants List
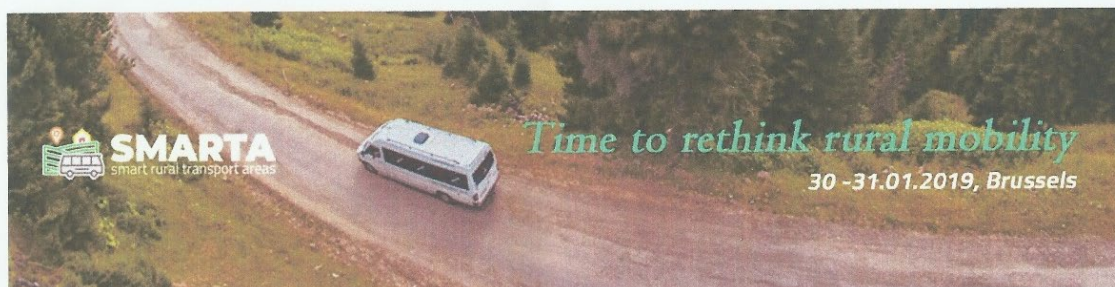
Time to rethink rural mobility

30th - 31st January 2019, Brussels, Belgium

Participant registration

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