

MEDIA RELEASE

Paris, 11 May 2015

Public transport for rural areas: Fighting the vicious circle of rising costs, reduced service

Analysis of international experiences points to ways of ensuring public transport access for declining, ageing rural populations

Providing good public transport services for rural areas has become a challenge for public authorities in many countries. To ensure continued access to public transport for citizens in rural areas, the definition of “public transport” should be reconsidered by public authorities, according to a new report by the International Transport Forum at the OECD.

Low population density and competition from private cars make it difficult to operate profitable commercial public transport services in rural areas, as costs per passenger are much higher than in densely populated cities. Maintaining service levels through public subsidies is becoming more difficult in view of rising operating costs and constrained public funding - leading to a vicious circle of reduced service or higher fares to contain rising costs.

Recent trends in mobility offer opportunities to alleviate the situation: New ways of providing information through mobile technology, new actors and services in the public transport market and changing user expectations and choices regarding their mobility are reshaping transport provision and demand. Yet, to profit from new mobility services that work also for rural areas, these developments should be reflected in changes in the legislative framework around public transport.

The report was commissioned from ITF by the Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications and looks at international experiences on containing the rise in costs associated with public transport services in rural areas, showcases efficient solutions and illustrates new ways of organising public transport services based on case studies from the United Kingdom, France, Norway and Japan. According to the new report, international experiences show:

- ▶ New ways of information provision are changing the public transport market.
- ▶ A major change in the perception of the concept of “public transport”, away from an exclusive focus on scheduled services and evolving to a more general provision of transport services accessible to any citizen.
- ▶ Demand-responsive transport is seen as one of the key options to meet future public transport challenges.
- ▶ New forms of public transport do not diminish the importance of traditional public transport.
- ▶ Significant potential for savings through coordination, such as pooling of passengers and

combining non-passenger transport services with passenger transport.

- ▶ Relaxing quantitative taxi regulation can enable new innovative solutions.

The executive summary of the report “International Experiences on Public Transport Provision in Rural Areas” can be downloaded from internationaltransportforum.org/Pub/new.html

Contact:

Michael KLOTH

Head of Communications

T +33 (0)6 27 21 47 41

E michael.kloth@oecd.org