

Summary:

Transport supply for older people in rural areas

Within 20-30 years from now, approximately one out of four Norwegians will be at least 67 years of age. This report discusses what kind of policy measures that are needed to meet the increasing demand of transport amongst older people in rural areas. The suggested policy measures may be summarized as:

- 1. Extending the older people's right to drive private cars by granting them local driving rights (e.g. driving licences with geographical limitations)**
- 2. Facilitating increased co-modality and the use of private cars and public transportation in combination**
- 3. Promoting safe and trustworthy relationships between users and operators**
- 4. Adjusting existing time schedules of public transportation services in accordance with older people's travel needs and patterns**
- 5. Introducing more benches and places to rest between private houses and shopping facilities and bus stops**
- 6. Supporting the delivery of merchandises from the groceries to older people's homes**

And last but not least, *information* on:

- **Alternative supply of transport services**
- **The possibilities for economic support**
- **The accessibility to further information**

A study of transport needs among older people in three rural areas in Norway

The Norwegian society is ageing. By the year of 2030, approximately one out of four Norwegians will be at least 67 years old. Therefore, transportation policies will increasingly need to address issues such as an increasing number of older drivers, increasing mobility among the older, as well as accessibility strategies for those older people who are no longer able to drive. What policies that prove to be most appropriate will ultimately depend on future changes in settlement patterns among the older, as well as their changes in lifestyle and demand for social and leisure activities.

Today, public transport services in rural areas are proven to be poorly developed, and half of all inhabitants outside cities in Norway report having a poor supply of public transport. In the outskirts of Norway, many older people are highly dependent on private transport, either in cars driven by themselves or by their relatives or friends.

Recent evidence suggests that the older population will be healthier, more affluent, have higher shares with drivers licence, and more mobile than earlier generations of older people, thus providing a greater demand for leisure activities and mobility. On the other hand, the increasing share of older also include those above 80 years of age, that report the strongest need for mobility support. A major challenge for future transport policies is thus to enable a better match between transport supply and the steadily increasing demand for transport among older people in rural areas. The main questions to be answered in this report are: What kind of social and leisure activities are important to maintain for older people in rural areas? How is this demand matched with the supply of public services in rural areas? What policy measures can be introduced to meet the demand of activities from the older?

These questions are answered by individual and focus group interviews among people aged 80 and more in the rural communities of Vågå in Oppland, Marker in Østfold and Nes in Akershus.

Organizational features of transport supply in rural areas

The responsibility for the provision of public transport services for older people is divided between different governmental bodies. The state is responsible for the provision of transportation for health services, and provide extra financial support to local public transport in the bigger cities. The counties are responsible for local public transportation. They are also responsible for the financing and organisation of special transport services (STS) for disabled persons, while the municipalities can decide who is entitled to such services.

The same applies for school transportation to primary schools. The counties are also in charge of the licensing system for taxi permissions, while the municipalities are in charge of parking facilities and infrastructure of vital importance for the overall patronage in public transport. In addition, the private sector is involved in the provision of transport services to older people through the taxi and express coach services.

The report identifies three core models in the provision of public transport services in this area:

1. The “traditional” negotiated model
 - a. Local public transportation is procured through negotiated contracts, including the responsibilities for school transportation
 - b. The counties are responsible for financing the special transport for disabled, while the municipalities can grant the user rights
2. The “all-embracing” model of competitive tendering
 - a. Competitive tendering of local public transportation, health transportation, as well as transport services for disabled people

3. The “innovative” demand-responsive model
 - a. The provision of local public services and special services for disabled are interconnected through demand-responsive public services

Our selected case studies represent one model each:

- The traditional model: Vågå in Oppland
- The competitive-tendering model: Nes in Akershus
- The innovative model: Marker in Østfold

Daily activity and travel patterns

The primary objective of one quarter of all travels among older people is grocery shopping, compared to 14% in the overall population (Figure S1). Social visits encompass 16% of all travels.

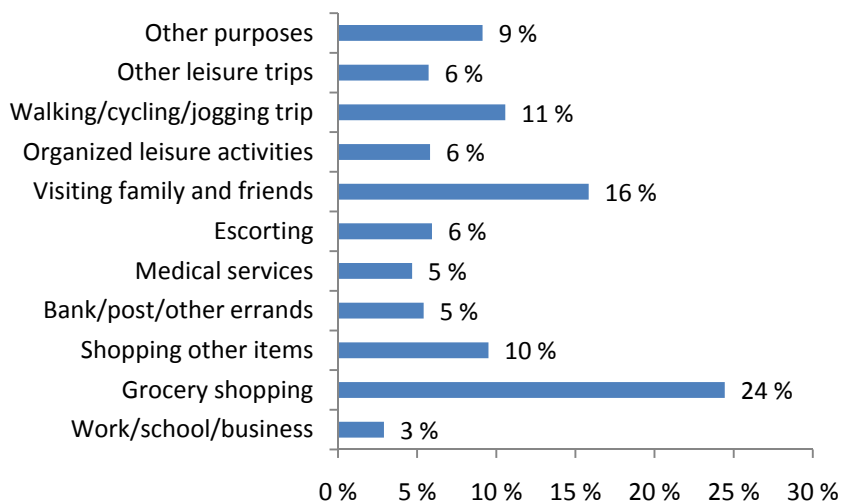


Figure S1: Trip purposes for older in the rural areas. NTS 2005. Per cent of trips

Shopping groceries is seen as an important social event for most of the population in our study, and both the grocery stores and the shopping malls serve as meeting places. This goes for both men and women. Having a friendly chat with neighbours or acquaintances are seen considered as a vital part of the shopping.

The leisure activities of the older population are different from those still working. Pensioners have more spare time available and have less strict hours to adjust to. Therefore, they more often travel during off peak hours (Figure S2).

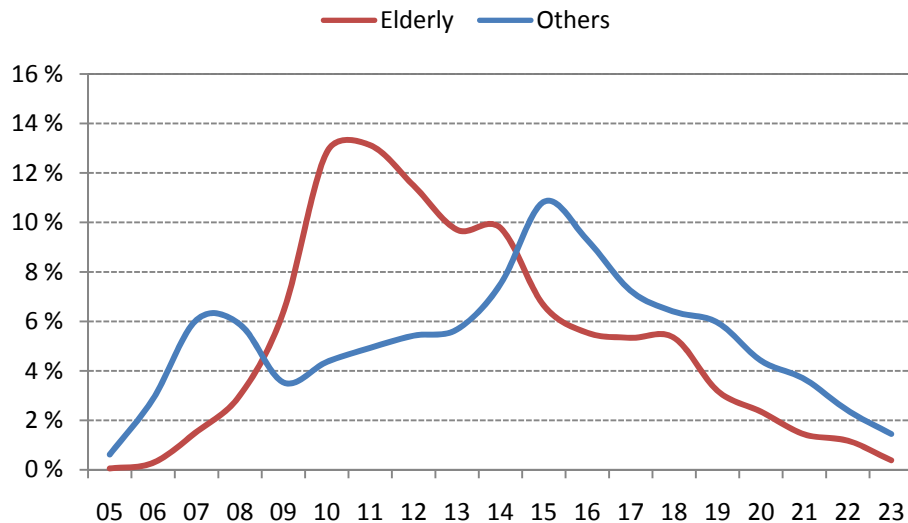


Figure S2: The trips' start time. Older and others in rural areas. NTS 2005. Per cent

According to our respondents, most of the organized parts of older people's leisure activities are arranged by the service center for the older or volunteer bureaus. The most common activities are dancing/trim and needlework, in addition to various social events.

The more unorganized parts of their social activities, such as cinema, theater, concerts etc., most often take place in the evenings. This is a time of the day when most of our respondents experience transportation challenges: The car dependent are scared of driving during the dark hours; those walking are scared of walking alone; and there's no scheduled transport services available at that time of the day. Hence, the older are often left with using taxis or hitchhiking with friends/relatives. The first alternative is regarded as expensive, while the latter is regarded as being troublesome.

Nevertheless, most of our informants are highly dependent on relatives when it comes to transport, shopping, social stimulation and general maintenance of their housing. The oldest ones are often the only ones still alive in their generation, making them even more dependent on relatives.

The importance of good health and car ownership

The interviews indicate that the mobility patterns of the older, their satisfaction with public service levels, and requests for future improvements on this matter, all depends on their health situation and whether or not they have access to private cars.

The situation of those still driving

This group of older is mainly composed of men that has managed to maintain relatively high levels of leisure and social activities thanks to their car driving. Even though most of them say they have not changed their mobility patterns at all during the last five years, they inevitably tend to change their driving habits: They

stick to their neighborhood, shorten trips, reduce night time driving, avoid rush hours and seek parking spaces that are easy to get in and out of.

The situation of those without a car but of good health

This group of older people is mainly women without driving licenses. Even though most of them show appreciation of the existing travel opportunities, there was evidence for restricted mobility for several of them. Most of those we interviewed in this sub-group had reduced some of their social and leisure activities due to lack of transportation.

Even though this sub-group of older seem to have a more restricted social life than the car driving ones, they are still in good health and able to uphold some of their social relationships and activities. Some of them have access to special transportation services for older people, and many of them rely on arranging transportation with friends or relatives.

The main characteristics of this sub-group however, are the dissatisfaction with current supply and schedules of public transportation services. In many cases, they have to rely on school transportation that arrive shopping facilities long before opening hours – and then wait several hours for a first chance to return back home.

The situation of the disabled without a car

This is a rather mixed group of older people, with the common characteristics of having rather few optional modes, leaving the mandatory special transportation service (STS) as the main provider of crucial mobility despite various accessibility measures. Every member of the sub-group had access to special transportation services, and they had typically accepted the fact that they had to reduce their social activities due to their disablement and restrictions on the use of STS.

Suggested policy measures

According to our interviews the following policy measures will improve the mobility satisfaction of older people in rural areas:

Policy measures targeted at older people still driving

1. *Information of alternative supply of public transportation services*
2. *Enhanced parking facilities reserved for older people in close connection to service centers and public transportation*
3. *To extend older people's driving career by granting driving licences with local/restricted driving rights (e.g. with geographical limitations)*

Policy measures targeted at older people without a car

1. *To introduce time schedules for public transportation services in accordance with older people's travel patterns and needs (e.g. through the introduction of demand-responsive services)*
2. *Informational and marketing campaigns aimed at older people*
3. *Increased coordination of the various types of public transportation*
4. *Increasing the number of seats reserved for older people in buses/trains*
5. *Promoting safe and trustworthy relationships between users and operators (e.g. by introducing regular drivers on certain routes)*
6. *Introducing more benches and places to rest between private houses and shopping facilities or bus stops*

Policy measures targeted at older people with disability problems

1. *Increasing the economic support for STS due to longer travel distances caused by the closing down of local groceries*
2. *To support activities that may help older people bringing their merchandises from the groceries to their homes*
3. *To increase the coordination of economic support for transportation for health services organized by the state, local/institutional transport organized by the municipalities and STS organized by the counties*