

Summary:

Main Experiences with Packages of Measures in Rural Areas

Background and objectives

The Norwegian Ministry of Transport and Communications has met up to 50 % of the costs of the scheme, "Subsidies to the development of rational and environmentally friendly transport". Since 1996 this subsidy has supported comprehensive packages of measures that develop and improve public transport. The rationale for carrying out a series of measures is the fact that they together may give a better result for the public transport.

Evaluation and documentation is an important requirement from the Ministry. This is useful both for the local project and for others, who can learn from their experiences. Therefore local project reports are submitted in addition to joint evaluation reports.

Nine packages of measures received government grants between 1996 and 1997. Three of these were in rural and sparsely populated areas; one in Hedmark county in the south-east of Norway; one in Vest-Agder (south of Norway); and one in Troms (north of Norway). This report summarises the main findings of these packages of measures.

An important feature of the packages of measures in the rural areas is the fact that they differ completely in terms of contents, see Table S.1. This fact provides a poor basis for doing a joint evaluation. Therefore, we will focus on a description of each of the three packages in this report. Additionally, we have tried to identify a set of problems and challenges that are specific to Norwegian rural areas.

Table S.1: Main contents of the rural packages of measures

County/Municipality	Name and main contents
Hedmark Kongsvinger	Transport for all in Kongsvinger <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Express bus Kongsvinger – Oslo and development of a buss terminal at Kongsvinger station ➤ Rehabilitation of bus fleet and bus stops ➤ Develop and build new bus sheds along selected bus corridors, rehabilitation of pavement structure
Vest-Agder Hægebostad Audnedal Marnardal	New Rural Public Transport Solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Purpose-oriented dial-a-ride for children/youths and elderly in connection with selected activities ➤ Feeding services ➤ High specification bus fleet
Troms Skjervøy Kvænangen Kåfjord Nordreisa	Public transport in rural areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improve public transport services and driving conditions ➤ Mapping of whether services meet the needs of the population (“Valuation survey”)

Package of measures in Hedmark: Transport for all in Kongsvinger

Conclusions relating to key approaches:

- Improved availability has increased the number of trips made by public transport
- Improved public transport services reduce car use
- Users take notice of the changes and appreciate them
- Co-ordinated packages of measures are an advantage
- Information is crucial

Package of measures in Vest-Agder: New rural public transport solutions

Three important conclusions that emerged from the pilot study were:

- Young people have the greatest travel need and should therefore be given priority through services that are tailor-made to their leisure activities. The elderly travel less often and are therefore more difficult to serve by conventional bus services. Exemptions to this are the door-to-door services. A “taxi travel card” may be equally appropriate for the elderly;
- To combine freight traffic with passenger services is not a suitable solution in this particular trial area. In order to provide a minimum level of service it is important to clarify the responsibility for handling goods in accordance with

public transport services. It is, however, important to stress the fact that combined goods and passenger transport must be developed in line with passengers' needs. Passengers' needs should not be compromised;

- The service should be flexible in order to meet people's needs both in the short and in the longer run. The operators should therefore be given incentives to develop a market-oriented way of operation.

Package of measures in Troms: Public transport in rural areas

The package of measures involved before – after studies of the project, in addition to a Stated Preference (SP) analysis in connection with a transport and communication plan (TCP) for North Troms.

The surveys

Only three of the measures were initiated when the after survey was carried out. Some of the main conclusions were:

- Public transport is a supplement, and not a service that people depend on for their daily activities;
- Main problems in the study area were inappropriate departure times and connections;
- The most appreciated public transport measures were improved services to local centres, improved services during school holidays (most services in sparsely populated areas are run in connection with the school transport), and improved connections between bus services.

The SP survey

Among the proposed measures in the TCP the service routes and school holiday services were the most appreciated. There were, however, some local variations.

The survey confirmed the fact that in sparsely populated areas public transport plays an important role for the feeling of participation in the daily life of a society. The use of public transport is a long term adjustment. Therefore continuity and long term planning are important considerations in the planning of the services.

Challenges for rural public transport operations

The challenges can be grouped into four categories:

- The development of *market efficient transport solutions*, focusing on tailor-made services to meet the travel needs of different passenger groups;
- The development of *cost efficient transport solutions*, focusing on vehicle size and load factors;
- *A flexible operation*, which continuously adjusts to changes in travel needs; and

- To clarify the *allocation of responsibility* between taxis and bus operators, between authorities and local operators, between school buses and scheduled traffic; and between freight and passenger transport.