

# Mobility as a Service provided by Public Transport Authorities: is it an attainable vision?

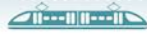
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If public stakeholders like public transport authorities (PTAs) take on the role as a provider of Mobility as a Service (MaaS), this may contribute to attaining key targets, including reduced car use, congestion and transport poverty. Therefore, we ask: Can PTAs provide MaaS, and if so, how can they achieve this target? This study applies three complementary theoretical approaches to public innovation to analyse the service innovation of the Norwegian MaaS leaders, the PTAs Kolumbus and Ruter. These are theories about public risk tolerance, reorganisation, and collaborative innovation. Methods applied are interviews, comparative analyses, event participation and document studies. Our analyses demonstrate that the selected PTAs exercise a “loose” form of meta-governance, or partnerships, and gradually innovate and have become early MaaS providers. Hence PTAs may be able to lead MaaS development. Moreover, various public authorities may, by setting environmental standards and providing funding, be essential in attaining innovation in MaaS and electrification.

This study has enquired into the MaaS development of the Norwegian MaaS leaders, PTAs Kolumbus and Ruter. Through expanding the services over many years, coupled with technological innovation, the complete penetration of smart phones and collaboration, Kolumbus and Ruter now offers what would have been a dream in the beginning of the 2000s: a large number of mobility services available via one ticket or subscription, easily bought in one app. Ruter and Kolumbus thus contribute to an increased mobility offer, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and more user friendly services. They have become early MaaS providers, here defined as integrated mobility services where the user gets access to public transport and other transport services via one ticket/subscription, bought in one app.

The study has applied approaches that may contribute to explaining innovation in the public sector: Mazzucato’s (2015) public sector innovation approach, an organisational approach, and Sørensen and Torfing’s (2011) collaborative innovation approach.

In line with the expectation based on Mazzucato (2015), public sector stakeholders like PTAs and their owners may be risk-willing and take on the role as MaaS provider by launching initiatives in the field, reorganise to innovate. This may succeed if the owners ask for MaaS, allow for such development and there is sufficient funding. Such development is also



dependent on contextual factors, like national rules enabling it, and substantial economic support from various external governmental sources.

The expectation based on the organisational approach was also supported. To become a MaaS provider, obtaining the right competence in the organisation, and creating an organisational structure supporting innovation was imperative. The expectation based on Sørensen's and Torfing's (2011, 2018) collaborative innovation approach received conditional support, if innovation is operationalised as they suggest. Innovation was carried out by stakeholders involved in networks. However, the study shows that the concept of collaborative innovation may only describe the cases well, if it includes stakeholder networks that are changing from one innovation to another.

The analysis also demonstrates that the PTAs may label themselves early MaaS providers. Through gradual service development, both PTAs and their owners have adjusted to new standards and expectations about what is normal and desirable for a PTA. They perceive the new standards as "small moves." When assessing the development since the year 2002, however, the developments altogether have been significant, such as the number of transport services available, that they are accessible via a digital ticket, and that this digital ticket can be bought through an app. Moreover, the PTAs and their owners' innovation work includes electrification across all modes of transport. Hence, the PTAs' service development has led them to contribute significantly to attaining important transport policy goals, such as increased modal share of public transport and active mobility, lower use of personal cars, lower noise, and reduction of the sector's environmental footprint. The PTAs are thus key enablers of a more efficient, equitable and environmentally friendly transport system.

There is a need to find out more about how the public transport system best may be organised to attain various key policy goals. This is not least because the EU's new intelligent transport system (ITS) directive and the multi-modal travel information services (MMTIS) directive, which applies to the European Economic Area, will likely make ticketing across various services easier (Commission, 2017; European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2023). This may give increased room for new conflicts, as it may for example not seem fair to PTAs, which are not-for-profit companies, to let private MaaS providers benefit from revenues that are largely based on infrastructure established by PTAs and other public investments and efforts (Interview Ruter, 2020). Private MaaS providers may be quicker at providing encompassing MaaS, as demonstrated in Helsinki with MaaS leader Whim. The PTAs hold another legitimacy, are publicly governed and serve all customer groups. As demonstrated here, when PTAs are given the necessary mandate and resources to pursue it, they may well become MaaS providers/operators.