Urban Transport Benchmarking Initiative

Annex A2.2

Behavioural and Social Issues in Public Transport Working Group

Site Visits and Case Studies

July 2004

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Behavioural and Social Issues in Public Transport Working Group

Case Studies and Site Visits

Prepared for

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by

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1.   CASE STUDIES OF INTERESTING PRACTICE

One of the findings of the working group's benchmarking exercise has been that it is difficult to learn solely from each others' data, particularly when statistics are collected differently in each of the cities and regions in the working group. In order to develop some of the suggestions and experiences shared by the working group the following range of sample case studies have been included in the report. The aim of these case studies is to present an overview of the interesting practices the group has conceptualised in a manner that is transferable and relevant to other cities interested in the working group's themes. By developing this "case-study based" approach in year 2 of the initiative to generate a deeper set of studies the dissemination potential and utility of the working group's findings are likely to be greatly increased.

1.1 Smart Cards in Lisbon – The Lisboa Viva Card and the 7 Colinas Card

Lisboa Viva

At the end of 2001, the Metropolitano de Lisboa installed a new ticketing and access control system to the city's metro network, changing from an open access system to a closed one with control lines and access channels equipped with doors commanded by the reading and validation of the data stored in the tickets. This new access system required a major change in the ticketing system, involving the introduction of magnetic tickets and contact less cards as is the case of the "Lisboa Viva" card.

The "Lisboa Viva" replaces the traditional pass and is intended mainly for the passengers who use regularly the public transport system of the Lisboa region.

How it works

The Lisboa Viva card has embedded a chip and an antenna which works by holding the card over a validator at the stations' gated entrance channels. This machine reads and validates the data loaded in the chip and, provided the card is valid, it enables the access to the networks that use this card - presently the Metro and Carris networks (see Plates 1.1 and 1.2). The system is check-in - check-out, thus meaning that the procedure used for entering the system is the same used to leave the system.

This card allows the loading of fares exclusive to each associated operator, multimodal fares, and combined fares. Since not all the operators have joined the system, the electronic loading of fares uses the conventional system of a sticker placed on top of the Lisboa Viva card. In the eventuality that all the operators decide to join the system, this system will cease to exist. Presently the Urban Metro Pass 30 days and the Network Metro Pass 30 days are no longer using the stickers and so the fares are directly loaded in the chip.

Plates 1.1 and 1.2: Smart card value loaders in Lisbon

7 COLINAS CARD

The 7 Colinas is a card based on the contact-less technology, intended to be loaded with multimodal tickets for urban and suburban trips in the Carris and Metro networks and is included in the new fare system which has been in force since 1st March 2004.

The 7 Colinas card is intended for the less frequent passengers enabling them to load the ticket(s) that better serve their particular needs. It can also be used as a complement to the "Lisboa Viva" card, also multimodal, intended for the passengers that would normally use passes.

How it works

The 7 Colinas card has an embedded chip and antenna and it works on the same principle as the "Lisboa Viva" card. Moving the card over the validator at a station's gated entrance channels enables access to the Metro networks. In the buses there are two validating machines working on the same principle but without barriers. The card may be loaded with more than one ticket on the condition that they are of the same type, it may be reloaded at any time with tickets of the same type of those existing in the card. If passengers want to load the "7 Colinas" card with another type of ticket they must use all the tickets of the previous type loaded in their card.

The impact of Smart Cards upon Lisbon's public transport network

- Gated access to metro provides greater security and revenue protection.
- Faster ticketing
- Better knowing of origin destination flows within the underground network
- Systematic collection of data regarding the entrance point in the bus network
- Integrated ticketing between bus and underground for non frequent users

There have however been some negative impacts:

- The entrance and exit of the underground stations, especially major interchanges, has become a hard task due to sub dimensioning of the validating machines.
- With both cards, only at the operators charging points (or at the moment of validation in the case of 7 Colinas) is it possible to check the card's validity period.
- Not every selling point is equipped with charging machines, thus forcing the user to go to a charging point.
- The informative public campaigns were too short which caused incorrect use of the cards (which further slows the entering / exiting time).

1.2 Promoting public transport in schools – Paris (RATP)

As described in the Behavioural and Social Issues in Public Transport working group report (Annex A2) RATP expends considerable energy ensuring that Parisian school children are specifically targeted with material designed to promote public transport. In 2002 a total of 32,000 school children received a visit from an RATP employee and will have been encouraged to use public transport to get to school. The success of this approach is suggested by the data for trip purpose collected by the working group. Paris displays the highest proportion of trips for the purpose of travel to school (21%) compared to the other members of the working group.

The main tool for delivering the message to school children has been the information pack "Ma Territoire C'est Ma Ville". This information pack is sent to teachers and is targeted at three different ability levels in order that teachers can reinforce the idea of travelling by public transport in lessons. The pack illustrated in Plates 1.3 and 1.4 includes videos, games as well as information about public transport and is designed to be fun as well as informative.

Plate 1.3 & 1.4 Ma Territoire C'est ma Ville

As well as encouraging the children to consider using public transport the information pack urges them to think more widely about their behaviour while travelling on public transport and even introduces an "Urban Code". This particularly refers to travelling in large groups and respecting other passengers, although also encourages children to consider aspects such as personal safety, road crossing awareness and platform safety. These lessons are taught and reinforced through quizzes, games and role playing activities for the children to do in groups or individually. By

making the process of learning fun RATP, appears to be encouraging children that public transport is a sensible way for them to travel around Paris and makes life simple for them by illustrating how to do it.

1.3   Integration of fare and ticketing systems in the Emilia Romagna Region

RegioneEmilia-Romagna
Agenzia Trasporti Pubblici

This project has been carried out to realise a new fare structure and the relative ticketing system for the entire bus and rail transport services provided within the regional territory.

For many years the Emilia-Romagna Region has worked in synergy with the public transport companies to define a system that guarantees the maximum degree of integration between different transport modes. The regional council has defined principles, structure and specifics for a new integrated system of travel documents named STIMER. Recently the Emilia Romagna Region has approved the zoning system. For further details visit www.regione.emilia-romagna .it/fr_trasporti.htm.

In the Province of Modena the new fare system has been in operation since 1994, and at the end of 2004 the STIMER will be extended across the whole region.

This new system aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To encourage the highest level of integration among different transport modes and other mobility-connected services
- To provide users with the highest freedom of movement
- To assure greater ease, transparency and flexibility of the fare structure
- To provide transport operators and local authorities with a reliable instrument for the planning and development of services and for the control of its use

Project Principles:

New Zoning System

The new fare structure consists of a zone based price system. The travel zones have been defined by taking into account both the specifics of the territory and the passenger movements on buses and trains. This has replaced the old flat-rate kilometric system and has introduced a consumption related fare system.

In July 2001 the study of the zoning of the regional territory was commissioned. The study involved all operators of the bus and rail services in the Region. The objective of the study was to define the fare zones and the effect resulting from the introduction of a new regional integrated travel document.

Technological Innovation

In order to manage the procurement of the necessary technologies in a single associated form, an acquisition Committee has been established. This Committee has been appointed to identify standardised technologies and software on the basis of the technical standards approved by the Bologna study. All bus and rail transport companies in the Region will then adhere to these standards in order to facilitate the process of region-wide integration.

The main innovation for the region will be the use of electronic travel documents. This will include a season pass based on contactless Smart Card technology which uses an embedded microchip. Special cards based on the same technology will also be available to enable travel for different zones and periods of time.

Program of Investments

The positive results obtained in the city of Modena have encouraged the authorities to program further investments. In total 18 million euros has been contributed to the extension of the system to all urban and suburban territory (via bus and rail) across the region. A total of 11 million euros has been shared among the bus and rail companies to assist with investment in stops, stations and vehicles (buses) to update the existing ticket validation systems.
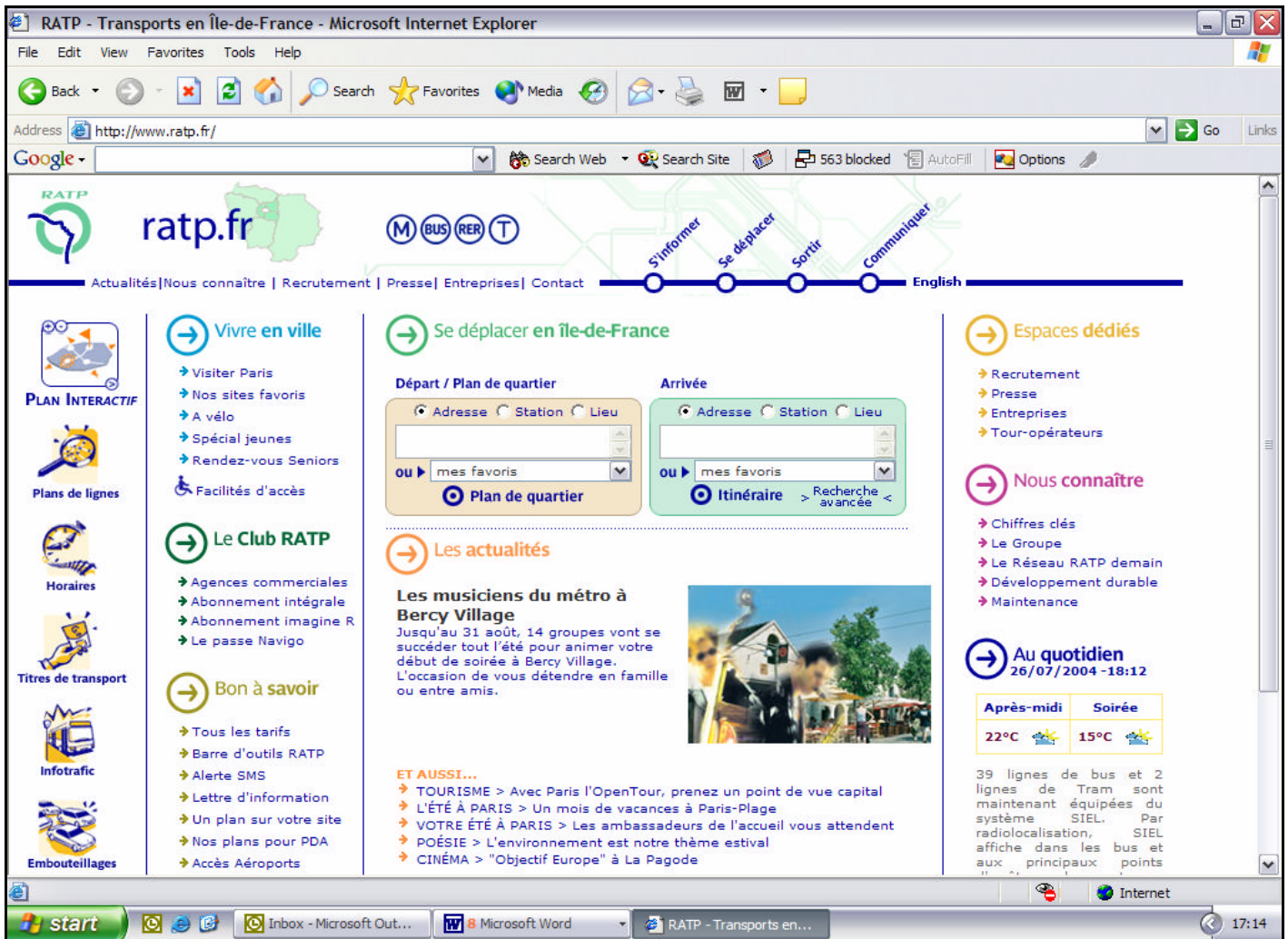
1.4: Encouraging student travel in Paris - RATP's Imagin'R travel pass

The example of the Imagin'R travel pass and its accompanying website and young person's travel benefits has already been well documented by the "Improving the Attractiveness of Public Transport Working Group". This still definitely qualifies as an example of interesting practice, so rather than repeat the work of the previous initiative the report can be viewed or downloaded at http://www.eltis.org/benchmarking/ where the case study example can be found on page 32.

1.5: Journey planner functions in the working group

At the time of writing the Ile de France region & Paris were the only places that had a journey planner function. This is accessible via the RATP website (http://www.ratp.fr/) and enables passengers to check their trains and plan a journey online. This was also complemented by real time information about delays and traffic congestion. In addition it is possible to visually plan a journey by using the maps available online. Plate 1.5 illustrates the journey planner on the RATP website.

Plate 1.5: Screenshot of the RATP journey planner function

The Emilia Romagna region was also planning to implement a range of journey planner facilities for its passengers. These would be accessible both at stops and stations as well as via the internet and the main objectives are outlined below:

- Timetable planner on regional scale (multi-operator).

- Intermodal planner (private + train + bus).

- Operating on cartographic base (graphical visualisation of routes).

- Accessible via the Internet.

The travel planner was in the process of being tested by 4 provincial-based bus companies and the 2 main rail companies and the tests conducted had been fully successful. As a result stop to stop integrated timetables are now becoming available for 15,000 bus stops and all train stations within the region (more than 300). In addition door-to-door transport services will also be available for the Bologna and Rimini provinces.

The project to implement integrated timetabling in the region was initiated due to the Emilia-Romagna region's participation in the RD project "EU Spirit" (4th framework programme). Integrated timetables will shortly also be available via the internet and this feature is due to be completed by the end of 2004 for the whole Emilia-Romagna Region.

1.6: The role of strategic marketing in Paris (RATP & STIF)

The city of Paris and the region of Emilia Romagna have demonstrated that they set the benchmark for strategic marketing and promotion of public transport. RATP's marketing department is part of the commercial department (which is made up of about 300 people). The communication department is not a part of the part of the commercial department; instead it is directly connected to the President.

Key roles of the commercial department

- Analyse traffic, incomes and sales results follow up.
- Define and follow the main indicators of quality policies, the product offer and services.
- Create the news maps and all customer information tools (multimedia).
- Manage the customer's relationship (complaints, new services).
- Follow the contract between the P.T.A (STIF) and the operator RATP.
- Manage business to business activities and key accounts.
- Marketing activities.

Key roles of the communication department:

- Manage corporate campaigns and branding.
- Manage partnerships (cultural, sports).
- Manage and develop special events (Football World Cup, Athletics World championship).
- Manage public relations.

The objectives:

Transform the impressions and usage of the customers.
Regain customers and improve patronage of public transport in Paris.

Plate 1.6: A sample campaign from RATP
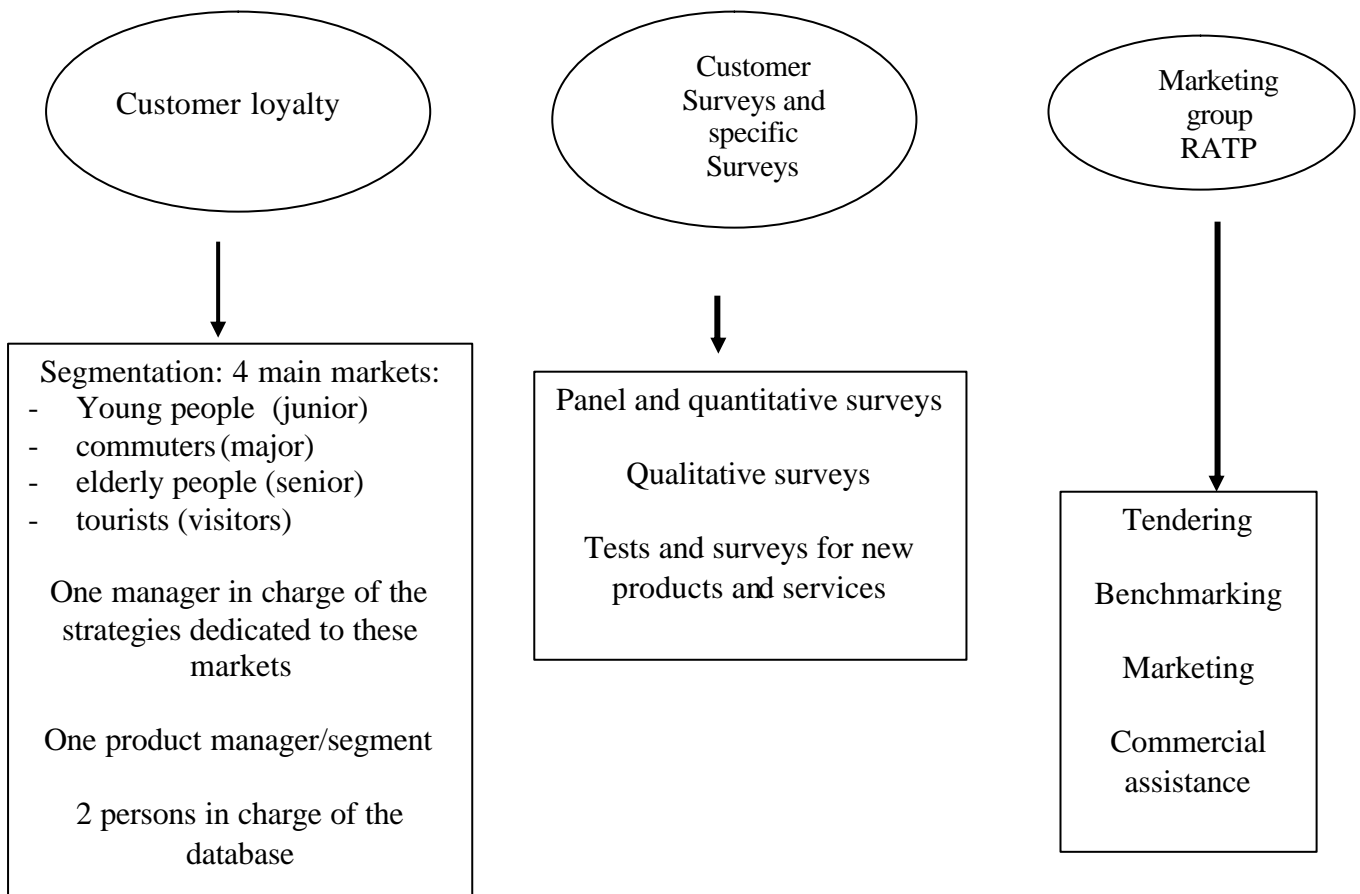
RATP Marketing Department

The global objectives:

- To increase customer loyalty and the number of frequent users.
- To improve customer satisfaction.
- To increase tickets value and quantity.
- To increase public transport market share.

The organisation and the main roles:

There are 30 employees in total. Of which 14 are employed in customer loyalty, 11 in surveys and 1 in 'group'. There are two project managers, an assistant and the manager. The main roles within the organisation are illustrated in Figure 1.1:

Figure 1.1: Organisation of Marketing within RATP

Customer loyalty

Customer Surveys and specific Surveys

Marketing group RATP

Segmentation: 4 main markets:
- Young people (junior)
- commuters (major)
- elderly people (senior)
- tourists (visitors)

One manager in charge of the strategies dedicated to these markets

One product manager/segment

2 persons in charge of the database

Panel and quantitative surveys

Qualitative surveys

Tests and surveys for new products and services

Tendering

Benchmarking

Marketing

Commercial assistance

Customer satisfaction surveys

The sample size:

RATP have consumer panels of 1,100 people made up of users of public transport and users of RATP services. The key requirement is that all the respondents are inhabitants of the Ile de France and are aged over 11. This allows a potential survey population of 9.6 million people.

The Method

Every third quarter, a part of the sample is interviewed by phone. Approximately 10 "core-items" are followed for each mode (Bus, Metro and RER). The main items are:

- Punctuality
- Rapidity
- Availability of employees
- General opinion of modes used.

- Security
- Information (re: delays)
- Waiting time

- Cleanliness
- Crowding
- Cancellations

The scale used is from 1 to 10 and anything below the mark of 6 is considered to be a poor level of satisfaction. The development of each item is followed from year to year.

Additional surveys are conducted regarding the customer's perceptions of RATP which follow the same methodology of the customer satisfaction surveys. Regular updates are provided by the internal "Panel Flash" document, which outlines recent ongoing results from the customer satisfaction surveys.

2. SITE VISITS

As described in section 1 of this report the working group attended a total of three site visits during the course of the Benchmarking exercise. The site visits are described in detail in this section of the report and have been presented as a series of case studies in order to provide an overview of the interesting practices that the group experienced in each city.

2.1 Valencia, December 3rd and 4th 2003

This site visit in Valencia was attended by both the Behavioural and Social Issues in Public Transport group and the Public Transport Organisation and Policy group.

**Plate 2.1: The Valencia tram system**

Day one involved the discussion of research questions and thematic indicators. These discussions were productive and the groups made a lot of progress in Valencia, rapidly confirming their chosen research questions and defining indicators which should enable the data collection process to begin in January 2004. In the evening the group used the Valencia metro system to get to the hotel in central Valencia where Generalitat Valenciana kindly provided dinner for the two working groups. After the dinner the groups were informed about the TramTrain system which is currently under construction along the coast from Alicante to Benidorm and the Metro Line 5 extension which is currently under way.

Plate 2.2: On-board the Valencia metro

Day two of the site visit brought a shorter discussion in the morning which was used to further discuss thematic data indicators. In the afternoon the groups were taken on a tour of the Control Centre for the Metro and Tramway systems in Valencia. Afterwards the groups explored the Valencia metro system and visited a number of stations including Colón, which is in the city centre and still has some remains of the ancient roman wall of the city; Benimaclet, which is an interchange point with the tramway leading to the coast and one of the Universities in Valencia; and Alameda which is architecturally very innovative.

Plate 2.3: The Valencia metro
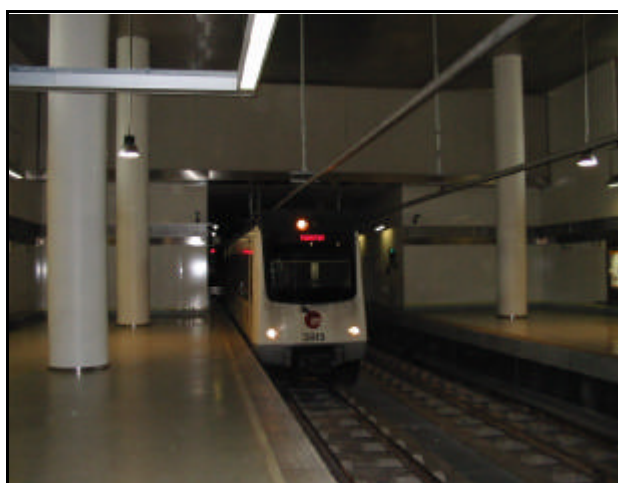
2.2   Rotterdam, March 18th and 19th 2004

At the Rotterdam site visit, most of day one involved a discussion about the data collection process so far and the issues that had arisen since the last working group meeting. After this meeting the group received a brief presentation from Peer Rooijmans of RET outlining the Public Transport situation in Rotterdam, before visiting various modes of transport during a guided tour of several sites of interest that related to the group's chosen themes. The second day of the visit consisted of a presentation from Ellen van Velzen and Ella van den Berg about the planning, research and marketing effort that RET expends. This was followed by a discussion about how to approach the process of data analysis and the potential data comparisons.

Public transport in Rotterdam

Rotterdam is a harbour city situated in the west of The Netherlands and contains a population of approximately 600,000 inhabitants. The Rotterdam region has a total population of approximately 1.02 million inhabitants and public transport across the region is overseen by the Rotterdam Public Transport Authority (PTA), SRR.

RET is the largest public transport operator in the SRR public transport area and the region as a whole is dominated by the city of Rotterdam, which has a land area of approximately 209 km2. RET provides public transport for roughly 830,000 of the region's inhabitants and the 600,000 daily trips made using public transport represent a modal share of 10% (although in the urban core this figure is closer to 12%).

The largest issue facing RET and its provision of public transport in the city is that the PTA (SRR) is keen to expose the public transport operators in the region to market force. This transition is planned to occur after 2006 and will initially affect bus services, but may later be extended to cover tram and metro operation.

Regeneration and public transport in Rotterdam

The group was shown two examples of how public transport has been used to help to regenerate areas of the city:

The first example was seen during a trip to Beurs, which is an interchange of the two existing metro lines. This illustrated to the group how the station had been integrated into the Beursplein shopping precinct. The metro station was specially renovated in order to achieve this and tram lines also run through the pedestrianised area. The Beurs metro station handles 70,000 passengers daily and also contains one of the 7 RET travel information centres that are located in Rotterdam.

Plate 2.4: The Erasmus Bridge in Rotterdam

Communicating with passengers

Whilst at the Beursplein the group visited one of the 7 travel information centres in the city. The group was given a brief talk about the structure of ticket sales and was also shown the various functions of the ticket sales centres. Aside from selling tickets the centres also accommodate functions such as lost property stores, journey planning facilities, information services (maps, guides to public transport) and real time multi-modal public transport information. In addition the centres are also used to publicise new initiatives to passengers (such as the implementation of conductors and revenue protection officers) and undertake consultation about items such as new rolling stock and the route of planned expansions to the network.

In terms of receiving feedback from passengers the information centres also provide an important role. Many of the comments received by RET are filtered back to the customer satisfaction divisions at the head office via the information centres. These information centres are therefore a useful tool; they allow marketing information to be passed on to the passengers and also enable information to be fed-back to the same department at RET.

Combating social security issues

In order to combat recent rises in fare evasion and social disturbance on Rotterdam's public transport network RET made two important decisions. The first was to increase the number of staff on board trams from 1 to 2 (including a driver) which has had two main impacts. Customer satisfaction has risen significantly and the amount of revenue lost to people that avoid paying fares has decreased. On certain routes and at particular times of day it is also common practice that two conductors will be stationed on a tram or metro. This is to enhance the safety of both passengers and conductors and has proved an effective way of reducing the number of incidents that relate to non-payment of fares.

The second decision was to implement a rapid-reaction team that are stationed at various sites in the city and can attend an incident on board a tram within a very short space of time. These teams have the power to arrest people and perform a similar role to that of a transport police officer. The

reputation gained by these teams has also served to discourage the number of attacks on staff and passengers and added to the enhanced feeling of security on public transport in Rotterdam.

Driver Training

The final aspect of the group's site visit was a trip to see the driver training facilities at Wilhelmsplein metro station. These enable both tram and metro drivers to be fully trained in exact mock ups of the driving cabs before they drive on the network. This allows drivers to be frequently re-trained and also means that passenger safety is never compromised and the number of additional resources normally required to train a driver, such as taking vehicles out of service and occupying track space, can be greatly reduced.

Plate 2.5: Driver's perspective from a Rotterdam tram

RET and Public Transport Marketing

Customer Satisfaction

The RET customer satisfaction survey (RET Kwaliteitsmonitor) has been in operation since 1985, although the most reliable data started to be collected from 1987. The satisfaction survey takes place on an annual basis and 1000 passengers are surveyed on the basis that they have made a journey in the last 2 months. One recent finding has been that adding a second conductor on the trams greatly improved customer satisfaction in 2003, although the benefit of this is offset by the large cost involved in delivering this service.

Targeted Marketing

When trying to market public transport RET targets 3 key groups and these are: people travelling between home and work, home and school and tourists/leisure users. Above all the main focus of RET's marketing effort are tourists, because research has shown that the numbers of regular users

are reasonably static. RET's key marketing objectives are to increase sales, offer good information, attract new passengers and retain existing passengers.

Ticket Promotions

The only promotions that RET are allowed to offer are those for their own tickets (1, 2 or 3 day passes and the 1 hour ticket), because the other tickets they sell (known as Strippenkaarts) are valid across the Netherlands (but not on Nederlands Spoorwegen, NS, trains) and the revenues from these tickets are distributed from a central source.

RET's own tickets are particularly popular with tourists, because it is often difficult to explain to people from outside of Holland how the Strippenkaarts work. At the end of 2004 the Strippenkaarts will begin to be phased out and are due to be replaced by Trans Link, a nationwide contactless smart card that will be valid on all modes of public transport including NS trains.

The logic applied to ticket promotion by RET follows a simple mantra: People only buy tickets because they want to go somewhere. This is applied in relation to all of the public transport promotions in Rotterdam and the majority of promotions involve combining entrance passes to museums, the zoo, cinemas, football matches etc. RET has a vast amount of media exposure at its disposal (inside vehicles, stops and stations, the daily METRO publication and the RET news magazine) and often offers this to major attractions in exchange for free entry tickets for them to sell as part of a ticket promotion. A good example of this is the Pathé cinema in Rotterdam which has no parking spaces at all and relies upon RET's public transport to deliver its customers. As a result Pathé have paid to have vinyls applied to some of RET's trams in return for free advertisements in RET publications.

Plate 2.6: The RET tram at de Kuip station

2.3   Helsinki, April 26th and 27th 2004

Following a warm welcome from Matti Lahdenrata (Managing Director) and Seppo Vepsäläinen (Planning Director) from Helsinki City Transport the working group meeting commenced and the group successfully discussed several aspects of the data analysis process. In the afternoon of day 1 the group received a presentation about the range of practices Helsinki City Transport have applied to try and improve their service and image of public transport in the city. Day one concluded with a visit to several sites of interest, which are described below. The second day involved further discussion about data analysis and presentation.

Public Transport in Helsinki

Helsinki is the capital city of Finland and, with an urban population of 560,000 inhabitants, contains approximately 10% of the entire country's residents. The Helsinki Metropolitan Region has a total population of 1.2 million inhabitants and the city is responsible for approximately 600,000 jobs. In the year 2002 a total of nearly 210 million public transport trips were made in the city of Helsinki which equates for about 70% of all public transport trips in the local region. Approximate modal splits for Helsinki are 31% walking and cycling, 37% car use and 32% public transport use.

Since 1995 Helsinki City Transport (HKL) has operated as a municipally owned commercial enterprise and since 1997 the bus markets in Helsinki have been opened up to permit competitive tendering for the operation of bus services. The impact of this competition has been a widespread reduction in the operating costs, while the number of seat kilometres travelled has increased. In total 80% of all trips are made using contactless travel cards, which are available for purchase for periods of 14 days up to 2 years. Once the cards are date expired they can also be credited with value so that the cardholder can continue travelling.

Plate 2.7: The newest Helsinki trams

A new multi-modal interchange (The Kamppi terminal) is currently being constructed and once completed in 2005 will house sub-surface metro, bus and long distance coach stations as well as a multi-storey shopping mall above ground. Other future projects include extensions to the metro

network, an additional tramline, a peripheral high-load bus route and real time information in every stop by 2012.

The presentations and sites visited during the site visit enabled the group to learn how HKL have attempted to influence travel behaviour and improve urban transport provision in the city.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction surveys from 2001 for Helsinki show that public transport is the most popular of all the municipal services, with more than 90% of the respondents to the survey stating that they are currently satisfied with the level of service. In addition participation in the BEST project (http://best2005.net/) has shown that Helsinki comes out on top in the fields of value for money and loyalty to customers. The feedback from this exercise and their own 11 point customer satisfaction survey has enabled Helsinki City Transport to identify its weaknesses in personal service, while also learning that technical service is generally satisfactory. Several examples were given to show how responsive the customer surveys are to changes in the level of service over short periods of time. The surveys are undertaken every 6 months and have revealed good feedback to commuter train investments that have been made, as well as the negative impact of work being undertaken on the metro at Kamppi in relation to the interchange which is currently under construction.

Plate 2.8: The view from the Bus stands at Central Station

In this example it would seem that frequent satisfaction surveying enables HKL to be responsive to the feedback received from its passengers. It must however be noted that the city of Helsinki benefits greatly from unanimous political backing for public transport from all of the political parties.

Flexible Ticketing Systems – SMS tickets

Since 2002 there have been 2 major new types of ticket introduced to the Helsinki travelling public. Single paper tickets have been removed completely and pre-bought tickets are now in the form of either SMS tickets, or Smart travel cards that can be loaded with value. The smart cards are discussed thoroughly in the fourth case study about customer assistance and communication.

SMS ticketing was introduced as a replacement for pre-paid single tickets in Helsinki. The customer sends a key word (A461) to the HKL service number (16353) in order to buy their single ticket. The cost of their ticket is then charged to their mobile phone account and the customer receives and SMS text message confirming the purchase of a single ticket which is valid on the city's tram, metro and ferry network for the next 80 minutes. When asked to present a ticket during their journey the customer simply shows the SMS message to the driver or conductor.

The take-up of this service was very rapid and, on average, 6000 tickets were being sold by SMS every day in 2002. The service has proved popular with people aged under 30, with approximately half of the users in this age group are buying tickets by SMS on a weekly basis. Key outcomes of this scheme have been increased ticket sales and faster ticket sales reducing vehicle loading times. In addition the scheme has reduced costs of printing and distributing tickets, reduced the maintenance of vending machines and is also better for the environment, because no paper tickets are sold.

Plate 2.9: Smart value loaders at the bus stands near Central Station

Research by Helsinki City Transport has shown that the introduction of the system has increased revenue for public transport, because almost a third of SMS ticket holders surveyed previously travelled on public transport without paying. A strategic marketing approach to publicise the scheme has also been a key factor in its success. The initial publicity used was plain and simple, outlining the key aspects of the scheme. Subsequent publicity (celebrating the 1 and 2 million ticket sales landmarks) has been livelier, focusing particularly upon the youth market by using vibrant colours and language.

Public transport image and customer information

In order to maintain a good public image the marketing department for Helsinki City Transport frequently attempts to raise passenger awareness of products and services through the use of publicity material. A good example of this is the campaign promoting the use of the Helsinki City Transport Service bus, which is a low floor, door-to-door, demand responsive minibus service operating across the city. The Campaign to promote this service has used humor to generate interest and help raise awareness in the Service Bus to dispel the common perception that the service is only for disabled passengers. The advertising boards at stops and stations show various images including a man with a broken leg, a man carrying a large double bass instrument and a mother with a large pushchair. These images have been both successful and fun and, by using bright colours have been able to catch the attention of the travelling public.

Plate 2.10: Rear view screens to enable safe negotiation of the bus loading areas

As well as pro-active advertising Helsinki City Transport have a website journey planner function and a call centre facility to handle enquiries and complaints. A further aim for the future is for real time public transport information to be available at all stops and stations in the city.

Customer assistance and communication

Smart cards are now responsible for approximately 80% of all public transport trips in Helsinki. The contactless smart cards are sold as season passes, with an expiry date, which can range from 14 days to 2 years. These smart cards can then be loaded with up to 400 euros of value in order to continue their use and prevent the need to replace the card every year.

When the scheme was first introduced Helsinki City Transport realised the need for a good level of assistance to help with the inevitable increase in enquiries about the Smart cards and their operation.

As a result 5 public transport information centres located around the city were renovated in order to improve their ability to handle enquiries. The group visited the Rautatientori (Central Station) information office in order to see how the customers were able to learn about the smart card system as well as other public transport information that is available. Additional staff were hired to ensure that plenty of people were on hand to help with the launch of the Smart Cards and the positive feedback to this approach has meant that the staff have subsequently been retained.

Plate 2.11: Demonstration of the Smart Card system in Helsinki

In addition to multilingual public transport information and maps, each of the information centres boasts a working Smart card reader in order that demonstrations can be given to confused passengers. This forward thinking approach meant that passengers who needed assistance with their smart cards received did not need to queue for too long and could receive a lesson in how the system worked before using it for real to travel around the city.

Plate 2.12: Trains at Central Station, Helsinki