

Good Practice: "Patenticket" in Cologne (Germany)

In the Cologne area (Germany), a season ticket ("aktiv60") for older people has been introduced in 2007. It has however been observed that there are many senior citizens in the area that hardly use public transport, even though they have good access to it and don't suffer from any relevant impairments.

Therefore, the Technical University of Dortmund and the local public transport operator KVB latched on to the idea of an innovative word-of-mouth advertising and buddying scheme: Owners of the "aktiv60" ticket have been asked to convince friends and relatives to a three month free trial of the senior's ticket. The original ticket holders acting as buddies were called "Paten" (godparents) and the new users "Patenkinder" (godchildren).

During the three monthly trial, the godparents helped the godchildren in case of questions relating to public transport and made trips together. This way, the test riders (or godchildren) found out about the advantages of public transport and - even more important - got used to riding buses and trams.

The project ran from November 2007 to March 2009. Altogether, 117 couples of godparents & godchildren were established, 29% of the godchildren purchased a season ticket after the free trial ended. In further 11% of the cases there have been "snowball-effects", meaning that people initially not involved in the scheme bought an "aktiv60" ticket as well.

In terms of impacts it needs to be highlighted that in the group of "godchildren" or test riders the people aged 60-69 years (70%) were overrepresented, showing high car availability and not being very familiar with public transport before. In other words, this project has proved to be successful in a target group considered to be a very difficult one for public transport companies.



Photo: KVB