

RATP: Colomb'Bus, P'tit Bus and Bus du Port (Paris)

Topic

Public Transport

Summary

Three bus services were developed by RATP (the public transport authority for the Paris region) as part of a larger strategy to better adapt their services to meet the needs of people in deprived communities.

This case study was collected in the framework of the Eclipse project.

Case Study

Introduction

The Northern loop of the Seine River is surrounded by the natural barrier of the Seine river, which creates problems when trying to access other parts of Paris. In this area, there is also relatively high unemployment (3% above the Department average) and large number of social housing blocks that are often badly connected to the public transport network. Moreover, car ownership levels are lower in this area, compared to more prosperous areas nearby and 35% of households have no car. Those in employment tend to work more unsociable hours, shift work and short-term contracts. The public transport routes and schedules are designed more to fit in with commuting and peak time travel, with few off-peak services. This means that in this area, people have limited mobility options.

Basic facts

In 1995, RATP defined a strategy for enhancing access to excluded districts, based on seven principles:

- Local services must fit areas and living patterns;
- Social fares should match the journey type (short, local) and individual resources;
- High-quality transport hubs are essential for multimodal services (fluidity, usability) and they foster local partnerships;
- Information and signage are important means to help people master multimodal journeys;
- Prevention and security measures can have a positive impact on the urban environment, particularly in creating relations between RATP staff and locals;
- Transport should contribute to employment policies and facilitate job access for local people, both to reduce unemployment and establish wider geographical links;
- Transport should contribute to economic integration; with national initiatives on "youth employment", it is possible to provide innovative job itineraries to foster integration.

The basic idea is also that it is not possible to design successful transport systems for vulnerable people without their full participation and consultation with them.

Users and stakeholders

The public transport operator and users.

Implementation set-up

Three bus services were developed by RATP (the public transport authority for the Paris region) as part of a larger strategy to better adapt their services to meet the needs of people in deprived communities. RATP carried out a wide consultation, bringing together local actors and local people in various ways including workshops, face-to-face interviews, surveys and working groups. From the consultation, it emerged that there was a need for more flexible services rather than the usual fixed route and radial bus services and for a demand responsive element to help meet the needs of those with part time, anti-social or irregular working hours.

Three services were established to be fully integrated with the rest of the RATP network:

Colomb'Bus started operation in 1999. It links an isolated district (Fossés Jean) with the Marante, via a town centre and sports facilities. The aim was to provide a real alternative to the private car and to open up the town centre services, sports and cultural facilities for residents.

The P'tit Bus de Nanterre, a variable bus service was created in 2,000. The main aim was to open up the P'tit Nanterre neighbourhood by linking it to the main railway station (RER A) and thereby the centre of Paris. To meet the demand for mobility, a modular service is provided; e.g. From Monday to Saturday, the bus runs to the town centre, town hall and Mont Valerien, which gives people the opportunity to go shopping, go to administrative buildings and access to leisure activities. In the evening, the service provides access to the town centre, offering leisure activities and shows.

The Bus du Port de Gennevilliers was created in 1999 and links one of the major employment sites in the area (the Autonomous Port of Paris) with residential areas in the northern Loop. The port itself and the neighbouring businesses employ 6,000 workers. The bus alternates between a fixed route service to coincide with shift start and finish times and a demand responsive service during the day.

All three services operate with smaller vehicles than the normal RATP fleet, but tariffs are the same as for the rest of Paris, with appropriate reductions for those on low incomes.

The long term future of the different routes is challenging. Presently they are financed by public subsidies (national, regional and European), for a limited period of six years. The way to make these routes sustainable will be to achieve a balance between social and economic factors.

Results

Surveys were carried out with users and showed high levels of satisfaction with the service-78% for Colomb'Bus, 72% P'tit Bus and 75% for Bus du Port.

There were also other results that are not always quantifiable but nevertheless significant. Access to a specially designed public transport system seemed to raise

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people's self-esteem. Users of the system feel better and are more self-confident which can often be a pre-requisite to finding an employ. People also benefit from improved access to education and training, which could potentially help them on the job market. Moreover, in the surveys carried out with users, transport difficulties are no longer mentioned as the main barrier to finding a job. It is also apparent that when transport services are suited to districts with social problems, the perception of the area change. In this way, employers are more inclined to incorporate neighbourhoods into their recruitment profile to create local jobs.

Future prospects and conclusions

These initiatives have led to similar systems being implemented in other parts of the North Loop.

The public transport operator now understands better the need for social innovation, based on end-user participation rather than technical solutions. Due to the demand for mobility becoming more widespread and scattered, it is essential to look at living patterns, day-to-day activities and to ensure a good and appropriate public transport system for the users. The difficulties involved in implementing new solutions are much more institutional and financial rather than technical, which means that operators need to talk more to decision-makers.

The level of use of the services in 2003 exceeded expectations and predictions. Projections for the immediate future (2-3 years) are quite good, with upwards trends of 25% for Colomb'Bus to 40% for Bus du Port.

Colomb'Bus is no longer an experiment, but a "special" route on the ordinary bus network. It does not compete with other routes and appear to complement them. The municipality of Colombes strongly supports this route as they believe it is not only a "social route" but also an innovative means of transport.

P'titBus is no longer an experiment but also a "special line" and does not compete with other routes. The operator is working to improve safety by changing the route to avoid some problem zones. This line has three years to prove its effectiveness and the rising trend in revenues is acceptable.

Bus du Port is quite different. Since Gennevilliers Harbour companies, in particular the Autonomous Harbour of Paris were interested in establishing a special route for their employees (and financed 50% of the operations). This shows the role that the private sector can play in policies to reduce social exclusion. These new expectations are reflected in operational demand for the transport operator. For example, Ile-de-France, 400,000 firms generate more than 50% of journeys, and for the RATP, 5 out of 9 million journeys are job-related.

Web links

<http://www.eclipse-eu.net/>
<http://imagine-r.com>

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Case study collected in the framework of the Eclipse project. Information taken from the FIA report on "Evaluating the contribution of transport projects to welfare to work, an international study. The French National Report."

City or region

Paris

Country

France

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