

Trapeze Global Perspectives on Demand Response Transport



Demand Response Transport (DRT) – historically largely confined to delivering ‘social’ services – is shifting before our eyes. Today, DRT plays an important role in the delivery of commercial services, while continuing to support the provision of mobility for those with mobility challenges. In both scenarios, service providers must manage transport costs while meeting increasing – and increasingly complex – passenger requirements.

Meanwhile, the DRT sector faces sustained disruption from new service providers. It is vital that cities and authorities are able to operate as legislators as well as transport providers; ensuring passengers’ mobility demands are satisfied without losing control over the wider transport network. DRT will play a vital role in this new world, providing first- and last-mile services to connect passengers with interchanges, thereby promoting sensible travel choices, while managing congestion, air quality and global emissions.

What’s Changed

Commercial DRT

- Shifting ridership patterns in mass transit have forced providers to become more innovative
- New commercial providers, including traditional vehicle manufacturers, have entered the market
- Increased passenger experience expectations (‘the Uber experience’)

Social DRT

- Increased need (ageing populations) and complexity of disabilities/service requirements
- Increased requirement for optimisation and efficiency to counter the rising costs

The Impact

- DRT now commercial and urban (previously social/rural)
- Cities face disruption; risk losing control over their networks
- Underfunded social DRT reduces optimisation potential (increases cost)
- DRT is part of a wider network – integration of modes and ticketing required for a seamless network
- Customer demands are the centre

What Transport Innovators Are Doing

DRT to drive mass transit ridership

FlexDanmark has integrated flex services to a national journey planner as part of a nationwide mobility as a service solution.

Using DRT to improve network coverage

Isle of Man replaced some poorly used fixed services with DRT, improving service levels while reducing cost.

Self-service for cost reduction

Skånetrafiken achieved major savings by digitalisation and self-service in the booking process of NEMT trips from the health sector.

Reducing no-shows & waiting times

WMATA (Washington) automated alerts to dramatically reduce no-shows and driver waiting times.

Linking social DRT with mainstream services

King County (Seattle): Call centre staff use integrated journey planning tools to offer DRT users alternative door-to-door travel options incorporating fixed-route services.

The Future of Demand Response Transport

Imagine if you could remove the final barrier to seamless travel through the introduction of a single, integrated ticket that covers all journeys across all modes. And what if this transport architecture facilitated the introduction of autonomous vehicles and other future innovations, enabling cities to focus on defining regulations relating to safety and quality of life, leaving running the network to the transport operators? Looking further ahead, what if passenger transport was integrated with other vertical markets – e.g., goods delivery – increasing available fleet size, while multiplying opportunities for optimisation and efficiency?

In the future, DRT will be a central part of dynamic personalised mobility. Dynamic services will be delivered in real time, supporting healthy lifestyle choices, accounting for external factors such as weather, and of course balancing cost versus convenience on an individual level. For passengers, ordering a vehicle will be as simple, convenient – and, crucially, personalised – as ordering a pizza today.

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