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From carpooling to village buses – changed topic in the Danish Light House Project

Niels Agerholm, Charlotte Tønning, Anette Jerup, all from Aalborg University, Denmark.

Introduction

As part of the G-PaTRA project was the Danish Light House project first seen as a rural carpooling project. It appears, however, that initiation of such scheme is very difficult as it is hard to make changes in a busy everyday life, where the already bought car is a cheap and mentally manageable mode, from which it is hard to gain modal shares to carpooling. After promising recruitment and learning experiences, it became clear, that rural carpooling schemes not are operationally in a Danish content yet. Hence focus in the Light House Project was changed to village buses and below follows a short description of the experiences with rural carpooling in the first parts of the Light House Project.

Carpooling – a good idea with difficult launching

Rural transportation has always been a special challenge due to its missing business case and the low density of residents in rural areas and most Western countries is the car the absolute main mode of transport (1,2).

Different trials with car sharing/carpooling operated or supported by rural municipalities have been carried out in Danish rural areas since the late 90s (3,4). None of them were able to keep in operation after the test phase and when the support from authorities stopped.

As carpooling (in theory) is a superior solution for rural transportation to reduce CO₂ emission and to increase social cohesion in the rural areas, we have turned our research focus to this topic during the last decade.

In 2009-2010 we investigated the transportation needs and attitudes to other modes than private driving among rural residents. The key point was that >25% of the residents were interested in carpooling (5).

In 2013-2015 we were involved in a trial including two attempts to initiate rural carpooling. In one of these, it founded due to missing quality of the tested app, while there was a strong local involvement in the project. In the other it failed due to insufficient social involvement (6).



In 2017-2018, in the frame of the G-PaTRA project, we found a rather good application and worked in close cooperation with a local rural council, who had the aim to reduce the transportation burden, which especially teenager families meet. However, as the local key person had to reduce his involvement, it stopped.

Parallel to this, several municipalities/public transport authorities have worked with rural carpooling in different trials, but until now (to our best knowledge) without lasting success.

Carpooling in rural areas – perspectives

At time of writing (summer 2019) the Danish public transport authorities have in general changed focus from purely transport to mobility perspectives. It means that they are focusing on all solutions, which can improve mobility for the residents. Therefore, they are (or will be) also involved in various projects in the fields of carpooling.

In the moment there are at least two SMEs, who are trying to launch a rural carpooling scheme. It is <https://www.byensbil.dk/> and <https://www.nabogo.com/>.

Also, the Danish automobile club, FDM is involved in the development of an application for carpooling, although their focus is on carpooling in connection with large work places.

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