



## WORKSHOP REPORT OF WORKSHOP SERIES 1

### One size does not fit all: How to find adapted smart mobility solutions to your community's needs? (1/6)



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## TITLE OF WORKSHOP: One size does not fit all: How to find adapted smart mobility solutions to your community's needs? (1/6)

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Notetaker: Magda Porta, Smart Rural 21 National Expert

### BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

The session aimed to explore creative solutions adapted to different geographical and cultural conditions and, among others, featured smart solutions identified by Smart Rural 21 in Ostana (Italy). Smart mobility solutions need to be adapted to the needs and conditions of the local communities. Mobility is certainly one of the key challenges for rural communities, especially due to the current energy crisis.

Mobility is not only a question of organising daily routines and accessing services for local inhabitants, but has also become a key concern of sustainability. There are many smart solutions already developed to address the needs and conditions of the local communities (e.g. car sharing, social taxi, ride-sharing Benches, Citizen Bus Scheme, apps and e-mobility solutions).

### PRESENTATIONS

**Brendan Finn, MemEx, Italy, SMARTA Project:** [The SMARTA experience and lessons for rural communities](#)

The presentation concerned the SMARTA Project:

- Objectives: enhance the current policies and practices on mobility in rural areas (e.g., public transport, shared mobility), leading to sustainable and accessible rural areas.
- SMARTA was developed by a consortium between 2018 and 2021, supported by the European Parliament and funded through the European Commission's Directorate-General for Mobility & Transport - DG MOVE.



- Three main tasks: (i) desk research including good practices on mobility services schemes, digital solutions and communities' engagement; (ii) policy recommendations for sustainable shared mobility and public transport; and (iii) stakeholders' engagement (European Commission, European Parliament, practitioners and operators, and regional and local authorities).

**Silvia Rovere, Mayor of the village Ostana, Italy: [The diverse mobility challenges and smart solution planning in Ostana](#)**

The presentation regarded the experience of a local authority in addressing the challenges regarding mobility:

- geographical and cultural context of the mountainous area where Ostana is located;
- main challenges felt by the Municipality and local communities;
- description of the solutions tried over the years to address the mobility issues, main challenges in implementing them and main results.



## FINDINGS ON CHALLENGES

Overall challenges in EU rural areas (aggravated by poor mobility):

- for people: need to travel more often and further to access services; high dependency on cars for mobility (less opportunities for those without cars); higher costs, energy use and emissions; situations that often leads to isolation and exclusion;
- for rural communities: difficulty and costly to achieve development plans; ability to attract, develop and retain businesses, as well as visitors, tourists and residents;
- for regions and Member States: ability to achieve balanced regional development and to revitalise areas in decline, ability to retain population in rural areas, particularly, youth and families.
- it is difficult to assure the sustainability of community-based solutions; e.g. there is a lack of regulation for volunteer drivers (and the responsibilities of transporting people and children are very high).



These aspects show clearly the challenges of mobility in rural areas, namely: increase the access to public transports or any other transport solutions and their range of destinations; improve the operational aspects such as affordability, reliability, security and frequency; and improve the access and quality of information about all these aspects.

**Specific challenges of Ostana** as more people and business are settling in the municipality:

- distance from public transports networks (e.g. bus station at 10 Km);
- existence of only one very narrow and steep road serving 6 small villages (400m of difference in altitude between them), this road becomes particularly difficult to drive in winter and the municipality wishes to maintain the security of people;

- the mobility issue is not only a question of organising daily routine and accessing services for local inhabitants but has also become a key concern of sustainability;
- seasonal peaks in spring and summer with many people coming to visit the mountainous area (Western Alps – Piedmont Region) cause an environmental problem. Also the landscape is deteriorated by the presence of cars;
- growth of economic activities, as it becomes difficult, for example, to agricultural producers to transport their goods for market;
- access to services (e.g. transport for school children), particularly, when their parents have jobs in other localities or when not owning a car.

Regarding (potential) providers of transports in rural areas, it is difficult to maintain this service as they represent high costs for few 'consumers', particularly when it comes to human resources (drivers).

Overall, it is clear that commercial and public transport routes are less than the needs of local communities. Currently there aren't any policies or plans dedicated to mobility in rural areas.

## FINDINGS ON SOLUTIONS

### General context:

- **Community-based solutions:** can be functional with the organisation of transport solutions in a very specific geographic context, with digital application or adopting simpler communication means within the rural communities.
  - all types of shared transport solutions were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and, currently, there is no detailed information about the situation of the solutions that were implemented in many of the rural areas;
  - shared transport solutions, while functioning in a very restricted geographic area, tend to not function so well in broader scopes;
- **Solutions based on digital applications:** can be very useful to shared transport solutions, however, it is considered that the creation of an app is only valuable if there are services that can be connected or combined.

### Local context

- Daily routines and accessing services
  - **Car-pooling:** civil service used especially by elder, refugees and other inhabitants without own car.
  - **Car-sharing** in personal basis: people in the village sharing own cars and dividing costs regarding their use. It is a partial solution as people are depending on others' schedules and daily routines.
  - Installation of **charging station for electric cars.**
  - **E-bikes** with charging points in several locations. Good solution in environmental and health terms, but equipment subject to high maintenance due to misuse.
- Tourism sites
  - **Shuttle services** (Ostana, Italy): very difficult to maintain the sustainability and to find the right frequency and dimension of the services to provide. The use of a shuttle service was found to be very useful in case of events such as summer concerts.

- **Cars paying fees to access tourist sites** (Ostana, Italy): solutions that decrease the amount of business tend to lack support from economic actors, even when there is a financial compensation.

Overall there is the need for experimenting new solutions and apply a new concept of transport in rural communities (on call, public and private car sharing, etc.).

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, NEXT STEPS

### Key message delivered at the plenary:

The national policies don't have any specific intervention regarding mobility in rural areas and at regional level it is common that authorities take decisions without knowing each context specifically and respective needs. In many cases, the authorities do not act because they don't have the same concern (the problem doesn't affect directly) and also because the mobility solutions in rural areas are seen as an expense.

If there is no mobility policy, there is no obligation to act. Therefore, a committed policy is needed to generate specific frameworks for improving rural mobility, including the conditions to push action from rural communities themselves. There is a need for frameworks in which communities are able to develop their own solutions (technology may or may not be a solution).

### Short summary of key findings from workshop:

- The direction towards sustainable rural mobility should be set up in three phases: mobilisations and preparation of the rural communities, development of solutions, implementation and long-term sustainability.
- Need for the mobilisation of the communities and prepare them to the sharing / cooperation schemes concept.
- Find a blend of formal and informal forms of mobility services (flexible routs of demand-responsive transport, shared taxi, car sharing, car-pooling, volunteer lift, etc.)
- Build up usage levels through raising the awareness on this issue, through marketing outreach and, at the same time, through community engagement and commitment to improve mobility (from rides and asset sharing services to public transports integration and networking among the mobility operators; and from the physical layer to the digital layer).

Make the social case to regional and national authorities, not only its dimension but **conveying clearly that one solution does not fit all**; and explore different support / financial resources. The goal should be a signed responsibility of the regional and national authorities in providing minimum obligatory transport services according to specific needs. With this kind of policy, it requires the administration to look better into the rural areas mobility needs.

## ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL: HOW TO FIND ADAPTED **SMART MOBILITY SOLUTIONS** TO YOUR COMMUNITY'S NEEDS?



We need national and regional policies for rural mobility that develop and fund framework that enable rural communities can develop their own solutions



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