

## GOOD PRACTICES – PUBLIC TRANSPORT PAYMENT SYSTEMS

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### **SMS TICKETING SERVICE**

#### **General information**

##### **Description**

De Lijn is the Flemish bus and tram company. They rolled out their new SMS ticketing service in February 2010. The De Lijn system permit travellers to buy tickets via SMS before they get on the bus.

##### **Background and Context**

In 1998, De Lijn buses drove 125 million kilometres and gave 216 million rides throughout Belgium.

Only established ten years ago, Belgian bus and transport company De Lijn has grown steadily since the merger between the Flemish part of the National Companies of Branch Lines, and the companies responsible for local district transport in Antwerp and Gent.

Today, with headquarters in Mechelen, De Lijn serves the Flanders region of Belgium by offering transportation between major cities, and operates several local public transportation systems throughout the nation.

De Lijn company started SMS Ticketing initiative to discourage the sale of tickets on the bus in order to maximize the circulation of buses and the punctuality of its services. Studies show that punctuality is one of the most important quality factors for travellers. In order to reduce the number of transactions performed by the driver (ie selling tickets), De Lijn had already installed a network of presale ticket outlets in March 2006. Since then, almost 80% of tickets are sold in presale.

SMS-ticketing is an alternative to the sale of tickets on the bus. The SMS ticketing system of De Lijn company has the important feature that no prior registration (which is a requirement of most other systems) is needed. All customers may use the distribution system at any time. Similar systems are in use in Helsinki (Finland) and in various cities in Sweden.

#### **Policy design details**

##### **Policy Design Steps and Timing**

SMS ticketing was launched as a pilot project in September 2007 together with the phone operator Belgacom (Proximus) in the cities of Antwerp and Ghent.

Based on the positive sales figures and the high degree of satisfaction of the users on the system, the project was successfully evaluated by De Lijn and Belgacom.

Since February 2010 customers have been able to buy a ticket for the bus or the tram anywhere in Flanders by SMS.

During the first month, they were already selling 1700 SMS tickets per day. In March, that increased to an average of 2200 tickets per day. So that's a huge success. Demonstrably, demand for this service is driven by the customer. The relative share of SMS sales is increasing, and that is exactly what we wanted to achieve."

### ***Actors Involved***

De Lijn Transport company and Belgacom

## **Implementation details**

### ***Implementation Steps and Timing***

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In 2010 only Proximus phone customers could use this paying system but since January 1st 2011 customers with other phone operators can obtain the tickets by SMS.

### ***ICT/Infrastructures needed***

Smartphone applications.

It is necessary to establish a contract between the public transport companies and phone companies to issue the ticket by sms.

### ***Monitoring Procedures***

Monitoring is carried out in collaboration between public transport operators and phone companies that have entered into a contract for the sale of tickets through SMS.

## **Supporting Mechanism**

### ***Awareness/Information Campaigns***

Advertising by De Lijn.

### ***Partnerships/Key Supporting Stakeholders***

A contracts were signed between De Lijn (the public transport company) and telephone companies (Belgacom – Proximus and others) to issue tickets via SMS.

## **Results**

### ***Expected vs Actual Benefits***

All benefits expected are now actual benefits – See "Qualitative Result Achieved".

### ***Quantitative Results Achieved***

In February 2010, De Lijn sold almost 50,000 tickets; by December 2010 this figure had increased to 130,000; In total 865,000 SMS tickets were sold in the year 2010. Ticket sales doubled in January 2011 and 157,440 SMS tickets were sold, this was 20% more than in December 2010, and double the monthly average of 2010.

### ***Qualitative Results Achieved***

The SMS Ticketing is faster than traditional ticketing, it is user-friendly, cheaper and less paperwork. The service is better and more professional & progressive image.

## **Key Considerations**

### ***Lessons Learned***

A good synergy between a transport company and a mobile phone company can give benefit to PT users.

### ***Primary Obstacles***

To find a right way to manage the information through informatics system. The most important step in order to set up the ticketing system was to consolidate all different library entities into one central library, where we could turn all data into useful information.

### ***Transferability Considerations***

It is necessary that public transport companies and local phone companies reach a strong agreement to implement the service ticket via sms.

### ***Up-scaling Considerations***

There should be no problems in extending the service to larger scales.

### ***Contact***

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