

Description of the measure and main outcomes expected

This measure seeks to find ways of integrating the Ruter age-friendly service with a projected, new DRT-service, no longer being limited to a particular age group. Instead of funding these services separately, our aim is to enable synergies and reduce costs by integrating the two. Relevant issues to uncover include (1) how to design a new “open to all” service which still takes into account the needs of the elderly, and (2) how can we support this particular target group onto a fully digital service. Additionally, the measure aims to cooperate with the ULTIMO project to learn how we can prepare and assist elderly onto the future, autonomous DRT vehicles.

The measure does not include a full-scale launch of an “open to all” service, but is an essential preparation for such a launch.

Measure outputs:

- Testing of original target group’s (elderly) adaptability to general DRT service (open to all customers), in terms of:
 - Ordering process (digital, rather than by phone)
 - Travelling (with a wider group of passengers, not only those within their own age segment)
 - Assistance (how much assistance is required from the driver/host, and which needs must be covered when we introduce autonomous vehicles)



Figure 1 Ruter age friendly transportation.

Preparation of the measure

Ruter's current service for age-friendly transport is for users who are 67 years or older and need door-to-door transport. A minibus picks up the customer at home and drives them to and from their desired destination within the applicable districts in Oslo. The trip can be booked directly or up to a week in advance, either via the app or by phone. You can also book a trip based on arrival time. On the journey, you will meet helpful drivers, and there is

space for walkers, wheelchairs, and other aids on board. All customers need to travel is a regular senior ticket. It is not possible to buy a ticket on board the minibus, so tickets must be purchased in advance using the Ruter app or with a travel card.

The service has been in operation for several years, but to gain an even deeper understanding of customers' experiences, expectations, pain points, etc., we have systematically approached this by:

- Initially documenting all lessons from the current DRT system, which formed the basis for the further analyses we conducted. This was supplemented by our experiences during the Serious Game, held in Oslo in August 2023. The lessons learned here also provided valuable input. After completing these two steps, we proceeded with various new analyses.
- In-depth interviews with existing users through the analysis institute Epinion. This included 21 telephone interviews with users of Ruter's age-friendly transport. The purpose was to evaluate the service, where we examined users' travel needs and purposes, their use of and relationship to the service, and their reactions to potential changes to the service (including digital user interfaces, self-driving cars).
- Interviews with city district employees to supplement users' viewpoints with those of district employees. This particularly covered the needs of users we do not reach in other surveys.
- Onboard examination of the travel experience. We were passengers on Ruter's age-friendly transport for one day, observing and interviewing passengers and the driver. The purpose of this was to supplement previous interviews with observations of actual customer journeys on board.

Preliminary key learning points are as follows:

- The target group is positive about carpooling with other target groups if it does not compromise the capacity and availability of the original service.
- Customers do not really need to plan a trip far in advance. For many, it is just as important to be able to act on impulse, depending on their condition that day. In other words, direct bookings are interesting if customers are guaranteed a trip when needed.
- The driver on board provides a sense of security for the target group, but a host could fulfill the same role.
- A large portion of the target group sees self-driving as a natural development (they have already lost the postman and staffed checkouts in stores).
- It is clearly necessary to have an option for non-digital users for bookings, changes, messages, information, etc.
- There will be a need for clear audiovisual communication (during boarding and alighting).
- For some, using age-friendly transport is stigmatizing because they do not consider themselves part of the target group even though they are over 67. Integrating the service with one that is open to everyone will make it more attractive and relevant to many.



Figure 2 Serious Game in Oslo.

Challenges & Mitigations

This measure meets two main challenges: one concerning testing and the other concerning technical app solutions.

- The plan from the beginning has been to take advantage of the work being done on the ULTIMO project, which involves the introduction of self-driving vehicles in a limited area of Oslo. It has been desirable to use one of these vehicles in the testing of OSL05 because the original project timelines matched well. Since the start, there have been some delays in the introduction of the vehicles (permits, approvals, etc.), which ultimately affects our ability to allow our target group to come on board. The solution is therefore to simulate a self-driving service by reducing the driver's visibility, helpfulness, etc., in the test. If there are any changes in ULTIMO's progress, we can quickly arrange a test as originally planned.
- Bookings for Ruter's age-friendly transport are currently made through a separate app (RuterBestilling) - not Ruter's main app for travel search and ticket purchases. Our new fully digital DRT service will be offered through the Ruter app, so in the future, it is reasonable to think that all existing segmented services will also be found here. The challenge is that all existing users of Ruter's age-friendly transport are influenced by the under-prioritized and somewhat deficient RuterBestilling. Perhaps several are negative towards digital bookings due to a poor digital interface here. Thus, it becomes a trade-off to determine whether we should prioritize improving RuterBestilling or make the necessary investments to move the customers of age-friendly transport into the Ruter app.



Figure 3 ULTIMO autonomous vehicle.

Next steps towards implementation

The next steps involve planning and preparing testing onboard vehicles with our target group (67+). This could be either onboard self-driving vehicles with ULTIMO or onboard our own soon-to-be-launched fully digital booking service called "Hent." For this, we plan to recruit core users, as well as relatives and others in professions that work closely with the target group (employees at nursing homes, etc.).

Another important step is to determine how realistic it is to get our users (67+) onto a fully digital service. We know that many will still need to be able to call the customer centre, but we want to get a more concrete figure on the proportion of people this applies to. This will significantly impact how the customer centre should be staffed and, not least, how and to what extent apps should be designed to meet their needs.



Figure 4 Use of RuterBestilling.

References¹

¹ <https://ruter.no/reise/bestillingstransport/aldersvennlig-transport/>

<https://www.oslo.kommune.no/helse-og-omsorg/tilbud-og-veiledning-for-eldre/aldersvennlig-oslo/>

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