

# RURAL TRANSPORT

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NEWSLETTER NO. 4

## DO YOU WANT ASSISTANCE TO IMPROVE TRANSPORT IN RURAL AREAS?

12 months of implementing and testing are over. We have learned a lot which we want to share with anyone trying to make rural transport better and accessible. We have distilled our experience into a Handbook which will give advice to transport planners and operators open to new ideas and approaches. If you want to achieve good results and avoid problems, use our checklists and learn from our experiences.



The Swedish demonstration site is located in Gotland, an island in the Baltic Sea.

### ASSISTANCE

The handbook gives you recommendations based on actual examples and conclusions from the ARTS demonstration projects as well as from expert knowledge.

### LESSONS LEARNED

In the Handbook we advise you about problems and barriers that can occur within the planning, operation and evaluation phases under the heading *Be aware of*.

### TOOLS AND MORE

In the Handbook we describe within the planning, operation and evaluation phases which important steps you should make and which tasks you should perform.



## Lessons learned

### Travel Dispatch Centres (TDC)

Unfamiliarity with the TDC concept (particularly among older people) made some people call direct to the drivers. When both the TDC and the drivers receive calls confusion may arise about the availability of seats and so more co-operation between the operators and the TDC is required.

### Integrated Systems

To enable integration it is important that the operator for all the services is the same (or an alliance of small operators) and that the TDC co-ordinates the trips in the booking procedure. It's important to make the inhabitants aware of the service and that the service is for everyone, not only for older people and disabled people. Transport targeted at particular needy groups e.g. youth, older people is more effective than services linking in with public transport. There was, however, an impression among younger people that this service was not for them but for older people only.

### Real Time Information Systems

Do not underestimate the length of time that it takes to implement a new Real-Time Information system. Full participation and co-operation of all bus operators in the area is essential to ensure the smooth operation of the system. Equip as much of the fleet as possible with the necessary on-vehicle equipment to enable the system to operate with minimal interruption when vehicles have to be taken out of service for maintenance reasons.

### Voluntary Taxi Service

Voluntary drivers did not lose their motivation and are still highly motivated. The Service became important for the community and remained in operation after the demonstration was finished. Only the legal situation (licensing) could not be solved satisfactorily because of the 'grey' area in the legal framework.

### School-Regular Transport integration

Taxis complained that they have lost 50% of their passengers, but user surveys showed that passengers were still using taxis to return home at midday. Especially in areas with very low conventional transport services, all the resources should be combined to try to obtain a minimum level of accessibility for all travellers, without increasing the cost for local authorities or local residents.

## Step by Step

### Design & Planning Phase

It is crucial to start your planning of a new or improved service with a thorough initial evaluation, where you delineate the market needs, existing resources and organisation structures. Following this step you are able to determine the aims and objectives of your service, and finally – with assistance of the ARTS demonstration schemes – outline your service in detail. First study the whole area/whole municipality, then the area for rural Public Transport and then the area in which you plan your service(s).

### Pre-Operational Phase

Explain thoroughly the type and scale of transport services you are planning. Detailed description of the proposed services should include operating hours, booking hours, service types etc. Integration with other services is very important because this make rural transport part of the total public transport system. Set out how your service will integrate with other transport and support services (public, private, voluntary) Choose a method for monitoring and evaluating the performance of your service and the time schedule for periodic evaluation.

### Operational Phase

Collect data for monitoring the performance of your service according to your indicators and evaluation plan. NB Performance indicators should be useful for future planning and not just for monitoring and evaluating the services for funders. Consider redefining your scheme and return to the pre-operational phase and make amendments in the service if necessary Don't stop, you must always have a "Plan B"!

### Evaluation Phase

In this phase you perform a more thorough evaluation than the continuous evaluation on a short term basis (e.g. monthly). Present results and experiences to stakeholders. The results from the evaluation should be used to make operational improvements, such as changes in timetable and marketing material. Evaluation should improve, not close, the operation!

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## Do you want assistance to improve transport in rural areas?

Improving transport systems in rural areas has proved to be essential, since it helps rural communities to increase their attraction to people living there and can be seen as an active policy for local development and social redistribution. The development of rural transport systems helps people living in rural areas to improve their quality of life, providing accessibility to different activities for certain groups who are not able to reach standard patterns of mobility – i.e. people without access to a private car (usually young people, students, people working in the home, older people and disabled people).

The performance of good quality transport services in low density rural areas isn't easy. The ARTS handbook is the result of the work in the European project ARTS, Actions on the integration of Rural Transport Services and aims to assist you in the planning, operation and evaluation of rural transport systems. Within the ARTS project 8 public transport schemes in rural areas in 8 different European countries were tested and evaluated. Each of the demonstration projects included a range of measures. The Austrian, Irish, Finnish and Swedish demonstrations are all different types of 'Demand-Responsive Services'. The Hungarian, Greek and Spanish demonstrations are 'School Transport Integration' services with the Welsh being an 'Information-Based Service'.

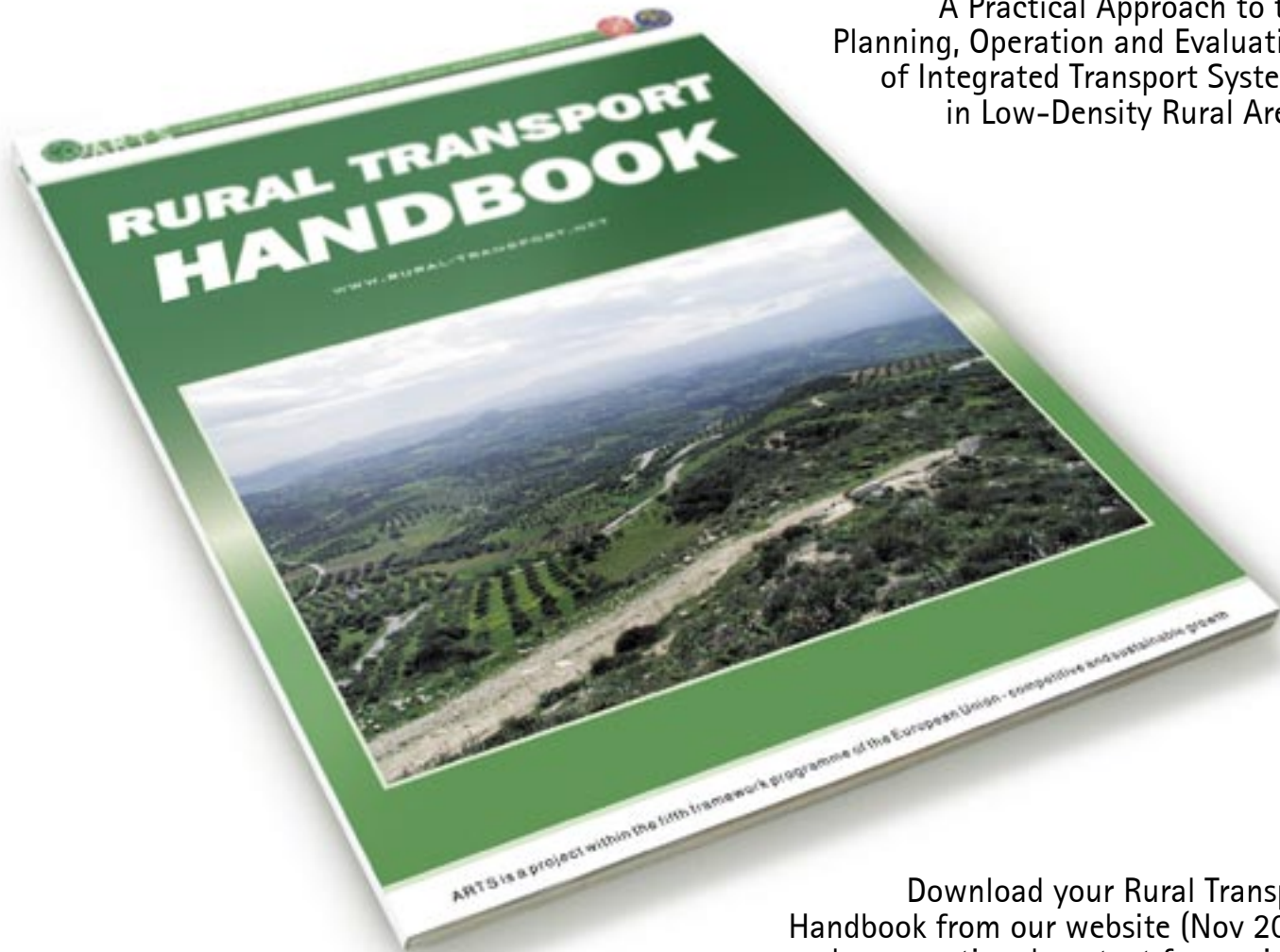
At the back of the handbook you will find a detailed description of the different demonstrations as well as comments on what was learned from them.

The handbook gives you recommendations based on the actual examples and conclusions from the ARTS demonstration projects as well as from expert knowledge on rural public transport obtained from the ARTS project members.

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# The Rural Transport Handbook for Operators and Transport Planners.

A Practical Approach to the Planning, Operation and Evaluation of Integrated Transport Systems in Low-Density Rural Areas



Download your Rural Transport Handbook from our website (Nov 2004) or ask your national contact for a printed copy. [www.rural-transport.net](http://www.rural-transport.net)

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