The “Mobility Escort”: An Mobility Service Within the Transportation System

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study

In 2007, the Lyon Urban Planning Agency began developing a participatory study on aging within the fields of urban planning, housing, transportation and other services. We came to two conclusions related to transportation. First, the increased access to vehicles, occurring at the same time as an improvement in public transport systems, has helped seniors become more socially integrated and has limited their isolation, especially in suburban areas. Second, the development of targeted services (commercial and community-based) has helped the social integration of seniors within municipal districts. Among these services—which complement those offered by transportation authorities but which are not counted within global demand—we see an increasing number of personnel escorting seniors to and from their daily errands on foot, on bicycles or motor-scooters, and especially in vehicles.

These services have two things in common: the presence of door-to-door mobility “escorts” (they constitute a human resource that is not recognized as an independent mobility service), and the increasing “motorization” of these daily trips, including within urban centers that are heavily served by public transportation.

Approach

Transport and mobility make up the second part of a sustainable intersector policy on aging, the first part being house and housing services. This implies moving away from an approach that considers only the issue of “accessibility” towards one that looks at autonomous or semi-autonomous daily mobility. Projects currently in place and future projects must be organized within a “local services” program that has a strong human presence and an intergenerational perspective. Intergenerational mobility programs can boost seniors’ independence and socialization and provide access to green spaces and social centers. Finally, aging must be integrated within planning and land-use policies that affect transportation and mobility (PDU, SCOT, PLU). Nevertheless, today we see that elected representatives and senior citizens are widely dissatisfied with transportation and mobility services. Our approach has allowed us to identify the needs, expectations, and failings of transport systems and mobility services. We are also working on ways to manage the following factors together: supply and demand processes, public/private/community-based partnerships, the sharing of financial and human resources at the city-level, and local public services.

Results

A report on demand responsive transport and personalized transport—including a greater role for “mobility escorts”—will be presented (examples include the cyclopousse, “mobility escorts”, Strada, etc.) as well as consensus-based proposals for authorities working in this field. Indeed, municipalities have prioritized demand responsive transport and “personalized” escort services for seniors (especially those over 75 years of age), and yet for the most part, these services depend on community groups or private companies. In fact, one of the main reasons why the local response has been so inadequate is that individualized and over-personalized services have created budgetary constraints. Many programs have been implemented to respond to the demand, and many programs did not last over the long term.

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