



WP.T3 - D.T3.2.3

**State of the Art Report about mobility problems
and policy challenges within ETP follower
regions - Municipality of Moravske Toplice**

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1. Introduction

Remote regions in central Europe share the same risks and issues related to the fact that they are located at the periphery of main transport networks. Inadequate and under-used services, excessive costs, lack of last-mile services and proper intermodality, poor communication and information to users and car commuting are some of the challenges that many central European regions face.

The SMACKER project addresses these disparities and promotes public transport and mobility services that are demand-responsive and that connect local and regional systems to main corridors and transport nodes.

Within SMACKER mobility issues related to peripheral and rural areas, main barriers are assessed and addressed and solutions drawn on the best international know-how are provided. SMACKER promotes demand-responsive transport services to connect local and regional systems to the main transport corridors and nodes. Soft measures (e.g. behaviour change campaigns) and hard measures (e.g. mobility service pilots) are used to identify and promote eco-friendly solutions for public transport in rural and peripheral areas, with the aim of achieving more liveable and sustainable environments and better integration of population to the main corridors. SMACKER helps local communities to re-design their transport services according to user needs, through a coordinated co-design process between local/regional partners and stakeholders; SMACKER also encourages the use of new transport services through motivating and incentivizing campaigns. The direct beneficiaries of the actions are residents, commuters and tourists.

Participation reflects the overall integration of citizens and groups in planning processes and policy decision-making and consequently the sharing of power. In particular, transport planning and transport relevant measures are often the subject of controversial discussions within the urban community. The concept of Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning has established the principle that the public should be included from the very beginning of the transport planning process and not only when the plans are largely completed and only minor amendments can be carried out. For that reason, public authorities need to open-up debate on this highly specialised and complex subject area and make participation a part of the planning process. In order to ensure participation throughout the process, the development of an engagement strategy would be necessary.

This deliverable “State of the Art Report” on mobility problems and policy challenges within ETP follower regions is the starting point for a better knowledge of the 10 selected Smacker Enlarged Transfer Programme (ETP) partners’ sustainable mobility challenges. The scope of these analysis is to map the needs, problems and expectations of each ETP follower region in low carbon mobility planning. Moreover, it defines the roles of ETP followers and policy leverages. It paves the way for local Action plans in ETP follower regions.



2. Project's area description

The municipality of Moravske Toplice is located in the north-east of Slovenia in the region of Pomurje. The main economic activities in the municipality are agriculture and tourism. The spa town of Moravske Toplice has transformed from a former rural settlement into an important health and tourist destination after discovering hot mineral water at 72.17 degrees Celsius in 1960 in search of oil at a depth of 1417 meters. The spa park Terme 3000 was built around the spring. There are some cultural and historical attractions on the territory of the municipality as well, such as the Romanesque rotunda in Selo and Jože Plečnik's church in Bogojina. The municipality borders Hungary and is the home to the members of the Hungarian national community.

The core area of the present analysis and the assessment of an improved DRT service is the **Municipality of Moravske Toplice** with its urban twin town - the neighbouring **City Municipality of Murska Sobota** (as shown in Fig. 1). The surrounding area - as defined for the purpose of this analysis - is the region of Pomurje with altogether 27 municipalities. The third level which must be considered as well, is the wider cross-border area - the border regions in three neighbouring countries of this area of Slovenia: Austria, Hungary and Croatia.



Figure 1. Map representation of the core pilot area as well as the surrounding area of the Pomurje region - brown representing the municipalities of Moravske Toplice and Murska Sobota.

General description of the broader area:

Pomurje has a strategic position in the north-east of Slovenia, in the heart of Central Europe and at the intersection of some of the EU's most strategic routes. The region is located at the junction of important international transport routes within the Pan-European Transport Corridor V, connecting Barcelona and Kiev, on the railway connection between Slovenia and Hungary, as well as motorway connection Lendava-Ljubljana-Koper. As shown in Fig. 2, the vicinity of neighbouring capital cities and a favourable geostrategic position make the region an important centre for transport and logistics activities.



Pomurje has approx. 115,000 inhabitants. It is the flattest region of Slovenia, stretching for 1,337 km² along the River Mura. It has extensive arable land, fertile soil, wine-growing hills, natural landscapes, and a continental climate, all of which create favourable conditions for agriculture and the production of fresh, local food.

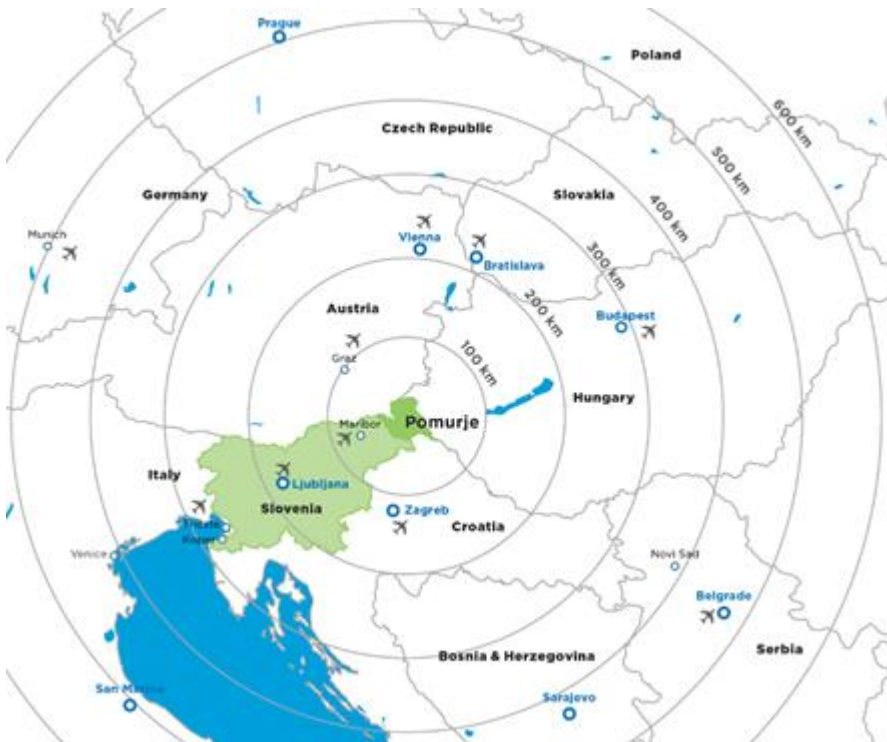


Figure 2: Map representation of the Pomurje region and the surroundings

Owing to the rich geothermal resources and the diversity and integrity of the landscape, Pomurje is a great environment for investing in sustainable tourism. A long industrial tradition, in-depth knowledge of the markets of south-eastern Europe, integrity, competence, and motivation, as well as a good command of foreign languages, are some of the qualities appreciated by the foreign investors employing local people at their production facilities in the region.

The Municipality of Moravske Toplice lies in the central part of Pomurje bordering Hungary, and parts of which are officially bilingual. Geographically, it is the largest urban administrative unit of Pomurje (145 km²), where three varied landscapes unite and spread across the left bank of the Mura River, i.e. Ravensko, Dolinsko, and Goričko.

Statistics data from 2019 on the population of the Municipality of Moravske Toplice:

- Population: 5,850
- Population density: 41 people/km²
- Mean age of people in Moravske Toplice: 45.7 years

Moravske Toplice is an important spa town in the region, which is attracting many German, Austrian, Italian, and Russian visitors. The total of overnight stays in the Municipality of Moravske Toplice in the year 2019 was 558.544. (Referring to the year 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 which resulted in a decrease



by 42.1%). In addition to the popular tourist destination of Moravske Toplice, which is the centre of the municipality, the area comprises of 27 other settlements, as shown in Fig. 3. Due to its proximity and strong ties to the regional urban centre of Murska Sobota, it *de facto* functions as a suburb of Murska Sobota.

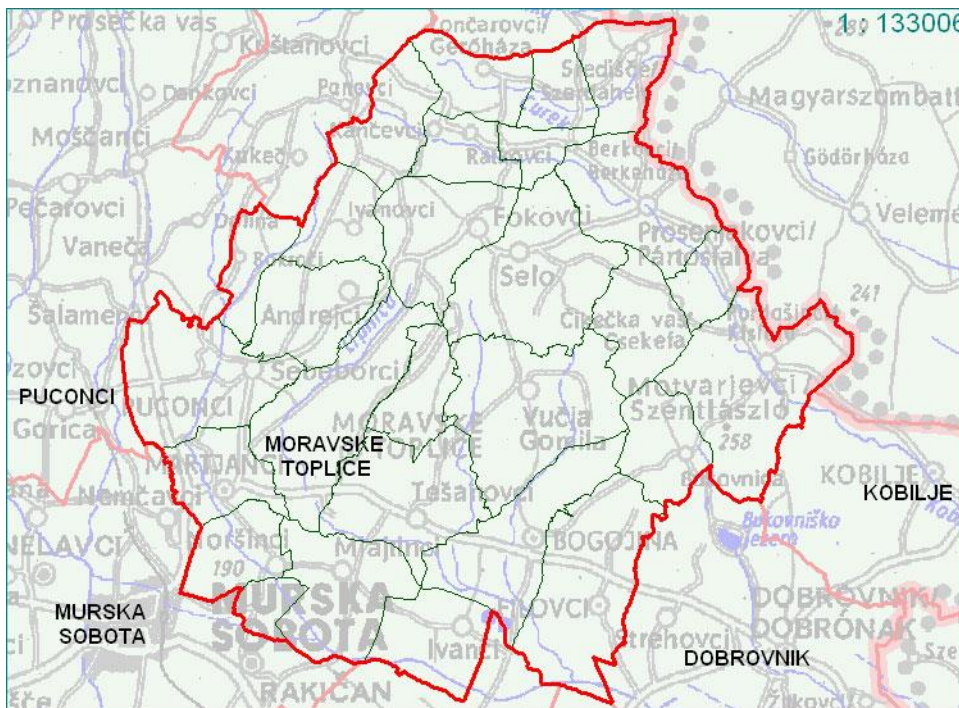


Figure 3: Map of settlements in Municipality of Moravske Toplice (Andrejci, Berkovci, Bogojina, Bukovnica, Čikečka vas (Hungarian: Csekefal), Filovci, Fokovci, Ivanci, Ivanjševci, Ivanovci, Kančevci, Krnci, Lončarovci, Lukačevci, Martjanci, Mlajtinci, Motvarjevci (Hungarian: Szentlászló), Noršinci, Pordašinci (Hungarian: Kisfalu), Prosenjakovci (Hungarian: Pártosfalva), Ratkovci, Sebeborci, Selo, Središče (Hungarian: Szerdahely), Suhi Vrh, Tešanovci in Vučja Gomila)

Next to Moravske Toplice lies the City Municipality of Murska Sobota, which measures 64 km²; this ranks it the 107th of all 212 municipalities in Slovenia.

Statistics data from 2019 on the population of the City Municipality of Murska Sobota:

- Population: 18,740 people
- Population density: 103 people/km²
- Mean age of people in Moravske Toplice: 43.4 years

In addition to the municipal seat of Murska Sobota, the municipality includes 11 settlements, as shown in Fig. 4:

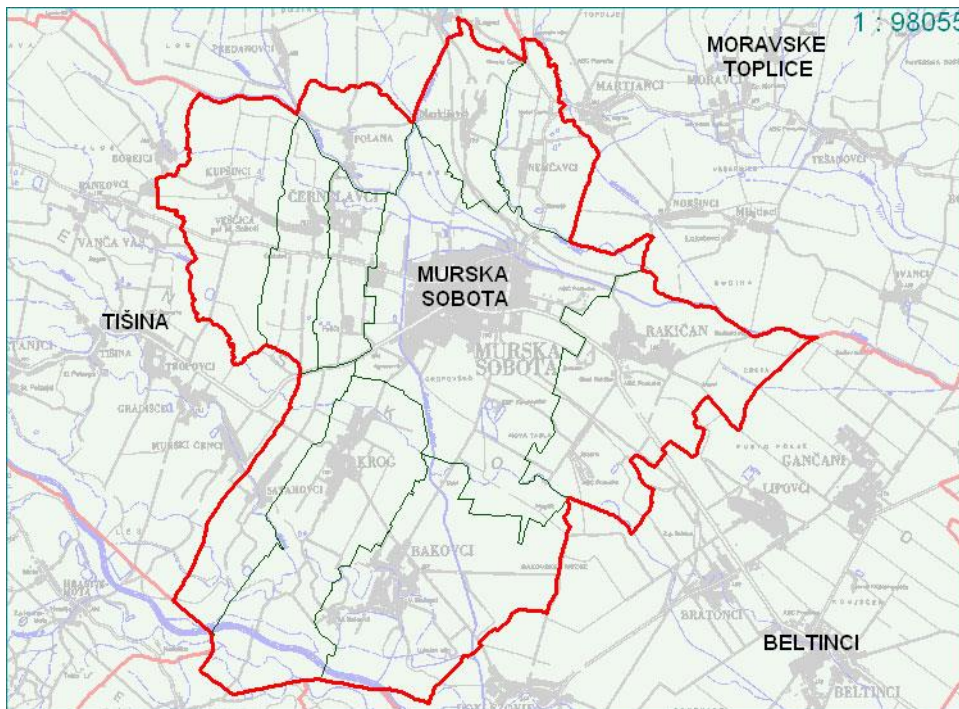


Figure 4: Map of settlements in Municipality of Murska Sobota Bakovci, Černelavci, Krog, Kupšinci, Markišavci, Nemčavci, Polana, Pušča, Rakičan, Satahovci, Veščica.

In the city of Murska Sobota, the regional urban centre, much has been done in the past to raise awareness and introduce sustainable mobility measures. A major contribution to sustainable mobility is the free Sobočanec bus service running through the city and to two major commercial centres and the regional hospital. Sobočanec has three lines and drives throughout the urban area and connects suburban settlements and the spa town of Moravske Toplice, however, this particular service runs mainly in the peak hours, while off-peak hours and weekend days are underserved, posing a gap that is soon going to be filled by a demand responsive service with a connection to the Regional Promotion Centre Expanso and focusing mainly on tourists.

In the past, incentives and measures were primarily aimed at improving the efficiency of public transport at the national level (single integrated tickets, subsidized transportation for pupils and students, P+R systems), which slowed the downward trend in passenger numbers. Nevertheless, many challenges at the local and regional levels remain.



3. Description of the mobility demand and needs (relations and attractors poles)

The Regional Development Plan 2021-2027 (June 2021, draft version) for Pomurje region declares mobility as one of its strategic priorities. The region's long-term vision for mobility pursues the goal of zero proprietary automobiles in Pomurje households. The end goal of the strategy is a regional sustainable mobility network for a Car-Free Region.

According to the data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, the current situation in public transport is inadequate at both, the national and the regional level. This is reflected in the decrease of the number of bus and rail passengers (as shown in Tab. 1), the increase of the number of registered motorised vehicles (as shown in Tab. 2), and the increase of the share of household expenditure on transport.

	2018	2019
January	3044	2876
February	2278	2208
March	3014	2846
April	2716	2643
May	2909	2661
June	2155	2002
July	951	1006
August	892	929
September	2552	2680
October	2838	2898
November	2923	3002
December	2340	2602

Table 1: Number of passengers in public transport (2018 and 2019)

	2018	2019
Pomurje region	91255	93232

Table 2: Number of registered motorised vehicles in the Pomurje region (2018 and 2019)

In the past, the incentives and measures were primarily aimed at improving the efficiency of public transport, however, many challenges at the local and the regional level remain. Supporting sustainable mobility and shifting individual transport to public transport will contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gases and emissions of hazardous particles (e.g., PM2.5 and PM10).

The road infrastructure in the Pomurje region is relatively well developed (albeit in a less than satisfactory state), which cannot be said for public transport connections between the urban centres and the rural areas and between touristic areas and attractions and urban centres. Most of the small, picturesque villages with high ethnologic and anthropologic value are totally deprived of transport connections to bigger towns and spa areas. Thus, tourists and local population rely mainly on their private cars. The intense traffic causes a lot of pollution, noise, damage to the infrastructure, congestions, and accidents. Today most of the hotels



in the region, of which the majority is located in Moravske Toplice and Murska Sobota, and other resort facilities offer taxi services to their customers, since no adequate public transport is available.

At the regional level, Pomurje has 70 km of motorways with two main roads of the II. order¹ and one main railway line. There are 28 categorized regional roads (four of the I. order, six of the II. order, seventeenth of the III. order) and two regional railways (as shown in Fig. 5). The total length of other roads in Pomurje is 3,120 km. The 70 km of the EU co-funded highway and the modernization of the Pragersko-Hodoš railway line both contributed to the elimination of the heavily burdensome effects of the rapidly growing heavy transit traffic through residential and working environments in many settlements across the region, including through Moravske Toplice and Murska Sobota.

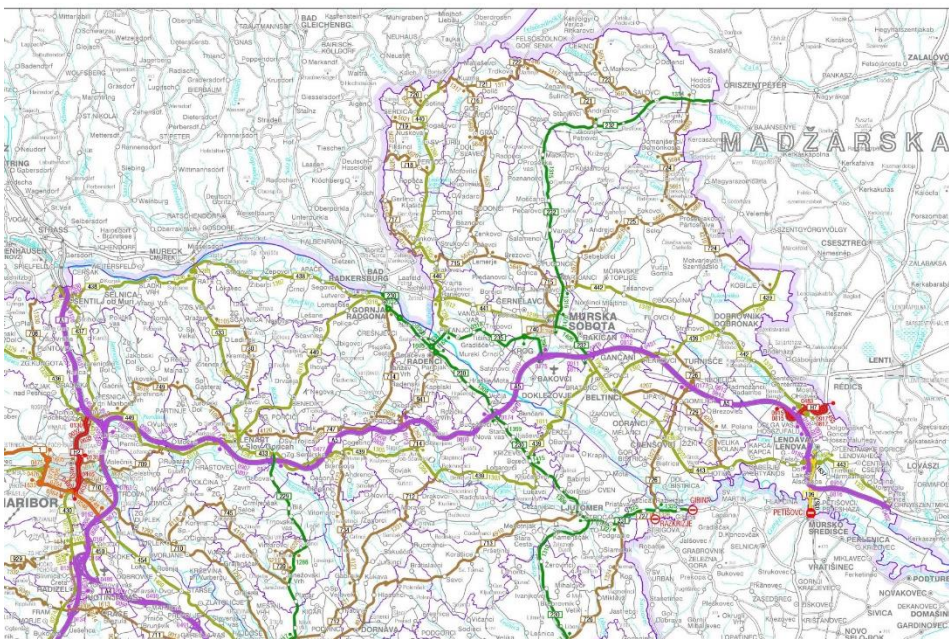


Figure 5: Part of the overview map of the national road network

The Municipality of Moravske Toplice gets a significant share of over 50% of all tourist arrival in the Pomurje region per year and 52% of all overnight stays in the Pomurje region per year. While the City Municipality of Murska Sobota represents the regional urban centre with the biggest share of daily commuters in the Pomurje region.

A major problem in the analysis of mobility demand and needs is the lack of data. Interviews and surveys with key actors in the municipalities and experts in sectoral agencies can provide some information, however these rarely stretch beyond general statements and assumptions.

On average, 7,562 commuters are migrating daily from other municipalities to Murska Sobota, which is significantly more than daily commuters migrating to work from Murska Sobota in other municipalities - an average of 2,380, as shown in Fig. 6. From the economic point of view, this only confirms the central position of Murska Sobota in Pomurje. However, this is also reflected in more passenger car trips and in the parking needs in the city and its direct surroundings, including the Municipality of Moravske Toplice.

¹ Main roads of the II. order (G2), roads are intended for traffic connection between major centres of local communities and connection of traffic to state roads of the same or higher category and parallel connections to motorways and expressways and to the road system of neighbouring countries.

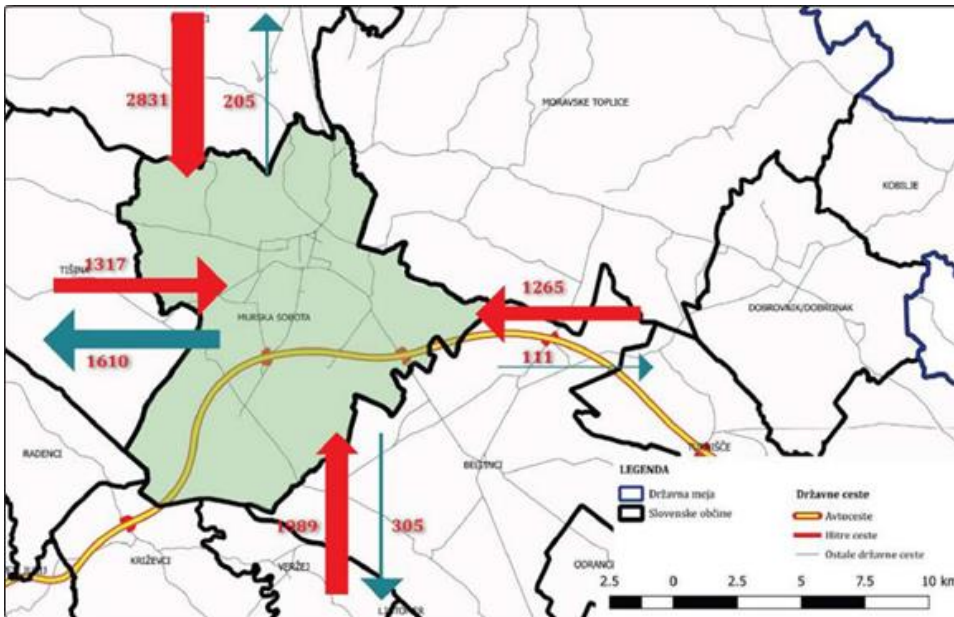


Figure 6: Map representation of daily commuting



4. Description of the public transport services and related multimodal accessibility

4.1 PT transport supply

There is no adequate multimodal hub in the core area comprised of Moravske Toplice and Murska Sobota municipalities to connect the road and railway networks. It has been a plan of the City Municipality of Murska Sobota for several years to build a multimodal hub at the railway station in Murska Sobota, where the main passenger bus station in the city would be moved to, however, nothing has been realised yet, apart from the modernization of the railway station. The bus hub and the railway station are 600 metres apart (see Fig. 7 for locations of both and the distance between them).

In the centre of the Murska Sobota town, there is the main bus station, where regional and international bus connections converge. As such, it represents the main regional hub for bus transport with 14 daily bus connections on average in each direction on weekdays. The only passenger railway station is also located in the town of Murska Sobota. The station is also used for freight transport by rail.

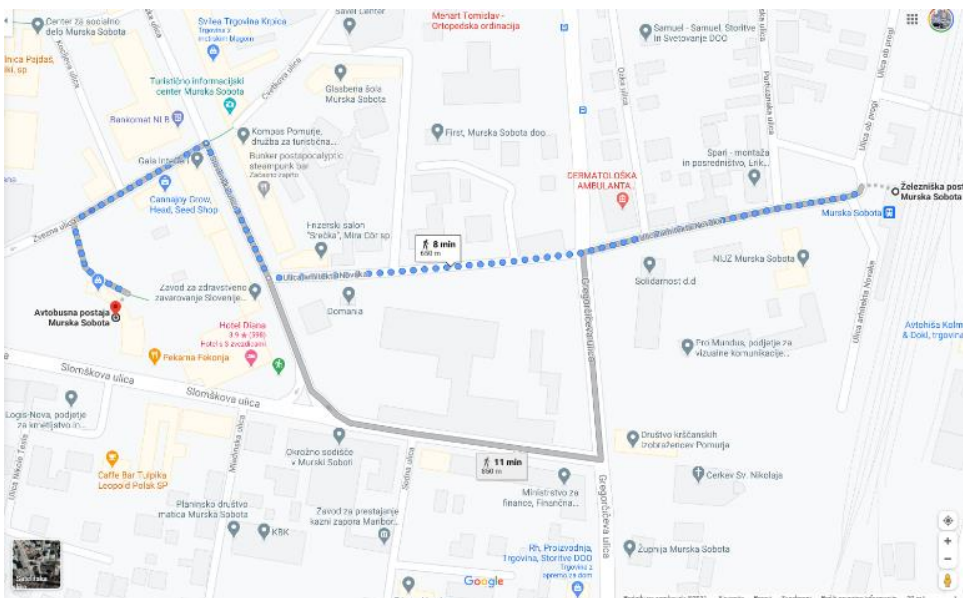


Figure 7. Map representation of walking distance between the railway station and the bus hub in Murska Sobota (www.google.com/maps)

As far as public transport is considered, there are significant challenges in the areas of supply (frequency of trips, the network of lines - coverage, speed, price), in the field of infrastructure, especially stops (e.g., inadequate bus or train stops) and vehicles (no low-floor entry, occasionally non-functioning heating and air-conditioning, not enough space or comfort). The existing network of bus lines in the core zone is also insufficiently integrated with regional and public passenger rail transport.

Bus timetables are available on the website of the regional bus concessionaire - Avtobusni promet Murska Sobota (<https://www.apms.si/voznired>). No online ticket purchase is available. Railway timetables are available on the website of the train concessionaire - Slovenske železnice (<https://eshop.sz.si/>), which on the contrary offers the possibility of online purchase of tickets.

As can be seen from the example below (Fig. 8), GTFS data are either not available or not up to date. Public transport information is mostly accessible using Google Maps app. This app collects public transport data from the General Transit Feed Specification also known as GTFS format. In the analysed area, the Google Maps app includes data of train and bus public transport, however, it does not include information on Murska



Sobota city bus lines, car sharing, bike sharing and other flexible mobility services. The Google Maps app also enables provision of data among different modes of transport.

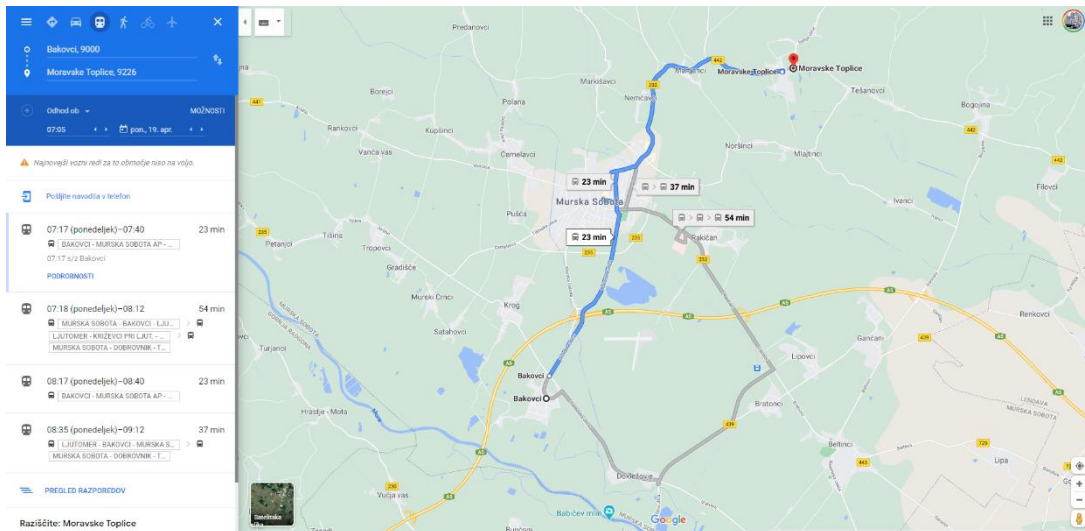


Figure 8. An example of a PT bus line between Bakovci and Moravske Toplice (www.google.com/maps)

In 2007, Murska Sobota introduced a city bus service called Sobočanec which is integrated with some of the suburban bus lines (e.g., connecting the town centre with the regional general hospital in Rakičan, a settlement on the outskirts of Murska Sobota), see Fig. 9. The bus is free of charge for the citizens of the City Municipality of Murska Sobota, pupils and students, and the disabled, while other users are charged a small fee of € 0.50 (the pricelist is accessible [here](#)).

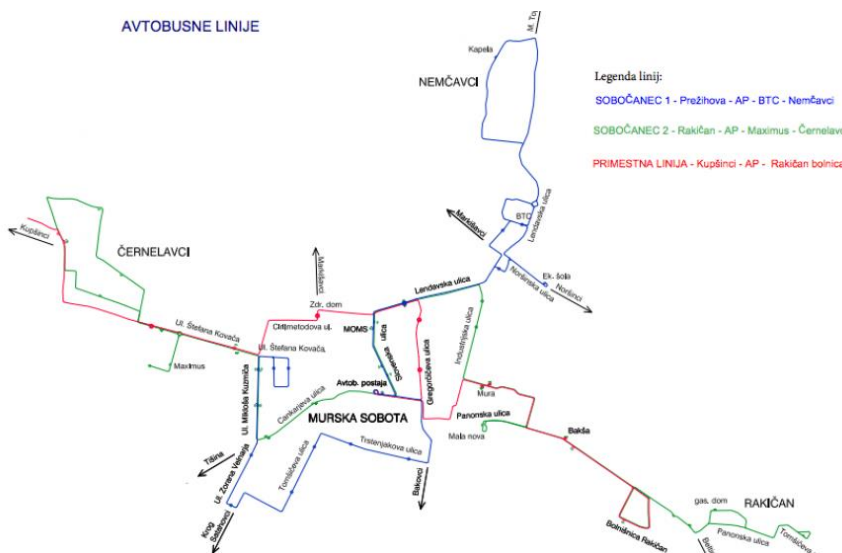


Figure 9. City bus lines of Sobočanec (MO Murska Sobota)

As goes for the flexible or demand-responsive transport, the supply in the core area is sparse. Public transport has been designed and organised primarily for domestic (local) users (especially schoolchildren, students, and daily commuters), and is adapted to a smaller number of users during the summer and the holidays, which causes some problems for tourists, as the main tourist season is the summer and school



holidays. However, in 2020, the City Municipality of Murska Sobota deployed a demand-responsive transport for the elderly by introducing the Prostofer service, which is intended for the elderly and operates on a partly voluntary basis. The user must announce the transport need to the telephone number at least three days before the ride, and the volunteer drivers will take them for the agreed ride in a vehicle provided by the municipality (Fig. 10). The operator has the task of coordinating the rides.



Figure 10. DRT service for senior citizens PROSTOFER (www.prostofer.si)

In Murska Sobota, there is an electric vehicle rental service - eCar Sharing Avant2Go (<https://avant2go.si/>), which enables the rental and driving of electric cars. Rental stations are currently located only in the City Municipality of Murska Sobota (see Fig. 11), however, the users are of course allowed to take the car to other municipalities as well. The users are also allowed to rent a car for a longer period at a very competitive price (from € 29.90 to € 39.90 per day, without any other costs for the user).

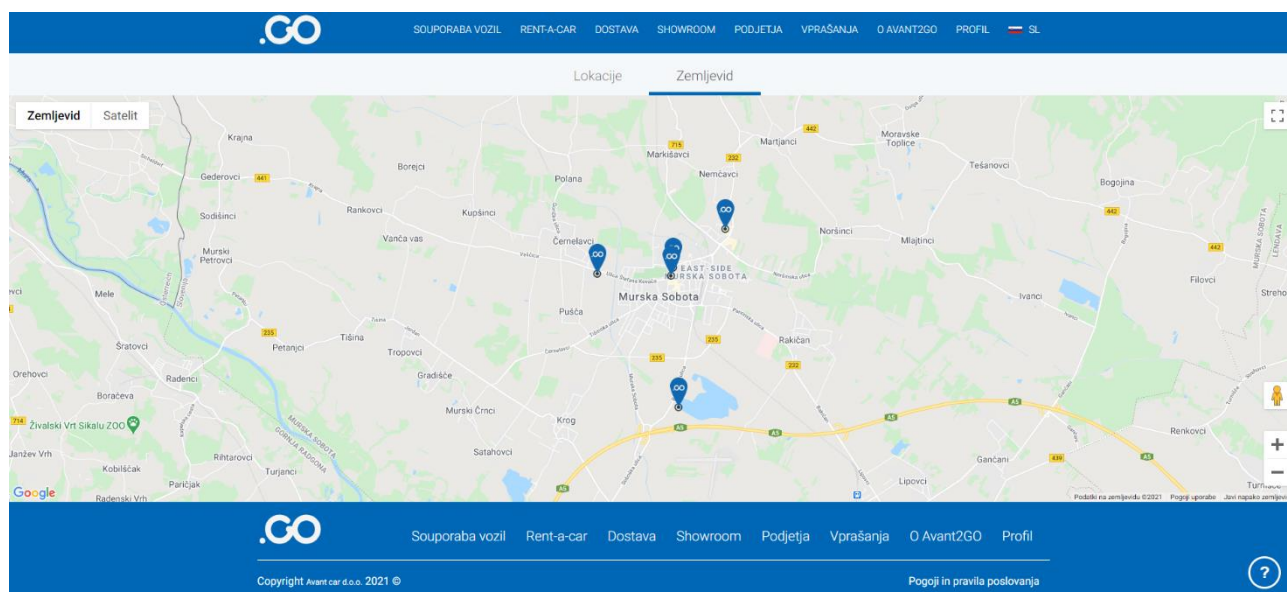


Figure 11. Locations of the eCar sharing service in Murska Sobota (<https://avant2go.si/cities/murska-sobota#location-list>)

In the core are, there is a bike-sharing service Soboški biciklin (www.soboskibiciklin.si), which also enables the rental of electric bicycles. The service is available in the town of Murska Sobota, as well as in the

surrounding settlements and in the neighbouring municipalities of Moravske Toplice and Puconci (see Fig. 12).

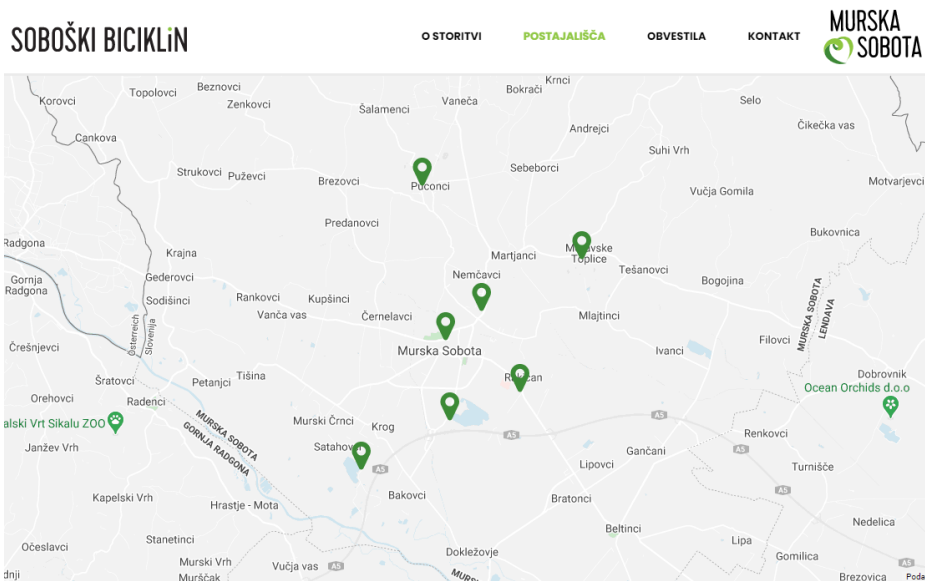


Figure 12. Locations of the Soboški biciklin stations (<https://www.soboskibiciklin.si/sl/postajalisca>)

Most information about timetables for bike, car, train, car sharing etc., instructions for use, terms of use of mobility services and price lists are available online. However, they are poorly interconnected and do not allow easy exchange of data between services. Slovenian Railways (Slovenske železnice) has a mobile application Go by Train, Avant2Go has its own eCar Sharing service application, Soboški biciklin runs on another platform etc.

4.2 Accessibility

The railway station in Murska Sobota was renovated and modernized in 2015. The main bus station is located in the city centre, a walking distance of 650 meters from the railway station (see Fig. 7). Bus stops are scattered around the city and in surrounding settlements, usually in the centres of these settlements (same goes for Moravske Toplice). Most stops are not suitable and/or safe for use (no canopy and/or seats, lack of information, inadequate accessibility, long distance to pedestrian crossings, to access the bus stop a passenger often must cross the bicycle lane).

The accessibility of most of the tourist attractions and points of interest in the core area (as shown in Fig. 13) is not adequate. The situation is even less optimal with access to key generators of transport in the production and commercial sectors, as most of the new industrial and business zones are not adequately accessible by public transport. As far as public services are concerned, the situation is better, mainly due to the traditionally good accessibility which was planned for and established in the past.

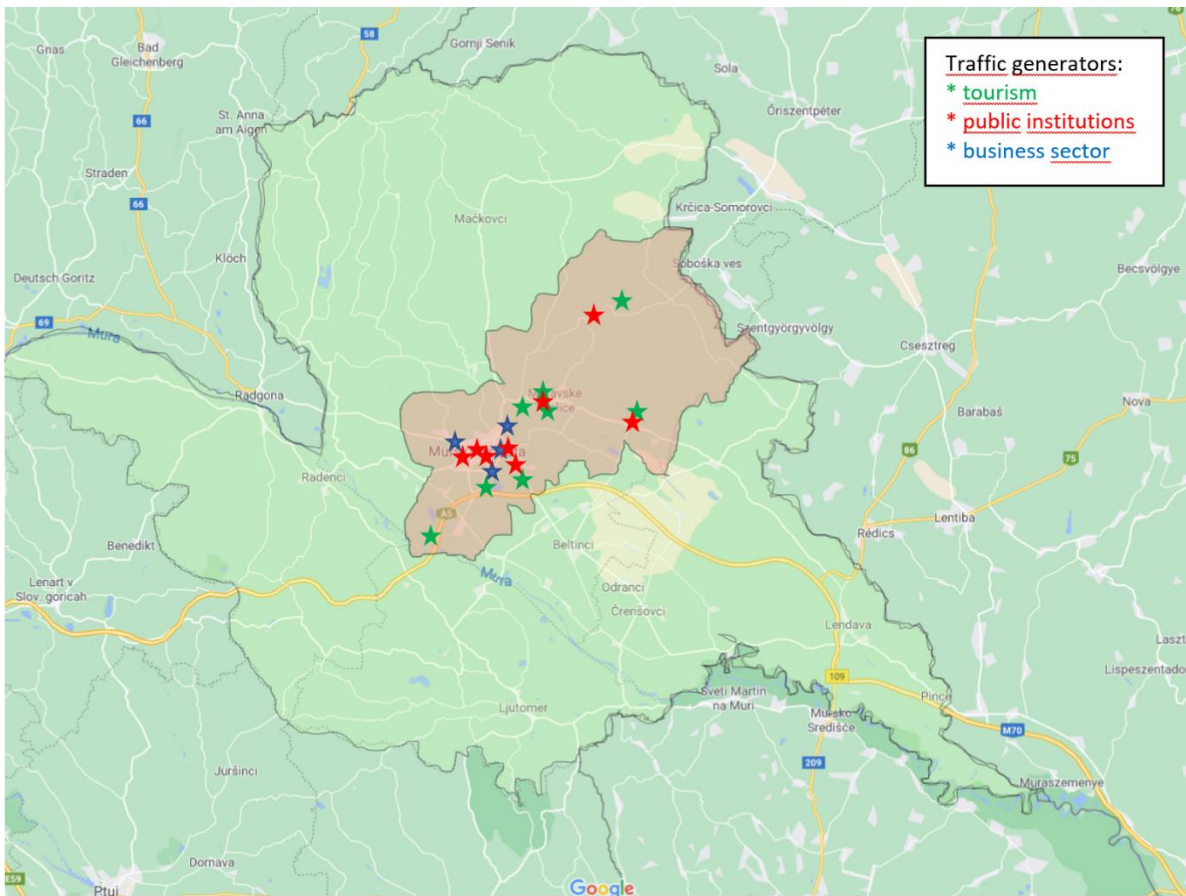


Figure 13. Locations of main traffic generators in the core area



5. Mapping the governance framework and relevant actors

5.1 Planning and regulatory framework

In 2008, Murska Sobota was the first municipality in Slovenia to adopt the Plan for Sustainable Mobility. This format is considered to be the direct predecessor of current integrated transport strategies known as SUMP. In 2009, it was followed by a comprehensive quality assessment and a plan to improve cycling BYPAD (BYcycle Policy AuDit; <http://www.bypad.org/>). In 2013, an assessment of the quality of sustainable mobility was carried out with the QUEST action plan. Murska Sobota adopted the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan in 2017 (published: <https://www.murska-sobota.si/promet-trajnostna-mobilnost>), while the Municipality of Moravske Toplice is planning to prepare its own SUMP in the near future.

In 2019, the Municipality of Moravske Toplice organised an urban planning workshop, which also focused on traffic and mobility in the centre of Moravske Toplice and the problem of tourist mobility, generated by the spas located in the town.

In 2018, within the Danube Pearls Interreg project, the Development Agency Sinergija written the Sustainable Regional Tourism Mobility Plan for Pomurje Region. Furthermore, within the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme, in 2018, an Analysis of Cross-border Public services was conducted in the region and one of the cases was focusing on cross-border public transport. Traffic and mobility are an important part of the Regional Development Plan 2021-2027 for Pomurje as well. The plan focuses on sustainable mobility and is emphasising especially the prospects of public transport and mobility-as-a-service (MaaS).

5.2 Identification of Stakeholders and key target groups

The key stakeholders or target groups identified in the attached Excel file are:

- Municipalities (local public authority): City Municipality of Murska Sobota, Municipality of Moravske Toplice
- Regional development or sectoral agencies (regional public authority): Development centre Murska Sobota, Regional Promotion Centre Expano
- Businesses (SMEs): Sava Hotels & Resorts
- Infrastructure and (public) service provider: Avtobusni promet Murska Sobota
- Tourism support organizations (sectoral agencies): Institute for Culture, Tourism and Sports Murska Sobota (ZKTŠ), Tourist Information Center Moravske Toplice (TIC MT)

Stakeholders and target groups can be divided into four key groups:

- (Public) support and policy organizations that administer the policy framework and participate in the implementation of policies and strategies at a local or regional level.
- Providers of mobility services, such as concessionaires for public transport (Avtobusni promet Murska Sobota, Slovenske železnice) or service providers (AvantCar, Prostofer, Soboški biciklin, etc.)
- Traffic generators, which fall into three key groups (see also Fig. 13):
 - Tourism (spas in Moravske Toplice: Sava Hotels & Resorts and Vivat; Soboško jezero (Sobota Lake) as a micro-destination hosting the Regional Promotion Centre Expano; POIs: Bogojina, Martjanci, the Mura River, Rakičan, Polana; regional cultural institutions - Pomurje Regional Museum, Regional Gallery in Murska Sobota, Regional and Study Library (PIŠK), Youth Centre MIKK Murska Sobota, Murska Sobota Park Theatre)
 - Business entities (SOIC business zone, an industrial area in the east part of Murska Sobota; larger shopping centres: BTC, Maximus, Mercator centre, TUŠ Bakovska)
 - Public institutions (Murska Sobota Regional General Hospital in Rakičan, Murska Sobota Administrative Unit, Murska Sobota Local and District Courts, both municipalities in the core area, schools and school centres)
- Users or the general public, where it is especially important to emphasise the location and the time component of travel: tourists have different mobility needs than, e.g., schoolchildren or seniors or daily commuters.



6. SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis below is a consolidated representation of the analysed state of the sustainable mobility in the core area and its surrounding area. The key focus of the analysis is the relation between the transport infrastructure, the behavioural mobility patterns of the local population, and the sustainable mobility planning in the Pomurje region, a part of which are also the core and the surrounding areas.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable planning in most urban centres, including SUMP (not in the rural areas as evidenced in the weaknesses) - Various means of sustainable mobility already present in the area (bus, train, bike-sharing, car-sharing, car-pooling, DRT service for seniors) - Pilot DRT bus service in the area - Several EU-funded projects (completed and ongoing) promoting sustainable mobility and developing new services - Geographically suitable area for cycling - Touristically attractive area - Favourable geo-strategic position - Good highway connectivity with the rest of the country and major urban centres abroad - Quick access to TEN-T 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demographically old area - Modes of sustainable mobility are not integrated - Unhealthy travel habits, low enthusiasm for cycling or walking - 80% of all trips done by car - Lack of sustainable mobility planning in rural areas, no SUMP for Moravske Toplice - No regional authority for planning and managing mobility - Lack of data to analyse demand, needs, and to identify key interventions needed - Public transport connecting urbanized areas only - Public transport limited to peak hours - Low frequency of public transport services - Unattractive passenger rail transport (slow, scarce, costly) - Poorly developed infrastructure for pedestrians and cycling - Inadequate bus and train stops - Buses and trains not suitable for people with reduced mobility - Damaged road surfaces (impact pits, narrow lanes, poorly maintained sidewalks)
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lower costs of mobility based on sustainable modes, relative to car-ownership based mobility - Better quality of life, especially in urban centres - Increased awareness of environmental impacts of mobility - Increased awareness of the importance of active lifestyle - Financial incentives for sustainable mobility aimed at consumers/users - Reduced need for parking areas, more open, green public spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No legislative basis for regional mobility planning, design, and management - More and more non-integrated services - National level of planning neglecting mobility in rural areas - Unaddressed accessibility concerns in planning and architectural design - No feasible first/last mile solutions for rural areas - A gap between strategic planning of sustainable mobility and implementation - Poor awareness of importance of access by public transport to major traffic generators



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less traffic, less damage to road infrastructure - Demonstration of corporate, environmental, and social responsibility - Environmental accreditation and certifications to attract more visitors - EU-funded projects and investments - State funded digitalisation incentives - Meeting policy obligations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A large proportion of public investment in roads and parking facilities - Low motivation of SMEs to participate in sustainable mobility development and promotion - Fear of change - Fear of new technologies and advanced services (MaaS, flexible and DR transport)
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Table 3: SWOT analysis sustainable mobility in the region

The analysis represents the main characteristics of the status of sustainable mobility in the analysed area. Key strengths are the existing local SUMP, many innovative projects, incentives and mobility services, and the favourable geography of the region for cycling. Main identified weaknesses are the region's ageing population, lack of regional mobility planning in the rural areas, and non-integrated modes of sustainable mobility. The opportunities this SWOT analysis emphasises, are mostly related to the environmental factors, the economics of alternatives to personal vehicles, and the general increase in the quality of life related to the strengthened use of sustainable modes of mobility. While the listed threats mostly stress the challenges of uncoordinated planning of sustainable mobility and focusing on infrastructure rather than behavioural change.

The analysis is clearly showing the endogenous potentials for the development of sustainable modes of mobility at both the local and the regional levels, however, it is also emphasising the region's main challenge with this endeavour, that is, its lack of a coordinated and professionally led regional sustainable mobility planning.



7. Policy challenges

Moravske Toplice is a spa municipality, one of the 27 municipalities comprising the Pomurje region, Slovenia. Pomurje is a statistical region at the NUTS3 level without any regional governing and/or legislative body, and it is a part of the East Slovenia region at the NUTS2 level, also without a mandate to govern itself nor to direct policies. Due to this absence of the regional level of government, the policy recommendation can only be directed either at the national level or at the local level.

Most often, the national policies are rather broad in scope and vague on detail, omitting the issues of peripheral areas and micro-mobility (first/last mile issue in particular), while local policies usually focus on a set of very particular challenges in a geographically relatively small area and as such cannot really provide guidelines or offer solutions to “functional areas”. These are larger areas comprised of an urban centre with its rural, geographically scattered periphery and often stretch far beyond the municipal borders.

In 2017, the Government of Slovenia adopted the Strategy for the development of transport in Slovenia till the year 2030 (<https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MzI/Dokumenti/Strategija-razvoja-prometa-v-Republiki-Sloveniji-do-leta-2030.pdf>). The key pillars of its analysis and intended prospective actions are:

- Transport and infrastructure development
- Financing of the transport infrastructure
- Management and maintenance of the transport system, public transport, intelligent transport system, logistics, and alternative fuels infrastructure

As it is possible to gather from the document structure and its mission, the strategy focuses heavily on the infrastructure. Moreover, the strategy is addressing the issues of transport, not mobility. It does not concern itself with the fundamental question of why people need to move around and how they could be moving around in a more sustainable way in the future, perhaps using alternative means of mobility. Rather it is employing conventional methods and an approach focusing on infrastructure.

The strategy’s main areas of proposed actions are: a) further development of the road system (extra lanes on the highway, new motorways to the peripheral areas to boost development etc.), and, b) modernization of the railway infrastructure, primarily for freight transport. The strategy does not establish any meaningful link with the SUMP in urban centres and urbanised municipalities.

The lack of SUMP at the local level in the Municipality of Moravske Toplice has already been mentioned in this document, which is one of the main challenges to tackle. The SUMP for Murska Sobota, at least so far, had no real impact on the actions of the City Administration, and what is key at the policy (and strategic) level, stands on its own without a clear link to any other areas or municipalities in the region. This is another challenge, namely the planning and implementation of the action plan based on the analytical and strategic foundations.

One of key policy challenges is also the absence of an integrated sustainable regional mobility plan, which could resolve the issues of both, the inconsistency of regional mobility planning and the lack of coordination between disparate mobility services in the region.



8. Conclusions and addresses for the Action Plan development

In this analysis, the needs, problems, and some expectations of the follower region in low carbon mobility planning were mapped. The follower region in this case is the Municipality of Moravske Toplice with its neighbouring urban centre, the City Municipality of Murska Sobota, as the core area in the Pomurje region, Slovenia. The analysis also defined the roles of these two municipalities in mobility planning and the challenges at the policy level.

Murska Sobota is a small town, even relative to other towns and cities in Slovenia, however, it is faced with similar challenges as all other regional urban centres. Air pollution, traffic congestions, lack of parking spaces in town, damaged road surfaces, lack of cycling routes and pedestrian zones, limited financial means to subsidise costly public transport etc. are all part of its daily reality. Moravske Toplice are not as heavily affected by all this, however, as its neighbouring municipality, some of Murska Sobota mobility issues spill into Moravske Toplice as well. For this reason, it would be advisable to plan the low carbon or sustainable mobility in cooperation between these two administrative units.

Furthermore, Moravske Toplice is a spa town very popular with the visitors from all over Slovenia and abroad, and this has to be considered when planning the mobility. Majority of the incoming visitors, be it domestic or international, arrive to and move around the region by their personal vehicles. This is a challenge not only affecting Moravske Toplice where most of the spa resorts in the region are located, but most of the municipalities throughout the region.

Tourism-focused mobility could help with bridging the frequency gap in public transport, which is presently one of the key issues. Namely, most of the bus and train lines operate in peak hours on the weekdays, while off-peak hours are underserved, especially in the rural areas removed from the urban centres in the region.

For these reasons, we propose a regionally integrated planning of sustainable mobility including all relevant stakeholders:

Municipalities	All 27 municipalities in the Pomurje region
Tourism sector	SMEs working in tourism (spa resorts in Moravske Toplice, Radenci, Banovci, Lendava, and local service providers and vendors); public agencies working in promotion and management of tourism
Education sector	School centres (primary and secondary)
Major employment centres	Large enterprises with 500 or more employees (Arcont, Carthago, Pomgrad, Elrad etc.); Regional General Hospital
Major commercial centres	BTC Murska Sobota, Maximus Murska Sobota

Table 4: Relevant stakeholders to be included in sustainable mobility planning at the regional level

This approach would foster:

- a) coordinated planning and implementation of mobility services,
- b) coordinated and rationalised investments in infrastructure,
- c) better connectivity at the regional level, both between urban centres in the region and between urban centres and their peripheral areas,
- d) better accessibility of public transport and flexible and demand responsive mobility services in rural areas,



- e) economically feasible mobility solutions to bridge the first/last mile gap, especially in rural areas,
- f) an integrated regional network of mobility, providing the locals and visitors alike with accessible, affordable, reliable, flexible, and user-friendly mobility services.

We thus propose a formation of a common inter-municipal committee - comprising of the Municipality of Moravske Toplice as the biggest Pomurje municipality by area and attracting by far the most visitors and the City Municipality of Murska Sobota as the regional urban centre - with a mission to establish a regional strategic forum on sustainable mobility.

This kind of a regional body including all relevant stakeholders would be best equipped to tackle the issues of local communities and those that are characteristic of the region as a whole. Moreover, this kind of approach could foster more integration between different sustainable modes of transport and encourage further innovation, especially with incorporating DRT as a solution for the first/last mile problem in the rural areas of the Moravske Toplice municipality.



9. References

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10. Annexes

Annex 1 - Stakeholders list