



# WP.T3 - D.T3.3.5

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**Regional Action plans to better integrate  
peripheral areas (Murska Sobota, SI)**

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# 1. Introduction

Remote regions in central Europe share the same risks and issues related to being 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 the challenges that many central European regions face.

The SMACKER project addresses those disparities to promote 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, and main barriers are assessed and addressed by providing solutions that draw on the best international know-how. SMACKER promotes demand-responsive transport services to connect local and regional systems to 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 to achieve more liveable and sustainable environments, better integration of the population to main corridors and better feeding services. 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 share 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, development of an engagement strategy would be necessary.

This document is the Regional Action Plan for the Murska Sobota SMACKER pilot area. It is based on regional and transnational strategies developed in SMACKER WP.T1 and on joint reflection/evaluation of the MURS' pilot results achieved through the pilot action developed in WP.T2. The Regional Action Plan serves the bodies of Regional Government (Council of Region and Regional Development Council) to support common practices in the area and provides hints for planning a better integration of the peripheral area/s in the regional transport system. It also prepares public discussion for mainstreaming the SMACKER achievements into the local policies.

The MURS pilot developed a DRT-service providing flexible bus service to tourist in the region in off-peak hours. The pilot service is connecting two major centres of tourism, Moravske Toplice and Expano, in the region with the regional urban centre of Murska Sobota in a sustainable way, providing a reliable, safe, and demand responsive transportation.

This Regional Action Plan has the objective of providing a strategic framework for the integration of flexible and demand-responsive means of transport in the regional system of public transport, including the DRT-service deployed and tested in the local SMACKER pilot action.

This document is organized following the common SMACKER approach and framework provided in D.T3.3.1. It is composed by ten chapters.

Chapters 2 to 10 present each one a section of the Regional Action Plan, which detail its Aims, Stakeholders to be involved, Key actions to solve the problem/s and to reach the proposed objective/s, Implementation time plan, Risk analysis, Funding resources, Key action monitoring schemes, Key stakeholders' involvement strategies in the medium/long terms, Conclusions.



## 2. Aims

The data and feedback collected in the SMACKER project reflect the needs, problems of the region in low carbon mobility planning, as well as some expectations. The City Municipality of Murska Sobota, as the main urban centre in the Pomurje region, Slovenia, plays the integral role in the regional mobility planning, especially in connection with the neighbouring spa town of Moravske Toplice - the biggest municipality by surface and the region's main centre of tourism.

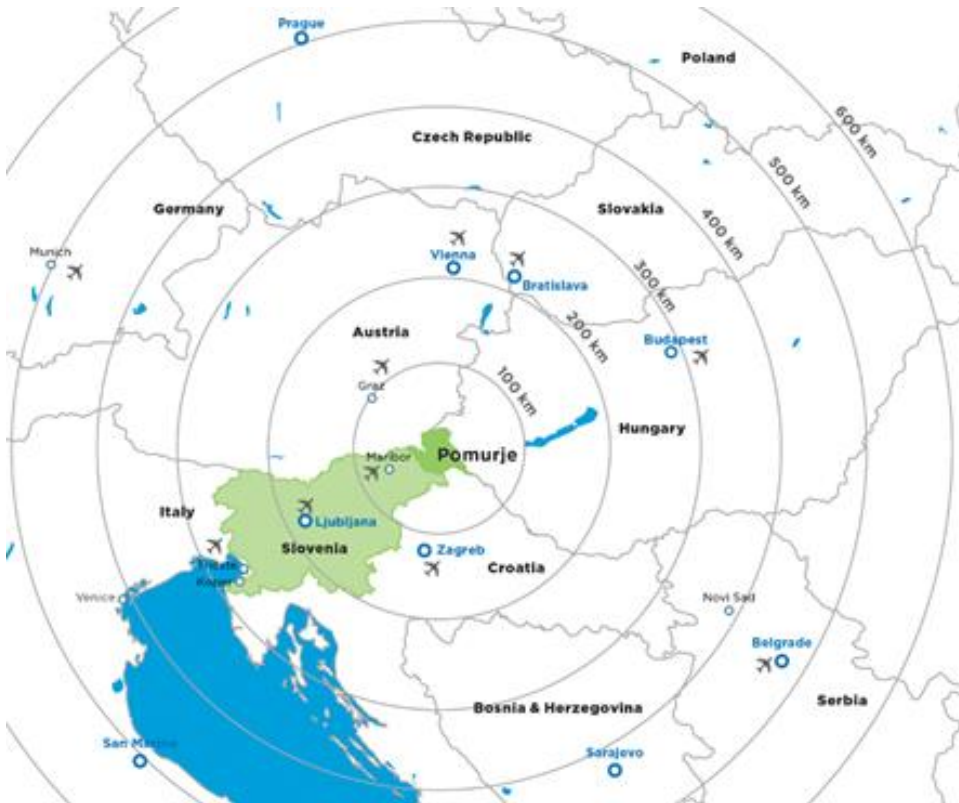


Figure 1: Map representation of the Pomurje region and the surroundings

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 is 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 is sensible to plan the low carbon and sustainable mobility in cooperation between these two units of local government, thus tackling the mobility issues at a micro-regional level with effects in the wider region of Pomurje.

Murska Sobota is the main centre of education, employment, and administration in the region. This makes the city the key starting point for mobility planning, especially in the aspect of daily commuting and issues related to this, i.e, the parking, first/last kilometre etc.

The Municipality of Moravske Toplice devised its own DRT implementation Action Plan as a SMACKER ETP follower region. The Regional Action Plan is fully aligned with the Action Plan of Moravske Toplice since the area it covers overlaps with the Moravske Toplice plan.



**Figure 2: 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.**

Moravske Toplice is a spa town very popular with the visitors from all over Slovenia and abroad, and this must 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 27 municipalities throughout the region.

Tourism-focused sustainable 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, a system of flexible mobility services - with DRT improvement actions at its core - has been envisioned, one that is building on and complementing the service developed within the SMACKER project pilot action for the City Municipality of Murska Sobota, which is connecting spa resorts in Moravske Toplice, the centre of Murska Sobota, and the Regional Promotion Centre Expano by the Sobota Lake on the outskirts of Murska Sobota.

The main objective of the further development of these services is to make public transport in the region more accessible, flexible, and attractive to the users, tourists in particular.

Specific objectives reflecting the identified needs, issues, and expectations are:

- To offer an enhanced innovative system of DRT services to the locals, daily commuters, and visitors in the area.
- To complement the existing DRT bus line developed within the SMACKER project connecting Moravske Toplice, Murska Sobota, and Expano by the Lake Sobota; thus further developing the DRT service in the area.
- To provide efficient and safe public transport in off-peak hours, in times of events, and on the weekends and public holidays when the potential demand for the service is expected to be higher.
- To connect various points of interest in the area by an innovative, environmentally friendly mobility service.
- To make moving around the region easier, environmentally friendlier, and safer.



- To make a visit to the area a pleasurable, safe, and welcoming experience also from the perspectives of mobility and accessibility.

Key priorities are as follows:

- The primary target group of potential users are visitors to the events taking place in Murska Sobota, the spa resorts of Moravske Toplice, and the daily visitors to the region using the Regional Promotion Centre Expano by the Lake Sobota as their starting point.
- The DRT service will connect various points of interest in the area which are attracting considerable numbers of tourists and daily visitors.
- The functionality and accessibility of the service are the main concern of planning of the service.
- The service is to be planned, provided, promoted, and managed in close cooperation with all key stakeholders to ensure its functionality and an excellent user experience.



### 3. Stakeholders to be involved

The main stakeholders identified in the scope of the wider region of Murska Sobota are the two biggest municipalities (Local public authorities): the Municipality of Moravske Toplice and the City Municipality of Murska Sobota. The former is the largest by area in the region of Pomurje and is the touristic centre of the region, while the latter has the highest population in the region and is the urban, educational, economic, and administrative centre of the region. Both are representing a local authority.

Furthermore, the following stakeholders were identified:

- Regional development or sectoral agencies [SMACKER target group: Regional public authority]
  - Development Centre Murska Sobota, as Regional Development Agency for the Pomurje Region
  - Murska Sobota Centre for Health and Development
  - Regional Promotion Centre Expano
- Businesses (SMEs) [SMACKER target group: SME]
  - Sava Hotels & Resorts
  - Hotel Vivat
  - Pomurje Chamber of Commerce
- Educational Institutions [SMACKER target group: Education/training centre and school]
  - Education Centre Murska Sobota
- Infrastructure and (public) service provider [SMACKER target group: Infrastructure and (public) service provider]
  - Avtobusni promet Murska Sobota (bus service provider)
  - Arriva (bus service provider)
  - Slovenske železnice (train service provider)
- Tourism support organizations (sectoral agencies) [SMACKER target group: Other]
  - Agency for Culture, Tourism and Sports Murska Sobota (ZKTŠ)
  - Tourist Information Center Moravske Toplice (TIC MT)

Stakeholders and target groups are 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 (the City Municipality of Murska Sobota and the Municipality of Moravske Toplice).
- Providers of mobility services, such as concessionaires for public transport (Avtobusni promet Murska Sobota, Arriva, Slovenske železnice) or service providers (AvantCar, Prostofer, Soboški biciklin, etc.)
- Traffic generators, which fall into three key groups:
  - Tourism (spas in Moravske Toplice: Sava Hotels & Resorts; 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 of the DRT service, where it is especially important to emphasize the location and the time component of travel: tourists have different mobility needs than, e.g., schoolchildren or seniors or daily commuters.

The role of different stakeholders depends on the phase of the implementation of actions. In the planning phase, the most important role lies with local authorities. There must be political support and will for such actions because tangible results will not be visible right after the implementation but after a longer period. Financial support of local authorities must be insured for the launch of the service.

The City Municipality of Murska Sobota allocates funds specifically for investments in sustainable mobility every year, and the City Administration is well aware of the need for cross-municipal and regional coordination and cooperation in the matters of mobility. Especially because of the city’s central geolocation and role in the region, which impacts the daily commuting patterns of the workforce and schoolchildren.

Some of the income of the Municipality of Moravske Toplice is generated through the tourist tax, paid by every visitor staying overnight. These funds can be in part used for promotional and nudging activities of the DRT service in the Municipality of Moravske Toplice. Because of a more attractive offer in the Municipality more tourists are expected and therefore more income through tourist tax paid is foreseen.

The Development Centre of Murska Sobota is well equipped to coordinate some of the activities and oversee the promotional campaign. The Development Centre is in regular contact with the SMEs, public institutions, and local communities in the region, and has an extensive network of contacts with partners from abroad who can serve as an inspiration for innovation and novel initiatives introduced to the region. The Centre is also very active in interacting with the local population due to different events and communication campaigns.

Providers of mobility services will be included in the planning and implementation phase. There is a crucial need for direct insight into different possibilities and capabilities of the DRT service for public transport in the planning phase to foresee different scenarios and, most importantly, to calculate the costs. During the implementation phase, the mobility service will provide the necessary infrastructure.

The hotels and spas in the area are also very important stakeholders. The Municipality of Moravske Toplice as the municipality with most visitors in the region must consider involving these in the mobility planning. The hotels and spas (and other accommodation providers in the area) will be directly included in the planning of services as entry points for the foreseen system of DRT services.

**Table 1: Stakeholders, their roles, and involvement**

| SMACKER TARGET GROUP   | STAKEHOLDERS   | KEY ROLE   | INVOLVEMENT SO FAR                                  | FUTURE ROLE   |
|------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Local public authority | City Municipality of Murska Sobota, Municipality of Moravske Toplice | Political support, local promotion and coordination, funding | Active - political support and community engagement | Key role in planning, development, funding, and promotion |



| SMACKER TARGET GROUP                         | STAKEHOLDERS   | KEY ROLE  | INVOLVEMENT SO FAR                   | FUTURE ROLE                                    |
|--|--|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| Regional public authority                    | Development Centre Murska Sobota, Regional Promotion Centre Expano | Coordination between stakeholders, promotion at regional level    | Active - leading the process         | Support role with planning and development     |
| Infrastructure and (public) service provider | APMS, Slovenske železnice, Arriva                                  | Service provision, planning, development, integration of services | Active - data sharing and planning   | Service provision, data collection and sharing |
| SME  | Sava Hotels & Resorts, Hiša Tara, SOIC, BTC, Maximus               | Promotion and engagement of users                                 | Active - communication and promotion | Promotion and engagement of users              |
| Education/training centre and school         | Education Centre Murska Sobota                                     | Promotion and engagement of users                                 | Active - communication and promotion | Promotion and engagement of users              |
| Other  | ZKTŠ M. Sobota, TIC M. Toplice                                     | Promotion and engagement of users                                 | Active - communication and promotion | Promotion and engagement of users              |



## 4. Key actions to solve the problem/s and to reach the proposed objective/s

Three crucial short-term steps are envisioned for the implementation of the action plan:

### Step 1.

The main activity is the establishment of a DRT bus service for tourism purposes, which, in addition to the group of visitors (tourists) in the area, could also benefit the local population. The DRT service will complement the existing service already implemented within the SMACKER project.

This solution is especially suitable for tourists since it allows easy and cost-competitive visits to the urban centre of Murska Sobota, the town centre, cultural institutions, and events and to many of the tourist attractions (POIs) nearby, especially during off-peak hours when there is a gap in the timetables of conventional mobility providers.

Such a solution will enable the local population to use a more sustainable means for recreational, cultural, and other leisure purposes, such as access to shops and entertainment. The DRT-service will provide a safe and low-cost alternative to visiting events (concerts, sport events etc.) by cars. Some locals will benefit from it, being a solution for commuting to work that is not in line with the most of PT schedules.

This activity, which is foreseen in the form of a special bus that runs during the off-peak hours, mainly on the weekends and in the evening in seasons of higher concentration of events, according to the needs of users, in particular tourists and locals with non-regular schedule needs, and on a particular route and provides quick access to the key points of interest (spas, city centre, shopping centres, regional promotion centre EXPANO, other tourist attractions etc.).

To implement this step, it is necessary to establish appropriate contacts with all the key stakeholders. As already described in Chapter 3, the key stakeholders for this purpose are the two local communities (municipalities), key tourism stakeholders (Hotels & Spas, Expanso, shopping centres) and the DRT line contractor (the bus company).

Monitoring user needs (with a survey or relevant mobility studies) and adapting to traffic flows (speed and accessibility) is key to determining the exact bus line and stops, as shown in Image 1. The proposed test line will connect Moravske Toplice (Sava Hotels & Resorts, Hotel Vivat) as the centre of tourism in the region, Bukovnica Lake - a natural area rich with recreation and relaxation options, Romanic Rotunda of Saint Nikolaj - a gem of cultural heritage, Murska Sobota town centre as the urban centre of the region, and the Regional Promotional Centre Expanso as the gateway to the rest of the region.

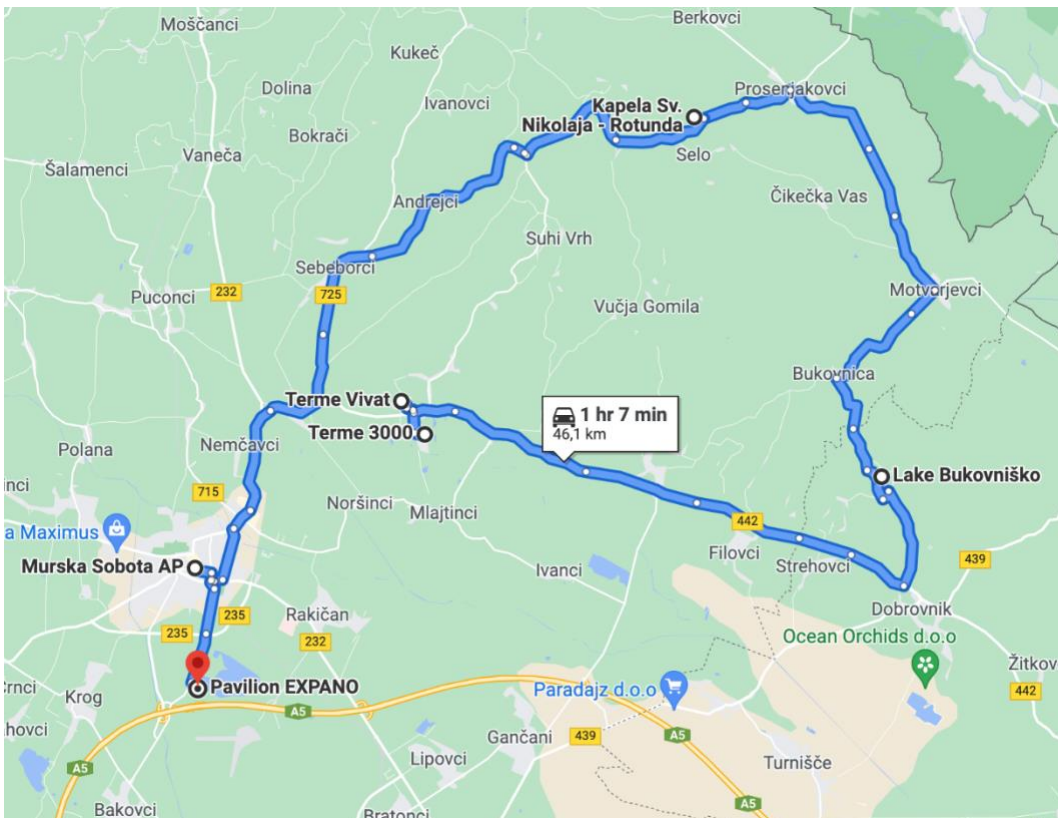


Figure 3: Proposed DRT bus line with stops

### Step 2.

The main measure taken in this pilot action also needs to be linked to parallel measures, such as ensuring adequate access to the DRT service through easy use of the ICT-assisted DRT service, a complementary micro-mobility scheme that upgrades the backbone, and connecting appropriate user interfaces for both.

The complementary mobility scheme could include the use of (e-)bicycles, based on the configuration of the terrain, which is mostly flat, and the short distance to other (final) destinations in the vicinity of the mobility hubs and the DRT service stops. This is also feasible due to the existent and foreseen network of cycling connections (cycle paths), and due to the already well established “Soboški biciklin” bicycle scheme, which should be sensibly expanded with additional stops and upgraded with a more seamless and user-friendly user application. This last should also be connected to the ICT supporting the DRT service.

To perform this step, it is necessary to upgrade the existing bicycle rental scheme with additional locations and to upgrade the app. These activities require inter-municipal cooperation and close work with the manager of the bike rental service (ZKTŠ).

### Step 3.

The key complementary activity is a thorough communication campaign and promotion of both, the planned DRT service and the associated micro-mobility services and user-friendly solutions. Because every DRT service responds to user requirements, preferences, and mobility needs, understanding these is key for a proper operation of the service. In addition to easy use and seamless user experience, comprehensive pre- and in-use analytics is needed to adjust and fine-tune the DRT service to the user needs.

The participation of local communities is crucial for the planning, analysis, and promotion. The cooperation of key tourist providers (Expanso, spas, shopping centres) and tourist information centres in the promotion activities has also been foreseen.

A long-term plan includes these actions:



1. A thorough analysis of further needs for flexible and demand-responsive mobility to design a comprehensive system of DRT-based public transport and regional mobility. The analysis must be based on high quality data, users' feedback, and the inputs from the key regional stakeholders.
2. A regional consensus must be met on how to further develop the public transport system, the DRT services in particular. This is crucial, since the local communities will have to provide the political support, necessary funding, and will have to guarantee a high level of visibility and attractiveness of these innovative mobility services in their communities. A close cooperation of all relevant stakeholders is a must.
3. The coordinating parties involved with the mobility planning in the region will work closely together to integrate the newly deployed services with the existing services. The mobility in the region must function as a whole - only comprehensive planning will lead to integrated services and happy users.



## 5. Implementation time plan

In the following table, all relevant steps and actions of the action plan implementation are linked to a time frame. Since it is difficult at this stage to clearly define a deadline for the implementation of the foreseen steps and actions, the table reflects the expected temporal framework for the three identified phases of the implementation - the Planning phase, Implementation phase, and the Follow-up phase - and the progression of specific actions and steps through time.

It has been established, that the implementation of another DRT service in the region - under the given political, administrative, financial, and operational conditions - necessitates 36 months to be completed, after which the Follow-up phase actions are envisaged. Regardless of the lengthy implementation procedures, the new DRT service can be implemented and start operating immediately after the Planning phase, that is, in month 7, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Implementation time plan

| Activity   | Months         |     |   |                      |       |       |       |                 |   |   |
|--|----------------|-----|---|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|---|---|
|  | 1-3            | 4-5 | 6 | 7-12                 | 13-18 | 19-24 | 25-36 | 36 +            |   |   |
|  | Planning phase |     |   | Implementation phase |       |       |       | Follow-up phase |   |   |
| Stakeholder involvement                              | X              | X   | X |                      |       |       |       | X               | X | X |
| Research and analysis of needs                       | X              |     |   |                      |       |       |       |                 |   |   |
| Planning of DRT solution                             |                | X   | X |                      |       |       |       |                 |   |   |
| Promotion  |                |     | X | X                    | X     | X     | X     | X               | X | X |
| Pilot implementation                                 |                |     |   | X                    | X     |       |       |                 |   |   |
| IT development                                       |                |     |   | X                    |       | X     |       |                 |   |   |
| Promotion  |                |     |   | X                    | X     | X     | X     | X               | X | X |
| Additional services development                      |                |     |   |                      | X     |       |       |                 | X | X |
| Additional services synchronisation                  |                |     |   |                      |       | X     |       |                 | X | X |
| Cost-benefit analysis and user satisfaction analysis |                |     |   |                      |       | X     |       | X               |   | X |
| New services development                             |                |     |   |                      |       |       |       |                 | X |   |
| New lines planing                                    |                |     |   |                      |       |       |       | X               |   | X |



## 6. Risk analysis

Through the process of preparing the Action Plan, different scenarios were envisioned, in which various negative issues arise. These can affect the Action Plan implementation for different reasons, be it due to the negative trends in public transport and tourism in the future, or some circumstances conditioning and directly affecting the region, e.g., natural disasters, pandemics, or public safety issues.

In Table 3, key risk factors are identified and assessed, and possible solutions are briefly outlined. Below the table, the identified risk factors are shortly described.

Table 3: Risk factors

| RISK FACTOR   | LOW / MEDIUM / HIGH | POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS   |
|---|---------------------|---|
| Aversion to technology  | Medium              | User friendly interface and instructions and nudging activities   |
| Poor perception of public transport   | Medium              | Strong media and promotion campaign, provide good reliability of the service  |
| Hight cost of system set-up   | Medium              | Cofounding by municipality<br>Cofounding by EU funds  |
| Pandemic  | High                | Postpone activities   |
| Ban on public gatherings and events   | Medium              | Postpone activities   |
| Fear of dependence on PT (as opposed to the independence provided by personal vehicles) | Medium              | Promotion of public transport and highlighting the benefits of using PT, high quality DRT-services, nudging activities, and attractive offers |
| Safety  | Low                 | Education/promotion - PT as a safer option than PV  |

**Aversion to technology:** Broad, fast, data-rich apps and platforms are very usefull in our everyday life. A given with IT is that there will always be surprise problems and unexpected benefits. Aversion to technology is surprisingly common. In fact, some experts believe that we all suffer at least a small amount of nervousness when confronted with new technology. Traditionally, teens and young adults are the first to embrace new products and the first to become proficient with them, followed shortly by younger children. Adults are generally somewhat slower to adopt new technologies, and some seniors may never embrace them. Technology must be easy and intuitive to use for the majority of the user groups - or they will not use it. The staff of the Info centres and hotels where the DRT-booking stand are places must be available to help the users with booking and to answer all the questions related to the service and the technology supporting it.

**Poor perception of public transport:** Public transport is considered slow, unreliable, and inflexible. To make public transport an attractive and everyday choice for residents and tourist the service must be well designed, while physical and cultural barriers must be dealt with innovative approaches, especially after the disruptive trends following the COVID-19 pandemic. High quality public transport services are reliable, frequent, fast, comfortable, accessible, convenient, affordable, and safe, serving routes for which there is demand. A comprehensive and innovative promotion campaign with nudging activities can attract more users and encourage them to try out new means of mobility on offer.

**Hight cost of the system set-up:** The ICT infrastructure that would provide the basis for all innovative means of mobility and PT is costly and takes a lot of political support in order to be funded. The service



must be cost efficient if the shift from PV to PT is supposed to happen. There are public funds available for projects, solutions, and service supporting these transitions, which can be very helpful in such cases.

**Pandemic:** The COVID-19 pandemic largely impacted public transport and other modes of sustainable/shared mobility. Many countries advised that public transport should only be used when essential; passenger numbers fell drastically, and services were reduced. The provision of a reasonable service for the much smaller number of fare-paying passengers incurred large financial losses. Protective measures such as obligatory mask-wearing and spacing of passengers where possible were introduced, and ventilation and sanitation (disinfection) implemented. Protection required passengers and operators to make many changes to the way they operated and behaved. In case of another pandemic, the activities will have to be adapted to the situation and some of them postponed.

**Ban on public gatherings and events:** Mass gatherings and events are hotspots of infectious disease diffusion and can lead to a surge of cases. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced authorities and governments to reassess their approach to these gatherings. This has an impact on the service when the transport is used for visiting events. In case of further bans on public gatherings and events, the activities will have to be adapted to the situation and some of them postponed.

**Fear of dependence on PT:** Public transport dependent groups in both rural and urban peripheral areas are often faced with difficulties reaching key activities and destinations. Fear of dependence on PT (as opposed to the independence provided by personal vehicles) is therefore a relevant risk factor. Accessibility of services has decreased over time in places where there have been the most significant reductions in bus services. To tackle this issue, the communication activities promoting the use of public transport must focus on highlighting the benefits of using PT in environmental, social, and economic aspects, and employ innovative nudging activities and provide users with attractive offers.

**Safety:** Safety and security aspects in public transport operation are very important, as public transport closely relates to human lives on a larger scale or in greater numbers as many passengers happen to be riding in one vehicle. Public transport vehicles in Slovenia are well maintained and are subjected to regular safety and compliance inspection. Another safety aspect is that using PT means less cars on the roads which increases road safety, and in this particular case, using PT instead of PV further increases road safety because of the potential lower rate of intoxicated drivers on the roads. This aspect should also be communicated to the potential users.



## 7. Funding resources

The funding resources are divided in two main categories: funding for the short-term core activities and funding for additional activities:

### 1. The core activities (the new DRT service and promotion):

The core activities include the DRT service with additional public transport line, the promotion of the DRT service and an integration of the IT based tool for users with maintenance.

The estimation of the core activities budget is 48.000,00 EUR per year.

The core activities are planned to be financed from the following sources:

- Revenues from the DRT service: 6.000,00 EUR
- Funding for promotion from the private sector: 4.000,00 EUR
- National government subsidies: 9.000,00 EUR
- Local communities: 29.000,00 EUR

### 2. The additional activities (micro-mobility):

The additional activities are mostly focused on the upgrading and developing additional micro-mobility solutions and services. These include the upgrade of the cycling paths in both local communities and the development of the network of micro-mobility hubs in communities to reach the most of users traveling for short distance (walking distance - max. 2 kilometres). It is important to upgrade the user experience (ease of use, IT support, the integration of apps and combined ticketing).

The estimation of budget for these activities is 5,4 million EUR for in the period of 5 years.

Most of the budget (4,1 mil EUR) is for the upgrade of the cycling paths - partly for building new ones, and approximately one quarter of the budget for the renovation of existing paths to make them more cyclist-friendly and thus promote the use of the routes.

1,1 mil EUR is planned for the development of micro-mobility hubs (new bike rental and bike sharing locations, additional cycling stands and information boards with IT solutions for the users). A part of the budget is to be spent for the maintenance of the existing network.

The rest of the budget (0,2 mil EUR) is planned to be spent on the integration of various mobility services and the IT support for the users.

The main sources of the budget are:

- EU grants: 3,2 mil EUR
- National government grants: 1,1 mil EUR
- Local communities: 1,0 mil EUR
- Revenues from the users and contribution from the private sector: 0,1 mil EUR



## 8. Key action monitoring schemes

In Table 4 and Table 5, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been defined. These are to be adopted to monitor the implementation of the short-term core activities of the Regional Action Plan after the SMACKER project conclusion. The KPIs were selected in accordance with the data available for monitoring and the tracking of changes.

Table 4 lists the must-have-KPIs, while Table 5 lists the nice-to-have-KPIs as defined within the SMACKER project. All KPIs refer to the current DRT-lines available in the core area.

Table 4: Must-have-KPIs

| KPI GENERAL CATEGORY                              | INDICATORS   | TARGET VALUE |
|---|--|--------------|
| Quality of public transport/ DRT                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased average number of operating hours per day      | 20 %         |
|   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased average number seat kilometres offered per day | 15 %         |
| Usage of supply in the course of the pilot action | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increase of DRT/ public transport users per day          | 25 %         |

Table 5: Nice-to-have-KPIs

| KPI GENERAL CATEGORY                 | INDICATORS   | TARGET VALUE |
|--------------------------------------|--|--------------|
| Quantity of public transport lines X | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Number of operating PT-lines [number]                                | 2            |
| Online booking tool                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Number or % of DRT bookings via online booking tool [bookings/month] | 80 %         |



## 9. Key stakeholders' involvement strategies

The identified stakeholders will be included throughout the process in different stages of the implementation of the Regional Action Plan.

For the preparation or definition of the main tools and strategies, the key stakeholders - mostly members of the Local Mobility Forum established within SMACKER - will be invited to take part in workshops on sustainable mobility in the region.

All the relevant stakeholders involved in the planning and implementation of the Regional Action Plan will devise and sign a Memorandum of Understanding. This document will outline the aims and expected results of the involved stakeholders.

The workshops will be organised and coordinated by the Murska Sobota SMACKER Local Team (MURS), since the staff working in this team gained extensive knowledge and expertise on mobility related issues and innovation in mobility solutions with the SMACKER project, and other activities within various cross-border and transnational projects at both, the local and the regional level.

Each participating organisation will appoint one contact person who will be available for information, feedback, or other relevant actions and support. The City Municipality of Murska Sobota will oversee the planning and implementation phases of the action in close collaboration with the Development Centre Murska Sobota. Both local communities already agreed to start the processes of applying for public funding for setting up the flexible mobility services when relevant public calls will be available. The Development Centre has experience in promotional activities and will oversee the promotional and communication campaign.

Avtobusni promet Murska Sobota (APMS) is the biggest public transport provider in the region of Pomurje. APMS is very interested in DRT solutions, and they already participate in the pilot activity for the DRT in the City Municipality of Murska Sobota within the SMACKER project. The representative of the bus service provider welcomed the initiative of transferring the results from the SMACKER project into other territories of their operation and expressed APMS' willingness to cooperate also in the preparation phase of the activities and provide crucial information regarding possibilities and capabilities of the DRT service for public transport in the planning phase to foresee different scenarios and, most importantly, calculate the costs. During the implementation phase APMS will provide the necessary infrastructure.

Other stakeholders, most importantly the largest accommodation provider in the region, Sava Hotels & Resorts, welcome the idea and recognize the added value for their offer to the visitors. It was agreed that the hotels and spas will be considered as entry/starting points of the forthcoming DRT services in the region.



## 10. Conclusions

The Regional Action Plan in the greater region of Murska Sobota, Slovenia, outlines the action planning process with a clear objective of providing a roadmap for the further development of DRT services as part of the integrated system of public transport in the identified geographical area.

The local SMACKEAR team (MURS), the selected external technical experts, and relevant stakeholders have designed a plan for a tourism-focused mobility service which could help bridge the frequency gap in public transport, which is presently one of the key issues in the area. For these reasons, a DRT improvement action has been envisioned, one that is building on and complementing the service developed within the SMACKER project pilot action for the City Municipality of Murska Sobota, which is connecting spa resorts in Moravske Toplice, the centre of Murska Sobota, and the Regional Promotion Centre Expano by the Sobota Lake on the outskirts of Murska Sobota.

The main objective of the further development of this service is to make public transport in the region more accessible, flexible, and attractive to the users.

Accordingly, the proposed DRT service runs past and stops at some of the key points of interest in the respective micro-region. That is why the primary target group of potential users are visitors to the spa resorts of Moravske Toplice and daily visitors to the region using the Regional Promotion Centre Expano by the Lake Sobota as their starting point. However, the service would be a welcome addition to the otherwise scarce public transport availability in off-peak hours and on the weekends for locals as well.

The main stakeholders identified in region are two local communities, the City Municipality of Murska Sobota and the Municipality of Moravske Toplice and. Besides these local administrations, other relevant stakeholders have been involved, including development agencies, tourist info centres, accommodation providers, bus service operators, education centres, other relevant sectoral agencies, etc. The role of each individual stakeholder depends on the phase of the implementation of actions and steps.

The Regional Action Plan envisions three crucial steps for the implementation of the action. The establishment of a DRT bus service primarily for tourism purposes; parallel measures, such as ICT-assisted DRT app and a complementary micro-mobility scheme that upgrades the backbone; and promotional and communication activities.

Three phases of the implementation were identified - the Planning phase, Implementation phase, and the Follow-up phase. The implementation of the DRT service would take 36 months to be completed, after which the Follow-up phase actions are envisaged. Nevertheless, the pilot DRT service can be implemented and start operating immediately after the Planning phase, that is, in month 7.

Several risks were identified that could disrupt the implementation process of the activities, the main ones are aversion to technology; poor perception of public transport; high cost of the system set-up; pandemics; ban on public gatherings and events; fear of dependence on PT; and safety issues. The Action Plan outlines possible solutions for all of these.

Possible funding resources for the implementation of this DRT service were divided in two main categories: funding for the core activities, estimated costs of 48.000,00 EUR per year, and funding for additional activities, estimated costs of 5,4 million EUR for a 5-year period.

Key action monitoring schemes were discussed and are to be evaluated with a set of must-have-KPIs and nice-to-have-KPIs, as defined within the SMACKER project.

All the relevant stakeholders will continue the work within an enlarged LMF to discuss and share insight on the planned DRT service. The identified stakeholders will sign a Memorandum of Understanding and will be included throughout the process in different stages of the implementation of the expanded DRT service/network, in order to achieve all the specific objectives as defined by this Action Plan.



## 11. References

1. SMACKER Application Form, Version 30 April 2021
2. SMACKER “D.T1.2.4 Methodology for stakeholders involvement and creation of Local Mobility Forum (LMF)”, September 2019
3. SMACKER “D.T1.2.8 Creating Communities (MURS, SI)”, January 2020
4. SMACKER “D.T1.2.11 Methodology for data collection on users mobility needs”, November 2019
5. SMACKER “D.T1.2.15 Data collection on users mobility needs (MURS, SI)”, March 2020
6. SMACKER “D.T1.2.21 Review for matching needs and services for a comprehensive planning (MURS, SI)”, April 2020
7. SMACKER “D.T1.2.24 Transnational review for matching needs and services for a comprehensive planning”, July 2020
8. SMACKER “D.T2.2.2 Stakeholders and users group involvement”, February 2020
9. SMACKER “D.T2.2.6 Pilot action planning (MURS, SI)”, August 2020
10. SMACKER “D.T2.3.5 Pilot measures implementation - Murska Sobota (SI) - Demand responsive transport based on real time information system”, April 2022
11. SMACKER “D.T2.4.4 Pilot action monitoring - Murska Sobota, (SI)”, April 2022
12. SMACKER “D.T2.4.10 Pilot action evaluation - Murska Sobota, (SI)”, April 2022