



## Midttrafik, DRT

Trip booking, planning and daily operation of DRT for elderly and handicapped persons in the Municipality of Aarhus.



*"Planning used to take 15 hours, it now takes only two. We now have a much better work situation, better planning, better service for our customers and we have even obtained savings."*

**Merete L. Nielsen**

**Daily Manager**

**Midttrafik, centre for booking and dispatching**

### THE ORGANISATION

Midttrafik, formerly known as Århus Sporveje, manages the planning and operation of public transport in the Municipality of Aarhus. Disabled and elderly citizens who are unable to use the regular public transport services are entitled to a certain number of trips per year within the Municipality of Århus. The trips are planned and administered by the former Århus Sporveje's Handicap Office, now Midttrafik. This service covers transport to leisure activities, family visits and the like. Trips can be booked and cancelled in the period from approx. 5:00 am to 1:00 am, and they are charged at normal public transport rates. Aarhus Fire Department manages orders outside normal office hours, ie 5:00 pm to 7:30 am on weekdays and from 4:00 pm to 8:00 am on weekends and holidays.

### ISSUE

The centre for booking and dispatching had an

IT system for booking and Planning, which was more than 17 years old. At the beginning, there were 30 to 40 daily trips, and the scheme was reserved for the physically disabled. In 2004 the scheme was expanded to also include sick elderly citizens.

The number of trips subsequently rose dramatically, and the old system was no longer suitable to ensure sensible and appropriate planning. The daily planning work was hectic and often resulted in a chaotic atmosphere towards the end of the afternoon when the planning of the trips was to be finished and the trips were reported by phone to the coach operators/drivers.

It took about 15 hours to plan a single day's driving. The trips were printed out on really long lists, which were placed on the floor so

the planners could be able to get an overview of the lists comprising 300 to 400 trips. Each trip on the list was allocated a number indicating which vehicle was to drive the trip. Only the planners' extremely good knowledge of the local area and their extensive experience made it possible to prepare decent schedules. The trips were reported to the coach operators/drivers by phone and this took quite a long time as there was only one list and therefore only one person could use the list at a time. Mistakes were often made when communicating: misheard information, overlooked trips or reading mistakes. When a trip had been assigned to a coach operator it would be ticked off manually. In the afternoons, it was a major challenge assigning all the trips by phone before closing time.

Besides the problems involved with extensive planning and mistakes when assigning the trips by phone, the fact that information was lost between two chairs also caused a lot of problems. Verbal messages from a driver or a customer to an employee were not always registered e.g. when drivers phoned in changes to plans. There were countless problems and it therefore became necessary to find a system solution to ease the planning work.

### SNAPSHOT

Company: Owned by the Municipality of Aarhus, Århus Sporveje's Handicap Office is responsible for the planning and operation of handicap transport in the Municipality of Aarhus.

Number of referred users:	approx. 3,600
Number of trips per day:	approx. 400
The Trapeze System's main tasks:	Booking, planning and operation of handicap transport with the system solution PASS

## THE SOLUTION

The centre for booking and dispatching chose an ASP/Hosting architecture where the actual operation lies with Trapeze and its hosting partner. This ensures maximum system uptime for The centre for booking and dispatching, and it also means that the staff at the centre for booking and dispatching do not need special IT competencies, allowing them to focus on just using the system. The centre for booking and dispatching and Trapeze signed a contract in summer 2005 and in September 2005 the implementation process and the training of employees were launched. All employees received training in both booking and planning, and two employees received super-user training.

## DAILY OPERATION

The system was operationalised without problems at the beginning of December 2005. "From day one, the employees have been extremely satisfied with the system and they have all experienced it as an immense help. Not having to work in a stressful and hectic atmosphere has been a great relief, and we are now able to plan the schedule for next day in a mere 2 hours," says Daily Manager, Merete L. Nielsen. "We have faster response times on the phones and we now serve customers much more quickly.

Proposed trips appear on the screen in seconds, something which used to take minutes. If possible, trips must be booked the preceding day before 4:00 pm, but same-day trips booked 2 hours before pickup are also accepted." "We carry out the planning with three batch runs during the day in order to optimise the schedules. After the batch runs at 8:00 am, we order a number of vehicles from the coach operator for next day's driving, and the final adjustments to the bookings are made after the last batch run at 4:00 pm. PASS is very good at filling up the vehicles and planning expedient trips."

The centre for booking and dispatching has a permanent arrangement with 5 coach operators. Trips exceeding the operators' capacities are managed by cab firms. PASS automatically plans the schedules so it is primarily short, cheap trips that are driven by cab. The somewhat longer schedules are divided between the permanent vehicles. Now the driving lists are

printed out and faxed to the coach operators. A lot of communication errors have thereby been eliminated. In January 2006, approx. 30 per cent fewer cab trips were booked compared with January 2005, which is before the Trapeze system was fully implemented and that constitutes considerable savings. Moreover, the individual trips have become cheaper.

"We are operating with a margin of +10 minutes on a pickup. It has not yet been documented whether we have become better at meeting pickup times, but fewer complaints suggest that more customers are picked up within the agreed time," says Merete L. Nielsen. Where a problem arises in meeting the driving times, the drivers call the centre for booking and dispatching, which solves the problem. The drivers have also noted positive changes resulting from the new system. Work has become much easier for them due to the messages and printed driving lists. The GIS coding gives the drivers very precise information on the clients' addresses and this helps them meet the pickup times.

## THE RESULT

PASS is an immense help and the centre for booking and dispatching only has good things to say about the system. The project process has been quite hard and intense and has taken place in close cooperation between the centre and Trapeze, but as a result hereof, the new complete IT solution was implemented in just 3 months. "We needed quite a lot of assistance from Trapeze Customer Care at the beginning. Before the system was operationalised, we held a meeting with Customer Care at which we drafted guidelines for how we contact the support function, so that the communication between us is expedient and we get the help that we need. This meeting has proved to be a very good investment and we are extremely pleased with the way our inquiries are handled," says Merete L. Nielsen.

"PASS has been an enormous help and a great relief for everyone involved in the booking scheme, from employees and drivers to users. Furthermore, the PASS system has resulted in savings and any savings at will benefit the taxpayers: either in the form of actual savings or in the form of improved service."

"We can only conclude that PASS is an excellent planning tool," concludes Merete L. Nielsen.

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