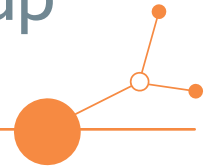
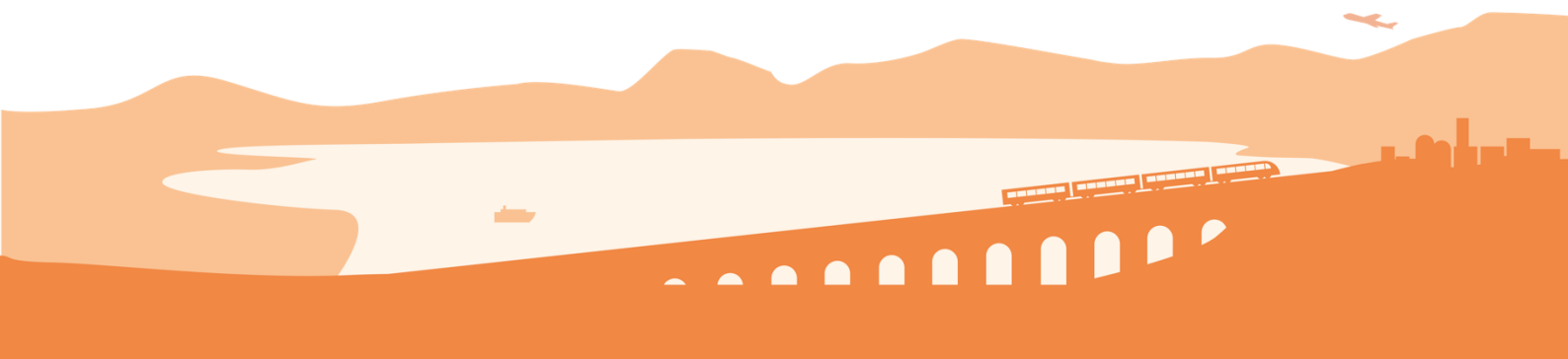


D3.2.3 Final Action plans and take up Split-Dalmatia County (SDC)



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1. Executive summary

This document is the final Action plan for the DREAM_PACE pilot region of Split-Dalmatia County (SDC) and is part of deliverable D3.2.3.

The draft Action Plan (D.3.2.1) built on the analysis and diagnosis of governance and planning (Activity 1.1) and of operational trends and approaches to DRT (Activity 2.1) and on the DRT strategy elaborated in D3.1.2 and for which the consultation process is being completed. Updating the draft Action plan presented in D3.2.1, this deliverable defines the final Action plan delivered at local /regional level, integrating final strategy and solutions. It includes the documentation on the adoption and description of the approval process by decision makers.

This document is organized as follows.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the pilot region, outlining the purpose and scope of the Action plan.

Chapter 3 outlines the strategic background and the scenarios developed in the pilot area.

Chapter 4 describes the development of the Action plan, highlighting the needs and priorities identified, the challenges addressed, and the stakeholder involvement process. It also outlines the pilot actions and its components, specifies the measures that are consequently implemented in order to achieve the objectives of the Action plan.

Chapter 5 provides information on the monitoring and evaluation process for the Action plan, including the expected results of implementation and the estimated relevant impacts.

Chapter 6 serves as the concluding chapter, outlining how the Action plan will be officially approved or taken up, summarizing the overall approach, and presenting the next steps.

Chapter 7 provides a comprehensive list of references, offering background information and sources supporting the document.



2. Introduction

Split-Dalmatia County (SDC) is the largest county in Croatia, covering coastal region, islands (Brač, Hvar, Vis and Šolta), and the hinterland (Dalmatian Zagora). The largest city and administrative centre is Split. According to the latest census, around 420,000 inhabitants live in the county. The highest population concentration is in the coastal cities, while Dalmatian Zagora is less populated. Its economy primarily relies on tourism, shipbuilding, trade, fishing, and agriculture.

The region faces challenges in transport connectivity, especially in rural and peripheral areas, where public transport is limited or inefficient. Traffic congestion is prevalent in urban areas like Split. The main need of SDC is to improve connectivity in rural and peripheral areas and to national and European transport networks by enhancing transport links between its rural and peripheral areas, transport hubs, and regional economic centres (mainly Split). Currently, the public transport system is sub-optimally organized. This results in significant traffic congestion and delays in regional centres, especially in Split. Therefore, the primary expectation from the pilot project is to enhance sustainable mobility by introducing the DRT service.

To address these issues, the county implemented a pilot project introducing Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services. The goal was to improve mobility, enhance connectivity between rural and urban areas, and integrate DRT with the existing public transport system. This pilot project was intended to benefit various groups, including socially vulnerable individuals, students, pensioners, and people with reduced mobility.

The pilot was conducted in the municipalities of Dugopolje, Dicmo, as well as in the City of Trilj, and included activities such as research, service design, procurement, testing, and implementation. Stakeholders included local authorities, the selected transport service provider, the selected digital platform provider, and the general public.

According to the latest population census (2021), the area of Dugopolje has 3.742 inhabitants, while the area of Dicmo has 2.805 and Trilj has 8.182 inhabitants. In Dugopolje there is the Podi Dugopolje business zone, where employees from the surrounding areas of Dugopolje and Dicmo work. The business zone includes supermarkets, restaurants, gas stations, ATMs, clothing stores, furniture showrooms, business premises (office and warehouse spaces), a hotel (currently closed), a polyclinic, a sports centre with a football stadium, a visitor centre, and educational (conference) halls. Additionally, there are plans to build a market for local products.

The tested DRT model for integrating DRT into public transport and the DRT service implemented during the project would encourage investment from other financing instruments and reduce barriers to major hubs and economic centres. The implementation of the DRT service demonstrates the feasibility of new approaches.

Key components of the Action plan include organizing a tender for selecting the DRT service provider, testing the service, and conducting public presentations. Challenges during the process may include delays in procurement, attracting bidders, and generating user interest.

The results include improved connectivity, reduced emissions, energy savings, and greater mobility in areas with low public transport availability. Success is measured through data collection on service usage, user satisfaction, and operational efficiency.

The Action plan also includes monitoring and evaluation, with defined key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess the effectiveness of the DRT service and its integration into the public transport system.



3. Strategic background and scenarios developed in the area

SDC is the largest county in the Republic of Croatia by area. It includes the coastal region, islands (Brač, Hvar, Vis and Šolta), and the hinterland (Dalmatian Zagora). The largest city and administrative centre is Split. According to the latest census, around 420.000 inhabitants live in the county. The highest population concentration is in the coastal cities, while Dalmatian Zagora is less populated. The main economic activities include tourism, shipbuilding, trade, fishing, and agriculture. The area is shown below in the image.



Figure 1. The area covered by Split-Dalmatia County, website Croatian Chamber of Economy

The SDC area is characterized by a large territory with varying transport demand (high in coastal cities and low in the hinterland). The starting point for developing the Action Plan was identifying the need to **improve mobility in areas of SDC where traditional public transport services do not exist or where demand is highly variable or low.**

Public transport in SDC is traditionally organized. In the county, transport services still operate based on issued permits. Ongoing projects aim to organize public transport in the county as a public service in accordance with EU Directive 1370/2007. SDC is currently (February 2026) in the process of preparing documentation for the public service contract for the public transport network of routes. It is expected that the tender will be published by the end of 2026. After implementation, additional areas characterized by low or variable transport demand will be further analysed and based on the results, the implementation of DRT services will be pursued.

The need for introducing models such as DRT was recognized, as before DREAM_PACE they did not exist in SDC nor anywhere in the Republic of Croatia. During Living Lab (LL) meetings, a specific area for implementing the pilot project was defined in the municipalities of Dugopolje and Dicmo, as well as in the



City of Trilj. The goal was to connect surrounding settlements with business zones and complement the existing public transport network.

The greatest challenges were identified in the area of public procurement. During the procurement process, the following risks were considered as possible:

- Delays in the public procurement procedure due to appeals;
- The possibility that no bidders would apply;
- Delays in contract negotiations.

Other possible risks included:

- Low user uptake;
- Application performance issues (delays due to internet connectivity).

In addition to procurement, further challenges could have arisen in **generating user interest** in the new public transport service. This risk was anticipated because the service was completely new and unfamiliar to users, and promotional activities had not been initiated before the testing phase. Accordingly, the expected risk was low user interest, which the data confirmed. After the promotional activities, the number of users increased.

After defining the area of the pilot project (the area of Dugopolje, Dicmo and City of Trilj), a stakeholder list was established, including:

- Local authorities (Municipality of Dugopolje and City of Trilj);
- Public Transport Operator (PTO);
- Digital platform provider;
- Regional authority (SDC);
- General public (Podi business zone, Dugopolje).

(1) **Local authorities (Municipalities of Dugopolje and Dicmo)** are local administrative units situated in the Split-Dalmatia County. They are known for their strategic position between the City of Split and the inland regions, making them an important hub for both urban and rural connectivity.

Responsibilities: Direct insight into the needs of the population, infrastructural capabilities and information gathering (identifying the needs of the population).

Role: stakeholder collaboration and DRT service promotion.

Contribution to the pilot: evaluation of the service and its impact. It was expected that basic information would be collected on areas requiring DRT services and that potential new locations for future expansion would be identified.

(2) **PTO** is the DRT service provider in the Trilj, Dugopolje and Dicmo area. He was selected through a public procurement tender. He was essential for the successful operation of the service as he provided transport infrastructure, vehicles, and drivers, thereby adapting the service to users.

Responsibilities: providing vehicles and drivers, using digital platforms.

Role: delivering the service to users, adapting the service to users' needs.

Contribution to the pilot: increasing transport availability in low-demand areas. The PTO was required to maintain a high level of professionalism in delivering the service and maintain continuous communication with the SDC on a monthly basis.



(3) **Digital service provider** is the provider of the technical solution in the DRT field. He was essential for the successful operation of the service as he provided the technical solution (receiving user requests, generating routes). He ensured the technical infrastructure for the transport operator and enabled a successful service for users.

Responsibilities: providing technical solutions and services.

Role: developing and integrating route planning, booking, and payment of different services within a single application.

Contribution to the pilot: improving usability for residents and tourists. The provider was required to maintain a high level of professionalism in delivering the service and maintain continuous communication with the SDC on a monthly basis.

(4) **Regional authority (SDC)** is a regional administrative unit in the Republic of Croatia. The region is known for its coastal cities and tourism, as well as its rural hinterland (Dalmatian Zagora), which is not connected by traditional transport modes.

Responsibilities: representing the interests of citizens, providing information of hotspots for activities and during tourist seasons.

Role: providing information about hotspots for activities and tourist seasons.

Contribution to the pilot: coordination of co-design and implementation, and adaptation of the service to citizens' and tourists' needs. The tested model and experience were intended for further expansion to other parts of SDC.

(5) **General public (business zone Podi, Dugopolje)** is one of the largest business zones in the SDC area. The zone is home to companies offering manufacturing and service activities.

Responsibilities: understanding the working environment in the business zone, the commuting patterns, working hours, and new public transport service users' needs.

Role: representing the interests of workers/employees and potential users of new public transport services in the business zone, collecting input from the companies operating in the zone to support the design and implementation of the pilot.

Contribution to the pilot: providing key information (working hours, number of employees per shift, commuting locations). This data was useful for improving the DRT service. The zone has a large parking area where DRT vehicles can be parked when not in use. The parking area in the Podi zone was used as a stop and waiting location for public transport vehicles between rides.

Within the pilot project, seven Living Lab workshops were held (two in person and five online).

The **first workshop** took place on 7 December 2023, in Dugopolje. It was attended by stakeholders from service providers, infrastructure maintenance, representatives of cities and municipalities, and associations interested in implementing DRT solutions. Participants gained an overview of the main project objectives and receive general information about DRT. Stakeholders had the opportunity to connect the surrounding settlements of Trilj, Dugopolje and Dicmo in the selected area, define stops, and propose DRT travel routes.

The **second workshop** was held on 8 February 2024 in Dugopolje, analysed the vision of DRT in the area of Trilj, Dugopolje and Dicmo. Challenges and needs were identified, including the target user groups for the service, strategic goals, indicators, expected impacts, and limitations. Following this, stakeholders conducted a SWOT analysis of the proposed scenarios. The group analysed four scenarios: commuting to work, traveling for shopping, visiting a doctor, and traveling for leisure activities. For each scenario, the user group and their mobility needs were defined, along with a functional description of the DRT service, user stories, areas of application, operational parameters, and success factors aimed at increasing usage and attractiveness.



After the second Living Lab (LL) workshops, a more precise testing area for the DRT service was defined (the area of Trilj, Dugopolje and Dicmo). Accordingly, the stakeholders listed that is represented in the previous chapter.

Pilot activities included research, new DRT service design, procurement and testing, and implementation:

1. **Research** - included the analysis of mobility demand and offer in the potential DRT service area, together with collection of inputs from different stakeholders (NGOs, public transport operators, local authorities, etc.) through various LL workshops. The analysis and cooperation with stakeholders led to the identification of existing challenges, as well as the needs and expectations of potential new users and stakeholders.
2. **DRT service design** - based on the gathered knowledge and co-creation LL workshops that involved the stakeholders, the DRT service design was developed to define the operational and business model of the DRT pilot, tailored to users' needs.
3. **Procurement and testing** - after confirmation from local authorities and involved associations, and based on technical specifications defined during the design phase, SDC conducted the public procurement and finally installed the DRT systems, IT solutions/platform and equipment, followed by testing of the innovative DRT service developed at LL-level, at the same time minimising the implementation risks.
4. **Implementation** - in cooperation with local authorities and involved associations, SDC monitored and integrated the DRT service into the existing public transport system, from the perspective of both public transport operators and users.

The **third workshop** was held online on June 5, 2024, where software solutions were presented by NEMI and SPARE. The focus was on driver and user applications, management systems, real-time navigation, booking, travel planning, operational monitoring, and coordination, as well as fostering collaboration between technical and transport stakeholders. Participants included SDC, Dyvolve, NEMI, Promet Split Ltd., and SPARE.

The **fourth workshop** was held online on July 9, 2024. It included a presentation of the proposed routes and service structure, discussions on public procurement, operational logistics, required vehicles and drivers, working hours, and planning of local promotional activities. Participants included SDC, Dyvolve, the City of Sinj, the City of Trilj, the Municipality of Dugopolje, and the Municipality of Dicmo.

The **fifth workshop** was held online on April 7, 2025. The NEMI application was presented, and discussions were held on visual identity, route names, vehicle markings, and the way free tickets are displayed for users. The translation of the application into Croatian was agreed upon. The official service name, Zagora, was confirmed. Participants included SDC, Dyvolve, the selected DRT PTO Smodlaka, and the selected digital service provider NEMI.

The **sixth workshop** was held online on April 23, 2025. The workshop presented and discussed user and driver applications, reservation procedures for two routes, and the simplification and standardisation of stop names. Final alignment of technical and operational aspects was agreed upon, and the DRT service launch date was confirmed (02/05/2025), with a press conference planned for 25/04/2025. Participants included SDC, Dyvolve, the selected DRT provider Smodlaka d.o.o., and NEMI.

The **seventh workshop** was held online on October 28, 2025. The results of the DRT service in the Split-Dalmatia County area (two lines) were presented. The implemented promotional activities within the project were discussed, and it was highlighted that the public procurement template can be used for other areas of Split-Dalmatia County as well as for the entire territory of the Republic of Croatia. Among the conclusions were the potential future establishment of a call centre (if the service continues) and the importance of conducting promotional activities to familiarise users with this new form of public transport. Participants included Split-Dalmatia County, Dyvolve, and the Development Agency of the Municipality of Dugopolje ODRAZ.



4. Development of the Action plan

4.1. Activities developed on the territory and objective of the plan

Pilot: 1.1. Governance and planning of integrated DRT public transport in a MaaS logic for peripheral and low demand areas.

SDC is the largest county in the Republic of Croatia in terms of area. It includes the coastal region, the islands (Brač, Hvar, Vis, and Šolta), and the hinterland (Dalmatian Zagora). Public transport in the SDC area, which includes 16 cities and 39 municipalities, has traditionally been organized on a permit-based system; however, ongoing projects aim to establish it as a public service in accordance with Directive 1370/2007, with plans to introduce a DRT model to support residents with limited mobility, including socially vulnerable groups, students, pensioners, and persons with disabilities.

The DRT was tested in the City of Trilj and in the municipalities of Dicmo and Dugopolje. The key objectives included improving mobility accessibility in areas where traditional public transport services did not exist due to low or occasional demand. In the regulatory domain, guidelines were provided for future public procurement processes for the implementation of DRT solutions.

Component 1: Defining guidelines for the Public Procurement Process for the Introduction of DRT Service.

Description: The objective of this activity was to define guidelines for future public procurement procedures in order to simplify the overall process of selecting a DRT service provider across the Republic of Croatia. The focus of the activity was on efficiency, sustainability, and adaptability. The activities included defining criteria at the national level for the selection of service providers. A unified approach to service provider criteria has made easier for regional and local authorities to ensure minimum quality standards in service implementation.

Pilot: 2.2. Experimental DRT service in a new regulatory framework.

In the future, it is necessary to regulate the existing regulatory framework for DRT services in a way that encompasses all specific areas within the Republic of Croatia. One such area includes inhabited islands. On inhabited islands where there is no form of public transport outside the tourist season and no registered transport operators who could offer the service, it is essential to define guidelines for promoting DRT in these areas. This could be achieved through additional incentives for transport operators willing to serve areas with exceptionally low and occasional demand and establish one of their headquarters on an island.

Component 1: Defining the Public Procurement Process for the Introduction of DRT Service.

Description: The objective of this activity was to develop unified guidelines for conducting public procurement procedures for the introduction of DRT services across the entire Republic of Croatia in the future. The emphasis is on the local needs of each area, while maintaining unified guidelines at the national level in order to ensure a minimum quality standard of service for users.

Component 2: Expanding the DRT Service to Other Areas.

Description: The goal of this activity is to expand the DRT service to other areas in the Republic of Croatia in the future. The emphasis should be on researching user needs in areas with low or occasional demand, such as smaller villages in the east and north of Croatia (Slavonia and Međimurje), towns and municipalities in the Gorski Kotar and Lika regions that are not well connected, and islands where transport services are limited outside the tourist season.



4.2. Split-Dalmatia County Action plan measures

4.2.1. Measure 1: Defining guidelines for the public procurement process for the introduction of DRT Service

The measure includes activities that define the minimum service standards to be incorporated into the legislative framework (technical standards for the vehicle fleet, digital services). It also includes guidelines to assist contracting authorities in preparing tender documentation.

The measure also includes activities related to workshops with stakeholders who would participate in the process of defining the DRT service in specific areas, including the future public transport operator (PTO) and the future digital service provider.

The process of preparing the tender documentation was successfully tested. The tender was published on 17 February 2025 and lasted until 7 March 2025. The contract was signed on 11 April 2025. The implementation of this measure affected the timeline of all other measures. The tender documentation for the DRT service in SDC consisted of the project task, bidder selection criteria for, and forms. The project task contained information for bidders, including the area where the DRT service should be provided, the frequency of the service, and the required features of the software supporting the DRT service.

During the public procurement procedure, emphasis was placed on:

- Conditions for economic operators;
- Technical capacity requirements.

Regarding the conditions for economic operators, the bidder had to meet at a minimum the basic criteria required by law for providing DRT services (a license to operate public transport services in the Republic of Croatia, the necessary number of technical and human resources, and experience at an appropriate quality level).

In the area of technical capacity, the bidder was required to provide specific transport means and characteristics of the information system for managing the DRT service. This included software for organizing and managing the DRT service, applications for drivers and users of the DRT service, as well as vehicle equipment.

The contract lasted a total of 6 months according to the 1+5 model, where the first month was intended for establishing and testing the service itself. After that, the operational phase of providing the DRT service began, lasting five months. The selection criteria were the lowest price and the average age of the vehicle fleet.

The tender documentation covered two routes: Fixed route in the area of Dugopolje and part of Dicmo - the total length of the fixed route in the area of Dugopolje and part of Dicmo, from the starting to the final stop, was approximately 31.3 km, with an expected travel time of about 1 hour and 16 minutes (01:16h). The total number of kilometers that could be covered on the proposed route throughout the entire day was around 375 km, with an estimated fuel consumption of about 56 litres per day. The total maximum travel duration throughout the entire day (two shifts) was about 15 hours and 12 minutes (15:12h).

4.2.2. Measure 2: Expanding the DRT Service to the other areas

The goal of this measure is to expand the DRT service in the future to other areas of SDC and the Republic of Croatia. In SDC, these include the areas of Zagora, Imotska krajina, Cetinska krajina, and the islands. In the wider territory of the Republic of Croatia, these include smaller villages in eastern and northern Croatia (Slavonia and Međimurje), towns and municipalities in the Gorski Kotar and Lika regions that are not well



connected, and islands where transport services are limited outside the tourist season. This measure includes familiarizing cities, municipalities, transport providers, and end users with this model, which can better connect their areas.

In the future, this measure may include activities such as:

- Educational campaigns and workshops - informational campaigns in educational institutions, workplaces, and local communities to raise awareness of sustainable transportation options.
- Promotion and subsidization of public transport - a subsidy model for a specific period to increase usage rates.
- Introduction of reward programmes - developing a model of free rides and discounts for users who frequently use sustainable transport options.
- Cooperation with local businesses and authorities - encouraging employers and institutions to implement sustainable transport strategies for their employees.
- Promotion of digital platforms and applications - investment in the development of app solutions for identifying the most sustainable routes.

In this pilot project, a Living Lab workshop approach was tested, in which stakeholders actively participated and, based on their input, routes were created in the SDC area.



5. Monitoring and evaluation

The expected results of the implementation include activities that will be carried out in the future. These are primarily related to activities concerning the future expansion of the DRT service to other areas of the Republic of Croatia and providing guidelines for the tender documentation and defining minimum service quality criteria.

Given the current situation, the main challenges and risks can be summarized as:

- Delays in the public procurement process due to complaints.
- The possibility that no bidders will respond.
- Delays in contract negotiations.
- Low user turnout.
- Application performance issues (delays due to internet connectivity).
- The technical condition of vehicles.
- Emergency roadworks (detours that prolong the journey).

#	Measure/Activity	Description/methodology	KPI
1	Defining guidelines for the public procurement process for the introduction of DRT Service.	Defining minimum quality standards for the DRT service and guidelines for preparing tender documentation.	At least one new area with a DRT service.
1.1	Workshop with stakeholders.	Workshop with stakeholders from interested areas for the implementation of the DRT service from all over Croatia. Defining at least two areas where the DRT service can be implemented.	Min one Living Lab.
1.2	Promotion of the DRT service at the national, regional, and local levels.	Promotional activities, public forums on the topic of DRT, news on portals.	Number of media announcements / publications (at least 3).
2	Expanding the DRT Service to the other areas.	Issuance of new tenders across the entire Republic of Croatia.	Implementation of the DRT service in at least two areas across the entire Republic of Croatia.
2.1	Workshop with stakeholders.	Analysis of the activities carried out in the field of DRT and defining the next steps.	Min one Living Lab.



6. Conclusions and next steps

The Action plan was officially approved through an agreement between SDC, the PTO, and the digital service provider. DRT, as a form of sustainable mobility, is integrated into strategic documents at the national, regional, and local levels.

In addition to the stakeholders who are signatories to the agreement (contracting parties) for the provision of DRT services, the municipalities of Dugopolje and Dicmo, as well as the City of Triljare also involved. These stakeholders contributed with the information they possess about DRT service users, thereby helping to improve the quality of the service.

The overall approach to the pilot project, which was based on the active involvement of the local community and stakeholders through workshops, provided valuable input for their local connectivity and for shaping the DRT service itself. The local community, which understands the needs of the local population, together with transport operators who provide daily scheduled transport services, provided a high-quality contribution to the introduction and development of the DRT service.

Through continuous communication, knowledge exchange, experience sharing, and data analysis, following the first experience of DRT service in the Republic of Croatia, positive results are expected in the future, including:

- Experience in preparing tender documentation and introducing sustainable mobility.
- Use of digital innovations in DRT services.
- Improved connectivity of rural areas.
- Better interaction and communication between local stakeholders.
- Environmental and energy benefits.

After the completion of the pilot project, it is important to analyse the results and define the next steps, including the decision on whether the service will continue, identifying new areas where it could be implemented, and other relevant aspects. It is important to engage local authorities and communities in order to ensure that all necessary information about the potential use of DRT services is provided.

SDC is currently (February 2026) in the process of preparing the required documentation for the publication of a tender for the implementation of a public service network of routes (County fixed lines). The publication of the tender and the signing of the contract are expected by the end of 2026. After the implementation of the route network, areas with low or highly variable demand will be identified, which are planned for further analysis, and based on the results, decisions will be made on the areas where the DRT service will be implemented.

The implementation of the pilot was monitored through monthly reports. These reports provided insights into the level of service activity, the number of requests, whether the visibility of the service needed improvement, and whether additional involvement of the local community was necessary.

In the future, the situation will be monitored following the implementation of the public route network in the SDC area, along with activities that include further analysis of areas with low and/or variable transport demand, as well as routes with a smaller number of passengers.



7. References

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