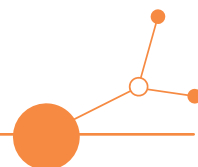


SUSTANCE

D.1.3.3. Roadmap no. 3 based on pilot action no. 3 and no. 5: [PA3 Feasibility study for improving passenger rail connections on the Divača - Buzet - Pula route and PA5 Development of a new ICT service for MaaS in Istria]



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Table of contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Existing public transport accessibility and key challenges	2
3	Impact of pilot action on public transport accessibility	3
4	Vision and goals for public transport accessibility improvement	3
5	Key measures and steps to achieve goals	5

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1 Introduction

This roadmap (D.1.3.3) defines the direction for improving the connectivity of the Istria County and cross-border mobility, based on the results of the pilot actions implemented within Work Package 2. It covers the area of Istria with a focus on the Divača-Buzet-Pula railway connection and multimodal accessibility within the Istrian region. Pilot Action 3 improved rail connectivity towards Slovenia, while Pilot Action 5 developed a digital MaaS application for integrated travel planning. The roadmap was prepared by PP5 - IDA, in cooperation with PP8 - SZPP, PP4 - HŽPP and AP3 - the Istria County.

The roadmap is based on the findings and results of the following SUSTANCE deliverables:

- *Public Transport Accessibility Report 2 - Analysis Area: Istria County (D.1.2.3)*
- *Transnational Public Transport Accessibility Report (D.1.2.3)*
- *Pilot Action Reports for Pilot Action No. 3 - Feasibility Study of Rail Connections on the Divača-Buzet-Pula Route (D.2.3.3) and Pilot Action No. 5 - Development of a New ICT Service for MaaS in Istria (D.2.4.2)*
- *Guidelines for Long-Term Sustainability for Solution No. 3: PA3 - Feasibility Study of Rail Connections on the Divača-Buzet-Pula Route and No. 5: PA5 - Development of a New ICT Service for MaaS in Istria (D.2.5.1).*

Three consultative meetings with local stakeholders (15-21 February 2024, 12-13 September 2024, and 8-9 April 2025) provided additional insights that complement the findings of the listed deliverables. The meetings were organised by PP5 - IDA with the participation of representatives of the county, local authorities, transport operators, technology partners and Nextbike. Discussions addressed the results of the accessibility analysis, the technical development of Pilot Actions PA3 and PA5, funding and cooperation, as well as challenges such as multimodal integration and cross-border harmonisation. The conclusions confirmed the importance of modernising the Pula-Buzet-Divača railway connection, further developing the MaaS application, and ensuring long-term maintenance, promotion and institutional support. (D.3.3.1, D.3.3.2, D.3.3.3).

2 Existing public transport accessibility and key challenges

The current availability of public transport in the Istria County is characterised by limited connectivity on the Pula-Buzet-Divača route and a strong reliance on bus transport, particularly in tourist and suburban areas. The analysis shows that trains have longer travel times, lower service frequency and less direct routing compared to buses, which significantly affects regional and cross-border connectivity. A particular challenge is the connection to Divača, where the frequency of services is exceptionally low, and the transnational report confirms that Istria is among the more peripheral regions with lower accessibility indicator values.

In addition to infrastructural shortcomings, there are serious limitations in the field of infomobility, as information is fragmented, difficult to access and lacks a unified digital interface. This hampers the planning of multimodal journeys, especially for tourists, who represent an important target group. During the first stakeholder meeting, participants emphasised the need to modernise the rail infrastructure, improve coordination between bus and rail services, and develop an integrated ICT platform as the basis for improving infomobility. The main weaknesses of the system include low multimodal integration, uncoordinated departures and poor cross-border coordination, while the strengths lie in the stable bus network and strong growth potential driven by tourism and future investments. Differences in service quality across routes and the lack of real-time information further affect the user experience, reducing overall connectivity and the availability of information to passengers.



3 Impact of pilot action on public transport accessibility

Pilot Action 3 had a significant impact on the assessment and future improvement of public transport accessibility in Istria, providing a clear analytical basis for the modernisation of the Pula-Buzet-Divača railway connection. The developed feasibility study identified infrastructure gaps, potential demand growth, opportunities for integration with bus and micromobility services, and the expected environmental and economic benefits, thereby creating the conditions for long-term enhancement of regional and cross-border connectivity. The installation of two micromobility stations in Vodnjan and Svetvinčenat further strengthened intermodality and last-mile travel options.

Pilot Action 5 achieved progress in the field of digital accessibility through the development of the MaaS application Mobility Plus, which integrates information on bus lines, trains and micromobility into a single user interface. The application enables efficient travel planning, significantly improving infomobility and the transparency of public transport in the region.

At the second and third stakeholder meetings, it was confirmed that both pilot actions deliver measurable benefits, particularly in increasing the availability of information, strengthening multimodal connectivity and preparing the ground for future infrastructural and digital investments. Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of promotion, maintenance and further development of the application, as well as the need for political support to translate the recommendations of the feasibility study into concrete projects and financial plans.

4 Vision and goals for public transport accessibility improvement

The vision for mobility development in the Istria County is based on a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that enhances internal and cross-border connectivity and ensures digitally accessible and reliable public transport services. In the long term, the aim is to establish a functional Divača-Buzet-Pula railway corridor and strong integration of public transport, micromobility and MaaS digital solutions.

Short-term objectives (up to 6 months):

- Formalise political and institutional support for the outcomes of PA3 and clearly define the roles of key stakeholders.
- Ensure initial maintenance and functional integration of the micromobility stations in Vodnjan and Svetvinčenat.
- Establish an operational management model for the Mobility Plus MaaS application (technical maintenance, content updates).

Medium-term objectives (6 months - 2 years):

- Prepare technical documentation, phased implementation plans and required impact assessments for the modernisation of the Pula-Buzet-Divača railway.
- Submit funding applications for the modernisation of the railway corridor through EU programmes (CEF, Interreg, Digital Europe).
- Expand the functionalities of the MaaS application (Park & Ride, seasonal lines, additional operators) and carry out targeted promotion to increase user uptake.

Long-term objectives (more than 2 years):

- Modernise the railway infrastructure and acquire hybrid/battery rolling stock for faster and more sustainable travel.



- Align Croatian and Slovenian operational, technical and regulatory processes to ensure interoperability and coordinated timetables.
- Develop a fully integrated multimodal transport system based on digital infomobility, low-carbon mobility and long-term stable governance and financing.

In relation to the Connectivity dimension the vision and objectives of this Roadmap are fully consistent with the **SUSTANCE Transnational Action Plan on Connectivity (D 1.4.2)**, translating its transnational priorities into a territorial development pathway for Istria. The Connectivity Action Plan identifies Istria among the areas facing significant accessibility challenges, particularly due to low service frequency and directness, weak cross-border coordination, limited multimodal integration and infrastructure gaps; it also recognises feasibility studies and micromobility solutions as important instruments for addressing these weaknesses.

Accordingly, the Roadmap combines long-term structural improvements of the Divača-Buzet-Pula railway corridor with shorter- and medium-term measures capable of progressively improving accessibility. The preparation of technical documentation and phased infrastructure modernisation, acquisition of low-carbon rolling stock and alignment of Croatian and Slovenian operational and technical procedures directly respond to the Action Plan's objectives of improving rail competitiveness, interoperability, service reliability and cross-border network integration.

At the same time, the further development of micromobility stations and their integration with the Mobility Plus MaaS platform strengthens first/last-mile accessibility and multimodal connectivity, particularly for peripheral locations and tourism-related mobility. In this way, the Roadmap operationalises at territorial level the Action Plan's recommended combination of operational, infrastructural, multimodal and digital measures, linking quick and cost-effective improvements with the longer-term objective of establishing an integrated and competitive cross-border public transport system.

In relation to Governance dimension the achievement of these connectivity objectives requires a stable cross-border and multi-level governance framework, as highlighted by the **SUSTANCE Governance Strategy (D 3.4.1)**. The Strategy identifies the formalisation of governance commitment by regional authorities, national transport ministries and public railway companies as a critical condition for transforming the feasibility study into concrete implementation, recommending inter-institutional agreements, integrated planning procedures and the possible establishment of a Joint Railway Corridor Committee between Croatia and Slovenia.

The Roadmap directly translates these recommendations into operational steps through the proposed establishment of a joint governance body for the Divača-Buzet-Pula corridor and a Memorandum of Understanding defining responsibilities, financing and coordination, while also assigning clear governance and maintenance responsibilities for the Mobility Plus MaaS platform.

This approach reflects the wider Governance Strategy, which calls for connecting public and private actors, combining short-term actions with long-term strategies, developing dedicated cross-border agreements and identifying sustainable financing mechanisms. Governance therefore represents an enabling condition for the entire Roadmap: it provides the institutional framework needed to coordinate infrastructure planning, harmonise Croatian and Slovenian technical and operational requirements, mobilise EU and national funding, integrate MaaS and micromobility services, and progressively translate the PA3 and PA5 results into a stable, integrated and sustainable regional and cross-border mobility system for Istria.



5 Key measures and steps to achieve goals

This chapter defines the key measures for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the solutions developed through PA3 (the Divača-Buzet-Pula railway corridor and micromobility) and PA5 (the Mobility Plus MaaS platform), aligned with the vision and objectives outlined in Chapter 4. Each measure includes several concrete implementation steps, an indicative timeframe and the stakeholders involved. The measures are based on the Guidelines for Long-Term Sustainability (D.2.5.1) and on the chapters addressing financial sustainability and governance schemes for PA3 and PA5.

MEASURES		STEPS		
No.	Description	Description	Timeline	Involved stakeholders
M1	Institutionalisation of the governance of the Mobility Plus MaaS platform	M1.S1: preparation and signing of a cooperation agreement (governance, maintenance, data, service development)	Short	IDA, Region of Istria, Pulapromet, HŽPP
		M1.S2: establishment of an operational team and procedures for technical maintenance, data updating and user support	Medium	Pulapromet / HŽPP, IT provider, local authorities
M2	Establishment of a joint governance body for the Divača-Buzet-Pula corridor	M2.S1: formal establishment of a Joint Railway Committee for the railway corridor	Medium	Ministry of Croatia, Ministry of Slovenia, HŽI, HŽPP, SŽ, Region of Istria
		M2.S2: preparation and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (responsibilities, financing, coordination)	Long	All listed above + local authorities along the railway line
M3	Preparation of technical and project documentation for the modernisation of the railway corridor	M3.S1: preparation of conceptual designs, phased implementation plans, environmental impact studies and CBA analyses	Medium	IDA, HŽI, expert consultants, Region of Istria
		M3.S2: preparation and submission of project applications for EU and national funding sources	Medium	Ministries, Region of Istria, IDA, HŽPP, SŽ
M4	Further development of intermodal and micromobility infrastructure linked to the corridor and the MaaS system	M4.S1: evaluation of existing micromobility stations, definition of new locations and needs	Short	IDA, Nextbike/other operators, local authorities, Region of Istria
		M4.S2: installation of additional equipment (stations, parking, P&R) and integration with the MaaS platform	Medium	IDA, local authorities, Pulapromet, HŽPP, Tourist Board
M5	Promotion and increased use of public transport and MaaS services	M5.S1: implementation of a campaign for MaaS and public transport	Short	IDA, Pulapromet, Tourist Board, Region of Istria
		M5.S2: monitoring of usage, collection of feedback and adjustment of functionalities	Medium	IDA, Pulapromet, HŽPP, IT provider

The implementation of the proposed measures can be financed through a combination of national and EU sources, including sectoral budgets for transport and digitalisation, county and local budgets, as well as EU structural and investment funds (e.g. CEF, Interreg, Digital Europe, Green Deal instruments). EU grants are envisaged for infrastructure interventions and railway modernisation, with the possibility of favourable EIB loans and public-private partnerships for specific components (stations, P&R facilities, real estate development around transport hubs). The operational sustainability of the railway service can be further ensured through PSO contracts, while for the MaaS platform and micromobility a combination of public funding, operator contributions and potential commercial revenues (e.g. advertising, extended services) is foreseen.