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How to design age-friendly public transportation systems? – Mentoring model pilot in Turku

Evaluation report and Impact Assessment

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1 Objectives of the project in Valonia

The main objective of Valonia's project in Turku City was to implement the public transport mentoring model and test its applicability to involve silver age people for more age-friendly PT, which would increase their share in public transportation in Turku Region. The project was implemented in close cooperation with Föli, Turku Region Public Transportation Authority, which operates on the region of six municipalities.

The aim of mentoring was to change attitudes and encourage silver age people to use PT through over-generational and peer support. This includes finding the possible barriers and challenges in PT use by collecting feedback from the user group. Based on this the aim was to identify recommendations for age-friendly local public transportation and increase awareness of age-friendly PT among stakeholders.

The framework developed and applied through the GreenSAM project to meet the objectives above will be evaluated, using the project evaluation framework and is addressing all aims of the evaluation of the project:

- understand how effective the participation tools are at addressing the mobility challenges
- increase the quality of engagement in local PT planning¹;
- increase the quality of engagement²;
- bring the knowledge about barriers and needs to the PT planning;
- raise awareness of user behaviour;
- improve future engagement practices (including transferability of engagement tools);
- get users' feedback on the acceptability and usefulness of implemented mobility measures;
- share success stories

Planned outcomes of the PP6 pilot:

1. **Model for mentoring** and how to use it as a participation tool, a guideline for starting and maintaining a PT mentoring model as one-time tool or on-going practice.
2. **Communication campaign** – a quality campaign which includes materials about mentoring and age-friendly PT. The campaign is planned together with Föli and marketing agency, and it will include targeted messages for different groups, e.g. elderly workers, volunteer groups, PT users. Material will be also

¹ During evaluations information about carrying out activities is collected. This enables analysing what should be improved next time when same or similar activities are carried out. The more that during evaluations some kind of written report or conclusions are compiled.

² During evaluations information about carrying out activities is collected. This enables analysing what should be improved next time when same or similar activities are carried out. The more that during evaluations written report or conclusions are compiled.

communicated to bus drivers, decision-makers, city planners, customer service etc. The campaign will include e.g. social media, videos, instructions, info graphics, posters.

3. **Online material** for senior volunteers, youth groups and NGO's for both peer and over-generational mentoring
4. An **assessment paper** to summarize all findings from the coaching sessions and results from the trials
5. **Recommendations** for improvements for age-friendly PT system

2 Activities

Chronology of the pilot

Jun 2019	<p>Local Kick-Off-workshop with a topic "Better public transportation for seniors" was facilitated together with Föli and TUAS</p> <p>Tools: Workshop and World Café</p> <p>The workshop had 43 senior participants (55 was registered). The aim of the workshop was to involve seniors on the work of increasing more age-friendly public transportation, hear their barriers and challenges and introduce the idea of the mentoring/coaching pilot to the user group. Anyone who wanted to join the pilot group was able to apply with a form. A press release and a call for participants had also been published and communicated via stakeholders as an invitation to attend the workshop and/or apply as mentor or mentee. Föli received very valuable information from the seniors, e.g. about the accessibility of the services including digital services. The results were compiled and discussed with Föli and articles were written to Valonia and Föli websites.</p>
Sept 2019	<p>Preparatory events for the mentoring model pilot during EU Mobility Week</p> <p>Tool: Mentoring/coaching, Workshop, Panel Discussion</p> <p>The GreenSAM project and results from the previous workshop were introduced in a seminar "Moving through all ages" organized by Turku City, TUAS and Valonia. The event had 38 participants. Seminar ended with a panel discussion of "Age-friendliness in public transport planning". Members of the panel were:</p> <p>Sirpa Korte, Public Transport Director Soili Raitanen, vice chairperson of the Elderly Committee of Turku Anu Perho, chairperson of the Public Transport Board of Turku Region Jarkko Toivonen, Region Director at Savonlinja traffic operator Jyri Kuparinen, Accessibility Coordinator of Turku</p> <p>A separate workshop was organized for the pilot group (14 seniors) where participants got to know each other and their needs and barriers were mapped in order to for peer coaching pairs for the upcoming trial.</p>
Oct–Nov 2019	<p>Peer Coaching trial</p> <p>Tool: Mentoring/coaching, Observation, Questionnaires, Conversation</p>

The peer coaching trial group consisted of 22 seniors – 11 pairs, the other was an active user of PT and another one a non-user, with barriers or little experience of PT. Each received a 30 day Föli travel card. The trial started with a meeting together where the cards were collected from the Föli office and a first bus trip was taken. The meeting continued by introduction of the project as well as the instructions and schedule for the trial.

TUAS sociology students (4) interviewed the seniors in the beginning and in the end of the trial. They also observed the participants on their travels. Seniors also wrote down their meetings and feedback of them. Some even kept a travel diary on their travels. A report of observation and questionnaire results was compiled and discussed with Föli.

Föli held two digital trainings for the participants. These were very popular among the seniors and even the active users/mentors learned a lot about the Föli application, route search and website etc. Participants' feedback was excellent.

A dinner and workshop was held to wrap-up the trial. It became clear that the mentored seniors were encouraged and inspired to use PT with help from peer coaches. It also was understood that the mentoring is a process where the pair learns together and from each other, and that the mentors need training also. Föli trainings were very much liked. The senior group became friends and planned to continue bus trips together. It showed that the social inclusion is a very important part of mentoring model.

Dec 2019 – Feb 2020 Discussing the results and recommendations with Föli.

The results of the trial were presented and discussed with Föli. The findings were targeted to different branches, such as planning, communications, maintenance, bus operators. Föli receives feedback regularly, but this was the first time to receive findings from a longer period of time from a group focused to develop more age-friendly PT.

Network of mentors as on-going service provided by Föli was discussed with Föli. The challenge is that it needs a coordinator and resources as well as incentives, insurances etc. for the mentors. As a one-time use (30-days trial for example), it is a great way to collect feedback and map the barriers of seniors.

Mar-May 2020

Preparations for Youth mentoring trial and Föli social media ambassadors open call

Tool: Mentoring

The plan was to implement the next part of the pilot "Youth as mentors on city bikes" in May 2020. Due to Covid-19 it was postponed to autumn 2020. The aim of the trial was to test over-generational mentoring, where youth mentor seniors on city bikes, which are part of the Föli PT system and can be used with the same travel card. The idea was that young Föli social media ambassadors create content of the trial on Föli channels, with the topic of how to increase awareness of age-friendliness in PT. Open call for the Föli ambassadors was launched in March via Facebook and Instagram and local schools, but due to situation it was promoted again in August. The incentives were IT tools, which the ambassadors could choose based on their needs in the work of creating content on social media.

June 2020	Follow-up calls for the previous trial participants. Seniors were interviewed about the PT use and experiences six months after attending the peer coaching trial. They were also asked if they are interested to join the next trial on city bikes.
Sept–Oct 2020	<p>Youth mentoring seniors on city bikes trial</p> <p>Tool: Mentoring, Online event tools, Questionnaires, Observation, Workshop</p> <p>The trial group consisted of 6 young Föli social media ambassadors and mentors, 7 seniors and 3 physiotherapy students from TUAS. The group was divided into three smaller groups. Each participant received a 30-day Föli travel card again.</p> <p>Covid-19 changed the plans a bit and some online events were organized instead of face-to-face, which made it a little bit confusing to participants (both youth and seniors), but all seniors were familiar with Teams so that was not a challenge.</p> <p>Before the trial an online workshop (Teams) was organized with a topic of social media and communications, where a well-known social media influencer trained the participants on the subject. After this the youth planned the social media campaigns with help from Föli and Valonia communication specialists.</p> <p>An online (Teams) kick-off event for the trial was held for the whole group where the instructions and schedule of the trial was given as well as introduction to city bikes, how to register online and use the city bikes by Föli. All participants registered the city bike during or after (with some help) the event.</p> <p>The next group meeting was face-to-face at a city bike station guided by Föli and Valonia. The seniors learned to use the city bike: how to open, use and return it. Whatsapp groups were created for each group to communicate after it was found out that all seniors were familiar with Whatsapp.</p> <p>The youth and seniors met 4-5 times during the trial. The youth interviewed, filmed and photographed the seniors and collected their comments and experiences during the sessions on the bikes. Some made competitions to Facebook and Instagram to raise awareness on the trial. The materials were used in communications and some content is still available in Föli channels.</p> <p>The physiotherapists compiled hints for seniors for the city bike use as well as exercise instructions for cycling. They observed and helped the seniors with their challenges and wrote a final report, which was also given to Föli. The hints were published in local Turku Post paper and Föli website.</p> <p>After the trial each participant filled an online questionnaire and a last meeting was held together on Teams to discuss the experiences.</p>
Dec 2020-Jan 2021	Traffic operators' meeting. Based on the results of the trials, it was decided to carry out a survey to the bus drivers. This was done via the 16 traffic operators that Föli has a contract with. The aim was to hear their views and experiences on the topic of age-friendly PT and those challenges that many seniors gave feedback on during the pilot. The survey was introduced in the traffic operators' meeting where they could also give their comments before the questionnaire was published. The survey was open 2.-22.12. and 79 answers were received, which was a very good number. The results were once again given to Föli

and sent to bus drivers message platform and presented in the traffic operators' meeting on 18.2.2021.

Feb-May 2021

Local evaluation workshop was held on 11.2. with 10 participants:

- seniors who took part in the pilots (2)
- planners and the head of Turku Region Public Transport Office Föli (3)
- the chairperson of Turku Region Public Transport Committee (1)
- project manager from Turku University of Applied Sciences (1)
- the GreenSAM project team from Valonia (3)

The aim of the workshop was to evaluate the mentoring model pilot in Turku City: how Valonia and Föli succeeded in implementation? It was important to let the stakeholders discuss about the topic and share their views about the way forward.

In evaluation workshop the discussion was divided into 5 topics: peer coaching, over-generational mentoring, collected feedback and recommendations, events, communications and dissemination. Each topic was considered by discussing the successes and benefits as well as challenges and further ideas.

1. Mentoring – peer coaching

Successes and benefits	Challenges and further ideas
<p>-Seniors are happy that joined the pilot, learned to use the Föli application and route search. There were difficulties in learning to use them. Instructions helped the mentee and many seniors are in need of instructions.</p> <p>-Mentee was so excited once learned to use the application</p> <p>-Peer coaching is important when learning new, it has been mutual learning together, even the mentor learned</p> <p>Learning with friend is interesting, big paper route map was used at first but when the mentor helped the mentee to use the digital route search things got so easy! The phone does the work!</p> <p>-It is important to give training and support to the mentors, support in the digital services</p> <p>-A lot of feedback to Föli, noticed that there were good spirit within the pilot group. Noticed that digital training is very important to seniors.</p> <p>-Many barriers were known in Föli before, but the feedback from trial confirmed all these: buses and instructions, planning bus stops, timetables etc.</p>	<p>-How to spread the mentoring wider and provide training and help for seniors? How will the small group have time to mentor many? Slowly group by group it will continue</p> <p>-The mentors in pilot group are interested in continuing their work</p> <p>-The implementation should continue via senior organizations and network. Existing mentor/guide activities, where Föli mentor services could be included. It is important to engage these stakeholders (discussions and plans already made)</p> <p>-Incentives to mentors (e.g. bus cards) could be possible</p> <p>-Organizations can apply for funding also for their mentor work</p> <p>-Timetable book vs. Digital applications? This question can be included in the customer survey. The book can be printed for special groups/targeted areas – the most important info for senior is the own route and area. Seniors like the digital app if there only is resources to train and support.</p> <p>-All seniors do not have smart phones, but the change is happening and "digital senior era" will be there soon</p> <p>-The activities and form of mentoring should be planned together with the mentors</p>

Figure 1: The results of the discussion on the topic of Mentoring – Peer coaching.

2. Mentoring – youth as mentors

Successes and benefits	Challenges and further ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The trial with youth mentoring seniors on city bikes made the topic visible in Föli's social media. -Seniors can use city bikes but they need help and support in registration and use.– Once learned it is easy! -Physiotherapist students were professional and contributed a lot -Important feedback on city bikes was received from the senior perspective: how age-friendly they are and what are the restrictions and barriers. Seniors loved the electric assisted bikes. -In the previous trial sociology students became friends with seniors so youth mentoring seniors can have social aspect as well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Youth are faster in everything, seniors had difficulties to keep up -Seniors learned to use the bikes on the first time and were able to cycle on their own – no need for mentoring after that -Seniors ended up mentoring and teaching the youth -Youth volunteer organizations could be used to spread the idea and material for mentoring. However, it is better to focus more on the peer coaching and support in Föli's mentoring work. -Digi language is difficult for seniors, often common language between seniors and youth is missing -Peer support works better "seniors like to be with seniors, youth with youth" -Digi support and other material for using the Föli applications could be delivered to youth organizations so youth can teach own grandparents for example

Figure 2: The results of the discussion on the topic of Mentoring – Youth as mentors.

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3. Feedback and recommendations – increasing age-friendliness in Föli

Successes and benefits	Challenges and ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Communication on Föli webpage has been improved based on the feedback from seniors -The project has brought the topic of age-friendliness more into discussion and the work for involving seniors and participatory methods have started in Föli. -Seniors are a big and important user group for Föli and age-friendliness is important for Föli -At least the active seniors have been given voice and have been able to share experiences of PT and the trials -Mentors have helped some seniors to use the Föli application after the trial. -Feedback and results from the survey for bus drivers were very important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Many things and improvements are long-term projects which are on-going and in planning. It may seem that things are not moving forward and improving although they are -Let's write article on local newspaper about age-friendliness together with Föli, Valonia and TUAS -Digital applications and route search are the main topics with seniors – how to help seniors to learn and use them and improve the user experience -Often many wish for the routes and bus stops to be close to home, but the instructions for planning include that the distances between two bus stops should be longer due to good service (too slow PT is not user-friendly for the customers) -The fluency of PT is important – the normal lines cannot be like service lines

Figure 3: The results of the discussion on the topic of Feedback and recommendations – increasing age-friendliness in Föli

4. Events (also online/remote) and participation

Successes and benefits	Challenges and ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Remote events and coping with the situation have been successful -Digital training (e.g Föli applications) for seniors has to happen face-to-face – it cannot be organized online -Face-to-face meetings and support are important and affects the grouping -The opening workshop at the library was successful– it gave seniors the opportunity to participate and discuss (seniors were able to give ideas and opinions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Covid-19 affected that it was not possible to organize mentoring/digi training in the library. -Covid-19 has affected in activities and events.

Figure 4: The results of the discussion on the topic of Events and participation

5. Communication and dissemination

Successes and benefits	Challenges and ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Age-friendliness is a comprehensive and important goal for Turku City and it is important to all sectors -In the pilot we have focused on the mentoring – seniors as a user group -Campaign coming up -New tools for participatory methods in planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The results of the project will be presented for the PT committee in May -How to get the planners to use the Atlas and Toolbox – sending e-mail is not efficient – plan to invite city and traffic planners and politicians to the final conference and seminar. -Invitations to seminar via city and environment sector – contacts and catching messages are important before the seminar so that the topic interests many -Presenting and training the new PT and city&environment committees is important and could be possible – plan for this -Traffic planners have knowledge – what is needed are the new solutions and bring them forward to use – reminder that it is important to involve seniors as user group when planning and developing new solutions

Figure 5: The results of discussion on the topic of Communication and dissemination

A lot of important comments and ideas came up in the workshop. It was important to discuss the pilot activities and outcomes with stakeholders. It helped to plan the way forward with dissemination and continuing the work during and after the project. For example, the plans were made to present the project results for the Turku Region Public Transport and City Planning Committees. We also got supporting feedback about designing the mentoring model between volunteer senior organizations and Föli. It was discussed that it is better to focus on the peer support due that seniors felt more comfortable with that rather than youth mentors.

After this, the on-going mentoring model was designed together with Föli, a local NGO (Turun Seudun Vanhustuki ry) and the 8 senior mentors from the pilot group, who had expressed their interest to continue as mentors in summer 2021. The group made a decision that the mentors are called "Föli friends". All activities for the senior peer support group were planned jointly. The mentors also received introduction and training for their voluntary work. The mentors wanted to organize Föli dates and trips where all non-users were welcome to learn more about PT and get help from the mentors. This was perhaps the most influential step of the whole project because it ensured that the model was integrated to Föli.

Turku Region Public Transportation Committee 26.5.2021

The project results from the local pilot as well as Atlas and Toolbox were presented in the Turku Region Public Transportation Committee. Also the on-going "Föli friends" scheme was introduced and asked for comments on it.

June-August 2021

Communication campaign and Föli friends

The message of support and mentoring was spread via large communication campaign in buses, social media and senior organizations in 1.6.-31.8.2021. Cooperation with local senior and volunteer organizations were key in spreading the message of peer support. This was done simultaneously with the Föli mentor activities with an aim of higher impact. Also 100 bus tickets were given out to non-users with a help from PT users and mentors. These activities were the final events and contributed to the continuation of the mentoring model.

All materials and articles can be also found on the [local project site in Finnish](#)

3 Indicators

Below in a table there are indicators of the pilot. These are set so that they support evaluating the implementation of all measures and achieving all goals of the programme, project and measure. As measures and local situations are different, there are compulsory indicators that come from the project objectives (green font) and voluntary indicators (black font) that assess the aims of implementing a certain tool or realizing a pilot and that help understand if and what should be changed to use the tool more effectively.

The pilot was implemented in close cooperation with the Turku Region Public Transport Föli and the activities and results were discussed with the respective stakeholders and authorities, e.g. city public transportation board. Föli was part of evaluating the success of the project. To evaluate the pilot and activities carried out, a local evaluation workshop was held and data from the user group was collected during and after the pilot. Several methods were used: questionnaires (baseline in the beginning and assessment in the end of the trials), observation, interviews, diaries and collecting feedback. It was evaluated whether the mentoring model can be a permanent offer or how it can be maintained and integrated to the system.

Project indicator	Local indicator	Target value	Way of measuring	Time frame	Value/result
no of events	Kick off event, workshops for the pilot group	At least 4 events (kick-off and workshops)	List of events	End of the event/project	10 (listed above under activities)
no of participants/people involved		100 pilot group numbers: -peer coaching trial: 22 seniors altogether -youth as mentors trial: 6 youth, 6 seniors	List of participants	End of the event/project	At least 200: 80 seniors 13 youth (mentors/ambassadors/physiotherapy and sociology students) 38 in seminar and panel discussion 79 bus drivers from 10 different operators directors from more than 10 bus operators 15 decision-makers and city/traffic planners at least 10 senior NGOs/networks

Materials compiled or developed during implementing the pilot	Feedback report of participants in the trials; questionnaire report of bus drivers	Yes		Throughout and end of the project	Yes. Feedback report of participants in the trials; questionnaire report of bus drivers (79 answers); Physiotherapists report; Sociology students report
decision makers' knowledge about the needs of senior citizens and the seniors' knowledge about green mobility solutions has increased	PT authority's knowledge about the needs of senior citizens has increased	Yes	Internal reflection - PT committee has been involved and engaged in the process, presenting and communicating the results and outcomes of the project to them	Throughout and end of the project	Yes, the communication was continuous with the PT director, the chairperson of PT committee was involved in the trials and panel discussion, the results were presented to the PT committee on 26.5.2021
recommendations for changes/ to support development of green transport	Based on the senior feedback and observation during mentoring sessions, the recommendations are compiled and introduced to PT Föli	Yes	Recommendations written and discussed with Föli	Throughout and end of the project	Yes, the assessment paper includes the recommendations and they have been discussed with Föli after each activity and continuously throughout the project. Föli will continue to increase age-friendliness and senior services, a webpage targeted to seniors and peer support was launched during

					the communication campaign foli.fi/senioribussiin
behavioural change of participants and a decrease in perceived barriers, skills or capability of participants	Based on the mentoring trials the participants are motivated to use PT and they feel encouraged and skilled in doing so	75% of participants in the pilot feel more encouraged and motivated to use PT	Questionnaires and interviews, follow-up from the trials (how many bought and used their travel cards after afterwards)	Spring 2021	<p>Based on interviews and discussions participants felt encouraged and motivated to use PT after mentoring in the trials. It is difficult to estimate how much the seniors would have used PT, if the covid-19 situation and restrictions would not have affected the PT traveling.</p> <p>Mentored seniors were willing to change their mobility behaviours (PT use instead of private car).</p> <p>Mentored who had physical and mental barriers to use PT after surgery, were encouraged to try again with the help of a mentor and continue PT use after that.</p> <p>Also, senior group became friends and planned to continue bus trips together.</p>

report about the results of engagement	An assessment paper to summarize all findings from the coaching sessions and results from the trials	Assessment paper is compiled	Activity report, document analysis	May 2021	Yes, assessment paper compiled as part of evaluation report
Improved engagement of people in silver age	People in silver age are engaged through peer- and over-generational mentoring in PT; Model for mentoring is tested and developed	Yes	questionnaires, interviews of the user group Model for mentoring exist and is on-going	End of the project	<p>“Föli friends” on-going mentoring scheme was established by Föli and a senior NGO. The Föli friends are a group of mentors from senior participants in pilot.</p> <p>Seniors who want help with PT have opportunity to join to open Föli friends’ events.</p> <p>The work and discussion is continuous with the group. They have opportunities to give feedback of PT and any experiences of mentoring activities straight in person to Föli planners e.g. during events.</p>

more convenient public transport (changes in physical and social environment) for people in silver age	Participants are more satisfied with public transport	Yes 10 participants feel that the PT is more convenient to use after mentoring	Assessment paper questionnaires, interviews of the user group	May 2021	Yes, 10 or even more participants feel that the PT is more convenient to use after mentoring and that peer support and training is useful and encourages to use PT. Some participants felt more convenient to use the city bikes after the trial and hints for cycling from physiotherapists
increased capacity of urban transport actors (authorities, ports, infrastructure providers and operators, transport users)	PT Föli and other city authorities understand the importance of involving silver age people in decision making and has a better understanding of organizing successful planning processes	Yes	Internal reflection	Throughout and end of the project	Yes, Föli has a better understanding of the topic and their capacity has increased.
increase in the effectiveness of green urban mobility offers through higher shares	City bike trial participants accept and feel confident to use bikes	Participants continue using city bikes	Interviews/questionnaires for participants	December 2020	It was concluded that the city bikes were not optimal for seniors and at first it was difficult to balance, the bike felt heavy. After they got

of senior citizens using the respective offers (significant increase in the number of senior citizens using the bicycle sharing systems, increase the acceptance and confidence of senior citizens towards Shuttle-on-Demand services)					used to them during the trial, many said they will continue to use them. The positive outcome was that many was inspired to cycle after some time.
improved decision-making processes of local public authorities in matters related to green urban mobility ((1) public authorities develop the capacity to seize, evaluate and process user needs, (2) public authorities	PT Föli understands the importance and basics of mapping needs and process evaluation and can disseminate and bring this knowledge to other city departments and projects	Yes	Internal reflection	Throughout and end of the project	Based on the discussion and working closely with Föli, it can be said that their knowledge of senior needs, age-friendliness and participatory methods have improved. The mentoring scheme will continued and is now integrated to Föli.

ensure that this will be done continuously, and not just once, (3) public authorities safeguard that that findings generated through (1) and (2) feed into decision-making					
Improved capacity to implement participatory processes	The capacity has increased in understanding and implementing participatory processes and using tools	Yes	Internal reflection	Spring 2021	The capacity was improved during the project as new ways of participation was introduced, developed and tested. PT planners have better understanding of the participatory processes and tools.

4 Assessment

The aim of mentoring/peer coaching pilot was to change attitudes and encourage silver age people to use PT, collect feedback from the user group and identify recommendations for age-friendly local public transportation Föli. The data for defining the changes and the impact was collected during activities mentioned above (2.). The methods included observation, questionnaires, interviews and workshops during the mentoring pilot. Information was collected from seniors and youth in the pilot group, bus drivers and Föli PT planners.

a. Peer support and mentoring

TUAS sociology students observed the pairs during their travels. The participants were also interviewed and they filled the same questionnaire with numerical scale and open-ended questions before and after the trial. The students wrote a report based on this data.

When explaining by own words and discussing what had been learned and gained, the results are very positive. The report shows that mentoring and peer support has a positive influence on seniors. In the beginning there were negative attitude towards PT in 4/11 of the coaching pairs. Many felt that the Föli application was too difficult to understand and use. Seniors with physical barriers and mobility aid devices seemed to have more negative attitude, naturally it is more difficult to use PT then. Also some negative attitude with bus user's status ("bus being for poor people") was seen.

After the trial, 9/11 pairs experienced the use of PT very positively. They mentioned that especially the cooperation between the peers helped them to feel confident and it was much easier and encouraging to travel with somebody. Also finding the right bus and route was easier and less time-consuming with a peer support. These pairs felt that they had active and good interaction between them.

After having positive experiences of PT with the peer, those with negative attitude at first became positive about PT. They became interested in using PT more, especially when learning and getting used to it. In the end of the trial, many pairs were willing to use PT daily. It was also told that private car was used less during the trial and the plan was to use more PT from now on. **It is important to notice that all experiences and encounters in buses impact the attitude towards PT. This affects the decision whether to use PT or not. If an inexperienced user gets a good start with help from a peer support, it helps to lower the threshold to choose PT again.**

After the trial many participants considered environmental impacts of mobility and they were inspired to use more public transportation as personal action for climate goals. Almost all were ready to use less private cars and more green mobility.

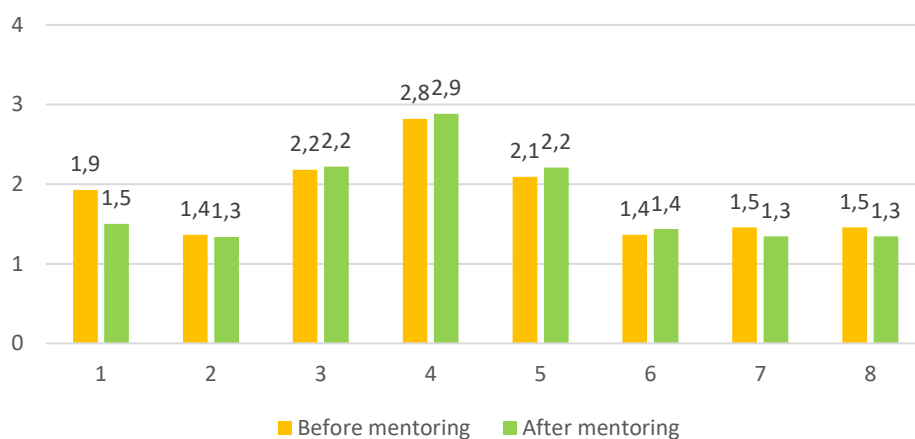


Figure 6: Participants received training on digital services from Föli. Credit: Heta Laiho.

Based on the results of the numerical scale the change in knowledge and skills was not remarkable. Maybe the seniors had difficulties estimating their knowledge on numerical scale, or they were still confused with different applications/services. The questionnaire could have been planned better: many had answered “Cannot say/not sure” which makes it difficult to conclude the change. The results of the questionnaire do not support what the seniors told about the change and how they felt that the peer support helped them. This obviously means that the peer support is more psychological and gives encouragement to use PT.

Mentors: How well are you able to use...

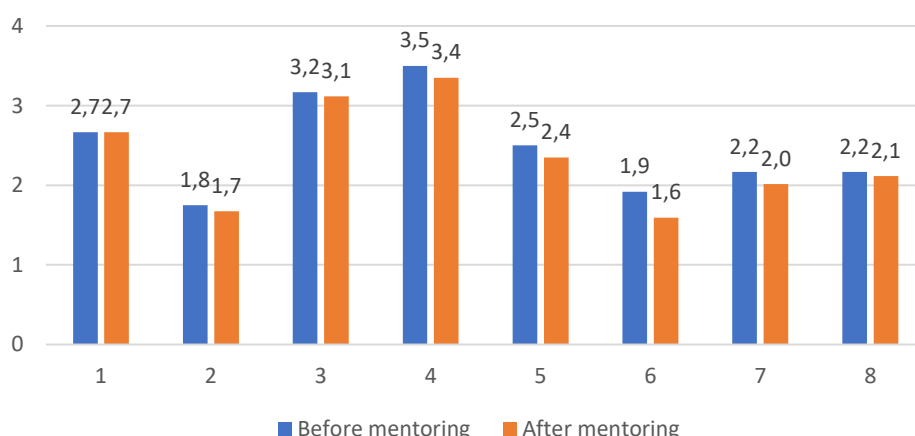
1=Very well 2=Somehow 3=I am not able 4=I have not used



1. Föli route search
2. Timetable book
3. Föli website
4. Föli mobile application
5. Charging travel card online
6. Charging travel card at the service point
7. Finding right bus stop
8. Finding right bus

Mentees: How well are you able to use...

1=Very well 2=Somehow 3=I am not able 4=I have not used





ROHKEUS KASVOI

"Teimme muutaman matkan yhdessä, ja sain takaisin rohkeuteni käyttää bussia vuosien tauon jälkeen.

Mentoroinnin ansiosta osaan hakea aikatauluja ja vaihtoyhteyksiä sekä selvittää bussien lähtöpaikat. Tärkeintä kuitenkin oli henkinen tuki, jonka ansiosta uskallan taas bussiin ja saan suun auki, jotta kul-

jettaja kallistaa bussia liikuntarajoitteeni vuoksi.

Talven liukkaat rajoittavat liikumistani ylipäättään ja koen tarvitsevani kaverin apua liikenteessä. Minulla on vahva luottamus siihen, että keväällä liikun bussilla itsekseni sujuvasti."

Pirjo Penttilä

Mervi Lempisen mentoroitava



TS/MARTTIINA SAIRANEN

KOULUTUSTA TARVITAAN

"Liikuntarajoitteisen on saatava suunsa auki bussissa. Vaikka molemmat kuljemme kepin tuella, kuljettajat jättävät bussin usein kallistamatta ja heitä on pyydetty odottamaan kunnes pääsemme istumaan.

Maahanmuuttajataustaisten kuljettajien eduksi on sanottava, että he huomioivat nämä asiat kantasuomalaisia paremmin.

Projektista jäi valtavan hyvä mieli ja ryhmältä tuli paljon hyödyllisiä havaintoja ja ideoita. Toivottavasti niitä hyödynnetään kuljettajien koulutuksessa. Oma suosikkini ideoista oli Föli-ystävä -tarra, joka kertoisi senioreille ja muillekin, että tältä bussin-käyttäjältä voi pyytää apua."

Mervi Lempinen

Pirjo Penttilän mentori

Figure 7: Article on local newspaper about mentoring pilot and experiences from the participants. Turun Sanomat 19.12.2019

Courage has increased

"We made few bus trips together with my mentor. I was encouraged to use bus again after years. Thanks to mentoring I am now able to find bus schedule and bus stops. What is most important, the peer support encouraged me to go to bus again, open my mouth to ask for help and the driver to lower the bus floor for me. Winter weather makes it difficult for me to walk and I need support. I am positive that when spring comes I will be using a bus on my own now." -Pirjo, mentee

Training is needed

"Those with restrictions have to tell the bus driver. Even though we both use a walking stick the drivers do not automatically lower the bus floor. We have to ask the drivers to wait until we get seated. I must say that drivers with ethnic background pay more attention to these matters. The project was a very positive experience to me and the group came up with useful ideas and observations. I hope these will be taken to bus drivers' training. My favorite idea was the sticker "Föli-friend" which would tell seniors and others that one can ask help." -Mervi, mentor



KUPITTAA-YHTEYS KUNTOON

"Tavoitteenani oli korvata yksityisautoilua käyttämällä bussia aina kun se on järkevää ja sujuvaa. Kokeilun jälkeen olenkin hankkinut arvokortin, kun aiemmin ostin kertalippuja kännykällä.

Koin bussin käyttämisen mutkattomaksi, mutta ryhmässä vaihdettiin monia kokemuksia liikuntarajoitteisten kokemuk-
seista. Olen itsekkin pistänyt merkille, että bussi jää monesti kuljettajalta kallistamatta.

Yhteyksiä Kupittaaalle tulisi parantaa, sillä se on Turun toinen keskus. Kulkisin juna-asemalle mielelläni bussilla, mutta sinne ei ole sujuvaa yhteyttä kotoani."

Reijo Tähtinen
Leo Uhtion mentoritava



MENTORIKIN OPPI UUTTA

"Vapaaehtoistyö on siitä jännä, että aina oppii uutta ja ajatukset tuulettuvat. Lähdettyäni mentoriksi, opinkin hyödyntämään sovellusta ja voin esimerkiksi seurata, missä bussi kulkee. Lisäksi sain vaihtaa monia hyviä ajatuksia mentoritavani kanssa.

Ajokortittomana käytän bussia paljon ja

monet asiat ovat bussilla liikkumisessa itses-
tään selvyys. Jos jotain kehittäisin, niin asiakaspalveluasennetta, johon kuuluvat illo ja hymy, vaikka aina ei hyvä päivä olekaan. Maahanmuuttajakuljettajat pärjäävät tässä hyvin ja se liittyy varmasti kulttuureihin, joissa vanhempia ihmisiä arvostetaan."

Leo Uhtio
Reijo Tähtisen mentori

Figure 8: Article on local newspaper about mentoring pilot and experiences from the participants. Turun Sanomat 19.12.2019

Better Kupittaa connection in needed

"My aim was to take a bus instead of a private car whenever it is reasonable. After the trial I bought a travel card, whereas before I paid for one-time ticket with a mobile phone. To me using a bus was easy, but there were many experiences with mobility barriers in the group. I have noticed that often the driver do not lower the busfloor for seniors. Connections to Kupittaa should be better. I would use bus to go to the train station but there is no suitable bus line from my home." -Reijo, mentee

Even the mentor learned new things

"Volunteer work is exciting, always new things to learn and thoughts to consider. After becoming a mentor I learned to use the application and see where the bus goes on a map. I got to exchange many good thoughts with my mentee. I do not have a driving license and I use bus a lot, which makes it self-evident for me. I would improve customer service and attitude: smile and happiness, even though it is not a good day. Those with ethnic background are very good at this, it must have something to do with the culture of appreciating elderly." -Leo, mentor

b. Follow-up of participants

Half a year after the first trial, the participants (mentors and mentees) were contacted and interviewed on the phone. The aim was to find out whether the seniors had continued to use PT, what did they learn from the mentoring sessions and what did they think about PT now after some time. **10/11 mentees had used PT regularly or few times after the trial until the Covid-19 situation began.** The pandemic situation affected seniors' travelling and many were waiting for better times to use PT. One lived in the city center and did not have the need for PT after all. One participants' situation had changed due to surgery and health and they were not able to use bus for some time. Almost all mentees answered that they could use what they learned and it has helped and encouraged them to use PT. Everyone told that they remember at least something what was learned, especially those digital services that they used most during the trial. There was not much difference between mentors and mentees when asked about this. **It was noticed even during the pilot that it was a learning process for both; the mentors as well learned to use the Föli digital services during the pilot. 7/9 mentors had helped relatives, friends or neighbours in PT use and told about what they had learned and how easy it is to use Föli once learned.**

Seniors' comments on the trial:

"I learned to use the Föli application and it has helped me to find the bus timetable on my phone. It was a positive experience to be in the pilot. I learned to use the bus on demand-service."

"The Föli internet page has helped me to use PT. The route search was difficult for me. I have had good experiences. It is difficult to go to town by own car and it is easier to use bus and walk."

"It was very useful and encouraging. Route search and Föli application have helped me, it is easier now to know the information of buses in real time in each bus stop."

"I like to go by bus now and get familiar with the region, just to travel for fun and looking at the scenery."

"I feel more confident now than before. Now I can find the bus routes and times on my phone and laptop. It is easier to use bus in spring and summer, than winter."

"After trial I have gone to my hobby by bus. Before I used my own car and did not know the bus route there. I rather put my money on bus card than parking."



Figure 9: Mentor and mentee on a bus during the trial. Credit: Heta Laiho.

c. Youth as mentors

This part of the pilot was affected by Covid-19 the most. First this trial was postponed and it needed some adjustment once implemented. It affected the grouping, especially between the youth and seniors, that the kick-off event had to be held online instead of face-to-face. The youth and seniors met face-to-face for the first time at a bike station where the participants tried the bikes and they were told to make plans to meet 4-5 times within each group (2 youth, 2-3 seniors, 1 physiotherapist). This was a bit confusing and difficult to facilitate because people did not know each other and it seemed that all given instructions were not clear to them. All seniors were familiar with Whatsapp and creating Whatsapp groups for each group was a great idea and an efficient way to communicate.

The youth had a role of Föli ambassadors who created content on social media in Föli channels (Instagram, Facebook). The youth and seniors met 3-6 times during one month trial. It was more about driving around and getting used to the bike while the youth filmed, photographed and interviewed the seniors for social media content. The topic of seniors and city bikes was visible in the social media for the first time, and this was a positive outcome. The youth received training from a social media influencer and the communication plans were planned together with communication specialists of Valonia and Föli. The youth told they learned a lot about communications and seniors as a user group during this process.



Figure 10: The youth found it interesting to create content about seniors and city bikes for Föli social media channels. Credit: Maiju Oikarinen.

The seniors felt that they mainly learned everything they needed to know in the kick-off meeting (how to register a city bike) and the first face-to-face meeting (how to open, adjust, use and return the bike). Seniors told that in general they prefer help from their peers, because they do not always understand the language of the youth. There was some misunderstanding also between the seniors and youth in some of the groups. From the seniors' perspective mentoring did not go as smooth as in the previous peer coaching trial.



Figure 11: Over-generational mentoring was not so natural to seniors, and they found peer support more comfortable. Credit: Maiju Oikarinen.

Föli also received feedback on city bikes from the seniors' perspective. The seniors definitely need help in registration and use of the city bike. [The physiotherapist hints](#) and instructions were useful for seniors and they were very professional in their work.

Seniors' comments on the trial:

"At first it felt heavy and clumsy, but as I got used to the bike, biking started to feel more comfortable."

"The city bikes weight a lot which makes it difficult to ride. They are good on short trips on flat roads."

"I have learned to remember the important bike stations and I keep finding new ones as I cycle."

"The city bike is heavy, but with the electric bike the hills are easy to ride."

"I am able to bike further with electric bike, and this surely helps to keep me fit."



Figure 12: Physiotherapist observed and gave hints to the seniors on city bikes. Credit: Jenni Mikkonen.

d. Recommendations for age-friendly public transportation

Recommendations for age-friendly public transportation in Föli were compiled based on the findings of the pilot. Here are some of the main points that can be useful for anyone who is working with PT planning.

i) Digital services

- Seniors became excited about Föli application and route search after they received support and learned to use them. They found the digital services' training by Föli very useful. New skills help the seniors to find the right routes and plan their travels, and it actually becomes easier than trying to find and understand the schedule on a paper map etc. *"The phone does the thinking on behalf of me"* – senior in the group
- It is important to offer training and support for senior customers on digital services. The services should be always age-friendly.
- The user experience and accessibility should be always carefully considered with senior users. The seniors told during the pilot that some text had too small letters and it was difficult to read, the map in the app was too small or difficult to read etc. Some seniors told that their phone/battery was not able to run the application.

- It is important to remember that all seniors do not have smart phones, but at the same time there is and will be “digi seniors’ generation” who use smart phones and are tech-savvy.
- It is important to collect feedback and user experience from the senior users. For example, Föli asked the pilot group to comment the new beta version of their webpage.
- Seniors need help with registration and the first time use with city bikes. Some special training days for seniors should be offered. Once seniors have registered and tried the bikes, they are able to use them.
- The seniors who were trained and learned to use the digital services were happy to share their knowledge and help friends and relatives to know more about them.

ii) **Buses and traveling**

- Digital screens on each bus and bus stop help seniors to see where the bus goes and where to get off. For example, adds on windows make it difficult to see out. Föli has decided to require a digital screen on each bus.
- Instructions for the customers: give a seat to seniors, helps others etc.
- For those with mobility support devices the middle door is the most important factor what comes to age-friendliness and accessibility. It is recommended to continue free of charge for those moving with devices (Föli offers free of charge daily from 9 to 13 for those with rollator). There could also be a card reader at the back on each bus, which would make it easier for many seniors.
- Lowering the bus floor when a senior gets on/off and driving close and straight to the platform is another very important factor. Some type of buses are not very well equipped for lowering the bus which can make it difficult to operate at the bus stop. This was pointed out in the drivers’ survey.
- During the trial and in the drivers’ survey it was concluded that even the newly designed bus platforms can be inadequate for senior users. It can be difficult for the driver to drive the bus close enough if the platform is not straight. Senior perspectives and participation in planning is very important and this should be enhanced.
- Seniors are very content with the service lines, where the service is age-friendly and nice. The bus drivers have time to help, the schedule is not tight and the bus can stop outside the bus stops.

- Age-friendliness should be emphasized in the training of bus drivers. Service and the way of driving can be a critical factor whether a senior feels comfortable using the bus or not. The service should be age-friendly in all lines.
- Road maintenance and poor conditions affect the experience of senior customers. Especially wintertime restricts the use of PT among seniors.
- Senior discounts are good and many seniors said that they rather put their money on a travel card than parking fees.



Figure 13: Seniors gave their comments and perceptions on local public transport in a workshop. Credit: Heta Laiho.

iii) City bikes

The city bikes in Turku are not optimal for seniors and are not suitable to those with physical restrictions. The seniors found the bikes quite heavy and difficult to balance at first due to front basket. However, after the seniors got used to cycling with it, they said it was good to cycle. Five seniors said they will continue to use it, one hoped to be able to cycle again after surgery and one was inspired to buy own bike again. The positive outcome was that the seniors were inspired to cycle again after some time. They prefer the electric bikes which allow them to cycle longer years and distances, while being good exercise to stay fit and healthy. Also tricycles could be considered as part of the city bike system. During the project the contract of

Turku city bike system came to an end and the city will get a new system in 2022. Senior perspectives and barriers were also discussed with the planning team, which prepares the competitive tendering.

Based on experiences from the city bikes pilots in Turku and Tartu, Valonia and Tartu have compiled the following recommendations for how to increase the share of silver age people users on city bikes.

1. Hold face-to-face meetings as much as possible, for silver age people to see each other and meet each other while learning to use the city bikes. The PT office or other organization could hold regular training session (e.g. monthly) targeted to seniors: *How to registrate or/and use the city bike?* If seniors are familiar with Whatsapp and Teams etc. the meetings and discussions can be partly organized online as well, but in order to learn seniors should get training face-to-face.
2. Clear and simple info material and step by step instructions for silver age people. All material should be accessible.
3. Create video material to show and paper instructions to hand out on how to use the city bikes. Include info number/website where to get help. The material alone is not enough, it has to be planned how to deliver it so that the materials reach silver age people and organizations who work with seniors.
4. Encourage silver age people personally and show in practise that it is not complicated to use the city bikes. Once silver age people learn how to use the bikes, they are encouraged to use them regularly. Collect also feedback from silver age people, in case of challenges and barriers. Plan how and where to address the feedback.
5. Bring a physiotherapist to the training sessions or meetings. Physiotherapist can give good advice and hints for biking and show main exercises for improving balance and biking condition as well as for recovering from biking.



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Figure 14: Physiotherapist instructions to city bike use.

6. Communication campaign

The final activity was to wrap the best practices of mentoring and peer support to a quality communication campaign. The aim of the campaign was to spread the message of age-friendly PT and create the atmosphere of helping seniors in PT use with whatever barriers one may face. The campaign had to wait until the Covid-19 restrictions were over and it was decided to be implemented in June 2021. The campaign was visible for three months in buses, social media, NGOs, Föli office etc. It was targeted to different user groups; senior PT-users, other passengers, bus drivers, family members of seniors, NGOs and other stakeholders. [A campaign page](#) was launched with information for senior offers and ways to help and support the non-users in PT use. All possible NGOs and associations were welcomed to take part in the campaign and it raised a lot of interest in the elderly networks. It also became part of the Turku City campaign of preventing loneliness and was in their newsletter several times. This also raised many further ideas and cooperation opportunities for Föli. The campaign started at the same time with the establishment of “Föli friends” peer support group so there was very much needed synergy in these. The mentors spread the word, posters and flyers and reached out to seniors. During the campaign 100 Föli tickets were given out to non-users via NGOs with a mentor to help them to try PT for the first time.



Figure 15: Examples of the materials in the communication campaign.

5 Impact

The knowledge of age-friendliness has increased in Föli public transport authority. For Föli this was the first time to run such participatory process. It increased dialogue between the PT planners and seniors, while the needs and barriers of the user group have become clearer. Seniors who participated in the pilot felt heard and they also got perspectives of the city planning, ways to affect and give opinions. Many factors have impact on age-friendliness of PT and Föli is not in charge of these all. The project helped to understand all these different stakeholders and think age-friendliness as a cross-cutting theme, which includes e.g. city and traffic planning, road maintenance, procurement of PT, communications, customer service and decision-making. The project was also introduced for the Regional Traffic System Work Committee of Southwest Finland and the produced materials will be in further use in green mobility work of the region. The work continues and there has been discussion for an introduction on the topic and training for the new elected committees of Turku Region Public Transportation and Turku City Environment in autumn 2021, although this will be after the project ends. The mentor group wrote a letter with suggestions of improvements in Föli to the PT committee and this will be presented to them in October 2021. This means that the project continues to have an impact while spreading the lessons learned and the materials in local mobility and city planning.

The impact of the mentoring model pilot was significant. The results were so positive that the on-going mentoring model was institutionalized and integrated into Föli's services. Eight volunteer senior mentors from the pilot group were involved in designing the final mentoring model of "Föli friends". After the project Föli wants to have an on-going activity for involving and encouraging seniors and increasing the senior share in PT. The pilot showed that peer coaching encouraged seniors to try new services and they became more confident with help from a peer coach. It has social inclusion as well, which is an important aim in Turku City strategy and as a member of WHO's Age-friendly cities network. PT peer coaching model give seniors opportunities to learn more about PT and share their thoughts and experiences about it. This can bring the sense of involvement for seniors: Föli considers them as important user group and offers

something for them as customers. In our pilot, feedback was collected during mentoring with an aim to find critical points for senior users in PT. This was a good way to involve the user group in developing more age-friendly services. Föli made a web page for the peer support group and the activities continue. Now Föli has a group of seniors who the planners can ask for opinions whenever they need a better understanding of senior barriers and needs. Mentors have also learned a lot in two years of mentoring others. Regular meetings between the seniors and PT planners create possibilities for continuous discussions and feedback. Föli keeps supporting and training the mentors and also finds opportunities for them to be active.

It was also concluded in the pilot that these kinds of activities can lower the threshold to try and use PT as well as change attitudes towards it. Peer support brings positive experiences of PT, and these can spread in informal discussions among seniors. The mentors wanted to organize meetings and trips outside the mentoring sessions. For example, a trip to a national park, where Föli runs, gave participants a lot of pleasure when meeting others outdoors, and at the same time they learned a new route. The mentors can help and encourage non-users in all kinds of PT issues, e.g. trying the bus for the first time, new routes, city bike registration, and digital services such as applications and webpage. Mentoring can spread on its own, when PT users advice and encourage each other even after the guided sessions. This is the ideal situation, and this happened with the Föli friends group. They started to spread the message in their own surroundings, networks and hobbies. The attitudes of seniors change when they learn how convenient Föli services can be. Seniors are encouraged to try e.g applications with a help of their peers, which then more often can lead to choosing PT over private cars.

It is important that Föli is the coordinator of the mentoring scheme. First, the mentors are always trained and their knowledge about Föli is regularly updated. The mentors are given monthly travel cards as incentives, and this has to be budgeted annually. The mentors report their mentoring sessions, which helps to follow-up and justify the importance and value of the mentoring scheme to the decision-makers. The mentors also need an insurance, this was covered by the partner NGO which has an on-going volunteer scheme in elderly work. The NGO also contributed to other practical issues based on their experience with similar work. Cooperation with local senior NGOs was and is very important in order to spread the message and reach all potential PT users. Cross-sectional cooperation is key to the long-term impact. In the long-term, the aim is that mentoring spreads widely to different Föli municipalities, senior users are more aware of Föli PT offers and the senior users share of local public transport is significantly higher.



Figure 16: Föli friends are a group of mentors who help their peers in PT use. Credit: Saana Lehtinen.

6 Success

The success story is that supporting and coaching each other is an effective way to increase senior users' participation and share in PT. The work continues with the integrated mentoring model – the established Föli friends group. The work will continue in Föli together with the local NGOs, elderly and digital support networks. The success story is presented with a video [“Moving closer to age-friendly green mobility” - Case Turku, Finland](#)

7 Lessons learnt

- It was important to prepare the mentoring pilot carefully and step by step with clear aim of each stage of implementation.
- The group of 22 seniors was the right size, as their travels in the pilot were observed and each participant was interviewed. It can be done also without observation, but some kind of follow-up of the participants and getting feedback from the seniors is important. This needs time and resources.

- Finding the participants for the pilot takes time and work. In the pilot there was a very diverse group of seniors: with physical and mental barriers (e.g. mobility aid device, memory challenges), private car owners and age from 66 to 81 years. The participants can be found by an open call, in the kick-off event and recruiting via events and NGO's.
- The mentors need training before they start to mentor others. Even after this, it is a mutual learning for both the mentor and the mentee. Experienced PT user is not a professional but a peer who wants to help.
- It is important to ensure that some improvements are actualized and put to practice, and that information about age-friendly changes also reaches the user groups.
- Quality communication is important, how and in which ways to reach the user groups.
- The seniors found the public kick-off event and other events during the pilot very important, where they were able to express their opinions and ideas freely.
- Meeting face-to-face is preferable for creating groups and learning together, especially for seniors, but also in over-generational cooperation. Meetings are important social events for seniors to see each other and discuss. Social inclusion is very important part of mentoring model. It cannot be implemented without meeting face-to-face.
- Seniors felt more comfortable and easygoing when they received help from their peers. Seniors had sometimes difficulties to understand the language of the youth (under 20 years). Also, the youth did not feel very comfortable in their position of mentoring seniors. It does not matter, is the mentor young or senior, they still need training to be a mentor. Support from the sociology and physiotherapy students (20+ years) with specific expertise seemed more natural for the seniors.
- Training seniors to use PT digital services is important, as it can make PT use more convenient. For example, seniors found it easier to find the route by smart phone than by a paper map after the training. At the same time, the digital skills of people in silver age should not be underestimated. Many silver age people are willing to use PT digital services after they have received hands-on training. Support, training and info materials are needed. Cooperation with groups, which give digital support to elderly people, can be useful.
- Mentoring scheme could be very effective way to get more senior users in those cities where PT is free.
- Offering trials of PT services to user groups raises interest and encourages more seniors to use PT, including city bikes. Collecting feedback from these is very useful and gives information on senior barriers and needs.
- Community and cross-sectional cooperation around mentoring is needed. NGOs and existing networks are important. Phone numbers of mentors cannot be online, hence coordination and

communication of activities is needed. Open for all PT events can be organized and communicated together with NGOs so that the non-users and silent senior citizens are reached.

- The mentors should be visible in the community and available for non-PT-users e.g. specific times so that people get familiar with them and know that they will help.
- Close cooperation with Föli (PT authority) and having their representative actively in the work has been key in the success of the project. This has allowed continuous dialogue between the seniors and PT planners.