

New handbook to improve travel experiences among vulnerable travel groups

April 16 2020

How is travel with demand responsive transport experienced? What factors play a significant role, and what can be done to create better travel experiences? This has been studied by researchers at CTF, Service Research Center at Karlstad University, who have released a new handbook with new knowledge and recommendations on how this type of travel can be developed to provide a better experience for the vulnerable travel groups.

The researchers have studied how travel groups with different disabilities experience their demand responsive travel journeys, this with a focus on user-friendliness and how the user and the driver together handle situations that may arise. The researchers have also looked at what kind of vulnerability this travel group is experiencing, and what during the journey that leads to it, as well as what kind of management strategies both the [traveler](#) and driver use to reduce the experienced problems.

"Drivers, as well as other staff, need to pay more attention to the physical, behavioral, communicative and sequential aspects when meeting the travelers. Much of the well-being of travelers lies in the details of the interaction, such as the staff's hand movements, body position and gestures. It is also important that traveler's own behavioral abilities are taken in consideration and are utilized," says Project Manager Per Echeverri.

"That the travel often is perceived as physically uncomfortable, that the

travelers sometimes feel treated as a commodity, or do not get enough information about where they are going, how long the trip will last and if there will be more travelers picked up, add to the feeling of vulnerability among travelers," says Nicklas Salomonson, Associate Professor at the University of Borås and visiting researcher at CTF. "To reduce vulnerability, it is important that drivers inform and are responsive to travelers' subtle verbal and nonverbal signals during the journey. Some of these are explicit while others are implicit. The signals are either reactive or proactive and are shown in ten different strategies used by travelers to manage their perceived vulnerability."

The studies also show that it is helpful when the staff takes in consideration that the travelers may end up in a "void," for example in gaps in the transition places such as between the transport system and the healthcare system, or in connection with drop-off at the final destination. This is a step in the journey where extra help and information may be needed, says the researchers.

The handbook is based on results from several different studies in which the researchers, often in connection with the actual trips, followed and interviewed demand responsive transport travelers, drivers and booking staff.

The handbook is aimed at actors in the public transport sector, and the researchers hope that it can serve as a support for future development in the area. The handbook includes recommendations on how to develop relatively simple methods to create a better understanding of the travelers, and even how to involve the travelers in the development and creation of future sustainable transport solutions.

"Our handbook provides an increased understanding of how this group of travelers are experiencing their demand responsive [transport](#) journeys, knowledge that can be used to improve this type of travel to better suit

the needs of the travelers," concludes Per Echeverri.

More information: The digital handbook is free of charge and available online:

www.kau.se/files/2020-04/Handbok_DRT_RESPONSE.pdf

Provided by Karlstad University

Citation: New handbook to improve travel experiences among vulnerable travel groups (2020, April 16) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-04-handbook-vulnerable-groups.html>

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