EUROPEAN DISABILITY FORUM

Multi-modal terminals: At the core of a seamless and accessible future transport chain

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The European Disability Forum (EDF)

EDF is the European umbrella organisation representing the interests of 80 million persons with disabilities in Europe. It is EDF's mission to ensure that persons with disabilities have full access to fundamental and human rights through their active involvement in policy development and implementation in Europe. EDF is a member of the International Disability Alliance and works closely with the European institutions, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

Introduction

As EDF states in its recommendations on Article 20, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in the Alternative Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it is vital that the EU supports "efforts to create a seamless, multi-modal travel chain and ticketing system to facilitate travelling for persons with disabilities"[1]. Similarly, EDF has repeatedly called for the realization of seamless, independent and spontaneous travel for everyone as a long-term goal. This can of course only be achieved once transport and the related infrastructure are accessible to all persons with disabilities, including women and girls with disabilities, and persons with disabilities requiring more intensive support.

EDF is aware of the well-known problems such as the long life-span of infrastructure and buildings and the perceived high cost related to upgrade, renovations and new constructions but is nevertheless convinced that improving accessibility is essential to achieve a seamless, multi-modal travel chain and the terminals or points of interchange are at the core of this chain.

In the first part of this paper, EDF will give a definition of what multi-modal terminals are and why they are an important part of the travel chain. We will then proceed to explain some of the difficulties that persist in the planning and setting up multi-modal terminals, specifically in relation to accessibility. Finally, we will show a few good-practice examples and give policy recommendations to make sure that possible future EU initiatives fulfill their potential.

[1] EDF's Alternative Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, March 2015, p. 39,https://www.dropbox.com/s/smf9saqatyixa1i/2015%2003%2004%20EDF%20Alternative%20report%20final%20ACCESSIBLE.pdf?dl=0

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Multi-modal terminals: a definition

A multi-modal terminal can be defined, according to the "NODES" project[2], as a place where an interchange occurs between different modes of transport and its purpose is to simplify the complexity of the public transport system.[3] We will focus on passenger terminals and include also the access to the terminal itself as well as the represented transport modes.

> **Definition:** A multi-modal terminal is a place, where an interchange occurs between different modes of transport and its purpose is to simplify the complexity of the public transport system.

Multi-modal terminals can be rather basic, such as a train station connected to urban bus services, but they can also reach high levels of complexity such as an airport connected to high-speed rail services, local/regional rail services, long-distance coach services, urban buses, metro and tram services, taxis, private cars (parking), bikes and even walking. The word "terminal" does thus not stand only for major transport hubs but it can also be a smaller transport node in an urban context. There is no limitation on the amount of different modes involved and the sizes vary of course also depending on the size of the city and the surrounding infrastructure and environment.

2 http://www.nodes-interchanges.eu/ , retrieved on 18 November 2015

3 NODES project, Report on State of the Art, Criteria and Indicators, p. 15, http://www.nodes-interchanges.eu/documents/2014/05/nodes_wp2_d2-3_final-3.pdf ; retrieved on 18 November 2015

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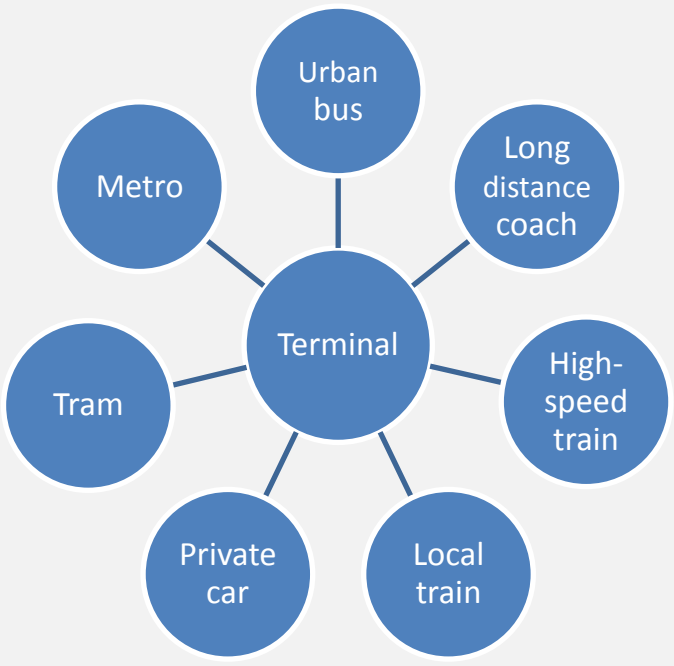
Schematic overview of a more complex multi-modal terminal



Multi-modal terminals are often not accessible to persons with disabilities. Even if one, several or all connecting transport modes are made accessible (e.g. low-floor buses or trains) it is not self-evident that the built environment is equally accessible. It can also be the case that the terminal is designed in an accessible way but it is rendered inaccessible if it is managed badly. However, EDF would like to underline the numerous advantages and opportunities that the increasing use of multi-modal terminals have to improve transport conditions for persons with disabilities:

- Shortened transfer time: Short distance between interchanges to different transport modes by having all the different modes under one roof or adjacent to each other

- Easier orientation: a consistent way finding and signage system, integration of accessibility features in a coherent manner

- Combined assistance: If assistance is needed, this can potentially be provided as one service, guaranteeing a smooth interchange (currently this is not consistently the case between airports and train stations, for example)

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- "One stop shop": Clear point of reference in the urban environment as the starting point for each journey is at the same place; easy access to shops if the terminal incorporates shopping opportunities.

- The terminal as a "business card" for the city: An attractive, accessible and well-structured transport terminal is often the first impression visitors get of a city so it should be presented accordingly.

Challenges to be tackled

Cost is stated to be the most common challenge to the establishment of multi-modal terminals and also for making them accessible. While there is EU funding available also to make infrastructure, in particular stations[4], more accessible, this is still perceived as a main challenge. Of course it does cost money to construct a new terminal from scratch but if this is done, accessibility should already be taken into account in the planning phase. Upgrades and renovations are also a good opportunity to rethink both the inter-modality of the urban transport systems as well as their accessibility for persons with disabilities.

The "NODES" project mentioned above also identifies both planning and design as crucial factors: "The planning process for the interchange […] should start from sound knowledge about the future role of the interchange, demand and impact."[5] In the process, end users including organisations representing persons with disabilities should be consulted as a source of information and knowledge about specific design requirements, both for the accessibility of the built environment and the provision of information in alternative formats.

Another challenge is how to manage intermodal links under Public Service Obligation (PSO) contracts. The responsibilities of different actors in such a terminal are not always clear and it has to be well-coordinated in order to avoid confusion for the passengers. Even in a regular railway station, different actors manage different part of the station: infrastructure managers are responsible for the tracks, railway undertakings for the rolling stock, station managers for the platforms, public authorities for the station forecourt and parking facilities, yet another transport undertaking manages the bus service that connects to the station, not even mentioning businesses and shop owners that rent retail space in the station building.

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[4] For example under the Commission's Connection Europe Facility (CEF) of the TEN-T Programme: http://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/ten-t-guidelines/project-funding/work-programmes_en.htm or the Rail research programme Shift2Rail: http://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/rail/shift2rail_en.htm

[5] NODES project, Report on State of the Art, Criteria and Indicators, p. 15

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These are only a few of the actors involved in managing a complex station environment; in an inter-modal terminal this is multiplied by the additional amount of actors involved. This also concerns the provision of assistance for persons with disabilities or reduced mobility under the EU's Passengers' Rights legislation[6].

Bus Users Scotland has also pointed out in this context that each mode has to start cooperating instead of working in their own, isolated "silo". This can be facilitated by more purpose-built terminals that host all transport modes under one roof and that make the transfer between different modes truly seamless. Additionally, they underline that information for passengers is key.[7]

Urban development is of course also a crucial aspect that needs to be taken into account – most transport networks and the corresponding terminals are not planned and built at the same time; they are added, altered and extended over the years. The growing urban environment makes it difficult to take a harmonized approach.

Finally, it is important that all aspects of accessibility are taken into account to respond to the needs of all persons with disabilities: mobility impairments as well as sensory disabilities such as hearing or visual impairments, intellectual and psychosocial disabilities (e.g. autism or Down syndrome) as well as the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities and persons requiring more intensive support. Furthermore, even a fully accessible terminal in its design has to be managed correctly to ensure accessibility throughout its operation. If shop owners place advertisements in the step-free path, if cleaners store their equipment in the disabled toilet, or if an elevator is permanently out of order this defies the point of having an accessible building.

Recommendations

Multi-modal terminals have many advantages that make it an ideal hub to facilitate the interchange between different transport modes as well as creating a vibrant centre in the urban environment. In order to exploit those opportunities fully, some things should be kept in mind:

- Accessibility is key. Making multi-modal terminals accessible will increase the attractiveness of public transport and thus contribute to its long-term sustainability.

[6] The obligation to provide assistance to persons with disabilities or reduced mobility is included in the set of Passengers' Rights legislation, including Regulations 1107/2006, 1371/2007, 181/2011, and 1177/2010.

[7] Presentation of Gavin Booth, Bus Users Scotland, at the ECMF Workshop on Multimodal Terminals on 14 October 2014 in Brussels, https://www.iru.org/cms-filesystem-action/events/2014/ecmf/booth.pdf

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Since many tourists and business travelers arrive at such a terminal it is first impression that people get when they arrive. The terminal is the “business card” of the city and making it accessible and easy to navigate can revitalize many aspects of the urban environment.

- Making terminals accessible is much cheaper when planning new terminals according to “Universal Design” principles. Urban planners and architects should take this into account already when planning the construction and public authorities should make accessibility a criterion in the public procurement process. A long-term view to planning is essential to anticipate future developments in urban planning.

- In order to “get it right” when planning new multi-modal terminals or when renovating existing terminals, EDF strongly recommends to involve organizations representing persons with disabilities in the planning process and to use their expertise. This is why EDF also recommends taking a look at the long term: the ageing population will make accessibility an even more important issue in the years to come. And collecting feedback from passengers helps to improve the travel experience for everyone.

- Accessibility is more than just getting the blueprint right, it has to be considered from the initial planning phase through the construction phase up to the daily management of the terminal and also in cases of renewal or update. EDF suggests consulting a technical expert on accessibility throughout the process in addition to Disabled Persons’ Organisations (DPO). Regular training of all staff on accessibility issues should also be held.

- Finally, it is important to see the whole picture and consider multi-modal terminals as part of a bigger travel chain. This also means including everyone, regardless of his or her disability, and gathering all the relevant stakeholders and actors when planning a new terminal or renovating an existing one.

Conclusion

Multi-modal transport terminals are a convenient, secure and accessible way to interlink the different segments of the travel chain for all passengers. They also play an important role in making transport more accessible for persons with disabilities and have thus a big potential. The cost of making new terminals accessible for persons with disabilities is lower the earlier accessibility is included in the design, it is thus important to take accessibility into account

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already in the planning phase. The aim should be facilitating seamless, independent and spontaneous travel for everyone, including persons with disabilities and reduced mobility.

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Related EDF publications:

- EDF report on the situation of passengers with disabilities 2015
- Accessibility for persons with disabilities in the EU railway sector – state of play 2014

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