Initial situation

Cyprus, as many other countries, has not avoided the effect of unorganized and fast development, leading to high private car dependency and the absence of organisational structure for the programming and deployment of long run traffic management projects. According to transport statistics, the country faces a dramatic increase of private car usage especially on the main urban areas of the country. Although interurban bus routes link all large cities alongside the TEN-T corridor, the passenger demand is very low and the image of bus services is poor. Recently, the interurban bus network have undergone an upgrade with more services and a gradual improvement of the bus fleet. The potential of public transport services on interurban links, however, still does not seem to be fully exploited.

Main tasks

Based on record of a sound traffic data pool and on local stakeholders’ opinion, the study was expected to form proposals at strategic level regarding the restructuring of the interurban public transport services and associated infrastructure. Along with the new bus services concept, policies suitable to promote public transport had to be presented. Suggestions for the adaptation of the legislative and organizational framework should ensure optimal effectiveness and efficiency of the restructured public transport system. Eventually, a strategy was needed to encourage Cypriots to use public transport. The most effective measure should be appropriate to increase the mode share of public transport up to 10 % plus by 2020.

Methodology

The study started with an evaluation of existing traffic studies for Cyprus. To improve the data base, traffic counts on the roads and in the existing bus routes upon the TEN-T corridor were conducted and trip characteristics were recorded for both a typical period of the year and for the touristic summer season. Interviews were carried out to understand the local stakeholders’ opinion regarding the existing and future interurban public transport.
Based on these data and international know-how, proposals were developed for the restructuring of interurban bus routes and services. All proposals were combined to scenarios with a set of smart policies promoting the use of public transport, e.g. parking fees, road tolls, bus priority measures etc. Three different scenarios (network restructuring / policy / cost-effectiveness) were tested and compared to the ‘Do-Nothing’ in order to evaluate the feasibility and viability of the proposals and to come up with a recommended solution.

For testing the scenarios, a national 4-stage transportation model developed regarding private and public transport modes. Existing conditions were calibrated for all means of transport and for future at two time horizons (2012, 2020). The scenarios were evaluated also in terms of their economic viability and the benefit-cost-ratio for the national economy to find a preferred solution.

In line with the network and scenarios, realistic proposals for the reorganisation of the current legal and institutional framework were elaborated. Eventually, a communication strategy was developed by identifying relevant target groups and messages to support a positive atmosphere in terms of the restructured interurban bus concept.

The study was carried out in cooperation with ALA Planning Partnership Ltd., Nicosia, TREDIT S.A., Thessaloniki, and the Hellenic Institute of Transport.

**Results**

The scenario evaluation resulted in an economically proofed proposal for the restructuring of the current point-to-point bus network to an attractive hubs&spokes system with bus priority schemes. Public transport passengers will profit from an increased number of direct and transfer links and reliable service during the day. Appropriate locations for the transfer hub stations (incl. station layout) and additional bus stops along the bus routes were identified for the implementation of park & ride facilities.

The proposal for the legislative and organizational framework includes, amongst others, the introduction of an integrated Public Transport Authority and a system of multiple bus operators competing for the market. Current and future (domestic) passengers as well as tourists, bus operators, decision maker and media are in the focus of the communication strategy and have to be addressed to for a successful implementation of the new bus system.