

QUALITY IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT FROM THE VIEW OF ITS SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

Zuzana Lokšová¹

Summary: The paper deals with the actual issue of public transport quality. Public transportation presents complicated phenomenon from various aspects. This paper tries to appraisal the quality in public transport from the view of its social functions.

Key words: quality criteria, public transport, social functions

INTRODUCTION

Public transport, including city public transportation, presents an important social problem since its unsatisfactory operation negatively influences the total standard of our living. At present in the Slovak Republic we can see tendency towards increasing especially road freight and individual automobile transport whilst the suburb bus and city public transportation are decreasing. In the former times penetrative increase of especially individual automobile transport was not considered during designing the roads in towns and villages. This reality results in negative impacts. Drivability of the roads is decreasing, passengers care is stagnating as well as the total transport quality. Time and speed of removal is extending to a certain measure. This unfavourable development in transport increasingly contributes by the exhaust emission and motor – vehicles noise to deterioration of the environment and residential zones, too.

1. QUALITY IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Quality of transport can be defined as a continual process of systematic satisfying customer requests and wishes.

These requests can be characterised by the following, commonly used categories of criteria by which customers most frequently judge city public transportation:

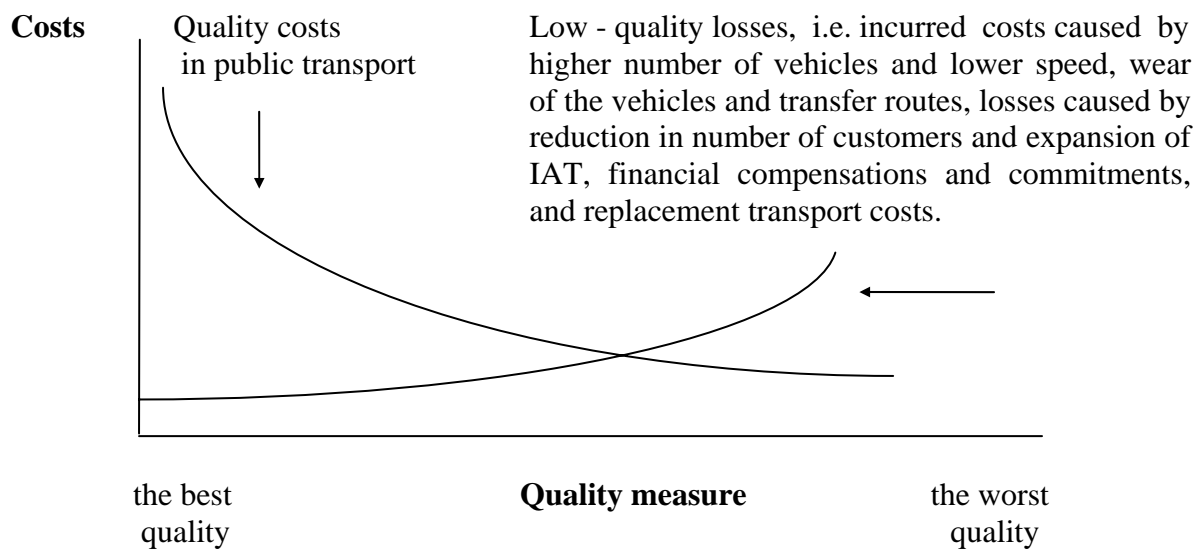
1. duration of transfer,
2. transport safety,
3. comfort,

¹Ing. Zuzana Lokšová, PhD., University of Žilina, Faculty of Operation and Economics of Transport and Communications, Department of Road and Urban Transport, Univerzitná 8215/1, 010 01 Žilina, Slovak Republic, Tel.: +421 41 513 3522, E-mail: Zuzana.Loksova@fpedas.uniza.sk

4. reliability and accuracy,
5. transportation costs.

One of the symptoms of our present time is the change in lifestyle, living standards and in demands for time use. This leads to changes in views on the quality of transfer in public transport. Quality of public transport influences mobility of inhabitants and division of transportation among the different types of public transport and between public transport and individual automobile transport.

When making decisions about the level of quality it is necessary to, first of all, consider economical factors. At any rate, it is the customer who determines the level of demand for a transport service of a certain price but also the level of required quality. Customers usually call for the highest quality for the lowest price possible. Considering the incurred costs the quality standards are not necessarily the highest. But, as evident from figure 1, poor quality standards of public transport will produce low-quality losses i.e. additional expenses necessary for eliminating a certain "failure of transport".



Source: (2)

Fig. 1 - Relation of public transport costs to changes of its quality

2. REQUIREMENTS FOR CITY PUBLIC TRANSFORMATION QUALITY FROM VIEW OF ITS SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

Personal transport and especially transport ensuring mobility of inhabitants in greater towns performs many functions. Social function is one of the most important functions. I have in mind that fact that formation and development of the public transport is dependent on expansion and deepening social relations that are given in the requirement for inhabitants' mobility.

Formation of big agglomerations caused that their inhabitants do not meet their social needs only within their habitations but they expand the space for their fulfilment in dependence on possibilities of their achievement in adequate time and comfort and acceptable economical and price conditions.

Problems of city public transportation are very important since its unsatisfactory operation negatively influence standard of living of inhabitants. If its functions including the social one are to be fulfilled it must achieve required quality parameters.

City public transportation quality as the part of transportation system presents generally complex of anticipated properties that meet anticipated and specified needs. These properties are quality requirements and also its criteria. **The quality credo is to ensure maximum transportation requirements with minimum effort at required quality level.**

The quality criterion is based on eight categories:

- availability, i.e. range of service offer in space, time, interval and capacity,
- accessibility, i.e. access to system of public transport and interconnections in system,
- sufficiency of information, i.e. provision of information about transport,
- time and speed of transportation,
- care of customer,
- comfort,
- security in transport, i.e. sense of security, measures for protection of lives, health and property,
- ecological impacts on natural environment.

Said by other words, the city public transportation quality depends on meeting the transportation requirements. Travelling community requires the system of city public transportation to be speedy (little time losses in regular transport), reliable, exact, prompt, spatially accessible, with sufficient transport capacity, minimum number of changing stations, short attendance distances to city public transportation stopping places by walking in the downtowns.

Social requirements are also important quality elements. They include preference societal interests to individual or local interests, social accessibility (solidarity – equal conditions for access to public services), adequate travelling expenses (reflecting social character of public service even at the price of subsidy, discounts), protection of so-called vulnerable persons (seniors, disabled persons, children in buggies, etc.), total security of passengers, their adequate comfort, hygienic conditions, culture and aesthetics of transportation.

Ecological requirements for city public transportation present also plumbless quality conditions. Especially decreasing of harmful impacts on natural environment as the noise,

exhaust emissions, vibrations and quakes, high dustiness and increasing quantity of solid wastes. The aim is to secure natural environment and human health.

At present, the individual automobile transport is the biggest competition of the city public transportation. Individual automobile transport achieves more and more growth as a result of higher standard of living that makes easier the access to automobile and its ownership. Individual automobile transport has advantages as better satisfaction of transportation need of the passengers from viewpoint of the space (also there where are no the transport lines), time (independency on timetable), relative comfort (avoiding travelling in overcrowded means of transport), personal comfort (the minimum walking) and also sense of being one of wealthier people.

Individual automobile transport, with regard to its growth and impacts, becomes problem of our towns and it is possible to say that it becomes also all-society problem. Weaknesses of individual automobile transport include decreasing of road carriageability in towns, higher expenses for users, parking problems, time losses, greater security threat and increasing negative impact on natural environment.

In societal interest, that is the interest of all of us, there is necessary to more expressively use propagation of city public transportation strengths especially in competition and make every effort to increase its quality. It is necessary to activate the societal interest in this kind of transport, offer more transport services and increase the number of customers. Propagation should emphasize especially these strengths (in comparison with individual automobile transport):

- ability to transport large number of persons in given time and space,
- low requirements for carrying charges and parking areas,
- saving money in comparison with fuelling price, amortization of personal motor car and other charges for motor car operation, e.g. insurance,
- no problems with parking (bad situation with parking at habitations and downtowns), no parking charges,
- protection of natural environment, less exhalations, noise and dustiness (in calculation on one person),
- higher security, risk reduction in traffic accidents and death injuries, no problems with traffic accident, insurance, police, transport of damaged car, responsibility for material damages and injuries,
- certain comfort (if the means of transport is not overcrowded), passengers can read, listen to music, no stress with driving, enter in social contacts, etc.).

That means that presentation of city public transportation should be concentrated on acquiring hesitating passengers, to support them in rightness of the city public transportation use. The aim is not to fight against individual automobile transport but to attract new city

public transportation users especially from the family of drivers. In big cities to propagate support parking and make more attractive combined travelling by car and by city public transportation. To compensate negative picture about city public transportation, to change the contribution of advertising campaign realized in favour of individual automobile transportation, to strengthen the passengers trust in quality of transport services and to learn them to travel correctly, securely and advantageously. To present advantages of its regular using.

3. CONCLUSION

From the above mentioned facts and arguments follows that in the all-society interest it is necessary to prefer public transportation against individual one for the reason of more effective utilization of the resources and care of the natural environment. Organization and development of public transport has to be solved completely with perspective in the future. It is necessary to ensure that the city public transportation development is in accordance with the needs of living style of citizens, natural environment, and planned development of towns and coordinated within the whole transport system. It is necessary to enhance management, planning, organization, tariff and investment activities and technical development. Only in this way, the social aspects of city public transportation, aimed at enhancing the life quality of inhabitants, will be met.

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