Large events & public transport: a winning team

1. The rise of large events
Cities are the theatre of a growing number of large events: sport competitions, concerts, cultural festivals, religious pilgrimages and business conventions, to name just a few. Increasingly several large events even occur at the same time. For instance about 4,000 large events take place in London (UK) every year and, on the weekend of the 7-8th of July 2007 alone, the city had to manage the Tour de France’s Grand Depart, the Live Earth concerts, the Wimbledon finals and a concert of a big rock star at the O2 stadium!

Large events differ in purpose, duration, size, frequency and type of public. A big concert which lasts for one evening is very different from the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup that last for several weeks.

Yet, whatever the type of large event, the organisation and the management of the movements of all actors (including those not involved in the event) are the keys to the smooth running of the event.

Public transport: an essential ingredient of large events
Experience shows that large events critically rely on the ability of the public transport system of the host city and its region to get large amounts of extra travellers to the right places, as it is the only way to avoid inextricable traffic jams and high air pollution.

During the Olympic Games in Athens (Greece) in 2004, 22 million passengers journeys were made to/from the Olympic venues, 74% of which using public transport. During the Rugby World Cup in Paris (France) in 2007 about 3 million extra public transport passenger journeys were generated. The challenge is particularly acute in small and medium size cities. For instance, the Music festival in Werchter (Belgium) welcomes about 300.000 spectators every year in a small rural village of 3.200 inhabitants. The public transport service target is 40% of those visitors.

While large events represent an opportunity to showcase its strengths, they are also a test for public transport. Poor performance, delays or even accidents can affect not only the course of the event but also the image of public transport, with related consequences on ridership.

Large events: catalysts for city improvement
The benefits of a large event for the host city may include:
- The demonstration of the efficiency of the organisation of the city/region and especially its public transport network
- An impetus for the economic development of the area and the public transport infrastructure in the middle/long term
- The chance to raise the image of the city in the competition for investments and qualified work force
- The development of a feeling of common purpose among citizens

1 Fédération Internationale de Football Association
Against this background, the purpose of this Focus Paper is to optimize the contribution of public transport to large events and the benefits of large events for the host city and its public transport system, by promoting coordination between those in charge of the planning and the organization of large events (in particular event owners and local authorities) and public transport operators and authorities.

This Focus Paper furthermore elaborates on the shared benefits of the coordination between large events and public transport and highlights the areas where coordination is particularly required. It concludes by a set of recommendations for decision-makers.

2. Shared benefits of coordination between large events and public transport

Structural aspects: development and upgrade of public transport infrastructure

The provision of sufficient capacity on specific routes is fundamental to the smooth running of large events. When suitably designed, public transport infrastructure developed or upgraded to accommodate extra demand generated by a large event will enhance the overall public transport system in the longer term.

Large events can encourage or accelerate the implementation of transport projects or the development of transport infrastructure that had already been foreseen to enhance urban, metropolitan or interurban mobility. The perspective of large events may make additional resources available for structural developments.

Genoa (Italy) for instance is a town that evolved from an industrial city in the first part of the 20th century to a touristic and maritime city nowadays, which means that transport needs changed over time. The municipality took the opportunity to host large events to change the face of the city and to develop a new transport plan.

In Beijing (China), four new metro lines opened in less than one year in anticipation of the Olympic Games in 2008. The new lines are an integral part of the metro network. The momentum created by the Olympic Games is sustained and 11 additional metro lines are planned to be built by 2015.

Functional aspects: communication, marketing, ticketing

The efficiency of the public transport system, the quality of the information provided to passengers and the user-friendliness of the fare system contribute to the success of large events, as a large proportion of passengers may not be familiar to the public transport system.

On the other hand, large events represent an opportunity for testing and implementing innovative marketing or ticketing practices. As a host city of the 2003 IAAF World Athletics Championships, Paris and RATP launched an extensive marketing campaign based on the theme of Athletics. After the introduction of an integrated ticketing system for the Olympic Games in 2004, Athens decided to keep the system and introduce an integrated ticket, which allows transfer between all modes of public transport within 90 minutes.

Operational aspects: service provision planning, management of flows, human resources

Experience gained in the management of past events shows that a fundamental key to success is the integration of operational management between the transport and the event itself. From an operational point of view, the long-term benefits of public transport and mobility management can be substantial: experience shows that forms of traffic and transport management implemented for the event last afterwards and have been validated.

The Olympic Games in Athens led to the new transport plan of Athens that was introduced by the Ministry of Transport shortly after the successful management of the mega-event and that is mainly based on the good practices applied during the Olympics, e.g. bus lane extensions, parking control, night services, etc.

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2 International Association of Athletics Federation
Moreover, the help provided by public transport for the flow management will permit police forces to be used more efficiently than regulating the road traffic.

3. Areas where consultation and coordination is required:

Coordination from the very beginning: choice of location

The planning, the organisation of public transport as well as the logistics of the event must be planned together from the very beginning. In order to achieve a sustainable improvement of the urban area, the choice of the location of the large event within the city must be made in consultation with transport experts and representatives of other urban policies.

Structural aspects: the planning of new public transport infrastructure or the improvement of existing infrastructure

Beyond the parameters of the large event, infrastructure development and upgrade decisions must take into account future development prospects of the city and its mobility system. The integration of new development in the urban fabric is essential. New infrastructures, like stadia, should be built to enable a smooth connection to public transport.

It is very important to achieve this objective, which is why all stakeholders should be involved. Structural planning must be the result of collaboration between the state, regions, local authorities, transport companies and end-users.

Financial aspects

The costs of the upgrade and/or the development of public transport services might be significant and the contribution of each partner to the funding of the project should be clarified at an early stage of the process.

A ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ of the funding architecture should be signed between the event owner, politics and the public transport actors to ensure a fair repartition of costs and revenues between the different partners and, in particular, to guarantee sufficient funding to cover the additional costs incurred by public transport due to additional service provision. For instance, an agreement was made between FIFA and the German public transport association (VDV) in 2006, stipulating that for each ticket sold for the event, a given amount would be provided to the VDV regardless of the use of public transport by ticket holders.

Sponsorship issues, as for example regarding the advertisement space on public transport vehicles and in stations, should also be discussed and agreed on from the very beginning.

Operational aspects: service provision planning, managing flows, human resources

It is important to create a ‘special body’, which is responsible exclusively for the management of the transport from the inception of the event up until the test period immediately before the event and the evaluation after the event.

This special body is the coordination group, a sort of multi agency coordination, with all involved actors, that should elaborate on a plan with milestones to achieve and should be set up and meet regularly as soon as the event is announced. It is the driving force of the event. In 2003, on the occasion of the IAAF World Championships in Athletics in Paris, the GIP, a group of public and private partners in charge of the organisation of the championships, was created. Within the GIP there was a transport unit with a workgroup composed of the RATP, SNCF (national railways) and ADP (Paris airport authority).

The companies who manage services already present in the area must be involved and encouraged as the event represents an occasion for growth and an opportunity of benefits for them too.

This special body should meet on a regular basis before, during and after the event. The evaluation and lessons learned will deliver precious advice for the organisation of future events.
Functional aspects: communication, marketing, ticketing

The organisation and planning should include a careful analysis of the non transport-related elements associated to it. The event does indeed need to be promoted and communicated (marketing), to be realised efficiently (economically) and to be managed and sold successfully (security/ticketing). Therefore the transport and the event need to be planned together as inseparable elements. In Zurich, concert organisers in a certain venue have to include the price of PT in the ticket. This provision is part of the regular contract arrangement for organizers that wish to rent these premises.

Tests of transport and mobility management prior to the event

Risk analysis and contingency plans as well as simulations and tests of the mobility plan need to be performed before the event in coordination with all actors. They are vital to the training of persons in charge of command, control and event management.

Real-time mobility management plan during the event

This must be coordinated with the main connected operational areas such as security, weather forecast, emergency services. Persons in charge of command, control and communication outside of the event sites must be in permanent connection with transport and security managers in charge of the same functions inside the security area.

Recommendations for decision-makers: Cooperation & Coordination

- Choose the location of the event with the long term development of the city and future mobility needs in mind.
- Plan the development of new public transport infrastructure and the improvement of existing infrastructure necessary for large events in collaboration with the state, regions, local authorities, transport companies and end-users, in order to take into account the longer term development potential of the area.
- Plan organisational aspects, such as the introduction of a new ticketing system, reserved lanes, with the long term development of the transport system in mind.
- Create a Special body, a coordination group, uniting all actors involved and which is responsible exclusively for the management of the transport from the birth of the event up until the test period immediately before the event. This Special body should follow a strict internal organization planning with a fixed time frame, mile stones and responsibilities.
- Test the transport system before the event.
- Take lessons learned from former events into account and organise an evaluation straight after the event to define the lessons learnt and hence gain precious advice for the organisation of future events.
- Establish a written ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ of the funding scheme between the event owner, public authorities and the public transport actors to ensure sufficient funding to cover additional public transport costs.
- Ensure that transport and other aspects of the large event are planned together as inseparable elements and that the collaboration with the event owner is very close.