NEEDS OF URBAN MOBILITY AND TOURISTIC FLOWS ON PROJECT: THE CASE OF CONEROBUS

Within the Intermodal project, objective of Conerobus S.p.A. is to study connections between Ancona and Massignano suburbs, which is a remote area having touristic potential not far from Portonovo beaches and whose connections need to be strengthened.

Conerobus S.p.A. intends to strengthen the connections between Ancona, the Portonovo beaches and the Monte Conero area (bus lines 93 and 94), by developing an on demand service, in which changes of itinerary will be programmed by using interactive departure boards, booking online and by phone. The on demand bus service will connect Ancona, the Portonovo beaches and the area of Monte Conero with a number of interchange nodes linked to interesting touristic attractions, such as:
- historical and religious places (Loreto, Recanati);
- wine and food tours (Rosso Conero road);
- Monte Conero seaside (Sirolo, Numana);
- car parking areas and other means of transport (ferry, plane, train).

With this aim, Conerobus S.p.A. has conducted a survey aimed at knowing the opinion of citizens and tourists on the public transport in Ancona with the goal of improving the public transport service. The survey includes also information on customer (dis)satisfaction about the actual bus service provided by Conerobus.

This analysis has allowed for a deep investigation of the degree of interest over the population of residents and tourists on the pilot project of a bus service on demand in the area of Ancona and Monte Conero. Additional objectives of the survey were to identify factors and forces behind decision about the choice of transport mode and to assess the customer satisfaction with the specific intermodal solutions.

Results from the data analysis have shown that:

- the great majority of the respondents are interested in using public transport in the area of Ancona and Monte Conero;
- the great majority of the respondents would be interested in the pilot project proposed by Conerobus for a bus service on demand using bus lines 93 and 94;
- the on-demand service would be used mainly for reaching Monte Conero seaside, Ancona historical centre and intermodal connections. Less interest has been registered for the wine and food tours and for religious itineraries;
- the on demand service would be used mainly for flexible changes of bus stops rather than changes in the route of the bus lines, and mainly at rush-hours and in summertime;
- a large majority of the respondents would be willing to pay extra-amount for this on demand service.
What have we learned?

Moreover, the analysis has revealed the main characteristics that discriminate between individuals interested in the on demand service and individuals not interested. The group of individuals who are significantly more interested in service is made up by: the younger, Ancona inhabitants, tourists, frequent-users of bus lines 93 and 94, users of bus lines 93 and 94 for holiday reasons.

Finally, the survey has provided a picture of the passengers’ satisfaction of quality services. Results reveal that the interviewed people are more satisfied with price of the journey, travel punctuality and information provided, but less satisfied with travel frequency and crowded buses. The items that the customers consider as the most important for a good quality bus service are the travel punctuality and frequency and the availability of intermodal solutions; on the contrary, the information provided is considered of much smaller importance.

TISAR, a common objective!

The European project TISAR – Traveller Information System for Adriatic Region – which was launched in October 2012 and ending in September 2015, has as its objective the promotion of multimodal mobility for passengers in the Adriatic area, through the sharing of information related to different systems of transportation (sea, air, rail, long-range transport and urban) and through the integration of travel plannings and information portals existing in that area.

The project intends to address the lack of a system of multi-modal trip planning in the Adriatic basin, a very sensitive issue. The ultimate goal is the creation of an ICT platform in the Adriatic area where public transport information and data available for the planning of a multimodal travel across borders will be integrated and made available in the languages of the countries PAHs. The platform TISAR gives information on available solutions in relation to public transport with a perfect planning of multimodal journey.

The project is implemented through the work of two parallel tables: an institutional table (partners are different regions and provinces of the two shores of the Adriatic, and the leader is Regione Marche) and a technical table, which could lead to share in a single portal all the information needed to plan trips in the Adriatic area.

The task of the two tables is also to interact with other European projects dealing with similar issues. Here is the important integration between Tisar and Intermodal, which tackles the issue of intermodality in Adriatic in different fields, but certainly “contiguous”: the two projects could provide each other interesting information and updates, as indeed they are already doing operationally. This was evident in the recent Intermodal seminar staged in Rimini on the 17th of February, in which the TISAR has been mentioned, even because the province of Rimini is a partner of that project.
INTERMODALITY ACROSS THE OCEAN

The U.S. railroad has always been measured by time. At the outset, it was a uniform system to mediate time differences across the United States, and build reliability into an erratic and rapidly expanding rail network. Railroad time remains a lasting standard.

Over the past 30 years, the rail industry has made great strides re-inventing itself within a 21st-century supply chain defined by efficiency, economy, and sustainability – all hallmarks of today’s railroads. Twenty years ago, shippers perceived intermodalism as unreliable. Over time, their concerns have been erased.

UNCORKING EFFICIENCIES

Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, based on Washington, takes great care with its product shipments. In the wine industry, every ounce of attention and detail helps ensure the product’s quality remains uncompromised from source to cellar to sommelier. Rail transport was never a viable option for Ste. Michelle – until it began working with Railex.

Railex, which began operations in 2006, is a transportation company moving in a third-party logistics direction. Its U.S. network features three rail-served, refrigerated mega-transload distribution centers in Delano, California; Wallula, Washington; and Rotterdam, New York, and a 55-car refrigerated unit train with multiple weekly departures.

The rail carrier’s on-time assurance turned Ste. Michelle in its direction. “Railex is located just 40 miles from the Columbia Crest winery, our major production facility,” says Rob McKinney, vice president of operations at Ste. Michelle Wine Estates. “The price of fuel was rising, so we consulted Railex.” The winery had explored rail transportation before, but never found the appropriate circumstances or partner to meet its stringent requirements. In previous test runs, the rigors of intermodal transit resulted in bottle scuffing and product damage. Ste. Michelle’s second-highest expense after the wine is its packaging. Damage to either is unacceptable. But the winery’s business was growing, and it needed a partner to manage its transportation and logistics. “We had been our own distribution point and warehouse, and oversaw truck traffic and orders,” McKinney says. “We reached the point where it would require significant capital to expand infrastructure.”

Railex was well aware of Ste. Michelle’s expectations when the carrier entered the picture. Railex proved to be up to the task, providing reliable and secure five-day service from Wallula to Rotterdam. The railcars are temperature-controlled, and Ste. Michelle can track the shipments during transit. With pre-determined temperature thresholds in place, it can be alerted if conditions change. Then Railex can coordinate with its rail partners to manage the problem.

The transportation company’s value to shippers is its capacity to be multi-dimensional. In addition to moving product by rail, it also stores inventory and arranges truck transportation – which is especially convenient for Ste. Michelle on the East Coast, where it imports product from partners in Italy.

Prior to working with Railex, Ste. Michelle was transporting approximately two million cases per year by truck, in 10 to 15 loads daily. While it still uses over-the-road transport to make shorter-haul deliveries in the west, the rail/intermodal component now serves a large share of its business. Railex moves roughly one million cases annually. It can squeeze three times as much wine on a train than a truck, which provides considerable sustainability gains in terms of reducing fuel use and carbon emissions.
PULLING THE TRIGGER

Ste. Michelle’s patience in waiting for the right opportunity to come along before it made the switch to intermodal has served the company well. For other intrepid users that jumped in early on, experiences weren’t always successful.

“Some shippers started using intermodal extensively, and the results weren’t always what they expected,” says Dave Howland, vice president of land transport services for APL Logistics, a global third-party logistics provider with U.S. headquarters in Scottsdale, Arizona. “Companies coming back into the marketplace now are more disciplined – opening one lane, then another. They are working their way into the business rather than jumping in with both feet. That works better, because they are in a more controlled environment.”

Improved service levels, the environmental benefits of converting truck to rail, and the availability of capacity are all intermodal drivers. The flexibility that rail brings – such as the ability to add units or train starts – allows responsiveness not available to motor carriers that are overbooked or short of drivers.

AFTER THE CONVERSION

Ste. Michelle’s trigger was recognizing it could transport product across the United States more economically and sustainably without sacrificing quality. That its partnership with Railex has moved beyond a functional need and now allows it to grow more organically on its own is an added bonus.

“Handing off transportation to an expert allowed us to focus on our core business,” says McKinney. “We’re maintaining our staff; we haven’t reduced labor. We’re taking the opportunity internally to re-train employees and build a flexible, agile, cross-functional work team that can float anywhere within our winery operations.”

As Railex expands its network – it is considering a distribution location in the Southeast – Ste. Michelle benefits by being able to deliver product closer to customers via rail, reducing the last-mile dray. Intermodal also provides a security blanket as looming capacity concerns threaten transportation economy and efficiency. Ste. Michelle’s conversion has also compelled it to evaluate all the inbound raw materials it transports via truck – empty glass and packaging, for example – to determine if there is an opportunity to use rail.

Ste. Michelle expects Railex to eventually take care of special projects, such as export orders that require compliance labeling. The service provider may also manage Ste. Michelle’s direct-to-consumer business, because it is already tasked with storing inventory and building orders. All these functions are currently performed on-site at the winery’s Columbia Crest facility. In the future, they will be transitioned to Railex to free up space and resources.

NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

As a transportation concept, intermodalism is far from new. It has always been an important part of the global supply chain. Motor freight is the anchor at both ends of the divide, with air and ocean in between. Ample opportunities exist for shippers and consignees to leverage the economy of rail transport – whether it’s converting truckloads to railcars, or expediting containers in and out of congested cities and ports.

Intermediaries such as Railex and APL Logistics understand the value of pushing more freight onto the tracks, as well as their importance in liaising between railroads, shippers, and truckers. The railroads play their own unique role, as well. Some companies are looking to locate even closer to intermodal ramps so they can radically reduce trucking costs. As more well-known brands make the jump, they raise the profile of intermodal solutions.

Generally, few doubts linger about intermodal’s potential. Its time is now!