

CHECK OUT the KOLLA- project – public transport for everybody

The KOLLA-project was started in 2005 to improve the accessibility of public transport in Gothenburg. KOLLA has mainly aimed at improving the physical availability and to influence people who use the special transportation services (STS) to travel more with flexible buslines and other public transport. The project ends in 2010.



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About Gothenburg

The city of Gothenburg located on the West Coast of Sweden, is the country's second biggest city with approximately 500 000 inhabitants. The primary means of public transport in Gothenburg are trams, buses and ferries.

STS in Gothenburg

Färdtjänst, the special transport system (STS) in Sweden is a form of public transport for people who are unable to use ordinary public transport without assistance due to disability. You need to apply for a permit to be able to use the STS service. The STS allows the permit holders a limited number of journeys by taxi cab and wheelchair accessible mini buses at a subsidized price. In 2005, nearly 22,000 people in Gothenburg had a STS permit and they made on average 32 trips a year.

A trip with the STS is around fourteen times more expensive for the city compared to travelling by bus or tram.



An accessible society requires an accessible public transport

In the year 2000 the Swedish government came to an agreement to make Sweden accessible for all. This decision and the plan 'From Patient to Citizen: A national Action Plan for Disability Policy' stipulates that public transport should be accessible for people with disabilities the year 2010.

In Gothenburg KOLLA – kollektivtrafik för alla (KOLLA- public transport for everybody) was launched to implement the plan.

We work towards a common goal

KOLLA is a collaborative project between the STS- authority, the Traffic and Public Transport Authority and the regional public transport authority Västtrafik.

For a project of this size to be successful good cooperation with those affected – in this case, at first hand disabled people using the special transport system – is essential. Representatives from the local branches of DHR (national organization for mobility impaired), HSO (persons with disabilities), SRF (visually impaired), SPF and PRO (two organizations for senior citizens) were involved.

The KOLLA-project has been followed by researchers from the start. The users opinions and experiences have been investigated by means of interviews and customer surveys and in many cases, results affected the project immediately.

”Every citizen should be able to travel where they want to by using public transport. The lack of travel options should not prevent anyone from participating in activities. ”

Vision of the KOLLA-project 2005

Costs and funding

The major part of the project has been financed by contributions from the municipality. Investment in infrastructure has been the project's dominating cost. Alterations and adaptations of stops and routes cost approximately € 35 million, of which € 3,6 million is covered by State aid. € 1,2 million was invested in new computer systems. Other sub-projects have a total cost of 6,7 million. Everything affecting the result of KOLLA has not been included in the project. For example, The City of Gothenburg bought 40 new low-floor trams for € 7,6 million. Existing buses and trams have also been improved at a cost of € 4,8 million.

Due to the fact that demand for special transport service is progressively reduced and since the project is set to improve public transport one could say that the users of special transportation services themselves have contributed to the improvement in public transport. And changes are done without affecting the service level in the special transport service.

Tram line number 6 was the first one to have low floor vehicles.



How do we make it easy to go by public transport ?

An essential condition for travelling is that it is physically possible. A barrier could be that it is difficult to get to the bus stop or that you cannot access the vehicle using a wheelchair. But accessibility is not just about adapting vehicles, stops and walkways. Attitudes are equally important.

We like to describe how we have worked to achieve the goal of a more accessible public transport.



The Flexlinje bus service can come closer, and it is easy to change for example between a Flexline bus and the ferry Älvsnabben.

1 The Flexlines – Demand responsive buses that can get closer

A Flexline is a bus line, with a little extra service. The vehicles have step free access and a ramp. The driver can assist on entering and exiting the bus. You call and book you ride and are thereby guaranteed seating on board. The Flexline has many meeting places (they are not called stops) and can get closer than other public transport can.

When KOLLA began, there were eight Flexlines in Gothenburg. Back then you needed a permit or had to be retired to travel. Since 2006 everyone can travel with the Flexline and the number of buses and flexlines is gradually increasing.

The goal of the project was that no citizen should have more than 200 meters to a Flexline meeting place or a stop for bus or tram. The cost should be no more than the cost of travelling with other public transports.

Since November 2009 flexlines covers almost all of the city of Gothenburg, except for some of the more sparsely populated areas in the outskirts of the city. In total there are 20 Flexlines.



Flexline mini buses have low floor and a ramp.

2. Getting to the stop is part of the journey

With KOLLA the rate of adaptation of bus and tram stops increased. All tram and trunk bus stops and the 70 most used other bus stops should be improved during the project period.

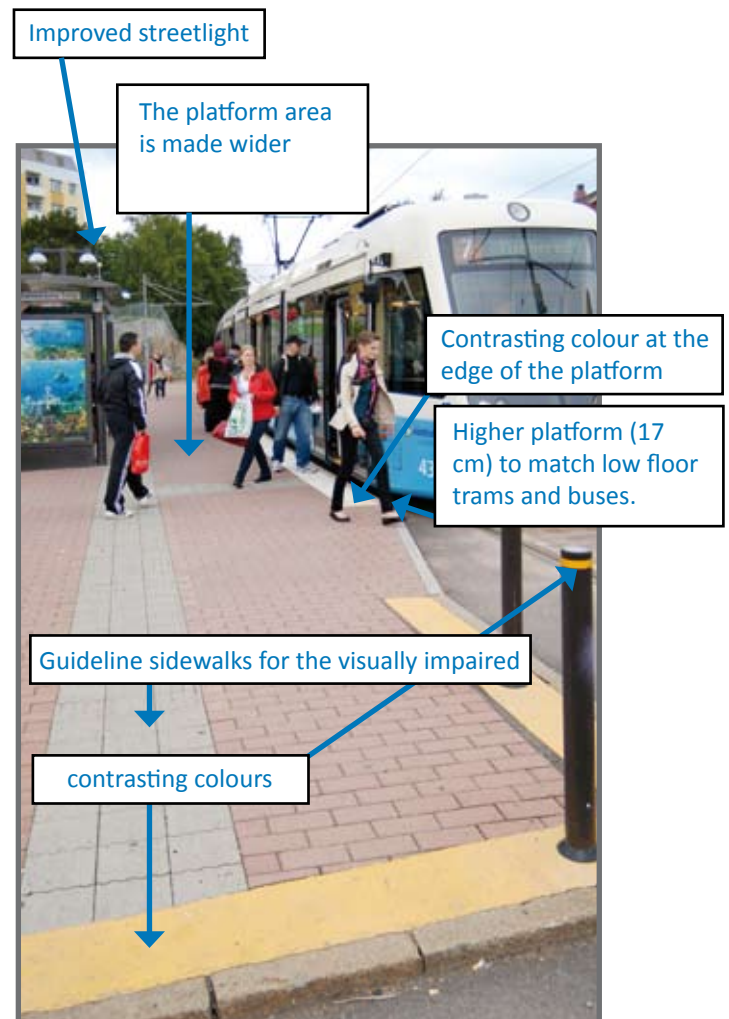
It is equally important that the way to and from the bus stop is accessible as it is that the bus stop is adapted. Streets are secured by removing obstacles, building ramps and adding handrails. Improved bus and tram stops are complemented with benches and better lighting.

In 2005, approximately 40% of all tram stops were accessible. In 2010 approximately 90% are accessible.

Less than 10 % of the trunk bus stops and the 70 most used other bus stops were adapted in 2005. 100 percent are adapted at the end of 2010.

What will happen from now on?

The adaption will continue until we reach 100 percent.



3. All vehicles should be easy to access

All new vehicles have step free access and a ramp, making it easy to wheel onboard. The oldest type of trams has stairs and it has not been possible to rebuild for wheelchair users.

Since June 2010 all low-floor trams have electric wheelchair ramps and wheelchair space. You have to press two different buttons to use the ramp. All buses have step free access and a manual ramp. Most vehicles have automatic voice announcements and internal displays. These announce the current and next stations and the final destination of the vehicle.

Certain seats are elevated, it is easier to get through in the aisles and more handles and rails

has been fitted. Stop request buttons, lighting and contrast decals have also been replaced where it was needed.

Significant investments are being made in extending the public transport system and attracting new passengers, a project parallel to the KOLLA-project aims at doubling the number of passengers by the year 2025. The growth requires more vehicles and increased frequencies and the old trams with steps will be needed, particularly in peak periods, for many years to come.

The aim is that all trams during off-peak time should have step free access in 2012 and in ten years time all trams will have low-floor.



New electric ramps makes it easier to travel with heavier wheelchairs.

4. Information before and during the journey

As long as there are vehicles and stops that are not accessible, it must be easy to find information on the options available.

You can find information about the vehicle and bus stop via Västtrafik's Web page www.vasttrafik.se or by calling their customer service.

In the future, the special transportation service can provide information about the whole journey, regardless of whether it is carried out by STS, Flexlinjen or other public transport. Information on the accessibility of the bus stop and the walk ways is part of the service.



Linje	Destination	Sida 1/3	Avgår om (min)	Därefter	Läge
1	Tynnered		Nu	10	B
1	Östra Sjukhuset		11	23	A
2	Högsbotorp		ca 1	15	B
2	Krokslätt via Domkyrkan-Sölnegatan		ca 11	23	A
3	Källtorp		6	18	B
7	Bergsjön		7	19	A
7	Tynnered		9	19	B

5. Help while changing

Changing between different vehicles often rise concerns and insecurity. Older people and people with disabilities are experiencing changing as a problem and a stress factor.

Västtrafik has established an “accompanying service”. The passenger can book an escort meeting and following you to the connection for further journey. The aim is to facilitate and make it possible for more people to travel independently. Accompanying service is available at major interchanging points for example at the Central Railway Station.

Accompanying service started as a pilot project in October 2005 and was set to last for one year, but was made permanent in 2006.

In Gothenburg the service are available on and around the Central Railway Station:

- the service is included in the fare.
- The service is open all day around the clock.

The realtime displays show when the next bus or tram will depart. They also show if the vehicle has low floor with or without ramp

6. Education for everyone who works with public transports

Everyone who work with public transport has been trained understanding the needs on disabled and older people and how to meet their needs. Drivers are coached while driving. The aim is to influence the attitudes of all employees and how they treat passengers with various disabilities.

The organization has gained a greater understanding of passengers with special needs. We also believe that a driver who has understood the importance of automatic voice announcements is more attentive to the sound level, etc.

Surveys done among passengers show that they rate the way the drivers treat the passengers and how they drive is 5 % higher than when the surveys started in 2008. Now it is 92%.

”It is important to consider that all passengers have different needs. We try making the journey as good as possible for as many as possible.”



How do we get people to change their travelling habits?

Rebuilding and adapting the physical environment is not enough. More are required to change people's habits. You must know and believe in the possibility of travelling by tram and bus in order to make an active choice. Many people need a little help to get started.

1. STS permits becomes more individually customized

In order to meet the goals of getting persons who travel by the STS to use other types of public transport, more individually designed STS-permits are required, where account is taken of passengers individual needs and the accessibility of the public transport system.

2005

Initially, there was a high level of ambition in creating individual STS travel profiles. There did not need to be less permits if an advanced system could select the best type of vehicle that was best suited economically and also taking account of the need for each individual.

The permit would take into account the person's state of health, but also the physical conditions of each trip, such as accessibility, weather and more. How many STS- trips a person would get assigned for, would be based on which type of vehicle each individuals can use.

2010

High expectations meant tough requirements on both the IT-systems and the specialists officers requirements that failed to be reached in full.

There were concerns that the new permit profiles would not guarantee the STS-passengers their right to safe and secure travel.

The solution was that travelers are directed to a flexline instead of STS when and where it is considered possible.

STS-travelers get tips on other public transport but can decide themselves whether it works or not. The specialist officer make an assessment of how many STS-trips a person need per year and the individual decides when to use them.

The new proceedings have contributed to a decrease in the number of people holding a STS-permit, though the population is increasing. In addition permit periods have become shorter and the workload on the STS -department has become greater. Both turnaround time and the number of personal meetings has increased. An evaluation of the new process has been made and it shows that over 90% are satisfied.

2. Directing permit holders while ordering their journey

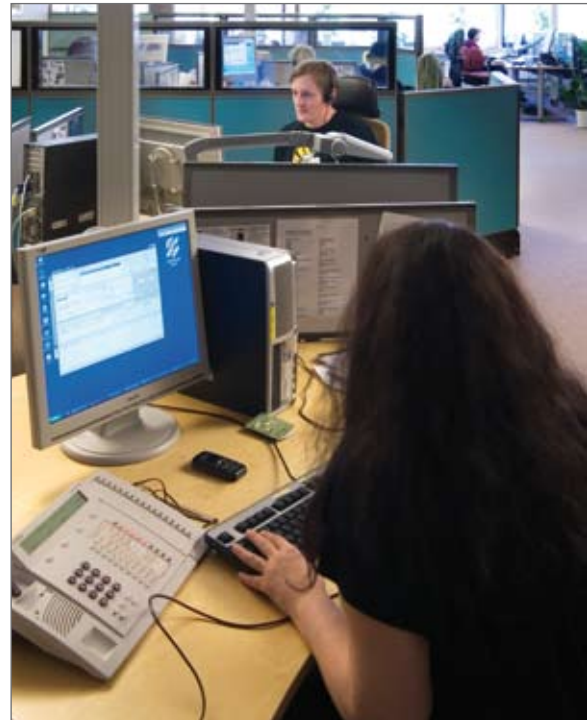
The STS-permit holders should always get the best travel suitable for the occasion. The ideal is to travel by flexline when you cannot travel with other public transportation and to use STS- travel booking only when you need more service than the flexline can offer.

Since the flexline can come and pick you up at the home address, unless there is a gate or other obstacles, more people can travel by flexline.

The IT-system made it difficult to retrieve information about alternatives to STS-travel, therefore, permit holders often got a traditional STS-trip without further consideration.

Since the autumn of 2009, the permit department at STS, assesses whether the permit holder can travel by the Flexline or not. The STS- travel booking then books a flexline trip when it is possible and informs about appropriate public transport options.

The directing to the Flexline has been successful. The number of trips with the Flexline has increased by approximately 1 500 per month, since the new order introduced in the autumn of 2009.



3. We spread the word about what's good – and what is not

Each organization would communicate with their target group. The primary target group for information about changes in public transport has been STS-permit holders. They have constantly received information about what is happening in the project,

- The magazine Färdskrivaren. A magazine about going by Flex lines, other public transport and the STS. It is sent to all STS-permit holders and is published twice a year.
 - Meetings and lectures at meeting points for older and disabled people, day centres, staff meetings etcetera.
 - The film about the vision of future travelling.
 - "Testing days" where you could test the new vehicles and how they function in an undisturbed environment.
 - Expo booth, and information on the Accessibility Expo "Live & Work".
 - "New travel habits"- a project with telephone interviews with more than 1,000 passengers, who received information and were encouraged to get out and try out public transport.
- The project Godfather– active Flexline-passengers has been helping a friend getting started traveling with the Flexlines.
 - Mail about the launch of electric ramps on trams, addressed to STS-permit holders using wheelchairs.
 - Periodic surveys and interviews which are evaluated and followed up.

4. Help getting started travelling by bus and tram

If you never tried or haven't travelled in a long time, you may need a little support rediscovering public transports. You can do it by travel training.

Travel training is a service offered to the citizens of Gothenburg, who, for various reasons, feel insecure or have difficulties travelling with public transport. The goal is to help people to be able to travel on their own and thereby increase their mobility.

The project started in October 2006.

- an experienced person- a travel coach, assist you while making your first trips by tram, bus or ferry.
- The travel coach can teach how to get on board with a walker, how to buy a ticket etcetera.

The mere existence of the service also has an effect. While applying for STS the applicant will be asked if travelling with public transport or not. Those who don't are offered travel training. In many cases, they chose to ask relatives or try it themselves.



5. Price and how to pay

Price is an important factor while choosing how to travel. A new model on how to set a price to the services provided by the STS was aimed at contributing in redirecting travel from the STS to the public transport. A new systems for paying your STS trip was to make it possible to combine different STS- travel with public transport and you should be able to order and pay online.

The new model would encourage choosing public transport for longer trips in the city. But it was declined by the political board of STS since it was considered unjust and segregating. Instead, the existing price system was revised and simplified. There are still plans to integrate the STS payment systems with the Västtrafik systems, but it is not yet decided when.



Travel trainers can accompany a person during the first travels and give valuable tips along the way

Research and evaluation projects

Right from the start, the project was followed by researchers. Evaluations and studies were planned at an early stage. Many of the sub projects have been tested and assessed, and in some cases become permanent.

Areas of special interest:

- How has the KOLLA-project managed to create the desired changes?
- How does it affect the STS-permit holders? Does the project change travel patterns and what does the change imply?
- What are the socio-economic effects of a public transport accessible for everyone?

Conclusions so far:

- It is important for disabled people to be able to travel just like everyone else.
- Changes will benefit not only people with disabilities; it is increasing the quality for all travellers.
- Changes in technology and the physical environment must be complemented with “softer” actions like services, information, staff training and so forth.
- It is important to have a reasonable expectation of how often the STS-permit holders can use public transport.
- It takes time to affect and change people’s habits and behaviour. It can be difficult to measure the effects and it could also appear in the longer term in decreasing need for STS services.

Within the project’s framework a lot has been learned about people with disabilities and their opportunities to travel with public transport

Sub projects of extra interest:

Tram Line number 6 – A full-scale experiment

Subproject line 6 ran in 2007-2008 and was a test with accessible tram traffic, accompanying staff and a major information campaign. Line 6 was to be the first fully accessible tram line. It had a low-floor guarantee and automatic voice announcements. All tram stops and the walk ways leading to the stops were made accessible. Up to one third of the vehicles should have hosts on board and they could, after ordering the service, accompany passengers while changing vehicles at any interchange in the city. STS-permit holders, who lived near a tram stop, were contacted by phone and received information about the improvements being made along the tram line 6 in particular and other public transport, including the flex lines, in general. More than 20% of the respondents began to travel more with public transport after the talks. The dialogues gave new insights about attitudes towards public transport.

The demand for assistance and hosts was much lower than expected, and that service was therefore closed early.

Cases study – preventing falling in a vehicle

Many persons are concerned with falling while travelling by public transport.

A case study was carried out by Chalmers, University of Thecnology, Gothenburg. The interior of a tram was rebuilt, aiming at reducing the number of falls inside the tram by smarter interior fittings. Researchers studied cases of accidents and used the knowledge to furnish with better handles, handrails, lights in the stairs and so on. The test has so far resulted in adding more handrails and handholds to existing vehicles.

What to do next?

A study carried out in August 2010 shows that almost half of the STS- permit holders aged 16 – 40 travel regularly with public transport (at least once every two weeks). Among older STS- permit holders around 25% travel regularly.

Travelling with public transport is increasing. A lot has been improved during the project, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

The city is currently deciding how to continue the cooperation and make Gothenburg even more accessible.



During the "Testing day" the tram with rebuilt interior to prevent falling was tested.

Gothenburg 2005

- 700 000 STS trips by cabs and mini bus.
- 40% of the tram stops and 10% of other main stops are accessible.
- 50% of the trams and 86% of the buses have step free access.
- 50% of the vehicles have automatic voice announcements
- There are 8 Flexlines and you need a permit to travel.

Gothenburg 2010

- 540 000 STS trips by cabs and mini bus.
- 90% of the tram stops and 100% of the other main stops are accessible.
- 62% of the trams have step free access and ramp. All buses have step free access and ramp.
- 90% of vehicles have automatic voice announcements
- There are 20 Flexlines and everyone can travel with them.



Göteborgs
Stad

