Limitless mobility with the student card of the University of Florence

2018

University
University of Florence

Country
Italy

Location

Size

Mobility Organizational Structure

Summary

Aims

Encouraging university students of Florence to use public transport for their trips for study reasons, as well as for living the city in a sustainable way. Integrating public transport into the range of services provided by the University is a way to reduce the cost of living in Florence (which is higher than the Italian average), especially for off-campus students, while increasing the attractiveness of the University itself.

Stakeholders

Background

The City of Florence, worldwide known for its UNESCO historic center, covers approx. 100 sq.km. The population inside the municipality is 381,000. It is the capital of the Tuscany Region (3.7 million population) and of the homonymous Metropolitan City (1 million population). The University of Florence is one of the largest in the Italian university system.

It offers programmes at all levels and in all disciplinary areas: scientific, biomedical, technological, humanities and social sciences. There are 133 programmes for the courses of the first cycle (bachelor's degrees) and the second cycle (master's degree and 5 or 6-year combined cycle degrees), coordinated and managed by 10 Schools.

The number of enrolled students is about 51,000 (which increases to 55,000 including post lauream courses).

16% of the students live in the municipality of Florence, 23% come from other municipalities belonging to the Metropolitan City, 38% from other provinces of the Tuscany Region, 24% from outside the region. Overall, the number of enrolled students coming from outside the city is quite considerable if compared with the urban population and have a significant impact on the demand for services.

The university structures – classrooms, laboratories, libraries, offices, canteens, etc. - are widespread in the metropolitan area of Florence. They include buildings inside the UNESCO historic center, as well as large building complexes and campuses located in various parts of the city or in the nearby towns, for a total of about 200 locations. In addition to the historic center of the city, the main university venues are the School of Engineering "Santa Marta", the Biomedical hub at the Careggi Polyclinic, the Social Sciences campus in the Novoli district and the Scientific campus (hosting the Departments of Physics, Chemistry and Horti-culture) in the municipality of Sesto Fiorentino.

Background

Public transport in Florence includes:

- Bus services (84 lines, for a total of about 1,000 km lenght) managed by Ataf and Li-nea, members of the consortium of the Tuscany LPT companies "One Scarl"; the main lines run on reserved lanes.

- Light rail lines, managed by Gest (a company branch of French Ratp); the network, designed to serve the busiest urban routes, includes the line T1 Scandicci-Careggi, opened in 2 phases in 2011 and 2018, with a length of 11.5 km; a second line of 7,5 km length (T2 Airport-Central Station) will be inaugurated at the beginning of February 2019; additional lines for over 20 km have been planned and financed and will start operating by 2023.

- Regional trains, managed by the national company Trenitalia, which operate between the 10 stations located within the municipal territory of Florence.

It is possible to use all these different means with the same ticket or pass. Thanks to the new light rail, having a capacity of 5,000 passengers per hour per direction and 4-minute frequency, and to the consequent reorganization of bus lines, public transport in Florence has made a quantum leap in recent years. When the second line will be operational, the number of light rail users is expected to increase to 38 million/year. According to estimates, this means 28,000 cars less on the streets of Florence, and a reduction of 14,300 ton of CO_2 emissions per year. Both T1 and t T2 serve directly some of the main university venues – that is the historic center of the city, the Polyclinic of Careggi and the campus of Social Sciences - linking them with the other urban facilities. They are therefore able to respond in an effective and efficient way to the demand for mobility of Florence University students, together with feeder bus lines and bike sharing, also present in the city with a station-free service managed by a private provider ("Mobike").

Description

With the beginning of the current academic year 2018-2019, the University of Florence, following an agreement with the Tuscany Region, the City of Florence, the Regional Agency for the Right to University Study (DSU) and the consortium of companies of LPT in Tuscany ("One Scarl"), has integrated the Student Card, given to students at the moment of their enrollment, with an annual pass for public transport, which includes the whole network of bus and light rail lines (extended to the nearby municipalities) and the regional trains which operate within the municipality of Florence.

The same card can therefore be use by students:

- As University identity card.
- For accessing library services.
- For getting free entry to the collections and museums of all the Universities of Tuscany.
- For accessing the canteens managed by the Regional Agency for the Right to University Study.
- For getting discount tickets for cultural events and attractions (concerts, theaters, monuments, etc.) throughout the regional territory.
- As a travel pass for public transport in Florence, during the whole academic year (until October 31, 2019).

The price requested to students of the University of Florence to get the pass, to be paid together with the university tax, is € 48, that is about a quarter of the ordinary price for student travel pass. For disabled or low-income students, the travel pass included in the Card is free. The service is not compulsory: students who are not interested can refuse it on request and do not pay the fee. Moreover, in order to promote and facilitate the use of public transport among students, employees and occasional visitors, the University of Florence has developed an information system accessible from its web pages, which provides, in a very user-friendly way, the map of all bus, tram and train stops located in the nearby of all university buildings.

Indicators

Rate of students who have got the Student Card inclusive of the travel pass (not exercising the right of withdrawal):
- 87% of the students enrolled in all University Degree Programmes.
- 93% of the students enrolled in the first year of all Degree Courses.

Therefore, over 44,700 of the 51,000 enrolled students have now free access, during the whole academic year, to the city's public transport services. In spring 2019 students will be given a questionnaire on the appreciation of the service and on the use of the Student Card as a travel pass. The most recent data concerning the appreciation of the light rail lines in Florence date back to April 2018. According to them, 87% of users consider the service to be "good" or "very good". The most appreciated aspect of the service is its regularity (94%; source: Gest).

Results

Expense & Financing

The possibility given to its students to get an annual travel pass for public transport at the price of € 48, instead of € 185, has been covered by the University of Florence, on the basis of the agreement signed with the Tuscany Region and the transport companies, with a funding of € 500,000.

Conclusions and Lessons learnt

The success of the initiative can be traced to three main factors:
- The significant improvement of LPT, due to the entry into service of the light rail, which considerably increased its attractiveness.
- The low price requested by the University to students for the service (€ 48 per year corresponds to less than 3 LPT tickets per month), compared with the freedom of movement provided by the Student Card.
- Ease of the procedure - the pass is integrated with the Student Card; in this way the LPT is made equal to any other services provided by the University.
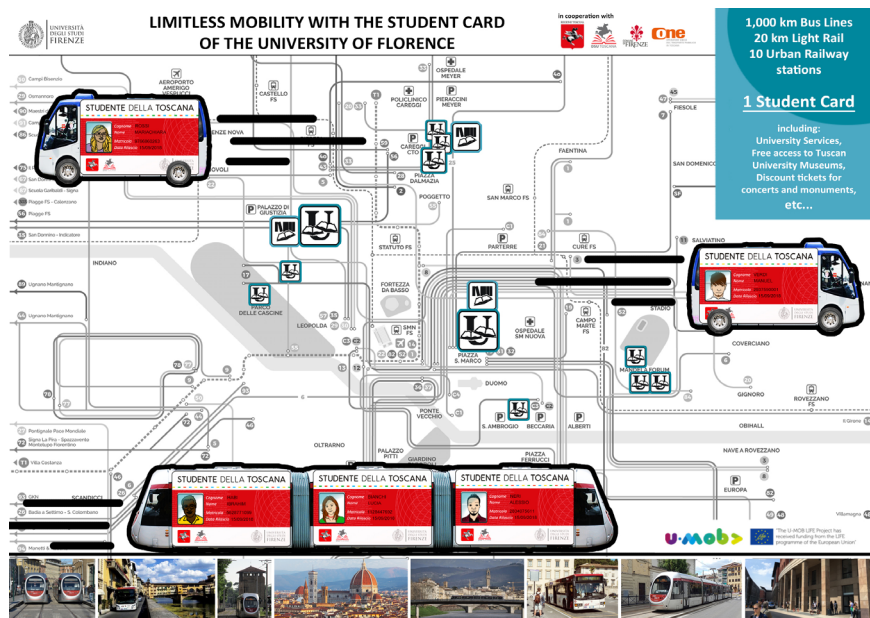
When it comes to promoting new, more sustainable lifestyles – especially as far as mobility is concerned - a user-oriented approach is the most effective.

Pictures

Links

Contact person