Pedelec test with elderly people within the EU project „Active Access“

Introduction

Within the EU project „Active Access“ (EU program STEER) a pedelec test was carried out among 20 elderly people (aged between 40 and 70) in Graz/Andritz, Austria. The project was also funded by the city of Graz. The pedelecs came from the company „Scherz“ and were of the model „Steiererbike“. The target of the test was to find out how middle-aged and senior people use pedelecs for their daily trips and what kind of advantages and disadvantages appear in daily use. Another goal was to reduce scepticism towards e-mobility. The pedelec test focused on shopping and recreation trips. During the test period the testers took note of their experiences in a mobility log. Additionally, they were interviewed individually after the test period.

Facts and Figures

At a start-up meeting testers were briefed about the tests and about pedelecs in general. During the test period the testers had the possibility to call a hotline for solving problems with the pedelecs. After four weeks of testing results were discussed and testers were interviewed.

Within one month the 20 testers cycled 1500 kilometres. About half of this distance would have been driven by car otherwise according to the specifications of the testers. . The average speed was 23 km/h, which shows that pedelecs can compete with public transport (11 km/h) and motorized individual transport (29 km/h). Velocities are specified for the city of Graz.

One of the main findings was that people changed their opinion on pedelecs to the positive. At the beginning test drivers were sceptical about pedelecs and about their ability to handle the pedelec technology. After the tests most of the doubts and fears were gone. The most important barrier for purchasing a pedelec for the testers is the high prize. Subsidies of Graz and the surrounding province of Styria were predominantly unknown to the testers.

Another result was that senior and medium-senior people appreciate pedelecs because pedelecs enlarge their mobility radius. “The city is getting smaller” was a significant statement. However, if pedelecs should be part of future's transport system for senior people, one has to approach people at an earlier stage. The pedelec test revealed that people in working age who try pedelecs for their journey to workplace get a stronger connection to pedelecs than people who get in contact with pedelecs at a progessed age.

The test also revealed that testers are afraid of burglary. That's why people store their pedelec in their basement or in their flat. Consequently, they do not carry the pedelec, which has is quite heaviy, out for a short trip.

Source: „Pedelec-test in Andritz“ within the „Active Access“ project: http://www.active-access.eu/docs/Aktive_Access_Pedelec_Test.pdf, accessed on 11th July, 2011.

Box of advice

→ Pedelec tests should be offered to citizens more often (especially in smaller scale): Additionally to a first short test, people should have the chance to test pedelecs in their daily life for a longer period of time.
→ For the tests pedelecs of good quality should be used (there is a regularly updated test report avaialable from www.extraenergy.org).
→ Within tests people should be offered information on subsidies for pedelecs.
→ Firms are a target group for pedelec tests: Pedelecs could be either used for reaching the

workplace or for trips during work. Additionally, in companies many people can be reached in short time and with relatively little effort.

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