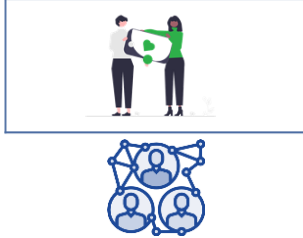


Ring a Link – Ireland



Community-based



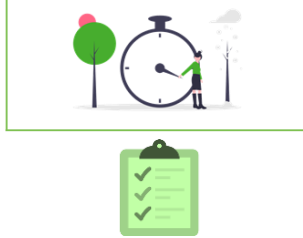
Good territorial coverage



Integration with Public Transport



Long-term durability



Mobility Solution typology (MS)

Demand-responsive Transport (DRT) service

Description

- Functions as a Transport Coordination Unit linked to the National Transport Authority
- Actives in 3 counties in the southeast of Ireland: Kilkenny, Carlow and Wicklow
- Fleet of 23 minibuses in house + about 10 minibuses daily contracted

Population and area covered

- 5,000 km² ; 139,000 (rural) (297,000 less 158,000 in the towns)



Ring a Link - Ireland

Why is this MS considered a good practice?

Starting from scratch as a **grassroots organisation** and leveraging various **funding opportunities**, Ring a Link established a range of **community** and **social** mobility services and the enabling booking and reservation capacity. It has subsequently developed daily and regular DRT and scheduled services, expanded its **coverage area**, and developed into a comprehensive **transport coordination unit** with operations in three counties

Organisers / Entity responsible for the implementation

'Ring a Link' is the designated Transport Coordination Units for the area, managing the booking and dispatch centre, and directly operating about two thirds of its services and contracts in the remainder from local private operators. The service is also supported by LEADER Partnership and, more recently, by Kilkenny County Council.

Sponsors or funding options

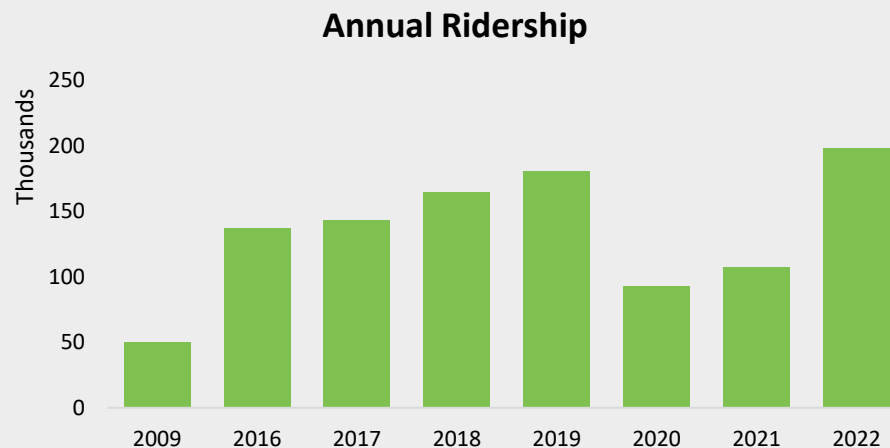
Ring a Link is mainly funded by:

- The **National Transport Authority (NTA)**, which provides public financial support for scheduled and DRT services
- The **Department of Social Protection**, providing funds as partial compensation for participation in the Free Travel Scheme, channelled through NTA;
- **Other sources** for specific services, such as from Kilkenny County Council for the interim urban routes in Kilkenny City.

Ring a Link - Ireland

Impacts

- In 2022, the demand reached **200k** single journey trip
- In 2023:
 - 21 DRT routes, mostly available on one day per week, in a few cases on two days per week. An exceptional route is operated 5 times per day and connects with the intercity bus services.
 - Evening services at weekends to combat drink-driving
 - Six routes' Schools Transport
 - 40 weekly services, with 100 “travel options”: linkages, connections, etc.



Ring a Link - Ireland

Costs

Bus Company Running cost:

- Overheads: 4.5%
- Driver wages: 54%
- Other staff wages: 9.5%
- Bus operating costs: 32%, of which:
 - Fuel: 54%
 - Maintenance: 31%
 - Insurance: 13%
 - Motor tax, etc.: 2%

The cost for a standard return trip is equal to 4€

Revenues

Turnover of €2 million in 2022. Income is derived from four main sources:

- Customer receipts on the scheduled and DRT routes
- NTA provides public financial support for scheduled and DRT services
- Allocation of funds from the Department of Social Protection as partial compensation for participation in the Free Travel Scheme, channelled through NTA.
- Other sources for specific services, such as from Kilkenny County Council for the interim urban routes in Kilkenny City.

Ring a Link - Ireland

Main barriers identified in the implementation process

- Lack of a national rural mobility policy in Ireland. This means there is not a clear vision of what needs to be done, nor a defined authorisation for Ring a Link (or any other TCU) to take initiatives to develop rural mobility.
- Absence of a mandate for public transport in local governments in Ireland. This means that the measures or support for rural mobility they can commit in their development plans or budgets is limited.

Lessons learnt

Local initiators consider the mobility services a success. Main lessons can be drawn from the guidance below about implementation

What is necessary to implement the MS?

- Developing durable structures;
- Developing a professional team and a good IT platform;
- Establishing a known and trusted brand;
- Maintaining close relationship to the communities;
- Building relationships with entities such as the LEADER program and the County Council;
- Gradual but sustained development of services;
- Ongoing adaptation of operating practices.

Ring a Link - Ireland

Main milestones:

