



CASE STUDY



VIA VAN

BerlKönig

A fully flexible on-demand shuttle to supplement existing transit options

PARTNER

Berliner Verkehrsbetriebe (BVG)

LOCATION

Berlin, Germany

LAUNCH

September 2018

CHALLENGE

Complement existing fixed-route services and fill service gaps

USE CASE

Poorly served trips, such as late-night, on the weekends, or where existing transit is limited



Overview

Berlin has an extensive existing transit network, but the city still faces transportation challenges: a growing population has led to increased congestion, bringing into focus the need for reliable, affordable shared mobility. This is especially the case during service gaps on evenings and weekends. As a result, the Berliner Verkehrsbetriebe (BVG) -- Berlin's transit agency -- partnered with ViaVan, the joint venture between Via and Mercedes-Benz Vans, to launch the largest public sector on-demand transit deployment in the world. The goal of the pilot is to reduce Berlin's traffic congestion and increase access by providing a sustainable shared mobility option that complements the BVG's existing service.

Solution

In September 2018, ViaVan launched BerlKönig, an affordable ridesharing option that primarily serves those traveling during times or to locations where existing fixed-route options are limited. We operate this service in the eastern part of inner-city Berlin using a fleet of Mercedes-Benz vehicles, which includes fully electric B-Class minibusses and wheelchair-accessible V-Class vans. Users without a bank account have the opportunity to purchase ride credit in selected BVG customer centers using cash. Riders without smartphones can use the service by booking a ride at designated kiosks in certain BVG customer centers.

“We want to show that a public transport company can work together with a start-up to develop new mobility services.”

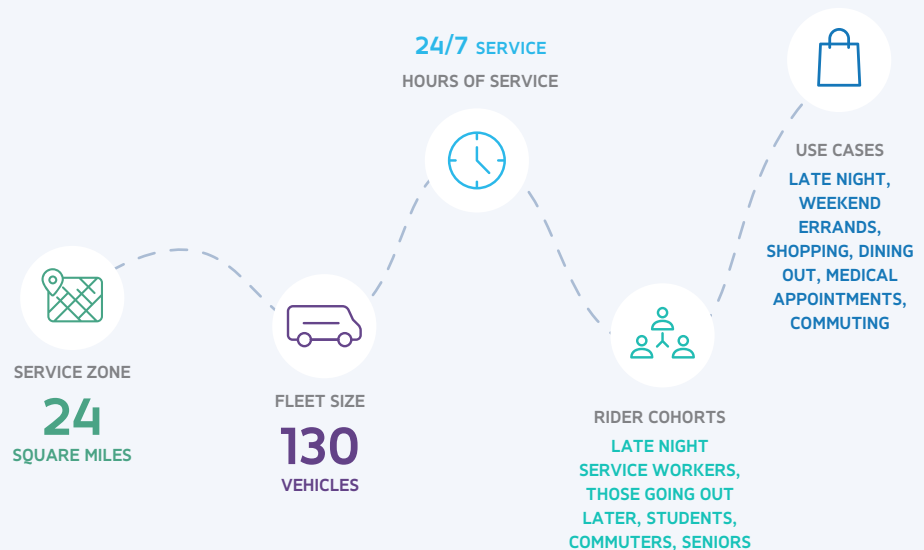
– Dr. Henrik Haenecke, BVG Management Board Finance, Digitalization and Sales

“Sharing a ride is part of our DNA. Driving multiple passengers together from stop to stop is a core competence for us as a local transport company.”

– Dr. Henrik Haenecke, BVG Management Board Finance, Digitalization and Sales

Solution (cont.)

Our service also integrates with the BVG trip planning app “FahrInfo” through an API. Berlkönig appears when the alternative BVG connections are significantly slower or inconvenient to access. Users are redirected to the Berlkönig app through a deep link, and their request is processed without further action required. By mid 2019, Berlkönig will be fully integrating -- in terms of both booking and payment -- with the BVG’s new multimodal app “Jelbi”.



Results

Currently, the fleet includes 130 vehicles, more than half of which are all-electric. Over the course of the two-year pilot, the fleet will expand to 300 vehicles. The service is already completing 25,000 rides per week with a customer satisfaction rate of 97%. While large, dense cities certainly require robust fixed transit systems to move the millions of people who work, live, and play in them, Berlkönig demonstrates how public transit operators can enhance and streamline existing service by deploying dynamic mobility solutions. By offering a highly convenient service that pools riders seamlessly on demand, the BVG and the City of Berlin have positioned themselves as innovation leaders, paving the way for an efficient, clean and shared future.