Target: Nationwide Digitalization

COPY —— Sven Hansel

Germans are increasingly using buses and trains which is a journey in the right direction. The supply of such travel is also increasing. The Federal Statistical Office reports that the number of trips on scheduled transport services in 2018 increased by 0.6 percent compared to the previous year for a record level of around 11.6 billion. That is an average of almost 32 million trips per day in Germany in local and long-distance traffic. That is the good news.

And now the bad news: the federal structure of Germany does not exactly make it easy for consumers. Finely spun like honeycombs, the local and regional transport networks for short-distance transit extend far and wide across the country, all with their own tariffs and ticket systems. In times of almost limitless mobility, this is not an optimal service. A new project of VDV eTicket Service (VDV-ETS) and T-Systems has now tackled this challenge. Through this cooperation, the electronic ticket will reach the next service level.

TRANSPARENT OFFERS

The VDV-ETS unites approximately 440 public transport companies under the "(((eTicket Deutschland" umbrella. On behalf of these companies, it publishes the German standard for electronic tickets and supports the industry in the digitalization of sales. Since 2003, VDV-ETS has been offering an e-ticket service for the various transport companies, which is being continually expanded, for example to include contactless payment. The aim is to introduce a nationwide electronic fare management system (EFM) for users of local and long-distance public transport throughout Germany.

However, in order for citizens to be able to use the digital ticket throughout the country, the last stumbling blocks had to be cleared from the path, such as the lack of uniform nationwide fare information with central tariff determination. This means that the user could not find out how much a ticket would cost if the journey crossed several networks. Without the exact price overview, the passenger could not book the entire trip and had to put the route together himself. In other words, there was a lack of a nation-wide fares overview with which the customer could have informed himself universally and then booked and paid.

T-Systems and VDV-ETS have now closed this gap for the associated partner companies. In a joint project, the two companies have provided a so-called product clearing service on the Open Telekom Cloud that meets precisely this requirement for nationwide fares information. However, such a ticket brings a further challenge: how can the payments received from travellers be correctly distributed among the transport providers involved (called "receivables clearing" in specialist jargon)?

ETICKETS NATIONWIDE

"We've now also digitalized this complex process," says Raphael Becker, Senior Consultant at T-Systems. On the one hand, the consumer is informed about the price of a cross-network ticket and, on the other hand, the connected networks are also informed about who can make which demands and to whom. To this end, the T-Systems experts provided a comprehensive cloud service for receivables clearing between eTicket participants, operating it on the Open Telekom Cloud. This means that the transport associations can now conveniently settle service, commission and license receivables among themselves.

"We are using T-Systems' cloud service as a complete service and are thus saving ourselves the trouble of setting up our own resources for providing and operating our clearing service," reports Nils Zeino-Mahmalat, Managing Director of VDV eTicket Service. "In this way, we remain flexible and our own efforts are geared toward the actual operation and utilization of the system. The regular further development of security, data protection and services keeps our hands free and allows us to concentrate on our core business."

As a result, the eTicket can now be used nationwide – an important step for digital local transport.

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