

# 1. Summary

Historically, railways and railway stations have had a significant impact on communications and prosperity, not only in Sweden, but also globally. Historical research has highlighted their importance to culture, leisure and domestic life. In this connection, societal changes and the physical planning of infrastructure have also been studied.

In recent years, the significance of railway transport and “station communities” as factors for growth in the national economy and opportunities for sustainable development and reduced carbon footprint have excited ever greater hopes. There are a number of modern studies that provide a good picture of the creation of economic value based on, for example, purchasing decisions.

What value do people attach to the proximity of public transport and to living near stations? There is research showing that proximity to public transport affects property values. There are also several recent studies on the qualities that passengers value in public transport. In contrast, no-one has examined the relationship between lifestyle choices and motivations for living in a sustainable society such as that embodied in the concept of the station communities of the future.

Can the quality of life that the Västra Götaland region wants to provide for its residents be achieved in urban station communities? What values can be created in the next generation of station communities? Which preferences do these values correspond to?

In this knowledge review, we paint a picture of current perspectives and problems. An important issue that needs to be examined further is how the station community is valued as a place for everyday life and as a solution for sustainable development.

Several of the station communities that exist today were established in connection with the introduction of the railways. Thanks to the opportunities for energy-efficient transport, sustainable community development and regional expansion with larger labour markets, interest in developing station communities has now once again increased.

In this knowledge review, practical examples show the opportunities that can arise from station development and what the success factors have been. The findings also demonstrate a need for knowledge linked to the development process and a need for technological solutions. Those involved have invested in developing their communities to:

- increase or create economic growth
- meet a need for increased capacity
- solve accommodation needs
- densify as an alternative to urban sprawl
- develop the community by making it more appealing (mainly for current residents)
- improve job opportunities through proximity to public transport
- connect various parts of the community
- create better links with other places
- meet current goals in respect of social and transport planning.

Some of the success factors we have seen in the various examples are:

- collaboration between several players
- early in the process, having a common vision for social, housing and transport developments
- purposeful planning that, despite criticisms and limitations, is based on a vision

- consistently highlighting the qualities of the project in the context of discussions on priorities
- obtaining additional financing for projects through regional, national or EU funds
- implementing measures as planned and highlighting best practice using case studies
- developing knowledge via, for example, study visits
- developing manuals and models in respect of, for example, physical planning, finance, emissions, local analysis and evaluations.

There are a number of areas about which greater knowledge needs to be developed. The examples we examined did not cover them to a great extent, but they did come up in the knowledge seminar on urban station communities (6 March 2013). These areas are:

- methods for seeking out and maintaining an active dialogue with different target groups
- how to create understanding regarding choices of direction and consequences in the planning process
- ways in which to highlight and promote values that attract people to settle in the municipality
- knowledge of what people value in a station community
- strengthening the regional perspective and its added value
- energy aspects of locations close to stations
- good sound environment
- limitation of vibrations and emissions.