



Report to Partnership Meeting of 4 April 2008

ATLANTIC AREA INTERREG IIB

THE PARTNER II PROJECT

1. Merseytravel, the Passenger Transport Authority for the Merseyside region is searching for partners to continue work that has been successfully completed in an EU INTERREG IIB project called PARTNER.
2. The PARTNER project involved the cities of Liverpool, Belfast, Dublin, La Rochelle, Rochefort and Santiago de Compostela and the ultimate aim of the project was to make it easy for people to travel to, from and around the Atlantic Area. The project succeeded in implementing high quality local public transport services to and from Atlantic Area gateways (e.g. airports and major rail stations) and high quality information services to assist travellers to, from and around the Atlantic Area.
3. The PARTNER project completed at the end of December 2007. Members of this consortium are now looking at opportunities to continue and expand the work completed into new regions of the Atlantic Area. A new consortium is being formed to submit a project proposal for INTERREG IIB programme which will run for the period from 2007-2013. The emerging PARTNER II project will:
 - a. Design and test transnational strategies to improve information about public transport services to optimize international trips of passengers by:
 - Continuing the development of a single multi-lingual web portal that links and provides sustainable transport options to travellers to, from and around the Atlantic Area.
 - Development of or improvements to regional web sites and journey planners that will link to the Atlantic Area portal.
 - Implementation of on ground information services (mobile devices such as PDAs) to assist travellers en route.
 - Investigating the needs of disabled people and ensure all information is accessible to all.
 - Continuing the development and exploitation of the INTEGRA brand and standards for public transport information provision.
 - b. Implement new systems and services to improve local accessibility and economical development of regional gateways by:
 - Implementing new or improved public transport services based on the transfer of knowledge developed by the PARTNER project.
 - Implementing smart cards and/or integrated ticketing systems.

4. The Highlands and Islands are one of the regions in the Atlantic Area for the 2007-2013 period and this would qualify HITRANS as a contributor to the PARTNER II Project. This project has very real potential to help us improve public transport services to our key gateways and merits further consideration.
5. An obvious opportunity would be to seek to add value to the bus route development scheme for which HITRANS secured funding to improve links to Inverness Airport. Although this project does include high quality buses and real time information there is significant potential to improve facilities at bus stops on the corridors included in the scheme and to improve the quality of information available to passengers particularly in terms of offering multi lingual information.
6. HITRANS would also want to establish if the project could offer funds to tap into to improve public transport links to the Airports serving our regional centres particularly Kirkwall and Stornoway. HIAL has already indicated a desire to see bus services to these airports improved to better serve passengers and both Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar and Orkney Islands Council are looking at options for this should funding be made available.
7. There might also be significant scope to upgrade public transport links at ferry terminals and rail hubs. Again improved and multi lingual information could really benefit passengers.
8. Without making any further commitment to become a project partner the Partnership Director and Programme Manager accepted an invitation from the project development team to attend a PARTNER II meeting in London on 31 March. This meeting should give sufficient background information on the project to identify what benefits could come from HITRANS joining the project.
9. Recommendation:
 - The Board is asked to note the report.
 - The Partnership Director will update the meeting verbally on the discussion and possibilities identified through the meeting in London and will make a recommendation to the board on whether there is merit in HITRANS becoming more involved in this project.

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Date: 26 March 2008