

Report to Partnership Meeting – 5th February 2010

EUROPEAN FUNDING

TransTourism - Sustainable Transport in Rural Tourism (formerly STIR)

HITRANS commissioned a Regional Access Scoping Study in 2009 that was designed to develop a platform for a potential future ERDF project. This study was considered and approved when the Partnership met in October 2009. The report concluded that there is currently general information available on most public transport services but that this could be better presented for visitors considering multi modal journeys, and that there would be benefit in developing bespoke solutions using many existing resources such as Traveline and Transport Direct's page landing wizard facilities as the base.

HITRANS and HIE officers have had extensive discussions with local authority, enterprise and academic partners regarding an ERDF Interreg IVB Northern Periphery Programme (NPP) project. These discussions have been with a view to HITRANS participating in the submission of a funding application for the TransTourism Project with partners from Sweden, Ireland and Iceland.

If agreed by the Board, the intention would be to submit a project consisting of web-based timetables and itineraries to enable the visitor to browse at home and then commit to a public transport based trip in the Highlands and Islands, as part of a multi national bid. This project would be consistent with the recommendations of the Regional Access Scoping Study and would help relieve the constraints of current Highlands and Islands tourism/travel sites being either mode specific or simply very patchy in the information given on the opportunity to travel by public transport for a full multi modal trip. Comprehensive single mode timetables do not facilitate the creation of individually tailored itineraries taking in attractions/locations of choice, and are often too detailed for the visitors needs. The portal provided as an output from the project would build and exploit existing data resources and introduce the opportunity for user feedback on trips to be generated within the content.

The project objectives are: to increase public transport mode share, maximizing of use of existing public transport capacity, to increase sustainable travel particularly to remote areas, and to facilitate easier getting about in the Highlands and Islands particularly for visitors.

The opportunity to provide real time updates to itineraries in the event of disruption etc would also be explored as part of the project with a view to introduction at some future point with future technological advancement. This would enable the portal to take feeds from the real time information systems that have been introduced in Highland, Moray, Orkney and Argyll & Bute as well as any data feeds that could in time be made available by ferry and rail operators. As the mobile phone technology available for information dissemination develops, there will be an opportunity to use the portal to give real time journey planning information to people while they are on the move. This would prove very welcome in providing information to travelers in the event of missed connections or service disruption.

Academic partners at Aberdeen University Rural Economic Digital Hub have agreed to monitor the project and then research Applications (Apps- mobile applications) that would further enhance tailored visitor choice. In turn they could subsequently develop the project further in partnership with HITRANS as real time and phone technologies improve.

The Proposed funding split to deliver the project Objectives should the bid be successful are:

HITRANS	3 years commitment Year 1 £30,000 Year 2 £20,000 Year 3 £10,000	£60000
HIE	up to 20% intervention	£30000
ERDF	While the intervention rate for the project is potentially 60%, lead partner administration and project general costs will reduce the level of potential funding to the Highlands and Islands element to below 50%	£60000
Total		£150000

The contribution and commitment from HIE to the project bid has yet to be confirmed and is considered essential to proceeding with the bid.

As with all European projects the funds provided are in Euros and are subject to variations in the Currency Exchange Rate current at the time of claims as the project proceeds and the level of support funding to the project may as a result increase or reduce. The Project partners are committed as a condition of making the bid to achieving the required outputs in the event of it being accepted. The risk of meeting any resultant shortfall in funding to produce the project outputs lies with the Partners, which in our case would be HITRANS.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to

1. agree to HITRANS involvement in this project and submitting a proposal with the other Partners for ERDF funding through the Interreg 1VB Northern Periphery Programme, subject to HIE agreeing their element of support funding; and
2. delegate to the Chair and Vice Chair the power to agree variations to the HITRANS element of the bid should this be necessary following discussions between European Partners prior to its formal submission for funding.

Report by: Frank Roach
Designation: Partnership Manager
Date: 27th January 2010
Background Papers: Appendix A – Background Note

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TransTourism (formerly STIR) is currently a NPP Preparatory Project with partners in Sweden, Ireland and Iceland. The application for the main project will be finalized at a workshop on 23 Feb 2010, with a submission deadline of 24 March. The project would then run from June 2010 for 3 years.

The project aims to support the development of new or improved transport services in tourism areas. These could include busy tourist destinations or areas that are trying to encourage more tourism. Transport services could be targeted at tourists, but also benefit residents working in the industry. In addition, actions and interventions that make a tourist destination more attractive, for example by removing congestion, could be considered.

If successful, the NPP will potentially provide 60% of project funding. The total project value is c. 1.5m euro over 3 years across all partner countries, with a proportion of this funding coming to each partner area.