

Report to Partnership Meeting – 8th October 2009

EUROPEAN FUNDING

START PROJECT

ARGYLL AND BUTE REAL TIME INFORMATION PROJECT

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To report to Members on the progress made by officers developing and delivering the extended coverage of Real Time Passenger Information in Argyll and Bute which will be part funded through HITRANS share of the INTERREG IVB Atlantic Area START project. The Argyll and Bute Real Time Information Project was approved by Members for inclusion in the START Project Programme at the Partnership meeting in Kirkwall in April 2008.

BACKGROUND

Funded through the RTP Capital Grant allocation HITRANS tendered for the provision of Real Time Information (RTI) services in Argyll and Bute in 2005. The contract was awarded to Tandata Ltd who initially equipped 14 buses and coaches operating from Campbeltown, Ardrishaig, Oban and Glasgow depots with on bus computers and automatic vehicle location (AVL) tracking equipment. In addition to this bus stop countdown displays were fitted at 10 locations to give passengers waiting at bus stops information in real time relating to their bus services.

The Argyll RTI system was expanded in 2007 with a further 10 buses equipped with on bus computers and AVL tracking. This allowed the routes operated by RTI ready coaches to extend to the Oban to Glasgow service. The 2007 extension also saw HITRANS increase the scope of the real time information provision in the region to include web and SMS access to real time data so passengers could find out what was happening with their bus services without having to leave their homes or workplace. This facility has been delayed in its delivery as difficulties with the supply of data to the system from bus operators have been more problematic than we anticipated but this issue has now been resolved making expansion of real time coverage a much more simple process in the future.

ARGYLL AND BUTE REAL TIME INFORMATION PROJECT

As a result of the success of the START project in securing funding allowed HITRANS officers to enter into discussion with Argyll and Bute Council officers and members to establish where the maximum benefits could be achieved from the roll out of further real time information coverage of bus routes in Argyll and Bute. The 24 buses and coaches included in the earlier roll out of real time passenger information on bus services in Argyll and Bute provided good coverage on the key routes to and within Mid Argyll and Kintyre. Having considered a number of areas it was agreed that the next phase would focus on completing real time information coverage of the Oban bus fleet and introducing the technology to the buses serving the Cowal peninsula.

Oban

Coverage in Oban was limited to a handful of routes with the only guaranteed coverage being the route to Glasgow and the interurban service to Lochgilphead and Ardrishaig. To bring the benefits of real time information to the largest market in Oban it will be necessary to equip 10 more buses with on bus computers and AVL.

Oban acts as a key transport interchange serving the West Highlands and Islands where modal interchange is a regular occurrence particularly for passengers requiring onward travel to and from the ferry terminal. The Scottish Government is working towards agreeing protocols with First ScotRail and Caledonian MacBrayne to minimise the risk of passengers missing connections as a result of delays to the ferry service. However there will still be times where it is not possible to delay the train and the coach offers greater flexibility in the event of late arrival of the ferry either to hold the service back or provide a duplicate vehicle. To give ferry passengers the best possible information on arrival at Oban it is proposed to install an electronic display at Oban Ferry Terminal in the arrivals area. A provisional item that will be included in the RTI tender is the installation of electronic information screen on the MV Isle of Mull, MV Clansman and MV Lord of the Isles to display bus and rail service information to passengers before the vessels berth alongside Oban pier. This will help passengers decide what their best option is for onward travel at the earliest opportunity.

In addition to the screens at Oban Ferry Terminal and on board the Caledonian MacBrayne vessels countdown displays will also be provided at Oban Bus Station.

Cowal

The original roll out of real time information in Argyll through HITRANS capital grant funding did not extend into Cowal. Instead earlier rounds of HITRANS funding in this area concentrated on upgrading bus infrastructure, including a contribution to a new transport interchange in Dunoon, and upgrading the standard of the bus fleet serving the peninsula.

To bring the benefits of real time passenger information to the modern fleet of buses serving Cowal would require 10 buses to be equipped with on bus computers and AVL. In addition to this it is proposed to install countdown displays at the main bus stops in Dunoon.

PROJECT FUNDING

Funding has been identified to deliver complete coverage of the bus fleet serving Oban and the bus fleet serving the Cowal peninsula. HITRANS identified £50,000 from our START budget to deliver this project and the HITRANS contribution is being matched by Argyll and Bute Council who will also contribute £50,000 for a total budget of £100,000.

PROJECT TIMESCALE

A delivery timetable has been developed for the Argyll Real Time Information Project with the following key milestones identified:

- Advertisement for expression of interest to supply the Argyll Real Time Information Project through Public Contracts Scotland portal – October / November 2009
- Invitation to tender for Argyll Real Time Information Project to be sent to selected bidders – December 2009

- Tender returns – January / February 2010
- Award of contract – February 2010
- Installation of 10 on bus computers in Oban – April 2010
- Installation of 10 on bus computers in Dunoon – May 2010
- Installation of electronic passenger information displays in Oban – June 2010
- Site approval testing and system launch in Oban – July 2010
- Installation of electronic passenger information displays in Dunoon – July 2010
- Site approval testing and system launch in Dunoon – August 2010

The timescale is an estimate and is subject to delays that could result from external factors such as difficulties in getting utility companies to provide electrical supply.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Members are asked to note the report.
2. Members are asked to approve the project scope and delivery timescale.

Report by: Ranald Robertson
Designation: Partnership Manager
Date: 14th September 2009