

Real Time Information – not just for the cities!

The launch of an innovative Real Time Information project for coach travellers in Argyll today (Wednesday 17 January) makes technology previously enjoyed only in cities available to people living in rural communities in Argyll.

Traditionally in the UK, and certainly in Scotland, Real Time Information Systems have been concentrated in areas with a high population density such as Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow where routes already operate to a high frequency. The systems use radio based communications utilising a series of masts that cover their operating areas.

As a first step in including Highlands and Islands communities in the benefits of real time passenger information and to test the effectiveness of this technology HITRANS has funded the first GPRS communications based real time information system in Scotland.

GPRS uses mobile telephone technology rather than radio links, opening up the opportunity of covering much larger areas and, importantly in the Highlands and Islands, the scenery is not spoiled by the need to erect radio masts.

The route selected for the trial is the long distance coach service from Campbeltown to Glasgow operated by West Coast Motors as part of the Scottish Citylink network. Covering a route 140 miles, the service offers the only alternative to the private car or air travel for people wishing to travel to and from the Kintyre peninsula.

The consequences of missing a journey are therefore significant, particularly if a passenger needs to make an onward connection. Due to the route's length there is also a high risk of delays as a result of traffic problems that can range from congestion in the Glasgow area to landslides in Argyll.

Information displays have been installed at Campbeltown, Kennacraig Ferry Terminal, Tarbert, Ardrishaig, Lochgilphead and Inveraray. Passengers can also get service information on their mobile phones through a text messaging service.

The project has been delivered at a cost of £170,000 and the main contractor is Tandata Systems limited.

Commenting at the launch in Lochgilphed today HITRANS member for Argyll and Bute, Councillor Duncan MacIntyre, said: "I am delighted to see this innovative system launched. I am sure passengers will gain greater confidence in the service as a result of knowing exactly when their next bus will arrive at the bus stop.

"We at HITRANS have identified this type of scheme as offering particular value for rural bus travellers and I expect other parts of the Highlands and Islands to benefit from this technology soon."

Speaking on behalf of Tandata Systems Operations Director Cliff Bull said,

"We at Tandata were extremely pleased to win the HITRANS RTPI tender. It enabled us to help them in the realisation of a major part of their RTI strategy. The system we have installed will benefit both passengers and bus fleet operators alike. These benefits we believe will result in increased patronage.

Ends

For further information contact Stan Arnaud or Jenny MacPherson at Platform PR on 01463 783018