

Report to Partnership Meeting 16 September 2016

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

HI-Travel Project / Officer

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide an update on the implementation of the Hi-Travel project and to invite Members to approve a proposal to make the position of Public Transport Information Officer permanent.

Background

A proposal to create a new post with the responsibility for co-ordinating the provision of public transport information across the HITRANS area was approved at the HITRANS Partnership meeting on 4th June 2014 following earlier discussion at HITCOG and the Partnership Advisors group. The agreement of the adoption of a shared services approach to information provision coincided with an opportunity to include the proposal and budget within an application to the Scottish Government's Bus Investment Fund (BIF) for which the objective was to support projects that incentivise and enable partnership working to help improve bus services, partnerships, standards and infrastructure for communities across Scotland.

The HITRANS application for the £535,000 HI-Travel project was successful and included investment in various improvements across the region including;

- 250 High quality Information poles / displays / timetable cases including Oban, Fort William (100%), Buckie to Portgordon (100%), Orkney mainland various and key stops in Western Isles.
- Procurement of a new public transport information database that facilitates automated production of wayside timetable displays, the supply of public transport information to Traveline Scotland and also supports any real-time information system.
- Innovative bus real-time information pilots;
 - 5 solar e-paper displays at key locations in Skye and Lochalsh including Kyle, Kyleakin, Broadford and Uig Ferry Terminal.
 - 4 Solar Chronos units at busy stops within the Cairngorm National Park
- Supply of more standard real-time information displays at locations in Orkney (including Kirkwall Airport), Stornoway Bus Station, Thurso, Wick and Bus Stations in Oban (x6) and Elgin.
- 100 Poster display cases for bus shelters.
- 5 new bus shelters for key interchanges including Oban Corran Halls, Keith, and Kirkwall
- Real-time display and Wifi hotspot in Portree Square
- Supporting the roll out of ticket machines with integrated Automatic Vehicle Location equipment
- In addition to the commitments above, HITRANS has worked with The Highland Council's Carbon Clever team to fund the purchase of information displays at several other key locations across the Council area that currently have no provision. These displays will be installed over the course of the current year.

Public Transport Information Officer

The position of Public Transport Officer has now been occupied for 18 months of the original 24 month contract. The shared services approach has resulted in a number of successful outcomes which could be built upon should the position be made permanent.

- Extension of roadside public transport Information while delivering a significant saving of local authority budgets
- Managed procurement of new contracts for information services and infrastructure..
- Increased number of roadside displays in each local Authority to cover an additional 300 stops bringing total number of stops which have information to 1450 including over 50% of Inverness and 100% of stops in Fort William with roll out continuing elsewhere.
- Populated the 180 timetable displays funded by HITRANS through the East Inverness BIF project prior to the establishment of the HiTravel project.
- Automated printing of roadside information on a high specification printer using photographic quality paper.
- Purchase of a new timetable database
- Installation and maintenance of electronic public transport information at key interchanges in rural areas of Highlands and Islands for first time.
- Development of a consistent brand for public transport information (HI-Travel) across the HITRANS area.
- Improved communication and supply of information to Traveline Scotland
- Management of real-time information system and displays across the HITRANS area

However there are a number of areas where there is still room for improvement / further development;

- Improving the supply of timeous bus service registrations in an electronic format.
- Work with Councils and bus operators to introduce protocols including the provision of bus service registrations with correct (NapTan) bus stop identification codes.
- Integration of the data sharing between the on bus Automatic Vehicle Location systems, real-time information database, on-street displays, Traveline Scotland and other media – The procurement of a new area wide contract this autumn will hopefully address many of the issues.
- Increasing coverage of on bus tracking across small operators and interurban coach network
- Reliance of ITS solutions on the mobile communication network available across much of rural Highlands.
- Improve distribution of roadside displays across the network with established targets that can be used as KPIs for the programme.
- Identifying new funding opportunities and developing applications in partnership with Council officers.

HITRANS officers have proposed that the funding for the post including the materials required to support it be on the same basis as that developed for the HI-travel project.

Local Authority	Annual Contribution
Argyll & Bute Council	£7,500
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	£5,000
The Highland Council	£10,000
Moray Council	£7,500
Orkney Islands Council	£5,000

The original proposal also included for the reallocation of any annual saving made on the annual maintenance charge for the timetable database following its renewal. This saving amounted to £5,000pa as a result of retendering for a new three year contract. It is proposed that HITRANS through the HiTravel project budget will meet the ongoing maintenance charge for the timetable database for the remainder of the contract and will look to continue this in future. This amounts to a combined annual saving of £22,500 for the Councils.

In considering local authority contributions HITRANS has identified an opportunity that this project could qualify as a Smarter Choices Smarter Places (SCSP) supported initiative. HITRANS contribution would also come from our budget for SCSP support.

HITRANS officers recently consulted the Public Transport Managers/Officers at each of the five local authorities via the HITCOG group. Four out of the five supported the continuation of the shared service approach to delivering the function of public transport information. The Highland Council officers expressed some reservations suggesting they may prefer to proceed by taking public transport information production and management back in house. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to discuss the Highland Council officers concerns in more detail. However, as the impact of their participation would only amount to a change in the overall budget of around £2000 (The Highland Council would be recharged for their share of the maintenance fee of the jointly procured public transport information database based on the standard agreed formula established for core budget contributions) it is recommended that this should not impact on the model overall model as HITRANS would make an allowance for this small deficit within their staffing budget and there would be savings for HITRANS in funding of projects in the Highland Council area resultant from the change in scope. These would include reduced printing costs for timetable displays in the Highland Council area which amount to the largest number of roadside displays of any Council in the region by a significant margin.

Recommendation

Members are asked to approve the following recommendations;

- 1. Members are invited to approve a proposal to make the position of Public Transport Information Officer permanent based on the existing Shared Services model.
- 2. Members are asked to delegate authority to the HITRANS Partnership Director to agree with Highland Council what level of participation they would have within the shared service project going forward.
- 3. Members are asked to note the areas relating to Public Transport Information that can still be improved and consider solutions for addressing them.

Risk	Impact	Comment
RTS delivery	√	This work supports several strategic objectives of the RTS.
Policy	√	This work supports the development of Policies H29, H30 and H33 as set out in the RTS Delivery Plan
Financial	-	Funding would be on same shared basis as developed for the Hi-travel project
Equality	√	Improvement of public transport services helps reduce social exclusion by improving access to employment and services

Report by: Neil MacRae
Designation: Partnership Manager
Date: 7th September 2016