

Report to Partnership Board 10 November 2023

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Demand Responsive Transport App – ‘Moove Flexi’

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides members with an update on the Demand Responsive Transport App currently being deployed by HITRANS to help support the operation, booking and marketing of non-scheduled transport services across the Highlands and Islands.

BACKGROUND

While the cost of providing public transport services has been increasing, the funding available has been reducing in recent years. This has meant that even without the increased challenges posed by Covid, the existing level of public transport and the model by which it is provided is becoming increasingly challenging.

The continued deployment of the DRT app ‘Moove Flexi’ will seek to increase the utilisation of these services which have sometimes struggled to attract the anticipated level of passengers for a variety of reasons:

- Limited or no budgets to promote awareness of them locally let alone to visitors to the area who might be interested in using them.
- The flexibility of the service makes them difficult to promote via many standard websites developed for scheduled services
- Many require journeys to be booked at least 24 hours in advance which removes the opportunity for passengers to use them for anything other than pre-planned journeys
- Coordination of the services is manually based which reduces the ability for efficiencies to be made
- There is no consistency of marketing or branding making it difficult for brand awareness to be developed.

In December 2021, HITRANS awarded Liftango an initial three year contract to deploy a DRT platform consisting of a user application, operators platform and a driver platform. The deployment of this system will:

- Provide a single point where locals and visitors will be able to book a number of different non-scheduled transport services through the one app.
- Provide both the passenger and operator with the information on the vehicles position and individual journeys in real-time with passengers informed if their service has been delayed.
- Enable services to be more efficiently utilised especially where there is more than one vehicle involved in providing a service.

- Includes features such as driver duty management and extensive reporting modules.
- API to facilitate integration of the solution with the HITRANS GO-HI MaaS platform.

PROGRESS UPDATE

Following a series of initial meetings with each Local Authority to identify services that could benefit from the DRT system and the hosting of webinars to demonstrate the application of the app to potential operators and community transport organisations, the phased rollout of these services is well underway. A summary of the services involved and work to date for each Local Authority is as follows:

Highland

1. Ferintosh

The Ferintosh wee bus has been using the system for over a year now and has seen a significant rise in the number of users as a result. In March this year a leaflet drop was carried out within the community which helped increase usage. Prior to using Moove Flexi the service had no more than 50 users, as of September 2023 there are 108 users.

Please see appendix 1 for full data set.

2. Durness

The Durness Bus have now gone live but feel they require further training after their first week of using the system. This is due to their first training session being carried out a few months ago to align with their original launch date which didn't go ahead due to driver shortages.

3. Wheels in Nairnshire

Wheels in Nairnshire are now fully setup on the system and now require their training. This is on hold at the moment whilst a new driver is appointed.

Moray

Moray's m.connect Dial a Bus service used the Liftango system for a 6 week soft trial at the end of June 2022, where bookings were made by the call centre staff via the operations portal on the system, and drivers used the in-vehicle tablets to receive their bookings. Following this trial period, the m.connect app was developed and launched on the 2nd May 2023.

Please see appendix 1 for full data set.

Argyll and Bute

A number of local operators attended the initial webinars. More recently, Tiree Ring and Ride service has been given a demo of the system.

Orkney

An initial discussion has taken place around how Moove Flexi could support demand responsive services required for teams participating in the 2025 Island games. The Dial-a-Bus currently operated by the Orkney Disability Forum has also been identified as a potential candidate.

Western Isles

Previous discussions with the council identified two services that could make use of the system: Barra public bus and the Benbecula local service. A follow up meeting is required with the council to progress.

GO-HI INTEGRATION

FOD and Liftango have been working on developing the API to integrate Moove Flexi with HITRANS GO-HI app. Liftango have now sent over all the material required for this development and FOD are producing a timeline for the work to be carried out.

PUBLICITY

As part of joining the project, each operator has been given leaflets for distributing within their communities with information about their service and the app.

HITRANS have been working with the CTA to identify opportunities to promote the app to prospective community transport operators within the region. Data and feedback from operators currently using the system will be shared with CTA members to encourage participation.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact - Positive

Comment – Local bus services support a number of RTS priorities relating the Public Transport and access to employment, education, healthcare and social inclusion.

Policy

Impact – Positive

Comment – HITRANS report on the Rural Bus Service Support and Funding (March 2021) sets out the variety of challenges facing local bus services not just in the Highlands and Islands but across rural Scotland. One of the actions it identified was the ‘Investigation of the potential for more regional collaboration on Public Transport and DRT management and operations.’

Financial

Impact – Neutral

Comment – HITRANS has successfully received a range of external funding to support the roll out of the app until December 2024. There is an option to extend the contract to three years subject to the agreement of HITRANS and the supplier.

Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment – Local Bus services help improve access to many of the most vulnerable groups within the area and also provide what can be described as a lifeline service to those communities where the local bus service is the only form of public transport available.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Partnership is asked to:

1. Note the report

Report by:	Rebecca Purvis
Designation:	Project Officer – Digital and DRT
Date:	23/10/2023

APPENDIX 1 – MOOVE FLEXI AND M.CONNECT DATA

Baseline data																	
MOOVE FLEXI																	
FERINTOSH	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23
	Moove Flexi Launched																
Total passengers	35	44	42	19	47	56	49	52	81	94	69	99	86	81	126	97	
Total registered users	N/D	N/D	N/D	50 *	14	28	36	40	44	73	84	89	93	99	106	108	112
Booking requests via app	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	8	5	4	9	16	15	29	40	55	43	32	61	17
Booking requests by phone		N/D	N/D	N/D	12	73	61	54	53	63	75	79	84	67	78	71	82
Total Bookings	34	35	43	17	20	78	65	63	69	78	104	119	139	110	110	132	99

*As a baseline, the Ferintosh bus had no more than 50 service users before joining Moove Flexi in October. The total user figures from October onwards are reflective of when both existing and new users of the service were added to system, after they had made their first booking since the system launched.

M.CONNECT	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23
	m.connect launched									
Total passengers	1503	1664	1890		1745	1714	1707	2027	1833	1933
Total registered users	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	661	1386	1689	1737	1790	1834
Booking requests via app	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	919	1057	1158	1501	1376	1476
Booking requests by phone	N/D	N/D	N/D	2565	3052	2490	2069	2592	2090	2189
Total Bookings				2565	3971	3547	3227	4093	3466	3665