

Report to Partnership Meeting 23 August 2013

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERERY

Bus Investment Fund

Purpose of Report

To update Members on the progress of applications to the Scottish Government's Bus Investment Fund 2013 which HITRANS are either a lead or supporting partner.

Background

The Scottish Government announced details of the Bus Investment Fund on 29th April 2013.

The Fund aims to enable the development of projects which have the potential to deliver improvements in bus services and infrastructure through partnership working between local transport authorities, bus operators and others. The fund is expected to run for several years, providing up to £3m/year in the first instance.

Project applications should be limited to £1m in any one year and should not exceed three years to deliver. Applications have been welcomed from transport authorities, bus operators working with transport authorities and community transport organisations. The fund aims to encourage partnership working and should have the support of local transport authorities.

Applications

The closing date for initial 'Expressions of Interest' that provided a summary of the proposed projects was in June 2013 and HITRANS offered match funding support to the following four applications;

- Tagsa Uibhist Community Services
- Moray Connect – Elgin to Aviemore bus service
- East Inverness Bus Improvement Corridor
- Oban and Fort William Sunday Coach Service

Transport Scotland received a forty five applications in total from across Scotland and each of the above applications, with the exception of the Elgin to Aviemore link, were successful in being taken forward to the next stage for further analysis and consideration.

The following section outlines in more detail the bid proposals and HITRANS commitment of funding support and resource.

1. Tagsa Uibhist Community Services

Tagsa Uibhist are a voluntary organisation in Uist providing a care support service to people in the local community along with community transport for people with mobility and/or disabilities who are unable to access public transport. The services cover from Berneray, North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist and Eriskay. Six islands extending for 60 miles.

The project proposal seeks funding to purchase two vehicles and revenue to support the administration and employment of a driver for the Dial a Bus Service. The total project value is £113,437 with HITRANS and CES each offering match funding of £17,100 over the three years of project. The total fund requested from Transport Scotland is therefore £79,237.

2. Oban and Fort William Sunday Coach Service

This project seeks to increase the number of days on which the coach service 918 operates between Oban and Fort William. At present the service only operates Monday to Saturday and this project will help deliver a consistent seven day a week operation and full integration with Citylink services at Fort William. The service is only the practical public transport link between the two largest towns on the west coast.

The total three year project cost is £75,000 with Argyll & Bute Council and HITRANS providing £2,500 each per annum in match funding. The service will be operated by West Coast Motors with a view to the service being commercially viable in year four once patronage increases.

3. East Inverness Bus Improvement Corridor

The project proposal is to develop a Quality Partnership to improve local bus services in East Inverness. It will improve access to key destinations including the new UHI Campus, Inverness Retail and Business Park, Raigmore Hospital and Inverness City Centre. It will also improve services in areas such as Hilton, Merkinch, South Kessock and Raigmore Estate which suffer from high levels of deprivation.

The project will deliver the following improvements;

- Deployment of 12 branded new coaches by Stagecoach on its flagship service
- Improved bus journey times and journey reliability with intelligent bus priority measures at key junctions.
- Bus lane on Millburn Road on the busiest bus corridor in the city.
- Increase patronage through improving infrastructure and innovative marketing.

The total project value over the three years is £2.7 Million with £1.7million from Stagecoach on new vehicles on its flagship City service, £200,000 from The Highland Council and £100,000 from HITRANS as well as resource in the form of managing the bid. The total funding sought from the Scottish Government is £700,000.

Next Steps

At the time of writing this report, HITRANS officials are working with the project partners to finalise the details of the next submission for which Transport Scotland are seeking a more detailed breakdown of the project finances, timescales and what the funding will be directed towards. Transport Scotland expect to be in a position to make a decision on which applications are successful by October 2013.

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report and invited to support the proposed allocation of the up to £41,600 per annum over the next 3 years from the HITRANS Research and Development Budget should all three applications be successful. A further update will be provided at a future Partnership meeting.

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 is identified in the 2013/14 Business Plan
Equality	-	Improvement of public transport services helps reduce social exclusion by improving access to employment and services for those living in our most remote areas.

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