

Item:

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Report to Partnership Meeting 20 September 2024

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

SHARED SERVICES UPDATE

PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFORMATION PROVISION

Purpose of Report

To provide Members with an update on the shared service model for co-ordinating the provision of public transport information across the HITRANS area that is being delivered by HITRANS on behalf of the partner Councils.

Background

Since 2014, HITRANS in partnership with Local Authority colleagues have operated a shared service approach in respect of public transport information. A Public Transport Information Officer was appointed in 2015 with responsibility for co-ordinating the provision of public transport information across the HITRANS area and in so doing improve both the quantity and quality of public transport information available to the public.

The supplier for the public transport information database has changed twice since 2015 with all five local authorities now using the DIVA system supplied by MENTZ (who provide the database for Transport for London). This contract was awarded in July 2020. From this system data is provided to both Traveline Scotland (for their suite of information facilities) and the company that supply the Regional Real Time Information contract (Vix Technology) which delivers the information flow and hardware assets at all the real-time display assets across the HITRANS area. The prime function of the database though is to support the production of the static at bus stop information throughout the HITRANS area. The information is also now being used for other software providers such as the Ticketer back office and various apps including the HITRANS GO-HI MaaS platform.

The list below outlines the volume of stops for which wayside bus stop information is currently produced by area:

- Highland Council - 1811 stops
- Moray Council – 319 stops
- Argyll & Bute Council - 687 stops
- Western isles Council – 394 stops.

Work to improve the source information received from operators is being taken forward in collaboration with the operators themselves and each local authority. This improvement is on an ongoing basis to ensure the output information received by the public is continually improving. To support this process and to reduce the level of manual input we have encouraged Partner Councils to include conditions in the award of bus contracts to require

information to be supplied by operators to a high quality preferably in the correct electronic bus service registration format which would help both improve the accuracy of the information and reduce the need for manual editing of the data.

Status Update by Local Authorities Areas:

Argyll and Bute

- Ongoing work with the local transport team to deliver correct and updated data within the DIVA database.
- Timetables developed and delivered for the Council by working closely with operators including Scottish Citylink and West Coast Motors. This work is ongoing as timetable changes happen across the year.
- Working with local transport team to discuss possible changes to the Timetable Display layout to fit the preferences expressed by Council officers.

Highland

- Opening of new Torvean Mobility Hub with good information available at the bus stop from the start of services
- A major change to various Stagecoach operated services for the opening of the Raigmore Hospital Bus Gate with new timetables have developed and published at bus stops along the new routes.
- Various Timetable runs for operators routes including those operated by Scottish Citylink, Stagecoach North Scotland, Highland Council in house bus operations and Shiel Buses as well as other independent operators across the year.
- Our team continues to have a close working relationship with the local transport team and are actively working together to amend public provision and respond to complaints in timely fashion.
- Working with the DIVA development team to seek improvements to the database functionality to allow the provision of route and network maps to be produced for busy areas such as Inverness.

Moray

- New 2024 Timetables have been developed and delivered for changes across Moray for a major service change by Stagecoach.
- Collaborating with the Council public transport team to improve clarity of provision of Council run services and information on Traveline.
- Ongoing work with the Council public transport team to improve the data of local services within our database.
- Working with our digital display providers and the Council to both improve the accuracy of the information and pinpoint where displays require maintenance.

Orkney

- Progress has been made on developing a Timetable Display Template that better meets the requirements expressed by the Council public transport team to meet the needs of bus users in Orkney.

Western Isles

- Ongoing work to improve our current database so that our information is accurate and fit for purpose.
- Small Timetable run has been produced and delivered for all bus stops in Barra and Vatersay.
- Collaborating with the local transport team to provide support on building our database resources with improved information so our team can be more confident that the information supplied to the database is.
- Once assurance is provided that the data for Lewis, Harris and Uist is accurate print runs will be delivered for all stops with displays in those areas.

Status Update for Delivery:

- The MENTZ system (DIVA) is being delivered to HITRANS by one of Mentz's existing clients National Public Transport Information (NPTI) which has allowed HITRANS to continue to provide a database within the current budget.
- We have purchased a new plot printer to enhance our developing of public transport provision. The new plot printer is more cost effective as well much quicker to print large print runs.
- Having a team of staff that have basic or advance training on DIVA has allowed the flow of data producing to improve.
- A new version of DIVA has been released that has improve functionality and user interfaces. The Public Transport Information Officer has been trained on the new platform as well as supporting staff. It is important for local authority staff to have the opportunity to learn the up-to-date version of the system and continue to use it on a regular basis to remain familiar with its functionality. Help sheets have also been circulated to aid staff when using the system and are constantly being updated when new features have been added.
- We have continued to have a strong relationship with the Data Development Manager at National PTI. This has allowed us to identify issues with the current build of DIVA and find solution together both to help our progress of travel information but also to help develop the system to make it more accessible and easy to use.
- Collaborating with the local authorities to improve in house services data and keeping Traveline informed and updated. This has improved support for residents who value and require accurate information and provisions as some of these areas have less commercial operation.

Listed below are the contributions from each local authority for the provision of the shared service approach in respect of public transport information:

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

Highland Bus Partnership Area Infrastructure Officer Support

Through discussion at the Highland Bus Service Improvement Partnership Steering Group the need was identified for enhanced support to maintain the provision of public transport information and infrastructure on behalf of the Highland Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) within Inverness and Fort William.

The conclusion of deliberations at the Steering Group was that a Public Transport Infrastructure and Information Project Support Officer be employed by HITRANS with the role to be funded by Highland Council and Bus Operators. Bus operator contributions to be determined on the basis of the number of bus stops where their services operate from that benefit from the provision of bus stop information displays. The operators of commercial bus services have all agreed to support the role. The postholder would be based in the HI-Bike workshop where there will be space to store spare parts.

The Job Description for this new role is attached as an Appendix to this report.

The roles of the different partners are listed below and it should be noted that there is no direct budget ask on HITRANS related to this role.

HITRANS contribution to Partnership:

- Employ new full time resource responsible for maintaining wayside information up to date and supporting assets (display cases and other bus stop infrastructure where possible) in good working
- Provide member of staff with van and cover transport costs
- Provide IT, workshop, materials for printing wayside display etc
- Member of staff would work alongside officer currently responsible for managing and producing timetable information across HITRANS area.

The Highland Council contribution to Partnership:

- Provide all new / spare parts required by officer to maintain at stop assets
- Contribution from general staff resource where repair may require DLO to assist.
- Pro-rata funding contribution towards post for their own in-house operations and those operators of supported services within the geography of the pilot.

BSIP Bus Operators contribution to Partnership:

- Pro rata financial contribution based on No of services to meet salary costs
- Provide timetable information via EBSR on all their registered service

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

1. Note this report.
2. To approve the proposal to recruit a Public Transport Infrastructure Support Officer as detailed above with HITRANS contribution being line management and in kind costs.

Risk Register

RTS Delivery Impact – Positive

Comment – This work supports RTS objectives and the monitoring of their implementation.

Policy Impact – Positive

Comment – This work supports the development of our Passenger Transport Policies (H33) in particular H33B to 'Develop high quality passenger transport user information and mapping

Financial Impact – Positive

Comment – Cost savings as a direct result of this shared service approach

Equality Impact – Positive

Comment – HITRANS support for improving public transport helps eliminate the barriers to travel for all and removes a number of physical accessibility barriers.

Report by: Robert Wilson/ Neil MacRae

Date: 6th September 2024

Designation: Travel Information and MaaS Officer/ Partnership Manager

Background Paper: Appendix – Draft Job Description

Appendix – Draft Job Description



JOB DESCRIPTION

PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFORMATION & INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT OFFICER

(FIXED TERM – INITIAL 12 MONTHS CONTRACT)

Based: Railway Cottage, Inverness

Salary £25,236 – 26,348

General

The post-holder will help support and maintain the provision of public transport information and infrastructure on behalf of the Highland Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) within Inverness and Fort William. The post-holder will be responsible for maintaining the provision of roadside and public transport information and infrastructure. The post-holder will be based in the HITRANS office at Railway Terrace in Inverness. The post will also involve travel within the Inverness and wider area (in particular Fort William) as required. Flexible working arrangements will be available provided the core elements of the post can be undertaken as operationally required.

Job Purpose

1. The post-holder is being recruited to support to the provision of public transport information and infrastructure in the Highland Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) Area which currently covers Inverness and Fort William.
2. The post-holder will join a small team and will have responsibility for monitoring, maintaining and updating at stop public transport information, infrastructure and other passenger facilities.
3. The postholder will report to BSIP partners (The Highland Council, Local Bus Operators and HITRANS).
4. In delivering these functions the post-holder will be expected to work closely with Th Highland Council's Public Transport and Roads teams and local bus operators as well as colleagues in HITRANS.

Main Duties

1. The post-holder will report to the HITRANS Partnership Manager on a day to day basis and also report to the Bus Service Improvement Partnership Steering Group.
2. The postholder will be expected to engage regularly with the Public Transport and Roads teams within The Highland Council and develop good working relationships with all relevant local bus operators.
3. Monitoring and maintaining of at stop public transport information displays and supporting infrastructure
4. Organising the erection and fixing of timetable display cases at bus stops and shelters
5. Cleaning and replacing timetable display cases and glazing materials.
6. Distributing public transport publicity and promotional material to meet operational requirements.
7. Carrying out remedial repairs to shelters following vandalism or accident damage
8. Prioritising workload according to operational requirements set by BSIP Steering Group
9. Supervision of any contractor carrying out instruction of BSIP partner.
10. Monitoring of stock and any tools to support the maintenance or replacement of at stop infrastructure.
11. Reporting and maintaining records of any defects found with bus stop infrastructure
12. Undertake any training required to ensure that the core tasks are carried out in accordance with safe working practices.
13. To input into progress reports / updates for the BSIP and its Partners.
14. To ensure post-holder activities are delivered efficiently, on time and within agreed budgets.
15. The post-holder will need to maintain effective working relationships with a number of key individuals including:

Within HITRANS:

- Public Transport Officer & Partnership Manager.

Within Local Authorities:

- Public Transport and Local Roads teams in the Highland Council,

Other External:

- All bus operators, operating registered local bus services

PERSON SPECIFICATION

PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFORMATION & INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT OFFICER

(FIXED TERM – INITIAL 12 MONTHS CONTRACT)

Based: Inverness

Salary £TBC

FACTOR		ESSENTIAL		DESIRABLE
Skills and Qualities	E1	Ability to work independently with limited supervision	D1	Good communication and interpersonal skills
	E2	Ability to work flexibly, prioritise workload, work in all weather conditions	D2	Ability to deal with public enquiries.
	E3	Ability to build working relationships with partners		
	E4	Good practical skills, a problem solver with the ability to undertake minor remedial repairs		
	E5	Ability to be a team player		
	E6	Hold a current driving licence		
Knowledge and Experience	E7	Experience or ability to demonstrate practical skills undertake remedial repairs in a responsible manner	D3	Any previous experience of working in the transport sector

	E8	maintaining high safety standards and good working practices	D4	Any previous experience of working for a public body
	E9	Experience of working with and the Microsoft Office software package and other databases Management, Monitoring and prioritisation of resources		
Qualifications and Attainments	E10	PCV driving licence (all types).	D5	Health and safety accreditation