

Report to Partnership Meeting 3 February 2012

EUROPEAN PROJECTS

START Project Update

Purpose of Report

To update Members on the progress made in delivering START project Actions in the Highlands and Islands in 2011/12.

Background

START is a transnational project relevant to cities and regions throughout the Atlantic Area and the whole of Europe. It deals with the broad issue of the improvement of accessibility and internal links (Priority 1) by promoting interoperability and continuity of existing transport networks, and sea/road/rail/air intermodality. This is critical to the success of regional and national sustainable development policies and is one of the key supporting pillars underpinning the European Spatial Development Perspective.

Furthermore, the convenience of travelling around the Atlantic Area using sustainable modes of transport is made difficult by differences in how the services are run by operators (e.g. ticket types), lack of knowledge of the local area (e.g. knowing when to get off the service), and language barriers (e.g. not being able to communicate with the driver).

HITRANS has secured funding for a projects totalling €789,163.69 through our participation in START. The START Project commenced on 1st January 2009. The project has been granted an extension to May 2012 although in the case of HITRANS the period beyond 2011 will only relate to work on project administration and making grant claims.

In addition to the budget secured from ERDF the Partnership Board also allocated £25,000 from the Research and Development budget to support activities that match the START project criteria. This funding has allowed a number of new schemes to be introduced that will deliver real benefits to passengers.

Activity 8 – Advanced Traveller Information Systems – Argyll RTPi

The START project has provided a very good opportunity for partners to share experience on delivering Advanced Traveller Information Systems and identifying good practice that should provide a very useful resource to other regions interested in developing systems. The project meetings have provided a very useful opportunity for partners from across the Atlantic Area to share their experience and learn from what other partners are doing.

In 2011 HITRANS budget from the START project has supported the delivery of real time information equipment and displays in Argyll and Bute. START has funded £56,000 of the projects costs with further funding from Argyll and Bute Council and West Coast Motors.

In total 74 buses in Argyll and Bute have been equipped with on bus tracking units with communications provided by GPRS (mobile telephone systems). The buses equipped undertake a wide range of duties including the strategic long distance coach services that link the west Highlands with the rest of Scotland.

The buses equipped serve the following ferry ports and the real time equipment will help provide a much higher quality interchange between ferry and bus:

- Oban Ferry Terminal
- Dunoon Ferry Terminal
- Hunter's Quay, Cowal
- Rothesay Ferry Terminal
- Kennacraig Ferry Terminal
- Campbeltown Bus Station (for the passenger ferry to Northern Ireland)
- Tayinloan Ferry Slipway
- Tarbert Ferry Slipway
- Colintraive Ferry Slipway
- Rhubodach Ferry Slipway

The buses equipped also serve Oban Airport and Oban Rail Station.

The START project has enabled the purchase of real time information displays at the following interchanges:

- Dunoon Interchange
- Rothesay Interchange
- Oban Interchange

In addition to the locations detailed above it is also planned to install a TFT display on the MV Isle of Mull ferry which serves the busiest ferry route into Oban. This will let passengers plan their onward journey from Oban Interchange while they are still on board the ferry.

The main method of information dissemination for the Argyll and Bute real time tracker equipped buses will be the Traveline Scotland Smart Phone Application and SMS service. The START project is supporting the development of the Smart Phone App on the Blackberry platform which will complement the Apps already available on the Android and iPhone platforms.

To evaluate the success of real time information in Argyll and Bute it is intended to undertake a customer satisfaction survey and the bus operator has agreed to provide basic passenger statistics for the periods before and after the real time project is introduced.

The total project budget is £143,000 and while the START contribution is £56,000 the amount claimed for from START can be increased as needed to ensure the total START claim is maximised against the total project budget. The START funding for this work is being met from the Activity 8 Advanced Traveller Information Systems budget.

Activity 8 – Advanced Traveller Information Systems – Traveline Scotland App Development

The Partnership approved the allocation of a budget of £12,500 from the Services budget of the START project to fund 50% of the capital costs of developing the Traveline Scotland smartphone application for the Blackberry platform at the Partnership meeting in April 2011. The App launched on the Blackberry platform in November 2011.

The cost of the Blackberry application development to HITRANS and SPT is a one off capital cost of £25,000 which covers the development and the first year of maintenance. This cost is split equally between SPT and HITRANS.

Following on from the success of the Blackberry App budget has been allocated by SPT and HITRANS to part fund the Windows Smart Phone App. This app has been developed at a cost of £27,000 with HTRANS funding £13,500 from the Activity 8 Advanced Traveller Information Systems budget and the core budget (Research and Development Programme) allocation to START.

Activity 8 – Advanced Traveller Information Systems – Orkney Real Time Information

New real time passenger information displays have been provided in Orkney at Stromness Ferry Terminal Bus Stance and St Margaret's Hope Ferry Terminal Bus Stop. The screens will help with integration between bus and ferry. The screens cost £5,900 which includes installation. There will be a small additional cost for electrical connection of the Stromness display. The cost of providing the electrical supply to the St Margaret's hope display will be met by Orkney Islands Council who have secured a contribution from the St Margaret's Hope Development Trust for the provision of a bus shelter and real time equipment at this location.

A budget of £6,000 has been allocated for this work from the budget of £25,000 allocated to START related activities in the Research and Development budget. This will complement the actions HITRANS is promoting through START Activity 8 Advanced Traveller Information Systems.

Activity 10 – Improving Transport Services – Kirkwall Airport JET Service

A project identified by HITRANS in the original START funding application was to support the development of a JET branded bus service to Kirkwall Airport. The budget for this expenditure was identified in 2011. Orkney Islands Council has a contract in place for a 30 minute service frequency on this route. The bus on the route is an Optare Solo low floor bus in the JET livery.

The START project has funded an expenditure of £55,558.34 for Orkney bus services 3 and 4 and this work is being funded from the Activity 10 Improving Transport Services (Other Expenditures) budget.

Activity 10 – Improving Transport Services – Airport CIS Project

HITRANS, working in partnership with Highlands and Islands Airports (HIAL) , have delivered electronic arrival and departure screens in Atlantic Area airports. This has allowed HIAL to provide information screens offering arrival, departure and local information should be provided at each of the following locations:

- Barra
- Benbecula
- Campbeltown
- Islay
- Tiree
- Wick

HIAL have agreed to meet all revenue costs associated with the displays.

The START project funded the capital expenditure on this project of £6,544.91 from the Activity 10 Improving Transport Services (Other Expenditures) budget.

Activity 10 – Improving Transport Services – On Bus Wifi Project

Stagecoach have introduced nine new coaches for their Service 10 from Inverness via Forres, Elgin, Fochabers and Keith to Aberdeen. The new coaches are highly specified with a number of features that will make the journey more comfortable for passengers. With support from HITRANS and Aberdeenshire Council these coaches have been equipped with on bus wifi connectivity which is available free of charge to passengers.

HITRANS share of 25% of the cost of the on coach wifi is £3,451.50 and this has been funded from the budget of £25,000 allocated to START related activities in the Research and Development budget.

Activity 10 – Improving Transport Services – Improving Access on New Coaches

The introduction of new coaches for Stagecoach Bluebird Service 10 (Inverness to Aberdeen) will see the introduction of a new lift system that will improve wheelchair access on the route. However this still leaves the issue that the coach steps are a barrier for a number of passengers who do not use a wheelchair but do find the steps difficult to negotiate. Discussions involving Stagecoach, Moray Council, Moray Disability and Access Forum and HITRANS officers have reached agreement that a pilot project could be developed on the route where each coach is equipped with a folding wheelchair that can be used to facilitate access for passengers who find the steps difficult but can otherwise make their way to a seat. If successful Stagecoach and other operators could use this project as a template that could be followed on other routes where DDA compliant coaches with wheelchair lifts are deployed.

HITRANS have agreed to meet the cost of delivering this pilot project from the budget of £25,000 allocated to START related activities in the Research and Development budget. This will complement the actions HITRANS is promoting through START Activity 10 Improving Transport Services. The cost of this project is £1,241.28.

START Budget

The maximum budget available to HITRANS through START is detailed in Table 1 below. This includes the costs of project management and service supply that have been arranged by the Lead Partner on behalf of all the project partners.

Table 1

1. Human Resources	- €
2. Services Supply	86,286.46 €
3. Operational Costs	9,546.79 €
4. Travel and accommodation	9,000.00 €
5. Meetings and seminars	5,000.00 €
6. Promotion and dissemination	46,324.47 €
7. Equipment	138,699.35 €
8. Other expenditures	494,306.62 €
TOTAL	789,163.69 €

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report.

Risk	Impact	Comment
RTS delivery	√	Improving transport services and removing barriers to using public transport are important elements of the RTS.
Policy		
Financial	√	The project budget is committed within the START project budget and 2011/12 Business Plan.
Equality	√	The provision of improved disabled facilities on coach service 10 between Inverness and Aberdeen will make this route more accessible generally for passengers with mobility difficulties.

Report by: Ranald Robertson
Designation: Partnership Manager
Date: 11th January 2012