

## **Report to Partnership Meeting 7 October 2011**

### **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.

##### **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 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 and covers a three year period to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2011.

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
- Colintrave 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 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 – Orkney Real Time Information**

New real time passenger information displays are being 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 will each 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 HITRANS 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 will fund an expenditure of £38,442 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 – Traveline Scotland Blackberry App**

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. Development of the Application is ongoing in line with the project delivery timetable reported to the Partnership in June and this will see the App launched on the Blackberry platform in late September 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.

### **Activity 10 – Improving Transport Services – Airport CIS Project**

HITRANS are working in partnership with Highlands and Islands Airports (HIAL) on the delivery of electronic arrival and departure screens in Atlantic Area airports. This project has been delayed as HIAL have taken the responsibility for providing customer information systems in house and expanding coverage to new facilities has been delayed as other activities such as the development of a new website with flight information have been prioritised.

It has now been agreed by HIAL that a TFT screen offering arrival, departure and local information should be provided at each of the following locations:

- Barra
- Benbecula
- Campbeltown
- Islay
- Tiree

HIAL estimate the cost of each screen inclusive of installation and software to be £1,500 HIAL have agreed to meet all revenue costs associated with the displays.

The START project will fund an expenditure of £7,500 for the introduction of Customer Information System screens at the five Western Isles airports from the Activity 10 Improving Transport Services (Other Expenditures) budget.

## **Activity 10 – Improving Transport Services – On Bus Wifi Project**

Stagecoach are to introduce nine new coaches for their Service 10 from Inverness via Forres, Elgin, Fochabers and Keith to Aberdeen. The new coaches will be highly specified with a number of features that will make the journey more comfortable for passengers. An option now available on buses is the introduction of wifi services that can be made available free of charge to passengers. Stagecoach approached HITRANS officers asking if we would consider funding part of the costs of equipping the new coaches with wifi. After discussion it was agreed that Stagecoach would meet 50% of the equipment costs with the remainder funded by HITRANS and Aberdeenshire Council.

HITRANS share of 25% of the cost of the on coach wifi is £3,451.50 and this is being 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 officers 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. This cost is estimated to be approximately £1,000.

## **Activity 11 – Communicating with the Customer**

An important theme that HITRANS is working on through START is improving the quality of information at public transport interchanges. This work is covered under Activity 11 Communicating with the Customer. HITRANS have agreed to fund the provision of new accurate onward travel posters to be displayed at all the rail stations in the region. This will see existing posters that are often inaccurate replaced with new posters offering a better quality of information. The new posters will feature the START brand.

This work is being delivered by ScotRail who have a quote to undertake the work for £1,500. This will be met from the START services budget under Activity 11 Communicating with the Customer (Other Expenditures).

## **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 €
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>789,163.69 €</b>

### 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	√	Project work to improve access to coaches to passengers who find the steps a detriment to travel

**Report by:** Ranald Robertson  
**Designation:** Partnership Manager  
**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> September 2011