

Report to Partnership Meeting 5 October 2012

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Bus Route Development

Purpose of Report

To update Members on the progress made in delivering the kick start bus route development project in partnership with Argyll and Bute Council and Scottish Citylink on service 926 from Campbeltown to Glasgow.

Background

The Partnership allocated funds of £20,000 in 2011/12 towards the increased operating costs incurred by Scottish Citylink in increasing the mileage operated on Service 926 from Campbeltown to Glasgow. The increased mileage will be achieved through increased journey frequency throughout the year on the route. The kick start project support continues for a further two years at a lower rate with HITRANS funding for years 2 (2012/13) and 3 (2013/14) set at £10,000 in each of these years. The HITRANS funding support is matched by Argyll and Bute Council. The service will become commercially viable from year 4 onwards.

The route has also benefited from significant investment in the form of a new fleet of coaches to operate the route.

The support from HITRANS and Argyll and Bute Council has been awarded in the form of Public Service Concessions Contract support under the same terms as the Bus Route Development Grant Scheme formerly provided by the Scottish Government.

Service Upgrade

The Kick Start project on the Campbeltown to Glasgow Scottish Citylink bus service has delivered a real improvement in terms of service frequency and vehicle quality. The number of journeys each day during the summer season increased from 3 to 5 covering the whole route with an additional late afternoon journey between Glasgow and Ardrishaig. The latter journey is provided by an Ardrishaig based coach which is also being used to guarantee duplication of one Glasgow bound coach eliminating a long standing problem with overcrowding on the route.

In the winter months the timetable is slightly reduced but the plan HITRANS and Argyll and Bute Council agreed to support was that the increased level of service would continue to operate only Friday, Saturday and Sunday. However due to the success of the first summer of operation the winter timetable only sees a reduction in one return journey on Monday – Thursday.

Previously the service had capacity problems which resulted from potential passengers choosing to travel at the last minute rather than pre-booking journeys. Given the nature of the route the service provides a number of local journey opportunities along the route from remote locations into nearby small towns/villages for shopping and leisure opportunities which tend to be of a

discretionary nature rather than a journey which would be pre-booked. The enhanced timetable spreads the opportunities for this type of journey. The timetable also improved journey opportunities for travel to and from Islay including the option for islanders to make a day return to Glasgow.

New Fleet

The Kick Start Project has seen a radical improvement in the service frequency that has been matched with a substantial investment in the fleet of coaches operating on the route. West Coast Motors (the contractor who operate the route under Scottish Citylink contract) have introduced 5 new coaches on the route. The fleet investment also saw new coaches purchased for the Glasgow to Oban service. These vehicles offer passengers a wide range of comforts and have increased seating capacity to 59 seats or 55 seats and a wheelchair. The total investment in vehicles alone is in the region of £1.6Million.

Impact of Upgrade

The service enhancement has performed very well operationally and Scottish Citylink have confirmed that passenger growth has matched the objectives set out for the project.

The additional patronage generated over the year 1 (May 2011 to April 2012) is 38,840. This amounts to an encouraging 30.37% increase over the previous year. To achieve this figure the scheduled operating mileage of the route has been increased by 187,354 miles, an increase of 63.96%.

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report.

Risk	Impact	Comment
RTS delivery	√	Improving bus links to national centres was identified in the RTS as an area HITRANS should support.
Policy	√	Increases accessibility to Argyll and Bute by increasing coach service frequency and introducing wheelchair accessible coaches.
Financial	-	The project budget is committed within the 2012/13 Business Plan.
Equality	√	The new coaches on the route are DDA compliant with wheelchair lifts to improve accessibility on the route.

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