



Report to Partnership Meeting 15 April 2016

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Bus Investment Fund – East Inverness & HI-Travel

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members on the implementation of the two Bus Investment Fund Projects for which HITRANS are the lead partner - East Inverness Bus Improvement Corridor and HI-Travel and have been able to draw down over £1million in public sector and over £2million in private investment in Public Transport in the Highlands and Islands since January 2014. Previous reports have included wider information about the objectives of the projects. This report focuses on the implementation.

Background

The Bus Investment Fund (BIF) is a challenge fund open to applications from public transport authorities working in partnership with operators, community transport, NHS, and other public or private sector partners.

The aim of the fund is to incentivise and enable partnership working to help improve bus services, partnerships, standards and infrastructure for communities across Scotland. The fund will support and encourage all relevant authorities to take up partnership working to help increase the standard of bus services to increase patronage thereby achieving a greater modal shift.

HITRANS have been a lead project partner for two projects in receipt of grant funding from the Bus Investment Fund to date - the £2.7million East Inverness Bus Improvement Corridor project and £535,000 HI-Travel project. HITRANS has also supported a number of projects led by partner Local Authorities or community transport groups including; Tagasa Uibhist, Moray Council's Access to Health project, Badenoch and Strathspey Integrated Transport Service and the Oban to Fort William Sunday service improvements led by Argyll and Bute Council.

East Inverness Bus Improvement Corridor

The total budget for the East Inverness Bus Improvement Corridor project is £2,715,844. This included a contribution of £1.7million from Stagecoach North Scotland towards 12 new Euro 5 low floor vehicles which now operate in the city. Contributions of £107,922 from HITRANS and £200,000 from The Highland Council were used to secure £707,922 from the first round of the Scottish Governments Bus Investment Fund.

The focus of the project was on improving access from some of Inverness' most deprived areas to health facilities and employment opportunities in the East of the city including, Raigmore Hospital, Beechwood Business Park, Inverness business and Retail Park and the new UHI Campus site.

All of the funding for the project has now been committed on a variety of measures across Inverness. These include;

- 20 new bus shelters including at Inverness Retail Park, Inverness Airport and bespoke shelters for Falcon Square.
- Intelligent bus priority successfully trialled at two junctions on Millburn Rd and in process of being rolled out at several other junctions east of the city centre.
- Contributions towards the design and bus priority elements in the redesign of the Tower Road / Barn Church Road junction.
- WiFi at Inverness Bus Station.
- Installation of over 180 new bus stop flags and display cases
- Roll out of NFC and QR codes that enable passengers with smartphones to access real-time information for any stop via the Traveline Scotland App.
- New real-time displays at locations such as Academy St, Grant St, Millburn Road, Charleston Academy and Inverness Campus UHI.
- Marketing and monitoring of local bus services in Inverness and Traveline Scotland using various media. Targeted campaigns and leaflet drops within the project area and new Inverness Campus.

In addition, a key overall objective of the project was the development of the region's first Statutory Quality Partnership (sQP) between HITRANS, The Highland Council and Stagecoach North Scotland. The sQP is now in final draft form and encompasses a wide range of commitments that will help improve bus services and facilities across the city. A summary of the SQP is contained within an appendix to this report.

The SQP will encompass all of Inverness but has exemptions to ensure that school services and any other infrequent bus services will not be affected. Partners are currently looking to finalise the text of the document in advance of wider consultation with other stakeholders including local bus operators, Transport Scotland, Confederation of Passenger Transport. Statutory consultation on the SQP will then take place before it can come into force.

HI-Travel

HITRANS also made a successful application to the second round of the Bus Investment Fund for the £535,000 HI-Travel project. The central objective of the HI-Travel project was to help address the poor level of public transport information provision across much of the HITRANS area by adopting a shared services approach supported through match funding from HITRANS and each member local authority towards the appointment of a dedicated Public Transport Information Officer (on an initial 2 year contract) that would work with the Councils and transport operators in an integrated and innovative approach to service delivery.

HITRANS made an appointment to the position of Public Transport Information Officer at the end of January 2015 and this member of staff has been working with colleagues in member local authorities to roll out various improvements identified in the application including;

- Procurement of a new public transport information database that facilitates automated production of wayside timetable displays, the supply of public transport information to Traveline Scotland and also supports any real-time information system.
- 250 High quality Information poles / displays / timetable cases including Oban, Fort William (100%), Buckie to Portgordon (100%), Orkney mainland various and key stops in Western Isles.
- 100 Poster display cases for bus shelters.

- Innovative bus real-time information pilots;
 - 5 solar e-paper displays at key locations in Skye and Lochalsh including Kyle, Kyleakin, Broadford and Uig Ferry Terminal.
 - 4 Solar Chronos units at busy stops within the Cairngorm National Park
- Supply of more standard real-time information displays at locations in Orkney (including Kirkwall Airport), Stornoway Bus Station, Thurso, Wick and Bus Stations in Oban (x6) and Elgin.
- Maintenance and support for the JourneyGenie website.
- 5 new bus shelters for key interchanges including Oban Corran Halls, Craignure Ferry Terminal and Kirkwall
- Real-time display and Wifi hotspot in Portree Square
- Supporting the roll out of ticket machines with integrated Automatic Vehicle Location equipment.

In addition to the commitments above, HITRANS has worked with The Highland Council's Carbon Clever team to fund the purchase of information displays at several other key locations across the Council area that currently have no provision.

Following the full implementation of the new timetable database a further report will be brought to a Partnership meeting later this year that will evaluate the merits of extending the shared service approach to providing public transport information in the HITRANS area.

Recommendation

Members are asked to approve the following recommendations;

1. Note the updated report on the implementation of the East Inverness Bus Improvement Corridor and HI-Travel projects
2. Delegate authority to the Partnership Director to finalise the content of the Statutory Quality Partnership for Inverness in partnership with colleagues at The Highland Council and Stagecoach North Scotland.
3. Approve the allocation of a £5000 contribution in 2016/17 Business Plan towards supporting the implementation and monitoring of the Inverness sQP.
4. Write a letter to the Minister or Transport and Chief Executive of Transport Scotland highlighting the successes of the various BIF projects within the HITRANS area and express support for the continuation of the fund, or a similar fund in future years.
5. Agree that a further report be taken to a Partnership meeting later this year that will consider the merits of continuing the shared service collaboration model for delivering public transport information across the HITRANS area.

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	-	An allocation of £5,000 in the 2016/17 Business Plan towards supporting the implementation of the Inverness sQP.
Equality	√	Improvement of public transport services helps reduce social exclusion by improving access to employment and services

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Designation: Partnership Manager
Date: 1st April 2016

Appendix: Inverness Statutory Quality Partnership Summary

1. Introduction

HITRANS, in partnership with The Highland Council and Stagecoach North Scotland, are progressing plans to introduce a Statutory Quality Partnership (sQP) for bus service delivery in Inverness. This paper has been prepared to inform Members of work undertaken to date, the proposed objectives of the sQP, and the service standards and infrastructure facilities being considered for inclusion in the sQP.

While the delivery of improved service standards will be the responsibility of bus operators, delivery and maintenance of infrastructure falls under the remit of HITRANS and The Highland Council. Accordingly, Members are asked to consider the potential infrastructure improvements that have been identified as facilities which could support delivery of a sQP to drive forward improvements essential to increasing bus patronage, and to deliver wider social, economic and environmental benefits across the City region.

2. Why an Inverness sQP?

In 2013, HITRANS, in partnership with The Highland Council and Stagecoach North Scotland made a successful application to the Scottish Government's Bus Investment Fund for a £2.7 million project to develop an Inverness Bus Improvement Corridor. The scheme has the following objectives:

- To improve public transport access to key destinations including the new UHI Campus, Inverness Retail & Business Park, Raigmore Hospital and Inverness City Centre.
- To improve access to essential facilities including healthcare and employment for areas within the city which are among the 10% most deprived in Scotland, including Merkinch, Raigmore, Longman and the City Centre (SIMD 2012).
- To increase bus patronage and encourage modal shift from the private car as a result of creating a more attractive public transport network.
- To support the delivery of bus policies within the Highland Council's Local Transport Strategy and HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy.
- To improve safety, particularly for vulnerable public transport users across Inverness.
- To reduce the adverse environmental effects of transport and improve local air quality, supporting the Council to deliver its Air Quality Action Plan and achieve 'Zero Carbon' status for Inverness.
- To enhance the partnership approach to bus improvements in Inverness.

As part of the project, partners committed to the development of a sQP to assist in locking in the benefits of the ambitious programme of works proposed through the Bus Investment Fund. Works include the purchase of new vehicles by Stagecoach, intelligent bus priority measures at key junctions across the city, upgrading of 180 bus stops, real-time information development, and improved marketing and promotion of local bus services.

Development of a sQP for Inverness will support wider public transport policies of the Council as set out in its Local Transport Strategy and draft Green Transport Strategy, the latter of which sets out an ambitious target to increase bus modal shift for overall trips in Inverness by 2020 and supports a policy to *"promote Quality Partnerships with the commercial bus operators, including accessibility standards*

and service frequencies". The sQP would also support wider efforts to improve air quality in the city centre of Inverness; an area recently declared as an Air Quality Management Area.

3. Quality Partnerships – What is a sQP?

Introduced by the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001, a sQP is a statutory arrangement between parties whereby a transport authority provides improved bus infrastructure ("specified facilities") and sets quality standards to be observed by bus operators for using those facilities.

An authority, or authorities acting jointly, may make a sQP covering a corridor or area, provided:

- The authorities are satisfied that the scheme will to any extent implement the relevant policies to which it relates (relevant policies is defined in the Act); and either
- Improve facilities and services to bring material benefits to users; and/or
- Reduce or limit traffic congestion, noise or air pollution.

Bus operators wishing to participate in the sQP must give a written undertaking to the Traffic Commissioner that they will provide the specified standard of service when using the facilities. Adherence to this commitment then becomes a condition of continued registration. The Traffic Commissioner is empowered to act against any operator who fails to meet conditions of registration.

4. What is proposed in the Inverness sQP?

Delivery of a sQP which addresses the objectives set out above will be dependent on strong partnership working and delivery of an agreed set of standards from both the bus operator and transport authorities. Potential bus operator obligations which could be considered in a sQP are presented below alongside the transport authority standards which Members are asked to consider.

Bus Operator Obligations

Bus Operators will be expected to provide specified standards of service in order to participate in the sQP scheme. The standards proposed in the sQP should reflect the project vision and significant level of investment being made by the scheme partners. However, the standards requested must also be balanced against the powers available under the SQP and the capacity of bus operators to invest and commercially deliver the required quality and level of service.

Amongst the standards which are proposed within the Inverness sQP are the following:

- Vehicle requirements
 - minimum vehicle age
 - accessibility,
 - emission standards
 - information
 - cleanliness standards
- Service reliability
 - minimum frequencies,
 - service stability,

- punctuality standards
- Staff
 - training and qualifications,
 - customer care
- Customer service package (e.g. customer satisfaction feedback).

The level of fares, timetables and frequencies (over and above any agreed minimum frequencies) and the routes served cannot be included in a sQP and will remain wholly controlled by the operators.

Transport Authority Obligations

Within a sQP, the transport authorities (i.e. the Council and HITRANS) are required to set out which facilities will be provided over the life of the sQP. Facilities can cover route priority schemes, bus stop infrastructure, intelligent transport systems (e.g. traffic signal priority and real time information), enforcement, and information provision. HITRANS is seeking to make a number of commitments in relation to the provision of information - both static and real time – including continuing to provide wayside information at 180 locations that were provided through the Inverness BIF project and will seek to increase this if the ERDF Smart Cities Transport project is successful in securing funding.

A number of infrastructure improvements are proposed for implementation including bus priority measures on key routes and junctions, such as bus lanes on Millburn Road and Margaret Street and bus priority measures in the Old town. These schemes will initially need approval at the relevant Highland Council committee and will be subject to statutory consultation.

A number of meetings have been held between partners to consider the scope of the sQP in terms of which bus services would be covered by the sQP and to discuss the potential service standards and facility improvements aspired to by partners.

These discussions have indicated that it is most appropriate to initially develop a targeted sQP, concentrating on the core city network. This initial sQP could potentially then be supplemented with a further sQP with extended coverage as partnership working moves forward.

In addition the detail of those infrastructure facilities that the Council and HITRANS may provide and the length of the initial sQP will be set out in the final version of document in advance of formal public consultation.

The plans in the following pages of this appendix highlight the proposed extent of the sQP, the existing infrastructure as well as the infrastructure improvements which are being considered for inclusion in the sQP, pending Highland Council Member agreement. .

5. Next Steps

Prior to the development of a final version of the sQP, Members are asked to note progress with the work undertaken to date on the development of a sQP for Inverness,

A final version of the sQP will then be prepared which will be used for formal public consultation as well as consultation with other bus operators across Inverness, as well as wider stakeholders such as Transport Scotland and the Confederation for Passenger Transport.

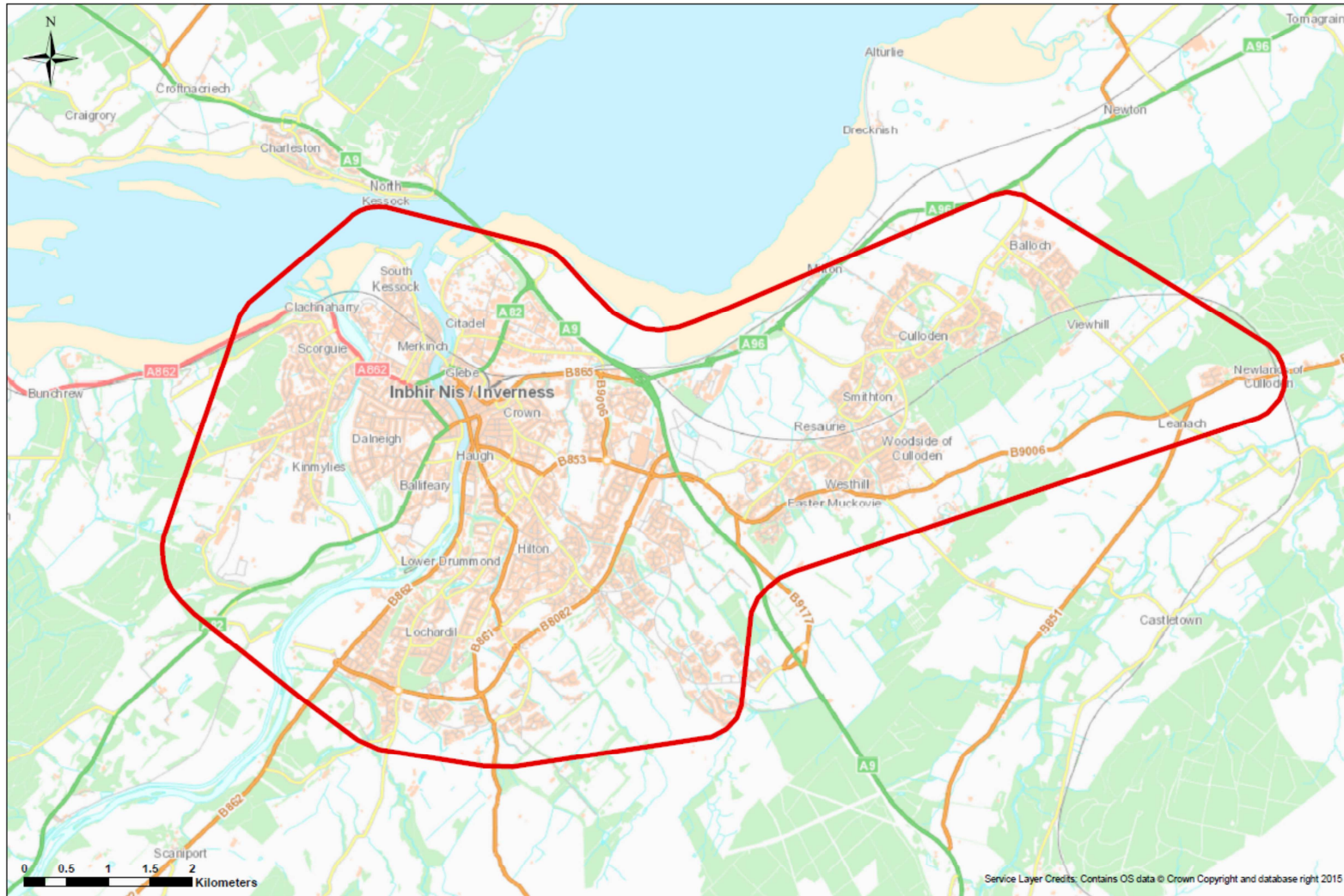
The Statutory Quality Partnership Scheme which will be made under Section 3 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 as amended by the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 includes schedules covering the following:

SCHEDULES:

1. Area Map & Route Plans
2. Specified Facilities
3. Council / HITRANS Standards
4. Bus Operator Standards
5. Services Excluded from Agreement
6. Schedule of Local Services
7. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
8. Bus Operator Undertaking Form
9. Data Sharing Agreement
10. Governance

MAP OF SCHEME AREA

SCHEDULE 1



Inverness sQP Area

