

Item:  
**10**



## **Report to Partnership Meeting 22 April 2022**

### **RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY**

#### **Demand Responsive Transport App**

##### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To update Members on work by HITRANS to commission and deploy a demand responsive transport app that will help support the operation, booking and marketing of non-scheduled transport services across the Highlands and Islands.

##### **Background and Challenge**

A report was taken to HITRANS Partnership Meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021 outlining a proposal to procure a Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) smartphone app to help support the operation, booking and marketing of non-scheduled transport services across the Highlands and Islands.

While the cost of providing services has been increasing, the funding available has been reducing in recent years. This has meant that even without the increased challenges posed by Covid, the existing level of public transport and the model by which that is provided is becoming increasingly challenging.

The solution will seek to increase the utilisation of these services which have sometimes struggled to attract the anticipated level of passengers for a variety of reasons including period of operation, accessibility of vehicle but also for a number of issues which we feel can be addressed with a co-ordinated solution and new technology.

- Limited or no budgets to promote awareness of them locally let alone to visitors to the area who might be interested in using them.
- The flexibility of the service makes them difficult to promote via many standard websites developed for scheduled services
- Many require journeys to be booked at least 24 hours in advance which removes the opportunity for passengers to use them for anything other than pre-planned journeys
- Coordination of the services is manually based which reduces the ability for efficiencies to be made
- There is no consistency of marketing or branding making it difficult for brand awareness to be developed.

##### **Progress Update**

The February Partnership Meeting considered an update on the project including details of the award of the Digital DRT System contract to Liftango on an initial three-year contract with the option to extend for up to another three years on a rolling 12 month basis.

# Liftango's DRT Platform

The diagram illustrates the Liftango's DRT Platform architecture, divided into three main components:

- USER APPLICATION:** Represented by two smartphones. It is a passenger application for booking trips, payment, visual of where the bus is, and communication between driver and passenger.
- OPERATIONS PLATFORM:** Represented by a computer monitor. It provides a real-time view of the whole bus fleet, passenger details, and location of vehicles and pick-ups. It also offers an immediate view for data analysis and customer request management.
- DRIVER PLATFORM:** Represented by a smartphone. It shows the next pick-ups/drop offs and uses Google maps for real-time traffic reporting.

The app will:

- Provide a single point where locals and visitors will be able to book a number of different non-scheduled transport services through the one app.
- Provide both the passenger and operator with the information on the vehicles position and individual journeys in real-time with passengers informed if their service has been delayed.
- Enable services to be more efficiently utilised especially where there is more than one vehicle involved in providing a service.
- Includes features such as driver duty management and extensive reporting modules.
- API to facilitate integration of the solution with the HITRANS GO-HI MaaS platform.

Progress is being made on the identification of services where the DRT system can be rolled out with significant engagement underway with partner Councils and transport operators. The first deployment of the system will take place in May in the Speyside operational area of the Dial M for Moray / Moray Connect DRT service. This soft launch will not initially be passenger facing but allows a thorough operational test of every aspect of the system with Moray Council acting as both the operator and the passenger throughout the test phase.

Following approval to recruit a Project Officer to support the delivery of the Digital DRT programme Rebecca Purvis was appointed to this new role taking up the post on 11 April.

## Risk Register

### RTS Delivery

Impact - Positive

Comment – Local bus services support a number of RTS priorities relating to Public Transport and access to employment, education, healthcare and social inclusion.

### Policy

Impact - Positive

Comment – HITRANS report on the Rural Bus Service Support and Funding (March 2021) sets out the variety of challenges facing local bus services not just in the Highland and Islands but

across rural Scotland. One of the actions it identified was the 'Investigation of the potential for more regional collaboration on Public Transport and DRT management and operations.'

#### Financial

Impact – Neutral

Comment - HITRANS has successfully applied for a range of external funding to support the procurement and roll out of the app over the next 3 years.

#### Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment – Local Bus services help improve access to many of the most vulnerable groups within the area and also provide what can be described as a lifeline service to those communities where the local bus service is the only form of public transport available.

#### **Recommendation:**

Members are invited to:

1. Note the report

**Report by:** Rebecca Purvis

**Designation:** Project Officer – Digital and DRT

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> April 2022