

Report to Partnership Board 7th November 2025

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Demand Responsive Transport App – ‘Moove Flexi / m.connect’

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides members with an update on the Demand Responsive Transport App being deployed by HITRANS and partners to help support the operation, booking and marketing of non-scheduled transport services across the Highlands and Islands.

BACKGROUND

HITRANS awarded mobility software developer, Liftango an initial 3year contract to deploy a DRT platform consisting of a user application, operators platform and a driver platform in 2021. This contract has enabled the development and deployment of the Moove Flexi app <https://www.mooveflexi.co.uk/> and equivalent m.connect app by Moray Council that supports their council wide on demand and scheduled network.

http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_148117.html

The purpose of the project and deployment of the app was to:

- Provide a single point where locals and visitors would be able to book a number of different non-scheduled transport services throughout the HITRANS region
- 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.

PROGRESS UPDATE

The contract with Liftango has been extended until December 2027. A summary of the services involved and work to date for each Local Authority is as follows:

Moray

Moray Council utilise the Liftango contract but opted to develop a tailored version of the app to align with the rebrand of their council wide on demand flexible bus service to m.connect (formerly Dial M for Moray). Moray's m.connect service operates 14 vehicles across Moray using a zonal based fare structure. The service was fully launched through the m.connect app in May 2023. Since then, use of m.connect has been increasing steadily and positive feedback has been received. m.connect has been expanding their operations in 2025 introducing a new on-demand Saturday service in Buckie

and Keith, starting 10 May 2025. Consultation is currently taking place between Moray Council and Liftango on future improvements to m.connect. Please see appendix 1 for passenger data.

Highland

As part of the Connecting Communities Transport Project, the Garve and District Development Company have acquired a CT service operated with a 9-seater vehicle. They launched their operation in March and have seen a steady number of passengers since. Please see appendix 1 for passenger data. Liftango are working with the operator to explore improvements to the app's features to better meet community needs and potentially offer new booking options, such as private hire.

Further engagement with the Highland council will take place to reintroduce and attract additional operators to the Liftango platform. HITRANS intends to meet with members of the Council's transport team to facilitate a collective meeting with DRT operators in the region. The recent and successful launches of other services will be used to showcase and promote the benefits of the app.

Argyll and Bute

West Coast Motors have successfully integrated with HITRANS Liftango system and launched services on the platform in May 2025. The service is branded as WestGo and covers the area of Dunoon and Campbeltown (<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/public-transport/timetables-directory/timetable/westgo-bus-travel-demand>). After a successful launch in the summer WestGo continues to see strong passenger numbers and have been very responsive with feeding back to both HITRANS and Liftango (see App. 1).

Orkney

A major focus of Moove Flexi in 2025 has been work to on board DRT services within the Orkney Islands. HITRANS and Liftango have been working with each of the operators to provide training and equipment to begin using the platform. South Ronaldsay and Sanday have launched their operations and Stronsay are currently in the final stages of testing with the intent to launch as soon as possible (see App. 1).

North Ronaldsay and Shapinsay are both in the initial setup stage, and have meetings scheduled with Liftango before the end of the year to outline next steps. Additionally, the Isle of Hoys DRT service have confirmed their involvement in the project and are currently going through training with Liftango, aiming for an early 2026 launch.

HITRANS has been working with the Liftango team to improve the overall user interface of the app to improve customers experience using materials such as images and FAQ's provided by the DRT operators of Orkney. This work is also in progress for other local authority areas.

Western Isles

Discussions with the Council have identified services that could benefit from the deployment of the system, including on Barra and Benbecula. Further conversations are required with the local authority and operator to bring the services on to the system. The expansion of services within other island contexts will be used as a platform to demonstrate the benefits the app can provide.

Promotion and marketing

HITRANS have been working with the Community Transport Association to identify opportunities to promote the app to prospective community transport operators within the region. Data and feedback from operators currently using the system will continue to be shared with CTA members to encourage participation. WestGo have promotional material they have been using to promote their new service and we have incorporated that within Moove Flexi app. The newly redesigned HITRANS website will also be used for promoting the launch of new services and officers will seek to utilise funding from the People and Place programme to further support as appropriate.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact - Positive

Comment – The provision of local bus services utilising MooveFlexi and M.connect support a number of RTS priorities relating the 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 Highlands 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.' HITRANS Regional Bus Strategy will consider how technology can further support local bus services going forward.

Financial

Impact – Neutral

Comment – HITRANS has successfully received a range of external funding to support the roll out and maintenance of the MooveFlexi app until December 2027.

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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to:

1. Note the report
2. Consider other on demand bus services that may benefit from the deployment of the app

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