

The pocket timetable's back... in an app on your smartphone - Ranald Robertson

Many of us will have happy memories of navigating our way round the Highlands and Islands on public transport using a pocket timetable which was the best information then available.

[By Ranald Robertson](#)

Traditional products such as the Freedom of Scotland Travelpass have long facilitated the bringing together of journeys by different modes. More recently strong advocacy from the Mobility as a Service Scotland group persuaded the Scottish Government to set up a development fund so that Scotland might showcase achievement in this developing field, and HITRANS was successful in its bid to the first round which has given rise to the GoHi app – a reinvention of this joy in modern form.

HITRANS set requirements that using smartphones or desktop devices, there should be an ability to book and pay for multiple modes. By enabling this to be done in a single online transaction, integrated ticketing should take the hassle out of joining up the separate legs, and a hybrid model would work also for business travellers, matching the straightforwardness of just jumping into their company car and thus offering a really sustainable alternative.

The first phase brought together several starting-points, including developing the MaaS platform, integrating together Moray's Dial M DRT booking and payment, Inverness's public eBike dock system, Car Clubs, bus, rail and air. GoHi achieved in its first four months over 900 unique downloads. The user is faced with a choice of ways to find their best travel options including using nearby modes, the offer of a full range of multimodal options or being put in touch directly with individual operators. Bus coverage started with Stagecoach, but now independent operators are being onboarded with new options such as DRT and a renewed need to learn local requirements.

Geography is a challenge, but the app must remove barriers by offering decent choices on a single platform which includes harnessing "last mile" modes for the convenience of business travellers. The inclusion of Northlink includes the new dimensions of booking a cabin or access to the Magnus Lounge. To support tourism in the Highlands the app can also be used to find hotels, restaurants and other useful facilities including ATMs.

A second phase embraces a rural and island focus for DRT booking and payment, public ebike and folding bike dock systems, electric and extended car clubs, with rewards to incentivise regular users, ehubs, ITSO integration and marketing and promotional activities. Electric vehicles will be rolled out to car clubs, and ITSO alignment will allow travel perks and options such as parents topping up ebike provision.

HITRANS has assembled a strong team that includes specialists including FOD Mobility Group whose Mobilio solution powers GoHi, Proxismart, Arcadis, IBI Group and Skedgo, with the University of Leeds providing monitoring and evaluation leadership. The GoHi team has had to take instabilities such as those associated with the pandemic in its stride as it seeks a level of resilience planning that persuades businesses to move all their travel planning onto the app. Fares available in the platform are drawn from a range of sources offering real convenience rather than just majoring on the lowest cost available.

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