

# GoSEStran MaaS project Final Report



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# Foreword by Councillor Colin Davidson, Chair, SEStran



I am delighted to introduce this report on the GoSEStran project, one of the five MaaS pilots throughout Scotland funded by Transport Scotland's MaaS Investment Fund. Despite all the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, the pilots have, in different ways, tested whether the digital enhancement of travel options via mobility-as-a-service tools can help to encourage people into more sustainable forms of transport.

This objective sits well with policies in NTS2 and our own <u>Regional Transport Strategy</u>, not least the desire to cut car kilometres by 20%. Our pilot has also shown that more general themes such as addressing inequality and reducing transport poverty can be helped by MaaS.

One aspect I would emphasise in relation to the pilot is the successful collaborations that our officers have had with the various partners, contributing greatly to the project's positive outcomes. The participation of East Lothian Council in promoting and sharing the app was crucial, as well as their input in designing the Demand Responsive Transport service. Early joint working with Tactran in sharing the licence for the tech support has led to the prospect of greater future collaboration in the Integrated Mobility Partnership.

However, the expertise provided by our project partners Prentice of Haddington, Fuse Mobility Ltd and The Routing Company has also shown that private and public sector collaboration can bring rewards when approached in the right manner. I would like to express my thanks to SEStran's own officers, but also our partners as well as our project managers Mott McDonald, legal advisers Anderson Strathern and monitoring and evaluation consultants Ansons for their contributions to the project's success.

Ultimately the GoSEStran pilot is just that – a pilot. However, I hope that the lessons learned in the course of it will be of use more broadly across Scotland and beyond in informing the future of digital transport in general, and MaaS in particular.

# 1. Executive Summary

# Background: The MaaS Investment Fund and SEStran's bid

The GoSEStran MaaS pilot was one of 5 pilots funded by Transport Scotland to trial Mobility as a Service (MaaS) in different geographies and contexts throughout the country. The other 4 are described in Section 2.1.

Building on a solid policy and evidence base which included the emerging RTS, and several studies commissioned by SEStran in January 2020, a restricted funding award meant that GoSEStran's focus was on a pilot integrated journey planner, available by a mobile phone app, centered on the East Lothian area. Joint work with East Lothian Council had identified an opportunity for a MaaS app of this nature to provide a digital overlay for the Council's network of Journey Hubs, which sought to physically bring together different travel modes.

The pilot's principal objectives were:

- Investigating whether a MaaS tool of this nature could help address one of the Fund's key themes of transport poverty in a rural context.
- > Exploring links between MaaS and a linked Digital DRT bus service.

Following the success of the resubmitted bid, SEStran formed a working group composed of themselves, East Lothian Council, Fuse Mobility Ltd., the tech providers, and Tactran, with whom SEStran shared the software licence for the digital platform.

# In Project: towards development of a fully-fledged MaaS system

Partnership working was the key to the success of this pilot. The input from the various stakeholders involved, including the collaboration, help in marketing and promotion, and feedback ensured resources could be allocated correctly.

# What has the project achieved? Tech innovations

The GoSEStran app successfully integrated various transport modes, including a new demand-responsive bus service (DRT), and highlighted the park & ride locations, EV charging locations and the Journey (also known as Mobility) hub locations across the region. Achieving this involved a degree of tech innovation – particularly in finding ways to short circuit the data standard problem (see paragraph 3.3.4).

# Formal Monitoring and Evaluation Outcomes

At the time of finalising this report (December 2023) there are 3600 users on the app. The formal monitoring and evaluation took place in June 2023, so things have continued to progress, but the results discussed in this report are still relevant.

# Building towards the future

SEStran and Tactran have worked closely together to develop an established MaaS platform and four successful apps throughout the two GoSEStran and ENABLE projects funded from the MaaS Investment Fund: GoSEStran, GoNHS, My D&A, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. To share the experiences and lessons learnt, the Integrated Mobility Partnership was launched. Officers continue to encourage other partners to become involved, such as the local authorities in the SEStran and Tactran region, neighbouring RTPS, and other private sectors such as Universities, NHS Boards, or tourist destinations. MaaS can be scalable to share licence costs and reduce the resources input for a successful platform.

# **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The various lessons that were learnt during the pilot are described in detail throughout the report. GoSEStran has highlighted the importance of public sector involvement of MaaS, or a similar platform to ensure the focus remains on sustainable objectives and the value of the data collected, including popular origins & destinations, time of travel, mode of travel to help assess the current patronage demand and availability on the transport network.

From a user's perspective, there is benefit in the one app that covers a geographical area as journeys often do not remain within boundaries. To encourage a shift to sustainable modes, the alternatives need to be seen to be as efficient and attractive as the private car, so it is important to highlight the multi-modal options.

Future work with the Integrated Mobility Partnership will continue to explore the potential of multi-party funded business models for MaaS.

# 2. Background: The MaaS Investment Fund and SEStran's bid

## The MaaS Investment Fund

The GoSEStran MaaS pilot was one of 5 pilots funded by Transport Scotland to trial Mobility as a Service (MaaS) in different geographies and contexts throughout the country. The other 4 were:

- Go-Hi led by HITRANS, the pilot looked to integrate multiple journey modes in the context of the Highlands of Scotland, where the more usual forms of public transport (bus and train) are supplemented by inter-island flights and ferry services.
- GetGo based in Dundee, this project focused on travel to events in and around the city.
- St Andrews MaaSterplan led by St Andrews, the pilot proposed to bring new travel modes into the town in the context of a rural hinterland, and the creation of a new campus at Guardbridge.
- Tactran SEStran's sister Regional Transport Partnership to the north ran three pilots from the same digital platform:
  - GoNHS, a web-based app based initially on appointments for a single clinic in Perth Royal Infirmary, and later rolled out to all clinic appointments in the Tayside Health Board area.
  - My D&A, an app designed for staff and students of Dundee and Angus College.
  - Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (LLTNP), designed for visitors to the park.

All of the pilots regularly shared knowledge with each other and the wider transport community in Scotland via regular events organised by MaaS Scotland, including an annual Conference. However, as this report will detail, there was particularly close working between the SEStran and Tactran projects.

#### SEStran's initial bid and subsequent funding award

When the second round of bidding for the MaaS Investment Fund was announced in late 2020, the prospect of running a MaaS pilot fitted well with SEStran's policy aspirations for the region.

# 2.1.1 Policy and evidence base

At the time of the bid, the extant Regional Transport Strategy for SEStran was the 2015 – 2025 refresh of the original 2008 – 2023 Strategy.<sup>1</sup> However, in June 2020, SEStran published a Main Issues Report in response to the then emerging National Transport Strategy 2. This identified as one of the key opportunities for the region 'the benefits of mobile data, including improved journey planning and MaaS.'

In addition, in January 2020 SEStran published three linked studies, funded by the Transport Scotland Low Emission Zone Public Transport Provision Fund. These were:

- The Mobility Hubs Strategic Study;
- The Park and Ride Strategic Study; and
- The Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) Study.

All three studies fed into the shaping of the bid to the MaaS Investment Fund.

# 2.1.2 Assembling the Partnership and the Call for Partners

In December 2020, SEStran launched a Call for Partners for the MaaS Scotland bid, seeking potential partners both amongst the bus operators in the region, community transport operators, and commercial MaaS and DDRT tech providers. A total of 29 responses were received: 19 tech providers, 8 transport providers including Scotrail, bus operators, community transport and taxi firms, and one other (Bus Users Scotland).

SEStran took the view that, at the stage of assembling a consortium for a bid, it was not appropriate to carry out a full procurement process. No funding was confirmed. The proposed pilot was not at that stage fully formed and was subject to further discussions with constituent local authorities. The Call for Partners process was not intended to replace formal procurement, but it was helpful in assessing the compatibility of tech providers with likely partners in the existing transport ecosystem.

With the assistance of Mott MacDonald, who had been procured to assist with the bid's preparation, the expressions of interest were assessed and graded in line with several agreed criteria.

Discussions with constituent authorities continued in parallel. SEStran considered that East Lothian Council, with its well advanced development of Mobility Hubs (labelled by them as Journey Hubs to avoid connotations of the Hubs being mainly or solely for people with disability issues) was a prime candidate for development of the MaaS concept, with Fife Council as an optional add-on in terms of rural DRT operation in the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Both have now been replaced by the approved RTS 2035, which is also supportive of MaaS and DRT in the region.

St Andrews area (Fife had at this stage already carried out a simulation with a potential tech partner of how DDRT might work for their Go-Flexi service).

# 2.1.3 Submission of initial bid – February 2021

By the time of the submission of the initial bid, the policy and evidence base indicated an initial pilot should be based on a 'core' of East Lothian, and Musselburgh in particular, with optional add ons of DRT in North East Fife and, potentially, elsewhere.

The proposed MaaS solution focused on two main themes:

- > The lack of physical and digital integration of transport across the region.
- > Transport poverty across the region.

The bid was built on research that demonstrated the importance of a 'hierarchy of need' to deliver MaaS, in which a mobility system that went beyond the private car cannot be delivered if the lower needs (layers) are not present. In this context, the MaaS solution was informed by other work by SEStran, and the local authorities aimed at addressing the lower layers of 'infrastructure and vehicles' and 'mobility services' to tackle the higher layers of 'transaction' and 'information services.'

Other research showed that transport poverty is a high risk in areas with (relatively) low income, high car availability and low access to essential services by public transport. Those at the highest risk of transport poverty were those living in accessible rural areas, a definition which covers a large part of the SEStran region, including East Lothian.

The Musselburgh Journey Hub had been developed by East Lothian using SEStran grant funding through the EU SHARE-North programme. This award was also informed by the Mobility Hub strategic study, referred to above, another part of the implementation of the SHARE-North programme. The stakeholder engagement, carried out as part of the Study, had identified MaaS providers as a key partner in the successful running of a Journey Hub.

The Musselburgh Journey Hub is centered around Brunton Hall, already a physical interchange for a number of connections by bus, train, taxi, and car. Changes to transform it into a formal Journey Hub include (at time of writing):

- Signage and marketing in Brunton Hall.
- > Posters and markers on-street (Totems still in production).
- > Electric vehicle ChargePoint's for car club vehicles.
- Bike racks.
- > Installation of two electronic real-time information displays.
- > On-street e-bike hire (also funded through SEStran).
- Bike repair station.
- Parcel drop-off and collection.

Other works are planned, as well as a roll out of other Hubs at Wallyford Park and Ride, Tranent, Pencaitland and Prestonpans. Wallyford, in particular, offers good opportunities with a railway station, a variety of bus services, taxis, bike parking, and 300 parking spaces. It is sited at the eastern edge of Musselburgh and will be linked to Brunton Hall and Musselburgh town centre via a high-quality cycle route in due course.

The bid also detailed how SEStran, and its partners would explore and apply nimble procurement and governance solutions, and how the project fitted with NTS priorities.

	Regional MaaS "plug and play" platform	East Lothian Journey Hubs	Rural DRT	Open Learning Network and MaaS Playbook
	NTS Priorities	i		
Reduces Inequalities	√.	√.	√.	√.
Takes Climate action	√.	√.	å	√.
Helps Deliver Inclusive Economic Growth	√.	√.	√.	√.
Improves our Health and Wellbeing	√.	å	√.	√.
Othe	er Government P	riorities		
Mode Shift	√.	√.	å	√.
Promotes the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy	√.	√.	√.	√.
Promotes the Sustainable Investment Hierarchy	√.	å		√.
Digital Innovation in Public Transport	å		√.	√.

Table 1 Which solution element address Scottish Government Agendas

In summary, then, the bid proposed a digital overlay to East Lothian's physical implementation of journey hubs, in an area characterised by evidence of transport poverty, particularly in the hinterland of the county's coastal settlements. The DRT service in East Lothian connected to this digital overlay by serving outlying areas. Optional add ons including DRT trials elsewhere in the region, with the first of these being North East Fife, were included in this initial bid.

In June 2021, Transport Scotland confirmed that the SEStran-led bid had been placed third in the second tranche of funding. This meant that there was insufficient funding for the whole project. However, Transport Scotland offered to help to co-create a bid that would fit the available finances.

# 2.1.4 <u>Submission of revised bid September 2021</u>

Following further discussions with Transport Scotland and partners, a revised bid was submitted in September 2021. This revision, subject to a slight uplift in the figure originally available, was approved informally by Transport Scotland in December 2021.

The sum requested in the original bid was in the region of  $\pounds 600,000 - a$  sizeable chunk of the total  $\pounds 1m$  on offer in the second tranche of the Fund. The revised bid was accepted at a figure of  $\pounds 212,400 - nearly$  a third of the original.

Although this reduction clearly had an impact on what could be achieved, there is a strong sense that it encouraged all partners to take an innovative approach to delivery of what had been planned. These innovations included:

- Three-way discussions with Fuse and Tactran which led to a shared licence fee for the digital MaaS platform between the two RTPs.
- Fuse's innovative approach to integrating DRT routes into the platform's digital 'back office.' This saved costly API level integration, meaning future cost savings whereby The Routing Company's relevant DRT operations, in the Borders as well as East Lothian, were integrated at minimal expense.
- In a general sense, a close working relationship with the tech provider which encouraged creative solutions to improvements to the app: this has been since reflected in the development of a 'roadmap' methodology for proposed improvements and enhancements to the app which helps to identify when different strands of work are best brought together to achieve time and cost savings.

Despite the changed nature of the bid, the policy objectives of the pilot remained the same, namely, to pilot the use of MaaS technology in a rural area, adding a digital overlay to East Lothian's physical Journey Hubs; and to trial MaaS and DRT solutions together to see if they could be complementary.

# 2.1.5 Post award contract negotiations

The consortium which would have followed from success in the original bid would have consisted of SEStran, Fuse, two DRT tech providers, two bus operators and two local authorities (East Lothian and Fife). With the reduction in funding, the optional DRT pilot in North East Fife could no longer be funded, which meant Fife Council and one of the DRT tech providers dropped out of the consortium.

The original concept was to bring all parties – now including Tactran, with whom the Fuse platform licence was to be shared – into a collaboration agreement which set out what was required of each party, regulating the transfer of money in return for work done, whilst emphasising the collaborative nature of the pilot.

However, further discussions between Liftango, the preferred DRT tech provider for the East Lothian DRT, and Prentice of Haddington Ltd., the bus operator, indicated that the DRT pilot could not be made to work – at least not with Liftango's software. This was a setback, and at that stage Prentice decided to trial their own flexible DRT route, the 109DRT, and engage their own tech provider. All involved parted on good terms, and SEStran continued to maintain contact with Prentice to assess how the trial route was progressing.

Another unexpected benefit of the cost reduction exercise was to prompt the offer from Fuse to allow the same software as a service (SaaS) licence to be shared between Tactran and SEStran. The technology was such that the digital 'platform,' or 'back office' was the same for the GoSEStran app and Tactran's three apps. Although there was an additional hosting fee for each app, the main platform licence fee accordingly covered all four apps.

There was then a period of negotiation on the terms of the Software as a Service (SaaS) licence, as well as the Offer of Grant for the MIF funding from Transport Scotland. Key issues to be resolved included:

- Data protection what data needed to be shared, and therefore covered by agreement, and which party was the data processor and which the data controller for the app.
- Intellectual Property who owned the IP generated as a result of the project, and what would become capable of being the basis of a new procurement when the contract ended.
- Following on from this, how Transport Scotland's standard grant conditions providing for all products of the funding to be owned by the Crown fitted in the context of intellectual property.

SEStran engaged its external solicitors, Anderson Strathern, to assist with the legal drafting. In the event the concept of a collaboration agreement was decided to be too complex and onerous in the context of a working relationship between public sector bodies over the length of a pilot. Having specialist legal advice on the licence as well as the grant conditions proved to be very helpful. It did, however, increase the overall cost to the project, with those costs being borne by SEStran.

One issue affecting MaaS and similar digital solutions in Scotland and other jurisdictions has been the difficulty of concluding legal agreements quickly and easily. Whilst the process undergone in this pilot also took time, this was partly out of a desire to explore different ways of documenting the relationships between the parties – particularly the abortive work on the collaboration agreement.

At the same time the SEStran team were keen to create contractual models that could be reused for similar projects. The success of this approach was borne out when the DDRT operator, The Routing Company, was engaged and a version of the SaaS Licence was drafted and agreed at some pace. Similarly, the more recent contract extension, and subsequent renewal, were quickly and easily concluded.

## 2.2.6 Key lessons learnt

- The submission of the bid was extremely resource intensive. As well as internal SEStran resources, Mott MacDonald were engaged and were invaluable in pulling together the main bid document.
- The limited time period of the funding (as with most public funding, it was intended to be spent in one financial year) and the competitive nature of the funding bid process meant it would have been difficult to carry out a conventional procurement. However, the Call for Partners process was useful in assessing the best match possible between the various public sector partners and the private sector tech providers.
- The award of limited funding forced innovation and helped to drive down initial cost estimates.
- Engaging lawyers early in the process and working with them to produce sets of terms that were mutually agreed between private and public sector partners, cut down on timescales in subsequent rounds of contractual negotiations. However, the additional cost should be factored into future projects of this nature.

# 3. In Project: towards development of a fully-fledged MaaS system

# Partnership Working

## 3.1.1 <u>Relationships with the consortium partners</u>

As mentioned previously, a consortium was developed for the project which included SEStran, Tactran, Fuse Mobility (the MaaS tech providers), Mott MacDonald (as the consultant project managers), East Lothian Council, and Ansons Consulting (consultant for the monitoring and evaluation). The consortium had fortnightly meetings throughout the duration of the project for updates to the programme timeline, risk register and ensure any feedback or concerns were shared and discussed.

Once SEStran had procured for the new DRT service in East Lothian, the successful tech company The Routing Company, and the bus operator Prentice of Haddington also became a partner in the GoSEStran project and attended the consortium meetings. Having ongoing conversations was particular useful for the tech providers for the DRT and the MaaS platform to discuss their ongoing work to ensure that both systems benefitted for any work carried out.

# 3.1.2 Outreach: developing relationships with local partners

SEStran were lucky to have a local authority involved in the project who were already prirotising public transport, were willing to trial new things and saw the potential in a MaaS app. Project Officers from East Lothian Council attended and contributed to all the stakeholder meetings.

One of the main reasons that GoSEStran was successful in gaining users was due to all the help provided by the stakeholders in promoting the app.

# 3.1.3 Tactran

SEStran worked closely with all the successful MIF applicants running their own MaaS pilots, however had a particularly close relationship with the neighbouring Regional Transport Partnership (RTP), Tactran. Tactran and SEStran shared platform licence costs, which allowed the GoSEStran and Enable pilots to be extended. The two RTPs also met regularly throughout the pilots to share experiences and lessons on wider topics such as marketing and evaluation.

*"Working in partnership with SEStran, our neighbouring Regional Transport Partnership, has allowed Tactran's ENABLE project to be extended through sharing costs and the* 

licence of the platform. Collaborative working amongst officers has allowed lessons and experiences to be shared to help the MaaS platform develop and improve. Officers at Tactran and SEStran continue to work closely together with the launch of the Integrated Mobility Partnership."

Mark Speed, Partnership Director, Tactran

#### 3.1.4 MaaS Scotland

MaaS Scotland is a network for the Scottish MaaS eco-system and facilitates initiatives that will help deliver the benefits of the MIF pilots, to put Scotland at the leading edge of delivery and the global home for MaaS development.

SEStran appreciated the advice offered by MaaS Scotland throughout the pilot, and it was useful to attend the organised events with the other MIF pilots to share experiences. The Special Interest Groups provide a platform for those interested in MaaS across the UK and even Europe to discuss common challenges and ways to ensure the success of individual pilots, but also adapt to changes to what is understood as the MaaS concept.

Dr Alastair McInroy (CEO of Technology Scotland) stated that;

"GoSEStran is an excellent illustration of collaborative innovation, bringing together public and private sector stakeholders to deliver a digital platform that will support policy areas beyond simply transport. The project has provided a valuable contribution to the evidence base required for future MaaS delivery and upscale in Scotland, bringing fantastic insight into how MaaS can support not just multi-modal travel but also how it can be used to integrate mobility hubs and demand responsive travel. We look forward to watching the platform develop and grow in the coming years."

#### 3.1.5 The European dimension - PriMaaS

From August 2019, SEStran was a Partner involved in the EU PriMaaS project, which aimed to prioritise low carbon mobility services for improving the accessibility of citizens. The main vision was to promote the integration of traditional collective transport modes with personal and innovative ones by creating equitable mobility services truly focused on citizens' needs.

Within PriMaaS, SEStran were able to increase inter-organisational collaboration with other Partners and build trust amongst key stakeholders to share learnings of policies and instruments to ensure that the more comfortable and affordable travel options for any individual also have minimum carbon levels.

SEStran were able to take the lessons and experiences from the meetings and conferences during the PriMaaS project and transfer it across to the GoSEStran project. SEStran hosted a two-day PriMaaS event in Edinburgh in April 2022. The final conference for the PriMaaS project was attended by all partners in Portugal in May 2023, where SEStran were able to promote the successes and lessons learnt from the GoSEStran pilot.

# 3.1.6 Consultants

The GoSEStran project was very resource intensive, and the project was so successful due to the help provided by various consultants.

Mott MacDonald: SEStran appointed Mott MacDonald at the beginning of the project, to help with project management which also included providing assistance with the bid process. Motts also helped SEStran to monitor and update the work programme, risk register and were key in helping to organise the two open learning network events that occurred during the initial pilot period.

Ansons: SEStran lacked the internal resources to conduct a thorough monitoring and evaluation assessment, so appointed Ansons to plan and complete a formal assessment of the GoSEStran project. This included an analysis of the data provided by Fuse on the app, a survey amongst users, focus groups with users, non-user surveys and interviews of relevant stakeholders. Ansons provided a full report of their findings from the evaluation, which can be found in the appendices, but key conclusions are discussed in section 6 of this report.

# 3.1.7 Key lessons learnt

- Partnership working has been key to the success of GoSEStran throughout the pilot. The advice and help offered by the various partners has helped to maximise resources and reduce duplication of efforts.
- > A bigger consortium will help create bigger economies of scale.

#### Marketing

SEStran budgeted a total of £20,000 from the MIF fund for marketing. This covered the marketing efforts for the GoSEStran MaaS app, as well as the new DRT service in East Lothian. SEStran had limited resources available for marketing, so relied on the help from various stakeholders including Fuse Mobility, East Lothian Council and Hillside design agency.

# 3.1.7 Marketing GoSEStran

To save time and cost, SEStran decided to use the existing brand for GoSEStran to avoid delaying the marketing further. Hillside design agency was appointed by SEStran to help create eye-catching materials to spread awareness of the GoSEStran app. Various posters, leaflets, and social media materials were designed with the objective of focusing on simple messaging to help people understand what the app is, and why they should download it. SEStran were able to ask Tactran for guidance about what marketing methods they experienced the most uptake from, which enabled SEStran to prioritise methods.

Throughout the pilot various promotional tools and activities were trialled to encourage the increase of the number of users on GoSEStran. This included posters at bus stops across East Lothian, adverts in the local newspaper and radio station, digital marketing on social media and various promotion conducted at Queen Margaret University (QMU). SEStran were able to track how successful each tool was due to the ability to track the number of scans of the specific QR codes on each tool.

The table below shows the various marketing methods undertaken and allows a comparison of value for money, i.e., how successful each campaign was with the resulting number of users compared to the total cost.

Marketing Action	Value for money
Posters at bus stops	High
ELC social media & website posts	High
Open Learning Network	High
Scottish Open Golf promotion	High
Promotion at Queen Margaret University (QMU)	Medium
Attending events at QMU	Medium
SEStran social media & website posts	Medium
Advert in The List	Low
Radio advert (East Coast Fm)	Low
Leaflet drop to resident houses	Low
East Lothian Courier	Low

#### Table 2 Value for money on marketing actions

## 3.1.8 Marketing the 109-DRT service

The promotional methods for the new DRT service required more specific efforts, due to the nature of the service only serving a set area of the population and for the service to be successful in gaining uptake of passengers likely requires a modal shift from private car use.

SEStran worked with Prentice, the bus operator, and East Lothian Council to understand the demographics of the service area to ensure that the marketing efforts reached the correct population likely to use the service.

Due to the term 'Demand Responsive Transport' being a new concept and term for many, SEStran had to find ways to overcome the issue of the residents in the area struggling to understand what or how the service worked. This included creating a 'how to video,' which aimed to explain to the public how to use the PINGO app to book the service.

#### 3.2.3 Key lessons learnt

- Start early in the project! In order to ensure the success of marketing efforts, it is best to create a marketing and comms plan early on the project. Due to change in personnel and limited resources, SEStran only started planning marketing efforts once the GoSEStran app was launched, which reduced time available for a promotional push.
- > Using existing branding saves time and resources.
- The 'cheaper' promotional efforts have proved to be the most successful, as the highest uptake has resulted from posters at bus stops. The priority should be on marketing efforts that focuses on the target users and population, rather than methods which may have a greater reach but less of an impact.
- SEStran has prioritised recruiting a comms officer, due to the experience of this pilot on the need to put resources into marketing and seeking future funding opportunities.
- Key simple messages are important for marketing, as many people are not aware what MaaS or Demand Responsive Transport is. It is vital to engage residents early in the pilots to check understanding and gain uptake of the service.
- Don't underestimate the power of word of mouth, especially for local new services such as the new 109-DRT service. Residents are more likely to listen and try new things if they have received advice or information from somebody they know or trust.
- This last point also applies to organisations. As Tactran also discovered in their project, Regional Transport Partnerships have very low public visibility, whereas local councils like East Lothian and employers or educational

centres like Queen Margaret University are trusted sources of information. East Lothian Council in particular were instrumental in the project's success.

#### The DRT Service

Demand Responsive Service is described as a flexible mode of shared transport focused on serving public demand that may be unsuited to conventional scheduled bus services. This report is specifically focusing on Digital Demand Responsive Service where automated scheduling and routing algorithms underpins DDRT and allows schemes to integrate into wider public transport network.

MaaS and DRT are different concepts, so it is not possible to compare the two in the evaluation process, but there is a positive correlation. MaaS is a digital platform to show users the different options to complete their journey by encouraging more sustainable modes, DRT is a new bus service that often requires a modal shift from privately owned vehicles so will take longer to see the benefits.

## 3.1.9 Initial discussions with other providers on the Prentice DRT 109 service

As set out above at 3.2.5, initial attempts to produce a working DRT trial with Liftango and Prentice of Haddington proved unsuccessful. Having gained traffic Commissioner consent for a DRT 'flexible' service, in April 2022 Prentice launched this on their own initiative. This service was initially bookable by phone and email only, although Prentice sought to bring in another tech provider to develop an app for the service at their own expense. Ultimately this also proved to be unsuccessful, so that the service ran with bookings being taken by phone and email only.

#### 3.1.10 Procurement of a new DRT service

With SEStran as the lead partner in the project, and East Lothian as public transport authority as well as provider of financial assistance to what is a supported bus service, a number of options existed as to how the tech provider for the new DRT service could be procured:

- The selected bus operator to procure the tech provider and receive a grant from SEStran.
- > East Lothian to procure the tech provider as public transport authority.
- East Lothian (or SEStran) to procure a joint bid for the service from a bus operator, on the understanding that a DDRT app would be made available to passengers (the bus operator procuring the tech provider).

SEStran procuring the tech provider.

After discussion, it was decided that SEStran would procure the tech provider, as the recipient of the funding and lead partner. The brief included the requirement that tenders should indicate which route was intended for the pilot, and a letter of support was to be obtained from the relevant bus operator.

Another crucial element in the procurement was ensuring that data flows were allowed to ensure all parties could assess ongoing performance of the trial. Access to the relevant data dashboard was given to SEStran as well as the bus operator and East Lothian. This allowed proper assessment of the trial's performance rather than relying on perceptions.

Due to the short timescale originally available for the pilot, several bus operators in the area decided not to participate in any of the bids. Prentice did offer letters of support to more than one bidder but indicated that the pilot would need to last a year. Changing a bus route to DRT involves notification to the Traffic Commissioner and a six-week period before it can commence – something which further restricted the time available to run the pilot.

The procurement produced considerable savings in terms of the original projected cost. These savings, along with a contribution from SEStran's own resources, allowed the DDRT pilot to be extended to a year.

The Routing Company were the successful bid, after a fair evaluation of all the tenders by a panel of four including officers from East Lothian Council.

#### 3.1.11 Post Contract negotiations and redesign

The 109-DRT service officially launched on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2023, after careful consideration of how the Routing Company could design the service to best suit the users' needs, whilst also considering Prentice's objectives as the bus operator. Weekly discussions occurred between SEStran, The Routing Company, East Lothian Council, and Prentice.

In the initial design of the service Prentice wished to incorporate the popular existing 109 service routes and times. The Routing Company were able to design the service so that the bus still made scheduled stops at the dedicated bus stops and times but ran as DRT the other available times. However, as time went on this proved to limit the trips that passengers were able to book on DRT due to the reduced operational time.

On 14<sup>th</sup> August 2023, the service went through a 'relaunch', where the scheduled stops were removed so the service became a full DRT service. The service runs Monday – Friday 09:00 to 17:00 with stops for driver breaks, and a school run midafternoon. This

limits the number of people who could utilize the service, as it does not run into the evenings or weekends.

Figure 1 below shows the area covered by the 109-DRT service in East Lothian since August. The 109-DRT service serves the local Community Hospital in Haddington, with an aim of improving public transport links to the surrounding rural areas such as the new housing development in Blindwells, or Glenkinchie whisky distillery. The aim is to focus on trips going to and from the Community Hospital and serve the rural communities that have no other public transport option.



Figure 1 Map of service area of the 109-DRT service in East Lothian

It became apparent that certain members of the population in the service area were hesitant about booking the service via the app. Prentice were able to utilize their existing booking phone line, email, and booking form available on the website which allowed those passengers to use the service and creating booking without the app. This may have been a factor in low take up of the app.

Bus operators are hesitant to become involved in DRT due to a variety of reasons but lack of funding to cover the mileage or offer a new vehicle is a crucial one. The funding

for this specific pilot only covered the technology for 9-month. For this pilot to be a success it relied on funding from SEStran to extend it to 12-month pilot, Prentice Coaches providing the call centre (£10,000 contributed from MIF fund), and as it is a supported service, East Lothian Council covering the cost to run the wheels on the ground. Operators across Scotland are currently under pressure for various reasons such as driver shortage, and still recovering patronage from COVID-19.

#### 3.1.12 Integration with GoSEStran and the data-standard problem

Fuse Mobility created the 'DRT back office,' which enabled the new DRT service to be linked to the GoSEStran app by a relatively simple expedient of the DRT tech provider sharing postcodes on a spreadsheet. These were then inputted to the 'back office,' allowing the DRT service – with a pass out link to the DRT PINGO app – to appear on GoSEStran.

This innovation, again created with a view to saving costs, avoided what has become known in the MaaS and DRT tech industry as the 'data standard problem,' whereby the exchange of APIs to allow integration of the DRT app has been slow and costly. In the context of the project, it saved in the region of  $\pounds$ 11,000 – and allowed quick and easy integration of other DRT services, including the Pingo services in the Borders.

#### 3.3.5 Key lessons learnt

- Tech enabled, on demand bus services are often seen as the 'solution' to problems for bus services in rural areas. However, the most successful rural DRT examples have been where money has been available to provide new, branded rolling stock to accompany the change to DDRT. The reality of bus operators in the post-Covid world with reducing levels of public subsidy, declining levels of patronage, increased fuel costs and driver shortages has been particularly challenging. Vehicle as well as tech funding may help to address part at least of these challenges.
- To provide a service that is accessible for all it is key to consider booking options, such as a booking phone line or email service as certain members of population may be unable or reluctant to book the service via a mobile phone application. The existence of these alternative options may limit the amount of usage of the app.
- There are a number of different ways to procure a DRT service. What is important is that the public sector body seeking to trial a new service – whether that is an RTP or a council – has access to the full amount of data needed to evaluate the service's success, and to contribute fully to discussions about redesign.

- It was useful in the procurement to get an indication of support from the relevant bus operator for particular tech providers. However, a weakness of the public sector funder/PTA procuring the tech provider is that there is then no direct contractual relationship between them and the bus operator. This was in part mitigated by the grant letter to the bus operator for call centre support, and existing strong relationships built up from good partnership working, between SEStran, the Council, and the operator.
- Procurement and service design takes time! This can often cause challenges with in-year funding pots. In reality, given the length of time taken to design the pilot, and considering that there has already been an in-pilot redesign, the minimum amount of time to run a DDRT pilot is 18 months, with a sixmonth procurement and design period and a year-long pilot.
- Because of time pressures the procurement was fairly short and focused. A longer procurement could, for example, allow for more detailed workshops between bidders and bus operators on the design of the service, as well as the potential to involve bus users including groups with protected characteristics being able to contribute to the service design.
- Unfortunately, the short overlap between the GoSEStran pilot and the DRT service particularly given the latter's teething problems means that little meaningful data has been produced on whether the two digital enhancements to transport work well together. There is some limited evidence of GoSEStran users being led to the DRT service. However, given the very rural character of the service, it is perhaps not surprising that initial results have been disappointing. An update on these results can be provided in the coming months.
- As outlined above, limited funding forced technical innovation and the creation of a digital 'back office' for DDRT operations in GoSEStran. This avoided the data standard problem which has been recognised internationally as one of the barriers to integrating DDRT services into MaaS.

# 3.1.6 Other DDRT pilots

There have been various DRT pilots trialled across the UK and globally. It is a new concept that it is still misunderstood by many. The particular benefits that a functioning DRT service could offer the public is undisputed, especially in rural areas which can help reduce transport poverty whilst reducing wasted mileage that timetabled services can experience.

CoMoUK conducted research into the current <u>DRT pilots in Scotland</u> to detail the potential DRT has to positively influence society as long as guidance is provided on procurement and regulations. There are many tech providers of DRT currently in operation running various pilots across the globe, but a lot of the work done is

fragmented, rather than working together to improve the chance of a successful DRT pilot in rural areas.

The integration of a DRT service into a MaaS platform or app has not been completed in many other areas due it being a new and emerging trend: it is tricky to accomplish, and other areas have not tried to do so. One issue is the data standard problem referred to above. At the date of drafting the report, there are only three other services globally with a DRT service integrated into a MaaS platform:

- The Mobility Stuttgart App Mobimeo
- Trip Planner Tips | RTD Denver
- <u>TravelEssex | Essex County Council (essexhighways.org)</u>

SEStran are pleased to be at the forefront of innovation by successfully integrating a new DRT service into a MaaS platform, which can help users see how the DRT service could link into the wider transport network to complete journeys that extend out of East Lothian. SEStran aim to continue working with the local authorities and explore funding opportunities to trial new DRT services across the region to further add to the experience and knowledge on this new potentially transformational concept, particularly focusing on the investigating option of linking DRT with workplaces and commuter travel.

#### Reprofiling funding and extending the pilot

Whilst mindful of the need for Transport Scotland to have fully evaluated all 5 pilots timeously, the savings made in certain areas – most notably the DRT budget through successful procurement – gave an opportunity to extend the pilot.

#### 3.1.7 Reprofiling MIF2 funding

Much of the funding was expended in line with budget expectations. However, the procurement of the DRT pilot, later than expected, gave an opportunity to extend the pilot overall. This was because a large element of the tech provider's financial requirement was set up costs which were payable irrespective of the length of the pilot.

Accordingly, in consultation with Transport Scotland, the GoSEStran pilot was extended from end March to end June 2023.<sup>2</sup> The DRT element of the pilot, meantime, runs from 6th March 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Now further extended to end March 2024 by Smarter Choices Smarter Places funding.

# 3.1.8 Contract flexibility

As mentioned above, the Licence Agreement with Fuse had been structured so that alterations such as a time extension – or indeed additional enhancements to the app – could be agreed by means of a simple bilateral change request being agreed. This made the extension of the Licence, and the execution of £11,000 worth of enhancements to the app (including bus numbers in the journey planner section and the ability to track car club and bike hire pass outs from interactive map) very easy, and quick, to document.

# 4. What has the project achieved?

#### Timeline and Innovations

Figure 2 shows the GoSEStran project timeline across the nine-month pilot period funded by Transport Scotland. SEStran made the decision to begin marketing efforts to encourage users on the app before it was fully developed due to it being a short pilot. The length of the pilot also resulted in the monitoring and evaluation surveys and interviews being conducted only a month after the DRT service was launched, and four months after the tech innovations were completed.



Figure 2 GoSEStran project timeline

Table 3 below lists the unique innovations in the GoSEStran app and explains how they have helped to create a unique MaaS app that users provide positive feedback about.

Innovation	Selling point
Real-time passenger information across	More reliable information to reduce
region	waiting times and manage expectations
Journey hub locations	As more local authorities look to
	introduce journey/mobility hubs into the

	area to link up public and active travel modes, users on the GoSEStran app are able to easily find the location through the map facility.
Park & ride locations	Shows users a viable (more sustainable) alternative route to incorporate public transport, rather than taking their private car for whole journey.
DRT integration	Links up DRT services into the wider transport network, to allow users to see other potential ways of completing their whole journey.

#### Achievement of objectives

In the original business case for the MIF fund, SEStran produced a 5-year plan for developing a regional MaaS solution. The carefully phased long and short-term plan for developing the platform, raising awareness and use includes:

a) Creation of SEStran MaaS Platform;

b) Integrating the MIF2 proposed Journey Hub and DRT pilot(s) into MaaS;

c) Integration of DRT services elsewhere across the region;

d) Expanding MaaS to cover modes primarily in the urban areas geographically adjacent to the pilot(s);

e) Full integration with neighbouring MaaS platforms (such as the Tactran area and the City of Dundee);

f) Full integration of Thistle Assistance Journey Planner;

g) Integration of Journey Hubs across the region.

SEStran can confirm we have succeeded beyond expectation and during the nine months pilot the first four points were met. SEStran continue to work well with Tactran and other Scottish regions with their own MaaS solutions, such as Nestrans. SEStran continue to pursue the launch of the Thistle Assistance Journey Planner and have already made connections between the two tech providers of the MaaS platform and Thistle Assistance Journey Planner to begin discussions on how the two can be integrated in the future.

The MaaS solution proposed by SEStran aimed to address all the NTS priorities, in the following order:

- reduces inequalities
- tackles climate action
- improves our health and wellbeing

- helps deliver inclusive economic growth

The new DRT service in East Lothian helps to tackle transport poverty in the rural areas of East Lothian which can provide transport to workplaces that might have been inaccessible by public transport previously, which can reduce inequality and deliver inclusive economic growth. As discussed in section 6, SEStran have collected data to show that the GoSEStran app has been successful in encouraging people to use more sustainable modes such as bus or train. This helps to achieve climate action as reducing the number of cars on the roads will reduce emissions.

As well as the NTS priorities, our project aimed to address other Scottish Government agenda(s) of relevance and importance, including:

- Modal shift
- Sustainable Travel Hierarchy
- Sustainable Investment Hierarchy
- Active/sustainable transport
- Digital innovation in PT

MaaS is a concept that helps address all the above points. By providing a digital asset that helps to link the local and national transport network it will make it more seamless and effortless for users and become a viable alternative to the private car.

# 5. Formal Monitoring and Evaluation Outcomes

#### The M & E Plan and methodology

Ansons Consulting Ltd was commissioned to develop and implement the monitoring and evaluation (M & E) report for the GoSEStran project.

The M & E report covers the period from programme inception in July 2022, to May 2023, and is attached as an appendix to this report.

# 5.1.1 Engaging the M & E Consultants

Ansons were engaged following a PCS quick quotes procedure in early July 2022. The procurement process had been started several months before, so that Ansons would be able to 'hit the ground running.' However, until the grant agreement and licence were signed, it was not possible to make the formal award.

#### 5.1.2 <u>Development of an M & E Plan</u>

Ansons were commissioned to:

- Review the project documentation and lead development of (i) refined objectives; (ii) appropriate indicators; (iii) a final data collection and monitoring plan; (iv) evaluation plan;
- Implement the agreed M & E plan, working with project partners and stakeholders as required to collect qualitative and quantitative data to assess the added value of the pilots, and the potential of MaaS and DRT as concepts to help achieve transport objectives.

# 5.1.3 Extension of budget and more qualitative M & E

As the project progressed, it became clear that further qualitative research would be useful, and the following change requests allowed extra budget to be reallocated towards M & E work:

- > November 2022 additional focus groups to be run, with a lengthier survey;
- > May 2023 addition of a non-user survey, and interviews with project team.

## 5.1.4 Key lessons learnt

- The initial budget for monitoring and evaluation proved to be a limitation. Fortunately, savings in other areas allowed more qualitative work to be carried out. This, however, still faced challenges in getting meaningful numbers of users to participate in surveys and focus groups – although, paradoxically, the non-user survey produced a healthy number of responses.
- It is very difficult to incentivise people to take part in surveys. MIF funding did not fund any of the incentives offered (Amazon vouchers, etc.) and funding for these came from SEStran's own resources.

#### Results from the M & E Outcomes: how did the project measure up?

A key question raised is how do you measure the success of a MaaS pilot? There are various possible approaches but ultimately, the data – both quantitative and qualitative – is what the project must rely on to evaluate its success and provide the platform to build on future projects of this nature. However, the data inevitably comes with caveats.

## 5.1.5 <u>Caveats: small numbers and other drawbacks</u>

Any monitoring and evaluation exercise can only be as good as the quality, and statistical significance of, the data it relies on. In this context, a focus group of only four individuals, and a survey response (26) of 2% of all users in the GoSEStran region, is less than ideal. These limitations are set out in more detail in section 3.1 of the M & E Report.

However, the dashboard data – even if only based on registered users – was based on 3,653 journeys planned, and 306 registered accounts. As such, although it is still a relatively low number when taken against the population of East Lothian as a whole, it does provide a useful sample size of trips planned using the app.

The app had only been live for 9 months of the 12-month pilot when the evaluation was carried out. This was very limited time to see an uptake in a new digital platform, but despite this positive trends and patterns have begun to emerge. It is also, as will be seen below, notable that the qualitative and quantitative data pointed to similar trends.

#### 5.1.6 Overall statistics

As mentioned previously, there were limited resources available for marketing. However, there was a positive trend of new users and downloads throughout the pilot. At time of finalising this report, in November 2023, the number of new users' session has grown to 3400.







Figure 4 Number of returning user sessions on GoSEStran per month.

There is a positive correlation between new users and returning users which shows a strength in the app as users are returning to use the app.



Figure 5 All user modal split (1st August 2022 - 26th August 2023)

The overall modal split of trips made during the pilot shows there is a high percentage of sustainable journeys. The public transport mix includes trips where the user takes a mix of a bus and train to complete their journey.



Figure 6 Modal split of activated account holders.

Those users who have activated an account are responsible for a higher percentage of journeys planned via trains or public transport mix, compared to all users.



Figure 7 Modal split for under 22's with Young Scot card

Those who are under 22, have the highest percentage of users who cycle.



Figure 8 Modal split for users with a Concessionary Pass

Concessionary pass holders have the highest percentage of users who travel via public transport mix, which may represent that they are likely to rely on public transport to complete their end-to-end journey rather than active travel as it is a low percentage who cycle.



Figure 9 Modal split of users with access to a private vehicle.

Unsurprisingly, there is a higher percentage of people who travel via their own car. But it is positive to see the wide modal split and higher percentage who use public transport depsite access to a car.



Figure 10 Modal split of users with NO access to a car

For all users' groups, there is an overwhelming trend of a higher percentage of journeys made via bus, this may be due to the location of East Lothian.

# 5.1.7 Did the app address transport poverty?

There is some data that suggests that the pilot helped to address transport poverty.

Firstly, the survey suggests that 36% of respondents did not have access to a car, compared with the Scottish average of 28%. As Ansons conclude, 'this could imply that those without access to a car have more of a need for a travel app,' although given the high numbers of those with access to a car downloading the app also, 'it may be more accurate to say GoSEStran has a wide appeal'.

62% of survey respondents stated that they used the app for new journeys, where they did not currently know their travel options.

The M & E analysis of origins and destinations from the data dashboard suggests that the app is supporting individuals from rural locations to plan their journeys, although most journeys are planned from locations with larger populations, such as Haddington. However, there is also evidence that destinations are in general more rural in character (Figures 10 to 13, M & E report). This suggests that the app is of value in addressing the transport poverty endemic in these rural locations.

# 5.1.8 Did it influence choice of mode?

84% of all journeys planned through the app were bus, train, or a mix of public transport. Taking in walking, cycling and community transport, that figure rises to 89% (Figure 6 of the M & E report). Survey responses showed similarly positive figures, with 89% travelling by bus or train; adding to the 6% who used more than one mode of transport it means that 95% of journeys will have been made at least in part by sustainable means.

As the report states, it may be that users of the app are more likely to be predisposed towards using public transport. However, it also states that it could suggest that 'use of the app has shaped the mode choice made by users.'

This was borne out by the survey results, with 62% of respondents saying that they strongly agreed or agreed that the app encouraged them to use public transport, walk or cycle instead of drive. 69% of non-users took a similar view. 17% of respondents to the user survey stated that they were intending to use a private vehicle before using the app, which suggests that some users have switched from car-based options to more sustainable modes because of the GoSEStran app.

What the app was unable to test to any great degree is whether the next level of MaaS, namely being able to book and pay for the whole journey, would also be attractive to users and/or influence their mode choice. The limited evidence noted in the M & E focus groups was that users planned their journey on GoSEStran, and then bought tickets through other travel apps, even when there was the facility to purchase e.g., rail tickets in-app. For some people, this was because the trips were work trips where bookings needed to be made through work systems.

## 5.1.9 User focus groups

Focus group participants identified the unique selling points of GoSEStran were that they could search based on different criteria such as carbon emission, mode, journey duration, enabling them to make informed choices based on their specific journey.

There was an overall agreement from participants in the benefits of MaaS with users stating;

"Having a lot of information in one place rather than jumping between different sources is a key strength, very handy pooling together lots of different sources of information to simplify the decision-making process".

*"It's suggesting alternatives that I might not have thought of or even know about, particularly as I am less familiar with bus network..."* 

But there was also support for using it as a 'journey planning' app, rather than MaaS app with the function to book and pay;

"There is not an advantage to booking journeys (especially for buses) as it is tap on in person (Lothian is capped fees)".

#### 5.1.10 Guest users v registered accounts

One issue which the M & E report highlighted was that, as at 7<sup>th</sup> May this year, only 24% of individuals using the GoSEStran app had created an account. The report speculated that this could be because it was an additional stage that individuals do not want to complete, or that the activation email may have been filtered into spam or junk inboxes. It may also be that users were unaware of the benefits of going the extra step of registering.

This clearly makes some of the conclusions in the report less representative than would otherwise be the case, particularly in relation to user demographics.

One of the enhancements to the app planned in the next year is to make account registration more straightforward, and for logging in through, for example, social media, an option so that this percentage can be increased. The focus group discussions indicated that those who had registered an account felt it beneficial. However, 80% respondents of the user survey stated that they were very likely or likely to use the GoSEStran app again.

84% (n=246) of respondents to the non-user survey which was sent out to East Lothian Council staff had not heard of the GoSEStran travel planning app. The respondents were asked if a single digital platform would encourage them to use more sustainable modes of travel, with 69% (n=201) indicating they thought it would.

## 5.1.11 Partner interviews

Interviews were carried out with SEStran, Fuse Mobility and East Lothian Council.

The Routing Company were also interviewed to provide their views on the new DRT pilot and how this links into the GoSEStran app. *"The concept of having these two integrated together is a 'must have,' and it is extremely powerful in principle. MaaS can give visibility to DRT services, which are often quite poorly marketed. So, if you already have users of a MaaS application, then suddenly they can see all the modes available, ... [including DRT]. DRT could be quite a popular mode because it is going to fill gaps in the public transport network, which other modes might not be as well suited to serve."* 

SEStran reinforced the importance of timing and that the original timings in the bid for DRT would have only allowed for a 6-month pilot. No operators would have been willing to change their services for that length of time, so SEStran were lucky to have their own funds to contribute to the extension of the pilot to 12-months instead.

It was agreed by all partners for the project that "Transport Scotland got a lot of value for £212,000", as not only can the MaaS app been seen as a success, SEStran were also able to launch a new DRT service and integrate it into the wider transport network. SEStran noted that due to the lack of resources and funding, the marketing efforts were limited. This is crucial as if people aren't made aware of the app, or the benefits to them then the uptake will be limited.

A limitation to the app was the short nature, and the lack of multiple year funding. Potential users and stakeholders would ask themselves the benefit of using or promoting an app that may not exist in a few months, which limited the uptake and results.

There were aalso procurement, legal and contractual challenges to overcome before the tech work could begin *"We didn't have something off the shelf to use. This is a developing area ...."* SEStran invested in advice and guidance from IP and legal specialists to help ensure it was a suitable SaaS licence between the tech company

(Fuse Mobility) and the customer (SEStran). The same advice was also obtained for the contract with the DRT tech provider.

# 5.1.12 The Interim Report, January 2022

In line with the original commission, Ansons produced a draft Interim Report on the pilot in early January 2023. However, through no fault of the consultants, the findings were considered to be of limited value, for the following reasons:

- The tight project timescales meant that the GoSEStran app was still in its early stages when the research leading to the Interim Report was carried out. The survey, for example, took place in late October/early November, when the app had only been in existence for two and a half months at most.
- > The survey response rate of 15 individuals was very low.
- The focus group consisted of four people, although some of the feedback on equalities issues was of interest.
- > At the time of the research, the DRT service was not in existence.
- Given the fledgling status of the app, even the dashboard data was based on low numbers and was therefore of limited value.

Nevertheless, the draft was shared with Fuse and a discussion held on some of the points which emerged from the focus group discussions. This led to a further conversation between one of the focus group members, who is registered blind, and Fuse, in order that they could understand the challenges faced by users with sight impairment.

This point is considered further in section 7.3, below.

# 5.1.13 The 109-DRT service

As shown in figure 2 in section 4.1, the new DRT service in East Lothian was launched on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2023. This was only a few weeks before the monitoring and evaluation surveys were released so it was not sufficient time for data to be collected from the DRT service and limited time for users of the GoSEStran app to become aware of a new service in the area.

Since the GoSEStran app launched in September 2022, there have been 43 opportunities for users to travel within the DRT region, where users have searched 43 times for a journey within the service area that is covered by the 109-DRT service. SEStran continue to work with the bus operator and tech developers to see how we can further market this integration to ensure the users are aware that the GoSEStran app

will enable passengers to see how the DRT service can link into the wider transport network, including public and active transport.

65% of respondents to the user survey had heard of the Demand Responsive Transport Service but not used it,

SEStran along with East Lothian Council and Prentice are engaging Bus Users Scotland to assist with running surveys and focus groups with the regular users of the 109-DRT service to help make a more informed evaluation of the service. Due to the pilot only launching in March, the results are not ready to share in this report but will be shared once completed.

## 5.1.14 Geographical spread of the app

Despite the GoSEStran pilot initially having a focus in East Lothian, which included integrating all the modes to make the app more relevant for those travelling across East Lothian Council and it was where all the marketing efforts were targeted, there has still been a widespread use of the app as shown in the two figures below.



Figure 11 Origin postcodes of all journeys viewed on GoSEStran.

There is a high cluster of origins across the SEStran region, but also searches for trips across the UK have been carried out.



Figure 12 Destination searches viewed on GoSEStran.

92% (n=24) of survey respondents reported they would be likely or highly likely to use a national app that covers all modes of transport across Scotland (Figure 20). This suggest that there is value in extending the app to a national level and that individuals who are already using the app would value an app that has national coverage over an app that is designed to focus on a local area.

# 6. Building towards the future

#### Context: the 5 MaaS Investment Fund pilots and timescales

Like so many things, the MaaS Investment Fund was badly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Phase 1 projects had to pause implementation whilst Phase 2 projects were also affected by a slow return to public transport use, which still remains below 2019 levels in most sectors.

The stop-start nature of the projects has also meant that they will all conclude at different times and having different timescales to test their objectives against the real world. In GoSEStran's case, the original timescale of July 2022 – January 2023 was extended, firstly, by SEStran self-funding another two months to end March 2023, and then funding reprofiling (as described in 4.4 above) to take the project to a year's length, ending in June 2023.

However, there was a feeling shared amongst all the pilots that there had been insufficient time to fully test the MaaS concept in Scotland, given limitations of funding, the disruption caused by the pandemic, and the relatively short timescales. The longest pilot was the GO-HI pilot, launched in June 2021, but it had the most complex integrations to manage given the different transport modes in the Highlands.

#### Integrated Mobility Partnership

As previously mentioned, SEStran and Tactran already share the licence to the same MaaS platform powered by Fuse Mobility for the deployment of the four apps, GoSEStran, and three Enable apps NHS Tayside, D&A College, Loch Lomond, and The Trossachs National Park. Pausing the programme until an informed decision is made by Transport Scotland could be detrimental to these specific apps, but also MaaS in general due to loss of confidence in the tool by users and stakeholders.

SEStran were successful with a bid to Smarter Choices Smarter Places in March 2023, which has funded the platform licence with Fuse Mobility up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 to continue the existing GoSEStran and the three Enable apps from Tactran.

Figure 13 below represents the relationship between the four apps, all powered by the same platform.



Figure 13 The Fuse platform shared with Tactran.

The Integrated Mobility Partnership (IMPs) is the term co-created by SEStran and Tactran Project Officers to continue the existing MaaS pilots, share our experiences, but also encourage others to start their own MaaS journeys by potentially becoming a partner and share the existing licence with Fuse Mobility.

IMPs will organise three Open Learning Network events, which will be free access to all to come along and learn about the learnings from the pilots so far, whilst providing a space for those interested to ask any questions, they may have about starting their own MaaS journey.

Other partners can join IMPs, as it will help to provide easy access to a developed platform and existing contractual agreements in place. Members can request specific new integrations, which crucially will also then become available to all other members. SEStran will investigate the possibility to rebrand GoSEStran, to increase the geographical spread and use of the app outside the SEStran region.

SEStran and Tactran will continue to trial and understand what the end users need, what enhancements/ promotions/ marketing attract and maintain the users. IMPs will also aim to develop a business case for achieving a sustainable tool, which will include understanding the market for any longer-term delivery post 2023/24.

In early September, St Andrews University became the first formal IMPs partner, committing just over £72,000 of its own MIF2 funding to enhancements to the GoSEStran app. This includes the creation of a web page version of the GoSEStran

app, and improvements to the homepage to include information on points of interest in the area. These will benefit all users on the app and also takes into consideration the feedback we received from users who took place in the focus groups.

Throughout this pilot, various potential revenue streams were considered with limited success. However, organisations, especially the public sector, were happy to promote at their own cost where we could show the benefit to their clients/customers. Other organisations have volunteered to pay or contribute to become a partner in IMPs, such as St Andrews. So multi-party public sector funding may be the answer, but in the current climate MaaS tools are unlikely to be affordable to the majority of Scottish public sector organisations without additional support. Within the short timescale of this pilot, it was not possible to research into what the true economic cost of not doing MaaS was. If the pilot is extended, research could be done to assess what cost savings MaaS has had on other aspects, such as is there a reduction in missed NHS appointments, and if so, how much cost savings has this resulted in.

#### Equalities Considerations

Throughout the pilot, SEStran staff have been keen to engage with equalities issues in the development of the app. This followed on Tactran's work with Fuse in their own pilot, which included the 'Making Connections Audit<sup>3</sup>.' The outcomes of this work were considered for the initial design process of the GoSEStran app, but also for the development work carried out since. An example includes the 'cut off' of 30-minutes for walking and cycling journey options.

Staff also engaged on more than one occasion with members of SEStran's Equalities and Access to Healthcare Forum. This led to one of the Forum members taking part in the focus group which led to the Interim M & E Report from Ansons. Criticism of the app included that the structure of spoken outputs from the app was not useable; this led to a conversation between the Forum member and Fuse, which helped to inform thinking about how the app could be more helpful for disabled people, and those with additional needs. This is an issue which is given even more importance by the M & E report finding that the proportion of disabled users was higher than in the general population.

SEStran are also working on a project called VoyagAR to help address the additional needs and requirements for disabled people to use public transport. The VoyagAR app is the next stage of the <u>Thistle Assistance</u><sup>4</sup> programme which is developing an augmented reality signposting interface for journey navigation along with associated

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>https://www.integratedmobilitypartnership.co.uk/\_files/ugd/994339\_072759b2d95a4530b79a37419f4885f 9.pdf?index=true

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> <u>https://www.thistleassistance.com/thistle-assistance-voyagar/</u>

website for carer and family members to assist in the planning of the journey. The integration between VoyagAR and GoSEStran in the future is to be explored.

Disability is not, of course, the only protected characteristic under the legislation. A recent report<sup>5</sup> which outlines the challenges for women using public transport makes it clear that this is an area that needs to be explored further in the MaaS context. It may be, for example, that the ability to plan a seamless journey and see real time information will help women feel more confident and safer in using public transport. However, other issues such as the lack of wheelchair or pram space on buses is not going to be solved by MaaS – although digital information about existing space on buses could form part of a MaaS offer.

Similarly, it was not really possible in the project's short timescale to successfully engage with people whose first language is not English, to see if the use of a MaaS app could help them to navigate the often-bewildering public transport network.

These are only a few of the issues which have not been addressed fully in project. However, they will inform procurement of the next generation of MaaS tech provision.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> <u>https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/womens-and-girls-views-and-experiences-of-personal-safety-when-using-public-transport/</u>

# 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

# Conclusions

# 7.1.1 Initial MIF bid objectives

The new 109-DRT service in East Lothian launched in March 2023 because the funds available from MIF2 covered the tech for the booking system. GoSEStran has successfully 'lightly' integrated DRT services across the region, including this new service by creating a pass out link to the booking apps for the DRT services.

The physical Journey (or Mobility) Hubs in East Lothian are shown on the GoSEStran MaaS app to encourage users to travel via alternative methods and link up the different modes in the region.

Throughout this pilot, various potential revenue streams were considered, but with limited success so far. Other parties, including local authorities, have shown interest in becoming a partner of IMPs and potentially have funding available to contribute. The most likely source of funding currently is multi-party contribution to cover the licence and hosting of the platform with various development and improvements been discussed and prioritised by all.

# 7.1.2 SEStran objectives

SEStran's new Regional Transport Strategy 2030 was approved by the Transport Minister in March 2023. Within this document SEStran have set out various strategic objectives to achieve. The key themes for these aims include:

- > Deliver seamless- multi modal mobility across the region.
- Reduce car kms by 20%

By expanding the focus area of GoSEStran to include the eight local authorities in the SEStran region, by integrating more modes such as the Edinburgh tram, or local taxi operators, it can contribute to delivering the digital aspect of a seamless- multi modal mobility.

As shown in the results, there has been a positive shift to sustainable modes by showing the users different ways to complete their journeys without relying on private cars. MaaS can help contribute to the reduction of car kms by 20% as GoSEStran promotes park & ride locations, shows the area covered by new DRT services and shows real-time bus information to provide users with more information to make informed decisions about their journey options.

#### 7.1.3 National transport objectives

MaaS has the potential to achieve or help achieve all the NTS objectives listed in Figure 14. It does require an element of funding and focus on ensuring all the physical modes are in place, but by providing the digital overlay it can help users see all the potential modes and journey options to encourage people out of privately owned vehicles, which also can help contribute to the target of reducing car kms by 20%.

Reduces inequalities
Takes climate action
Improves our health and wellbeing
Helps deliver inclusive economic growth
Table 4 National Transport Objectives

#### Lessons and recommendations for Transport Scotland

- Procurement and service design takes time! This can often cause challenges with in-year funding pots.
- What is a 'successful MaaS app'? How feasible is it to include booking and payment functions for all operators and modes across the SEStran region and wider afield? Not all operators (especially rural bus operators) have the means or ways for pre booking and payment so restricted in what is achievable.
- If highest level of MaaS with booking and payment options for all modes is to be achieved, it will require multi-year funding to cover a licence for multiple years in order to get 'buy in' from operators and other organisations such as the NHS.
- Time savings could have been made if there was more open data available Traveline helped with majority of information, but SEStran, Tactran and Fuse had to have conversations with all taxi operators, community transport operators, and DRT providers to get the data to be able to integrate into the app. Discussions are ongoing with the National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board (NSTAB) and Digital Data Travel Services (DTDS) project to see what improvements could be made to share free data. Duplication of effort and funds between similar projects needs to be kept to a minimum so encourage ongoing conversations.
- > Engagement and transparency is key for all stakeholders and users!
- Procurement: Understanding what users want from a MaaS system, how they might access it, and how easy that is to create, is key to a successful procurement. Like the other pilots, GoSEStran can help to inform future public sector procurements of similar tech in Scotland. Allowing time for discussions with potential tenderers will contribute to a successful procurement.

- In a multi-party project, it is essential that any procurement recognises the need for public sector partners to have access to the relevant data (anonymised or otherwise) to enable policy decisions arising from the project to be evidence based.
- Engaging specialist legal advice early in the process and ensuring that contractual terms are acceptable to the market but protecting the public sector interest will cut down on timescales in subsequent rounds of contractual negotiations. However, the additional cost should be factored into future projects of this nature. SEStran have legal documents to share (without breaching confidentiality), so others don't need to spend the time or money on similar contracts, such as SaaS licence.
- Partnership working has been key to the success of GoSEStran throughout the pilot. The advice and help offered by the various partners has helped to maximise resources and reduce duplication of efforts, especially Tactran. A bigger consortium will help create bigger economies of scale and increase the opportunity for multi-party funding sources. Sharing licence fees and various apps on the one platform results in cost savings.
- Tech enabled, on demand bus services are often seen as the 'solution' to problems for bus services in rural areas. However, the most successful rural DRT examples have been where money has been available to provide new, branded rolling stock to accompany the change to DDRT. The reality of bus operators in the post-Covid world with reducing levels of public subsidy, declining levels of patronage, increased fuel costs and driver shortages has been particularly challenging. Vehicle as well as tech funding may help to address part at least of these challenges.
- Limited funding forced technical innovation and the creation of a digital 'back office' for DDRT operations in GoSEStran. This avoided the data standard problem which has been recognised internationally as one of the barriers to integrating DDRT services into MaaS. This would ideally be addressed at the procurement stage.
- The initial budget for monitoring and evaluation proved to be a limitation. Fortunately, savings in other areas allowed more qualitative work to be carried out. This, however, still faced challenges in getting meaningful numbers of users to participate in surveys and focus groups. Although, paradoxically, the non-user survey produced a healthy number of responses. These challenges should be factored into the design of future M & E.
- Marketing and promotional campaigns from a trusted source are key to initial uptake and engagement – RTP's are unknown to many of the general population so relied heavily on help from local authorities or third parties.

- Private investment in MaaS is yet to be seen. However, what is the true economic cost of NOT doing MaaS? The short timescales for this initial pilot limited what could be assessed. However, research should be done to see whether a MaaS app can help make cost savings in other areas, such as reduce number of missed NHS appointments, or reduce number of employees late for work.
- There is a need for a national MaaS app or journey planner! People don't stay within boundaries potential for at least a regional app but, ultimately, it seems to make sense that the MaaS app could be best coordinated (and funded) at a national level. Users want the 'one-stop-shop' approach where all the information is available to them in the one app. This is the subject of current discussions with Traveline to ensure there is not duplication of effort. However, any 'national' MaaS solution could operate alongside specific apps such as NHS Tayside website for a more tailored approach to specific users.
- There needs to be more focus on DRT and ideally led nationally. A lot of tech companies offer similar products but not many have it perfect, and currently pilots in Scotland are not joining up and sharing their experiences. Need to be clearer what the future funding & resources opportunities are for bus operators especially in rural areas, as positive trends are beginning to emerge from DRT pilots, especially when compared to timetabled services and the potential savings for Councils to run flexible services. But there is no committed funding for these pilots.
- Talk to operators! Especially about the DRT aspect as many operators have hesitations to trail new concepts with the unknown situation they are currently facing, with driver shortages and reduction in funding.
- Timing not sufficient a 12-month pilot is not long enough to see substantial behavioural change.
- All MaaS platforms, similar systems and apps should be interoperable as it is key that they work together not compete against each other. This has been successfully shown with IMPs, as even though four different apps are powered by the same platform, many benefits can be seen from working together.
- Public sector engagement and involvement is key to be able to collect and evaluate data on the modes available and users! If private sector led, sustainability won't be prioritised, and the data will not be shared with relevant stakeholders and public sector authorities.
- It has become clear that Scotland is, in fact, leading the way in some respects with MaaS. Looking at the recent UK Department for Transport MaaS Code of Practice, for example, it is clear that GoSEStran and the other Scottish solutions

are 'ahead of the game', as many of the recommendations have already been achieved by IMPs. Increased visibility of the Scottish MaaS ecosystem and contact with other UK and EU countries to promote joint learning, should be a priority as the MaaS MIF pilots come to a formal close.

- More work is needed on potential business models. Initial discussions on a multiparty funding model have been moved forward by the Integrated Mobility Partnership. This should be taken forward with Transport Scotland and MaaS Scotland's input.
- MaaS does not exist in a vacuum so far as digital solutions to transport issues are concerned. Linkages with DDRT, the National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board (NSTAB) and Digital Data Travel Services (DTDS) project should be a priority to reduce duplication of effort and funds. Further digital aspects of the drive towards a sustainable transport infrastructure include equality-focused projects such as the SEStran VoyagAR project, and Al/digital twinning. There needs to be buy in to a coordinated approach with other travel app providers such as Lothian Buses.

What is a successful 9-month MaaS pilot? The report hopefully proves that this has been a huge success with a limited budget of £212,000 and within the time frame! The key message is to keep going with MaaS! Too much time and resources has been put into the apps so far, and the public will be discouraged from using similar apps in the future if they cease to exist. Positive trends are just beginning to emerge but not long enough for the users to see the benefits. And learn as you go! It is a pilot but also MaaS is a new concept that still needs to be explored and developed.

# 8. Appendices

# 8.1 Spend profile.

Confidential. Please ask SEStran officer for further details if required.