

## **Kickstarting a Mobility-as-a-Service pilot – lessons learned so far**

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*GoSEStran is an innovative project to develop a Mobility as a Service (MaaS) app to allow users to plan, book and pay for journeys in and around East Lothian.*

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The [GoSEStran MaaS project](#) is a collaboration led by SEStran and involving Fuse Mobility Ltd., Tactran, East Lothian Council, Ansons and Mott MacDonald. It has been funded from the second round of [Transport Scotland's MaaS Investment Fund](#) (MIF).

Building on both East Lothian's physical Journey Hub infrastructure, which groups different modes of transport including rail, bus, taxi, car club, community transport and e-bike hire in Musselburgh, and [Tactran's Enable project](#) which developed similar journey planning apps for different projects in Tayside, the GoSEStran mobile app will allow users to plan, book and pay for their journey end to end.

The project is also looking to integrate demand responsive bus services in the area.

Below, SEStran's Andrew Ferguson shares some lessons learned on setting up the GoSEStran MaaS project, with contribution from Anna Rothnie from Mott Macdonald.

### **Bidding is resource intensive**

SEStran entered a competitive bidding process to undertake the development of GoSEStran's MaaS project. The eventual award was just over £200,000, which was less than the original budget requested. With a reasonably tight deadline for the bid from the date of announcement, responding was time-critical – and as a small organization, the resource required was not readily available. We recognized this early on and engaged consultants Mott MacDonald to help with bid formulation.

### **A Call for Partners process worked well, but didn't replace procurement**

At the stage where we were pulling together a bid, it really didn't seem sensible to procure any of the partners needed to deliver the project. We were still deciding on the precise nature of the project. The budget was subject to an unknowable award of funding. Instead, we went down the route of a 'call for partners' process. This allowed us to indicate our intentions for the project and ask for expressions of interest from local authorities, bus operators, MaaS and DRT tech operators.

This process helped to identify areas of opportunity. Early in 2021 this meant a lot of Teams meetings, but that was helpful in identifying potential partners with a collaborative approach and a problem-solving attitude.

We already had early conversations with our lawyers around potential procurement issues, and one alternative to the conventional procurement route identified was a 'collaboration'. Although this sent us down a long and circuitous route in terms of legal

agreements. Ultimately the advice was that, in terms of the private sector partners, a direct award was a more straightforward way of appointing them to the process.

However, the call for partners process helped hugely in sifting through options both in terms of potential partners and the overall shape of the project.

### **Regular communication is crucial in building partnerships and avoiding drift**

Once the consortium was formed, it was agreed to meet as a consortium fortnightly – with other one-to-ones happening on an ad-hoc basis in between. The fortnightly meetings helped everyone recognize that this was a collaboration, and not just a series of binary relationships. It also helped project management in terms of ensuring everything was on track in terms of finalising the bid.

### **It's never too early to call your solicitor!**

Although there was some legal resource in-house, the specialist, cross-disciplinary nature of the legal advice required to pull agreements together meant SEStran's external lawyers needed to be engaged. Advice required especially related to procurement, data protection (DP) and intellectual property (IP).

Other MaaS pilots have said previously that concluding data sharing agreements can take a long time.

In the GoSEStran case, the legal work was to some extent complicated by the attempt to create an overarching 'collaboration agreement' between all the consortium partners. In the end this was abandoned after a fair amount of abortive work in favour of a licence between the MaaS technology provider and SEStran, and the grant agreement with Transport Scotland.

Overall, this issue has clearly also been experienced in other areas and needs to be addressed by standard formats of agreement in relation to projects of this nature.

Our initial DRT proposal failed to obtain full funding from MIF2. This contributed to this change of heart in that the proposed DRT technology and bus operators dropped out of the main project, although lines of communication have remained strong.

Going forward, on a higher level, collaborations between the private sector and public sector organisations to provide MaaS on a wider geographical basis will need an agile governance structure. The multi-party agreement idea is not completely dead – particularly if funding and requirements for different functionalities come from different 'sponsors.' Some of the learning from our journey towards the current legal agreement structure will be useful in that regard.

### **It's never too early to call your marketing department!**

Once the agreements were concluded, on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022, the app developers got to work on creating the app. They did this in just over five weeks.

Meanwhile, we engaged Project Management and Monitoring and Evaluation support, having previously procured them subject to funding once we knew the extent of the funding. This was helpful, as it meant we could hit the ground running in those respects.

We hadn't procured a marketing 'expert.' This was deliberate, as it was felt, building on previous experience in the consortium, that there was enough capability within the partners to create a marketing plan and that the relatively small marketing budget could be better spent on marketing itself.

This has turned out to be the right decision. However, in retrospect, the marketing plan and marketing assets should have been advanced more quickly than has been the case. This has now been addressed and a marketing campaign launched in mid-September, to promote the existence of the product. In hindsight, it would have been better if this could have been in place earlier.

One positive that the project benefitted from was the early decision to use SEStran's existing GoSEStran branding. This already developed branding package had clear design guidelines— something that other projects have reported took time.

### **Did I mention communication and teamwork?**

I did mention communication, but it is worth mentioning again. Through a combination of luck and design, we have ended up with a set of partners who work well together, take a problem-solving approach, and are prepared to go the extra mile. This has been demonstrated by the numerous offers of help we have had in terms of marketing channels via our partners. Achieving a good teamwork ethos amongst the partners has contributed massively to the project's ongoing good progress.

### **Learn more about the project**

As part of the GoSEStran project we will be launching a series of interactive online sessions to share lessons learned from the project. If you would like to be added to the invite list for these please contact Anna Rothnie at [anna.rothnie@mottmac.com](mailto:anna.rothnie@mottmac.com).