

## **GoSEStran**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 At its meeting of 15 March 2024, the Board received a report on GoSEStran, updating on progress and continued operation of this pilot project to trial Mobility as a Service (MaaS) and Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT). The Board agreed:

- To note the risks and opportunities for SEStran in relation to the continuation of the GoSEStran MaaS project
- Subject to the above, to agree to SEStran continuing to participate in a procurement exercise in collaboration with Tactran and other Integrated Mobility Partnership (IMPs) members, and entering into such licence and other agreements as are necessary to secure the continuation of the GoSEStran and other IMPs partners apps, subject always to appropriate levels of funding being secured
- To note that a report detailing the outcome of the funding bids and, if appropriate, the procurement exercise, would be put to the September 2024 meeting of the Partnership Board

1.2 It was also agreed that, if any of the following criteria had not been met, then officers would recommend that SEStran withdraw from the MaaS pilot:

- Long term funding committed (at least three years)
- Successfully concluded procurement exercise to confirm future partners
- Service Level Agreement in place with Tactran and other Integrated Mobility Partnership (IMPs) partners to confirm responsibilities, including project management

1.3 Officers provided an update to the Board as requested at its meeting on 27 September 2024. The report noted that the three criteria in the March report had not been met, in that SEStran had not yet secured funding which guaranteed a three-year contract, but that it had successfully developed the SLA with Tactran, and that the procurement exercise was then under way.

The Board accordingly agreed:

- To the continuation of GoSEStran as part of the Integrated Mobility Partnership due to the significant progress on funding made as outlined in the report, and achieving two of the three criteria presented at the March Board
- To authorise the Partnership Director to enter into such contractual agreements as were required to progress the GoSEStran and VoyagAR projects to their fullest extent possible within available funding levels
- To receive regular progress updates via the Projects Update at Performance and Audit Committee, with such Board reporting as was necessary as the projects progress.

1.4 The purpose of this report is to update on adverse developments since the Board meeting in September, and to recommend termination of SEStran's further involvement in the GoSEStran project given problems with the procurement process and the lack of progress made to date on securing long-term funding.

1.5 Given that the Board meeting on 27 September took place less than six months ago, Standing Order 20 is relevant:

Revoking a Resolution: A decision of the Partnership cannot be changed within six months unless the Chairperson rules that there has been a material change of circumstances; and notice has been given of the proposed change.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 To support climate change, air quality and social inclusion objectives, not only must sustainable transport opportunities be improved, there must also be effective ways of making people fully aware of their travel options. A lack of ability to plan and book transport services in advance can be a barrier for people, hence journey planning must be made as convenient and easy for users as possible.

2.2 Transport Scotland's [MaaS Investment Fund](#) enabled pilots of Mobility as a Service (MaaS) to offer easy, digital access to travel information and allow for planning, paying, and booking on one platform. The initial GoSEStran pilot period ended on 31 March 2024, and a [final report](#) was submitted to Transport Scotland for evaluation along with the other MaaS Investment Fund pilots.

2.3 Funding for year 2024/25 was secured by SEStran to carry on the existing SEStran and Tactran pilots. This consisted of:

- Transport Scotland (TS) grant of £42k to SEStran towards extension of the current contract, pending the outcome of the procurement
- A successful bid by SEStran of £100k from Smarter Choices Smarter Places for this current year, matched by an additional £50k from external sources and £50k of officer time
- Potential carry over from SEStran's 23/24 budget of £50k.

## **3. PROGRESS**

### **3.1 Partnership Working**

3.1.1 A Service Level Agreement (SLA) was signed with Tactran in July. This enabled a Tactran officer to be assigned full time to project manage the joint project, partly funded by SEStran, freeing up vital resources in SEStran. However the project has encountered a number of obstacles since this date, and has continued to require a significant amount SEStran officers' time. Despite this input, there continue to be significant delays to the project which are outlined in 3.2.

## 3.2 Procurement

- 3.2.1 Following the Board's approval in March, Tactran initiated a procurement exercise for the tech supplier, and Innovate UK was engaged to assist. This open procurement route was chosen as one of Innovate UK's aims is to enable tech suppliers to the public sector where traditional procurement can be restrictive. The outcome of the procurement was to be a framework contract, allowing SEStran and Tactran to contract with the preferred tech supplier, with timescales being dependent on the available funding.
- 3.2.2 When the procurement exercise was nearing completion, both legal and procurement advice concluded that the 'challenge' process run by Innovate UK did not constitute a sufficiently robust route to appointment of a tech supplier. As of the date of drafting this report, a subsequent, modified procurement exercise has not been initiated. This delay means that it is no longer possible to spend the allocated budget in the current financial year, resulting in the loss of approximately £40k external funding.
- 3.2.3 In addition to procurement of a technical supplier, Tactran and SEStran were looking to secure other consultancy services to support the project. This work is being led by Tactran with the support of Perth and Kinross Council Procurement team. This has not been completed. However, SEStran engaged Mott MacDonald on a short-term basis to assist with the project in the light of resource issues at Tactran.

## 3.3 Funding

- 3.3.1 As at the date of writing this report, there is no clear sustainable funding path for the project.
- The potential funding opportunities for 25/26 are based on one year funding with no certainty that it will be funded in the longer term.
  - The inclusion of sustainable transport within the People and Place Grant does offer the opportunity to fund MaaS staff roles from that funding pot in 25/26 but this still leaves a significant gap on the funding required to continue or improve the platforms.

## 3.4 Policy

- 3.4.1 The Smart, Digital, Integrated Ticketing and Payments Delivery Strategy was published in August 2024 and outlines TS's roadmap to digital solutions including MaaS. This indicates that MaaS solutions could be supported depending on the outcome of their evaluation. At present it remains unclear how much further funding will be available through this Strategy's roadmap.
- 3.4.2 MaaS Scotland recently published their 'Implementing Mobility as a Service: A Roadmap for Scotland' which recommends Scotland would be best served by the implementation of a single, centralised National MaaS Platform. It also notes that a lack of leadership has been a major barrier to successful delivery. These recommendations indicate that allocating significant resource to regional MaaS projects going forward would not be in line with the learnings to date.

- 3.4.3 SEStran has been pushing discussions with TS and other potential partners towards the creation of a national MaaS platform. This could be integrated with the national journey planning app (Traveline) allowing for one trusted platform. This would provide significant economies of scale, reduce duplication with other MaaS apps, and increase the reach of the current apps to a level that may be attractive to advertisers, providing a potential opportunity to increase revenue.
- 3.4.4 The evaluation of the MaaS pilots was recently published on [Transport Scotland's website](#). This highlights the need for more work to be undertaken in order to produce a definitive national policy and approach.
- 3.4.5 In summary, there is no realistic prospect that longer term funding could be achieved within the current funding environment. The lack of certainty would result in short term planning with no ability to fund platform improvements or expansion.

#### 4. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

##### 4.1 Risks and mitigations

Risk	Implication	Proposed mitigations
Dropping out of procurement will result in tech supplier being procured by Tactran only which is different to initial procurement scope	Reputational damage based on the project being withdrawn	Contract has been extended with current supplier to enable Tactran to complete procurement  Discussion with current supplier and partners will be held to explain reasoning for withdrawing from the project  Legal advice taken
Loss of progress in developing MaaS platform	The chance for SEStran to be at the forefront of MaaS in Scotland will be lost  Costs associated with 'starting again' with MaaS are high	Based on the low numbers of users, and findings from the policy documents noted in 3.4, it has been concluded that these risks are minimal  A review of the project will be carried out at PASDoS to ensure lessons learnt can be fully realised
No base MaaS platform to implement VoyagAR accessibility features	The work developed by SEStran is not tested or implemented	Develop review for VoyagAR options in 25/26

	No additional support provided to users before and during journey	
Loss of current user base due to withdrawal of service	Reputational damage. In January 2025, there were under 200 users accessing the platform.	Users will be informed of the project's closure and advised of suitable alternatives.
Old advertisements of app being misleading	There are no active ads in digital media. There will likely be some physical advertisements on bus stops and in other locations.	Where possible, these will be removed, and any QR codes will lead to alternative information.
Loss of direct partnership working on MaaS	This may impact partners including City of Edinburgh Council, East Lothian Council, and St Andrews University. Users and partners will lose trust in similar products in the future.	Project closure discussions will be held with them, and a way forward on MaaS generally agreed

## 4.2 Opportunities

### 4.2.1 • Learnings can be picked up from partners

Even with the platform being discontinued, there are learnings which can be utilised internally and by partners. The IMPs group continues to offer an opportunity for conversations on MaaS in Scotland. Additionally, learnings can feed into future working groups on the national MaaS solution.

### 4.2.2 • Reduced staff resourcing

The project has required significant staff time since its inception. Currently, the work on GoSEStran requires 0.2 FTE of consultancy time and 0.3 FTE project officer time from the core budget. This time could be reallocated to other projects within the business plan for 25/26.

## 5. CONCLUSION

5.1 It was agreed as part of the March 2024 decision that progress against the following key success criteria would be reported to the September Board meeting, and that, if any of the criteria had not been met, then officers would recommend that SEStran withdraw from the MaaS pilot:

- Long term funding committed (at least 3 years)
- Successfully concluded procurement exercise to confirm future partners
- Service Level Agreement in place with Tactran and other Integrated Mobility Partnership (IMPs) partners to confirm responsibilities, including project management.

5.2 Although in September it was considered that sufficient progress had been made to allow officer to recommend continuation of the project at that time, these criteria have not been achieved over the past 12 months, and hence officers now recommend the project is discontinued.

5.3 However, given that the Board granted approval to continue the project on 27 September 2024, that resolution occurred slightly less than six months ago, and the Standing Orders make it clear that Board resolutions cannot be changed within six months unless 'the Chairperson rules that there has been a material change of circumstances; and notice has been given of the proposed change'.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 As the Chair has ruled that the failure of the procurement process and failure to secure the anticipated level of funding constitute material changes to circumstances it is recommended that the Board:

6.1.1 Agrees to discontinue the GoSEStran project and associated app as from 31 March 2025.

6.1.2 Agrees that a review of the project will be carried out at Performance and Audit Strategy and Delivery Oversight Subgroup (PaSDOS)

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6 March 2025

Policy Implications	None
Financial Implications	The funding position is as set out in the report.
Equalities Implications	The project was subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA).
Climate Change Implications	None
Appendices	None
Background Papers	The following background papers were relied on in the production of this report: <a href="#">GoSEStran Final Report (March 2024)</a>