

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE Audit and Risk Committee

DATE 25/01/2010

DIRECTOR Gordon McIntosh

TITLE OF REPORT Logical Transport System

REPORT NUMBER: EPI/11/002

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to advise Members on the Logical Transport software system used in the Public Transport Unit for scheduling transport and the implementation of the system to schedule School Transport.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- (i) Instructs the Head of Planning and Sustainable Development to postpone any further development of the Logical Transport system pending completion of a Shared Service review of the Public Transport Unit.
- (ii) Instructs the Head of Planning and Sustainable Development to report back to the Committee regarding the outcome of the Shared Service review and to make a recommendation on the future of the Logical Transport system.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Since the system was introduced in late 2006 £164,500 has been spent on the system. Ongoing support for the system is costed at £14k per annum; this can be met from existing budgets. Further financial implications will be investigated as part of a Shared Service review.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

To introduce the system to School Transport will require substantial staff resource, this is not likely to be met from existing staff resources due to the level of input required, therefore an additional temporary resource would be necessary. It has been calculated that a temporary Technical Officer post from Manpower for a total of 15 weeks would cost £8,470.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

5.1 Background

At the Audit and Risk Committee on the 21st September 2010 Members requested that officers submit a report to a future meeting of this Committee on the potential to extend the use of the Logical Transport System for school transport.

The Logical Transport System was introduced in 2006. The system was designed to be a transport scheduler for transport services specified by the Public Transport Unit; including our internal Fleet Transport, School Transport and Social Work transport.

It was anticipated that introducing a transport scheduler would improve the efficiency of the transport we provide and would schedule all our runs in a more effective manner with the additional benefit that this would potentially reduce the cost of the transport provided.

There were a number of transport scheduling systems investigated at the time and following the short-listing of two software packages, it was decided that the Logical Transport System was the most appropriate when considering cost and functionality.

5.2 Work Undertaken To Date

The software is very specialised and is not widely used outwith the City Council. There is no manual, instruction book or reference guide to advise users on the operation of the Logical Transport system. This has posed particular problems in the rollout of the system across the Public Transport Unit.

A considerable level of staff resource had been required to get the Logical Transport system up and running and tested. This has primarily been focused on deciding upon and inputting "rules" which the scheduler will adhere to, and inputting data. During the initial set up of the system the Council worked closely with Logical Transport staff. Unfortunately some of the initial knowledge that was built up during this period has been lost due to staff changes.

From early 2009 through to June 2010 an officer was tasked with ensuring Logical Transport was implemented. This involved the full creation of a zone matrix, which is designed to schedule transport using postcodes of all areas within Aberdeen, which was input along with realistic timings for travelling between each of the postcodes. Unfortunately the results showed up inaccuracies within the sequential pick up and drop off locations of clients, thus requiring further work which was extremely laborious and required significant support from Logical Transport. The system is now set up to schedule fleet transport, however there is lack of confidence in the quality of this scheduling.

Due to further staff changes within the Council there is currently a lack of expertise in the use of the system.

5.3 School Transport Scheduling

It was always the aim that the Logical Transport system would be rolled out to other operational areas of the Public Transport Unit, including School Transport, Social Work Transport and Community Transport.

In July 2010 attempts were made to use Logical Transport to schedule Community Transport, however officers were once again faced with problems and required further input from Logical Transport. Due to staff resource levels this has not been progressed.

To implement the Logical Transport to schedule School Transport would undoubtedly require a substantial level of staff resource to input rules and data, test the system, and analyse the results. To undertake this task it is estimated would require a staff resource to work on the system full-time for approximately 3 months to input each journey. This would be impossible to undertake with current staff resources. It has been calculated that an additional temporary Technical Officer resource for 15 weeks of employment would cost in the region of £8,470.

The School and Social Work transport teams have recently manually rescheduled the majority of transport and this has resulted in a considerable reduction in spend. Officers are not confident that the Logical Transport system will be able to schedule the transport in a more efficient manner.

5.4 Shared Service

As part of the Priority Based Budgeting Service Review members have approved the proposal to investigate a shared service Public Transport Unit between Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council.

Aberdeenshire Council use the Trapeze system to schedule much of their transport. Although not without its own challenges this is up and running relatively well for all sections. Also, as this has been in use for some time, the officers in their Public Transport Unit are more knowledgeable on the use of the system.

As part of the Shared Service review officers will be investigating the consolidation of all IT systems, including scheduling software, used between both units. There may be initial costs involved in the consolidation of the systems, however if the Council was to proceed with a shared service it would likely be more appropriate to operate one scheduling system.

6. IMPACT

Corporate - A key aim of the Community Plan is to ensure that all citizens have access to a range of transport options that reflect differing needs of age, gender, disability and income. The Single Outcome Agreement also sets a priority of improved public transport and integration of transport is key to improving access to employment, education and training opportunities. As part of the Five Year Business Plan a shared Public Transport Unit is to be investigated and potentially implemented which will have an impact on the IT systems used.

Public – The detail of this report should not have any major impact to members of the Public other than to improve efficiencies in transport provided by the Council. There is no Human Rights or Equalities impacts.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Internal Audit Reports Issued, CG/10/164, report to Audit and Risk Committee on 21st September 2010,
- Business Plan 2011 to 2015/16, CG/10/202, report to Finance and Resources Committee on 2nd December 2010
- Public Transport – Progress Report, report to Shared Services Board, 6th September 2010

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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