DfT Transport Sector Transparency Board - Minutes

Great Minster House, London 15:30-17:30, Tuesday 17th December 2013

Attendees: Steve Gooding, DG Roads, Traffic & Local, DfT (Chair) [SG]
               Prof. Jonathan Raper, CEO Placr [JR]
               Andrew Stott, Public Sector Transparency Board [AS]
               Nick Illsley, Transport Direct, DfT [NI]
               Helen Morris, Driving Agency Sponsor, DfT [HM]
               Andrew Murray, , DfT
               Krizstina Katona, Cabinet Office [KK]
               Sandra Webber, Civil Aviation Authority [SW]
               Judith Corbyn, Civil Aviation Authority [JC]
               Mark Farrow, Network Rail [MF]
               Mike Howard, Network Rail [MH]

Apologies: Miles Gibson, No 10
               Tim Stamp, Statistics, DfT

Introduction and Welcome

Rail Delay Attribution Process and Data Flow

1. MF and MH gave a short introduction.

2. SG thanked them for their paper. The discussion would cover two points: understanding the potential to open access to the current data flows and the delay attribution process.

3. The group agreed that Network Rail had made real progress on the transparency and open data agenda. MF said that a recent stakeholder event had been well attended and positive. He continued the Rail Delivery Group had recently agreed to establish a working group on Transparency. It was very early, with members still being finalised, but he was hopeful this would prove a useful way to engage the industry.

4. SG and NI updated the group on a recent meeting with National Rail Enquiries (NRE.) This was held to better understand the flow of data and provided a really useful insight.

5. The group reviewed an information flow and wiring diagram. SG was keen to understand the origin of this information and the group discussed who actually inputted, provided and hosted the various data streams. The picture was complex – although it was felt that raw information from control centres and the Nexus Alpha Tyrell offered the best opportunities for opening up access. The group concluded that it was very difficult to see a single point which could be readily exploited to quickly improve the availability and openness of data.

6. JR felt that more should be done to ensure that the wiring was conducive to providing data to allow competition and innovation. The complete cancellation of trains in Scotland following stormy weather highlighted the time lag in information dissemination; JR felt this was evidence of a "single source" mentality that needed to be challenged.

7. MH explained that delay attribution was notoriously complex and subjective. Much of the data was reported in a high level fashion and the attribution frequently changed. There was a deal of concern about releasing this data from the TOCs (and ATOC.)

Action: Transparency Board to invite David Brown to discuss open data and delay attribution.

CAA Update on Civil Aviation Act Consultation and Data Gathering

8. AS highlighted the work of the Federal Aviation Authority on providing detailed, flight specific information on domestic aviation. This data was used in a host of innovative apps and programs by the developer community. JC said that whilst this raw data was useful in a US context there are notable differences in the habits and information requirement of passengers in the UK.

9. SW presented a paper "The CAA's New Publication Duties" which highlighted their approach following the recent legislative change. This was in draft as it was yet to be agreed by the CAA Board.

10. SW focussed on "reliability" as she felt this was of most interest to the group. The group wanted to understand the flow and openness of data. It was noted that there are considerable challenges to overcome in a sector which is truly global and largely privately financed.

11. SW said that the CAA had two options to improve access to raw data: one would be to increase the coverage of airports and airlines from which they requested data under the 1982 Act. The second was to tap, or duplicate, the comprehensive information provided to EuroControl. This Europe wide data was currently used to monitor air traffic performance (and provided with agreement that it would not be shared) but it had a host of potential applications. SW stated that discussions had begun with EuroControl about accessing this data and legal obstacles were being explored.

12. SG offered assistance. SW said that would be gratefully received as this Board was uniquely placed to see patterns and trends across modes. SW and JC noted, however, that an opportunity to push openness and transparency had been missed by failing to engage with the consultation exercise last year.

Action: SG to engage Lee Andrew () on the issue of accessing the "EuroControl dataset" and to talk through the transparency experience from other modes.

13. SG observed that when discussing opening up these datasets there is a developer community (that would require an APIs etc) to consider alongside the consumer "star rating" angle. JR felt that rather than "Not Going Ahead" the language of the presentation should be changed to reflect the opportunities to take forward this work.

14. SW said that the CAA were interested in any opportunities to engage the developer market because the production of outputs such as a comparison table for optional services or access for persons with reduced mobility was currently resource intensive. JR suggested supplying the raw data to a number of SMEs and seeing what innovative solutions they could provide.

15. In terms of ascertaining the cause of the delay, these were currently assigned an IATA code. The cost of the compensation regime in aviation was very high and there was a fear that if this information was made public then codes would be used in a tactical manner.

AOB

Date of Future Meetings

16. Dates to be confirmed around SG's availability. NI suggested dates around the end of February, April and June would be sort with SG's office.