# Department for Transport

# Road Freight Statistics publication content review

## 1. Background

- Alongside releasing the 2013 Road Freight Statistics publications in February 2015, an exercise gathering feedback via a publication user questionnaire was conducted. The user feedback was intended to then be used to make changes to the publication to better meet user needs.

- The user questionnaire was published online on the publication webpage so that all users had the opportunity to provide feedback. The questionnaire focused on the following areas:
  - frequency with which the publication was used
  - sections of the publication and tables that were useful
  - reasons why publication was used and other sources of freight data
  - extent to which the publication met user needs
  - suggested improvements

- Six user responses were received; two from within the Department for Transport, one from another government department, one from a government agency and two from external organisations.

## 2. Summary of user responses

- **Frequency of use**: the publication was mainly used once a year sometimes once a month. A specific question was asked as to whether a more frequent release (quarterly or bi-annual) would be useful however there was little interest apart from the two external organisations who listed some figures that they may have found useful on a more frequent basis.

- **Use of publication**: the most used sections of the publication were overall trends in freight activity, activity by type of vehicle, population of licenced goods vehicles and goods vehicle traffic. The least used sections were on mode of operation, commodities, employment and unemployment of drivers and the environmental section.

- Only three of the six user responses provided a list of tables that were used making it difficult to draw conclusions as to which tables are most used and identify those that are not used at all and could therefore potentially be removed.

- **Reasons for use and other sources of freight data**: the main reason given for using the publication was to obtain information on specific road freight trends for reports. Information was also used for research purposes and to provide a comparison for other transport data. Several other sources of data were stated not all of which were specifically freight related.

- **Meeting user needs**: one user said the publication fully met their needs while the majority of others said that it partially met their needs. Only one user said that the publication did not meet their needs at all and this was due to the lack of information on the carriage of dangerous goods which is one of the data items that we are intending to better capture as part of a review of questionnaire content. Another user wanted more information on the van sector and made specific reference to the van activity surveys which the Department used to run.

- One user found it difficult to get an overall picture of freight activity (domestic plus international) and this was also raised as part of the last publications wash-up. Producing a factsheet including a summary of all freight activity may be a way of addressing this issue.

- **Suggested improvements**: all of the suggested improvements were to the presentation or regarding access to the publication. Specifically one user requested combining the three releases into one which is something that was discussed as part of the last publications wash-up however combining all three releases could result in losing the identity of the international road freight release and blurring headline messages. For the 2014 publication, the domestic release and the release focussing on the wider road freight industry within the UK have been combined.

- Longer term improvements were also suggested in relation to access; specifically an online database with the functionality of creating user defined freight tables and also a freight mobile application to view the latest statistics on mobile devices.

## 3. Next steps

- The user responses received were very welcome however it is difficult to make substantive changes to the publication based on these few alone. Specific suggestions support the

actions that were already planned (e.g. combining releases).

- It would be beneficial to rerun the user feedback exercise in future to see whether improvements result in the publication better meeting user needs.