

Minutes

UK Network Management Board meeting 27 June 2023

Attendance

Mark Kemp	Chair, UK Network Management Board and Hertfordshire CC
Anthony Fergusson	Department for Transport
Satbir Gill	Representing TAG
Nick Owen	Transport for London
Graeme Salmon	Department for Infrastructure Northern Ireland
Alex Wright	TRL
Nick Tyler	UCL, representing Academia
Anastasia Trofimova	CIHT Secretariat

1. Welcome introduction and apologies

Apologies were recorded for Ewan Wallace (Aberdeenshire Council), representing SCOTS.

2. Presentation on Digital Local Roads – Alex Wright, TRL

Mark Kemp introduced Alex Wright and the document they have been working on in the partnership (Ringway, TTF, Jacobs, TRL, Innovate UK, ADEPT, Vinci Highways, OS).

Digital Local Roads

What is a digital road? – using technology and data to improve decision-making, enhance existing services and enable new services and business models.

Why Local Roads? – they make up the majority of the UK's Road network, but there is no strategy to exploit digital transformation on Local Roads

Project Aim: begin to define what we need to do to be 'Digitally fit for purpose' on local roads by 2030.

Stakeholders: what else is driving change?

- Budget (need for efficiency in the face of restricted budgets)
- New mobility (support other modes like active travel)
- Politics (lack of long-term vision and poor coordination between LAs)
- Data (demands to make data available and more valuable)
- Skills (ageing workforce and gaps in digital skills)

What is stopping us?

- Finance (LAs are reluctant to pay for services that are not proven to add value)
- Technology (A perceived larger investment in complex tech for potentially lower returns than strategic roads)
- Collaboration (siloed working; lack of efficiency implementing solutions in single LAs)
- Standards (existing standards do not support innovation and guidance from the government is slow and/or not up to date)
- Social/skills (insufficient skills and experience, fear of rapid change)

Why/How a national strategy could help?

1. Direction
 - Ensures consistency across the UK
 - Puts improving public services at the heart of DLR
 - Ensures equitable access to new services and data
2. Collaboration
 - Encourages market-led innovation – by providing clarity on civic needs
 - Supports collaboration between private and public sector
 - Disseminates best practice across the UK
 - Sets out new business models for mutual benefit
3. Community
 - Generates buy-in from the public and engages customers
 - Communicates benefits of Digital Local Roads
 - Drives engagement with local services and government
 - Addresses privacy and safety concerns

What happens if we do not reach the 2030 vision?

- Fragmented future
- Doomed public image
- Deepening divides
- Reactive and directionless

The future of Digital Local Roads

- Digital Roads have the potential to transform how we manage roads and deliver services
- However, there are challenges and barriers to implementing them
- There is a need for strategy at the national level for Digital Roads

The cost of failure

- Funding for local road maintenance is reducing
- Distance travelled on buses continues to decline year on year
- By 2030 congestion will cost the UK economy £21.4 billion
- Traffic related pollution kills 5000 people a year in the UK

Action: Alex Wright to share slides of his presentation with the rest of the group.

Questions after the presentation:

Satbir Gill asked the question about the amount of carbon reduction through efficient network operation and modal shift.

Alex Wright did not have precise figures in front of him, but he said there is a perception that significant carbon reduction is possible via modal shift and facilities that digital roads provide. By making information available more easily and freely, modal shift will be encouraged.

Mark Kemp asked Anthony about the role of National Highways, around its national leadership role and the fit within that; how some of the outputs of the Digital Local Roads can fit into National Highways Digital Roads Strategy.

Anthony said that DfT see a big role for National Highways. In the digital technology sector, there is a lot going on, and it is a bit messy – quite challenging for local authorities to find resources and the political will to do the right things at the right time. The government can have a leadership role: bringing people together, shaping the joint view, and driving that forward. Persuading politicians that we need to do this is another challenge. It is crucial to make a plan over the next year. Even if everyone is willing, we still need to persuade government officials that it is a sensible idea (not very hard to do as technology offers all sorts of opportunities/solutions/efficiency). Security is important to add to this topic. We cannot produce tons of data and share it without safety measures.

Mark Kemp: we need to add not only security but 'resilience' as well.

Nick (TfL perspective): Excellent presentation. We need to make sure we are consistent across all conversations with National Highways and other stakeholders. What can DfT do to pull all this data together, are we basing the decisions on the same data sets? We need to do this together.

Salmon Graeme commented that they are not sure we will ever have financial resources for this, though.

Nick Owen: All these companies need us to invest in order to facilitate the next version of their products. What requirements/licences – we expect some of that data to be delivered to us as a part of the requirement.

Mark Kemp agreed with the point made by Nick.

Alex Wright has been talking to major manufacturers. They are all commercially minded. They become data sellers. That is where the world is going.

Mark Kemp: some data we might find very useful, but we usually do not have access to it. Capital revenue is going to be the real challenge.

Anthony Ferguson thinks that when we speak about capabilities and skills, we need to have the ability to come up with our own strategy (without considering what is going on in Europe or elsewhere). That pulls our conversation from the roads to other sectors like 5G. The challenge for the government to link all these industries.

Satbir had a question for Alex on how often they are going to update the data? And will they have other classes of the road?

Alex Wright said that National roads are not their key focus, rather local roads.

Anthony thinks it is vital to move bit by bit. In organisation like his, it is important to speak with enough people and gather their views. 2030 is near, their interest is what are the things they need to do in the next 3-5 years and what they need to do right now.

Satbir commented on this point and said it is essential that academics are involved as well.

Action: Anthony to give an update on the next meeting.

Action: Mark to arrange a chat with Michael.

3. Presentation on Micro mobility – Anastasia Trofimova (based on research at UCL)

According to recent statistics, 2/3 of Londoners find using public transport as the most stressful part of their daily life. Commuting times (40 min worldwide vs. 54 min UK average vs. 74 min in London). People 18–34-year-olds spend the highest proportion of their income on transport (£137 per month in London). Can e-scooters solve any transport problem?

Micromobility includes light-weight devices (electric or human-powered) which are designed for short trips at speeds not exceeding 15.5 mph.

While e-bikes do not require driving licence, can be used on bicycle lanes by anyone older than 14, e-scooters do not have a defined place on the road, private e-scooters are prohibited, driving licence requirement and no legislation.

Why would many people prefer e-scooters over e-bikes?

- No special clothes
- Less physical activity (health issues, shower facilities at the destination)
- Portability
- New form of smart mobility

Challenges:

- Shared e-scooters are expensive (private are prohibited)
- Ambiguity of legislation
- Not many people have driving licence
- They are not really 'green vehicles' (materials: the aluminum frame, rubber tires and lithium-ion batteries that make up a scooter account for more than half of its emissions—more so because a scooter's lifespan can be shockingly short, somewhere in the range of one to ten months)
- No defined place on the road
- Banned from public transport
- Battery does not last long (short trips only)

Potential solutions to consider:

- Include in public transport fares
- Provide more bays near stations
- Audible alerts/ training days
- Define rules for e-scooters
- Guidelines for the safe design of private vehicles
- Improve quality of batteries and equipment

Imperial College London report found that: 4% of all riders' wear helmets. '44 per cent were to the face, indicating that open-face helmets like bicycle helmets could help prevent a slight majority of head and brain injuries but would not protect against facial ones. The findings highlight the need for better pothole management from local authorities if e-scooters are to become commonplace on roads.'

Which opportunities can e-scooters provide?

- Alternative transport on strike days
- Safe night-time transport
- First/last mile solution
- More transport options for people who live far from public transport stops
- If private e-scooters are allowed, then less money spent on transport per household.
- Less probability of sexual harassment
- Spillover effect on urban infrastructure (more focus on micromobility/active travel, less cars)

Questions after the presentation:

Anthony commented on this topic and said there is a challenge that it is a new vehicle, and it is everywhere. They bring both opportunities and all sorts of challenges. The current legislation considers e-scooters as motor vehicles (must be insured, registered, etc). But it is evident that safety standards should be improved, and the government must do something about the legislation. People are using them in vast numbers, because they are not illegal to buy, but they are illegal to use on public roads. In Paris, it was a tiny turnout on the public referendum to prohibit e-scooters, but the problem is the same in all cities: e-scooters arrived in large numbers very quickly, they divided opinions right from the onset. In London and in rest of the UK, the situation was slightly better as we only have legal operators who can operate e-scooters in accordance with terms and conditions.

Nick Tyler agrees with Anthony that the main challenge is regulation at the moment and what is considered an acceptable vehicle on the road. Rental e-scooters are pretty robust, and how they are controlled, so the problem lies in private e-scooters. The paradox is that you can buy those things, but you cannot actually use them. And for many disabled people, it is a real danger on the pavement as they cannot see/hear them coming. But the fact is that they will not go away whether people like it or not. And the best way to have them is to have them well regulated.

Mark Kemp thinks we speak about anti-social behaviour (i.e., they are on the pavement), which is not very different from what the cyclists do.

Nick (TfL perspective) says a lot of work is going on in TfL to assess the e-scooters trial. The whole trial was built around safety, and said that Anastasia was right that shared e-scooters are safer in terms of wheel size and other features; and Nick agreed that they are not as sustainable in terms of the environment as people think.

4. UKRLG update – and next steps for Chair of UKNMB [ukrlg-meeting-june-2023-final.pdf \(ciht.org.uk\)](#)

The last meeting was a month ago. There is a debate around the Asset Management group and Climate group. Do we need a Roads group as well? Or will it be an overlap? They are currently reviewing how we can ensure we got an appropriate membership of boards.

Action: Mark to send the minutes from that meeting.

5. UKNMB last actions ukrlg.ciht.org.uk/media/17731/uknmb-23-feb-2023.pdf

All actions completed.

Action: We need to put something on carbon as our future agenda item and have a proper program.

6. Updates from members

Anthony: Some of the fundings of the Traffic Signal Maintenance Fund – 50 million pounds spent over the last 18 months or so. We want to show what are the benefits are etc. We hope to publish the research about private e-scooters as well.

7. AOB

Satbir Gill has asked Anthony Fergusson, DFT when the London Permit scheme charges will be revised as there has been no change in the charges since the scheme has been implemented.

Action: Mark to speak with Anastasia about the date of the next meeting.