

In vehicle driver information in the UK – Status Quo

The UK has a mixture of free to air and private traffic information services that can be received in vehicle. ITS (UK) understands there is confusion about how this mix works in practice for UK car drivers and foreign visitors. This short note aims to clarify the situation. It focuses on the in-vehicle delivery of information, but the UK also has extensive VMS and other systems for roadside information, a wide variety of free public and privately sources websites for traffic information and trip planning and TV traffic reports.

Voice Radio: All major networks provide traffic news . either nationally focused (e.g. BBC Radio 1-5 and national commercial stations) or locally tailored (BBC and commercial local radio). Much of the content and presentation of the bulletins is provided by the private sector as a business to the broadcaster, using a variety of private and public sources. The BBC licence fee paid by TV viewers also pays for BBC radio, while for commercial radio there is advertising.

RDS-TMC: There are two competing services provided by private companies: INRIX and Trafficmaster They collect their own journey time data from ANPR, GPS and mobile phones and fuse it with other sources of data , e.g. police, Highways Agency, maintenance informationõ These are fully EU standard complaint services, which are free to receive for the lifetime of the vehicle or sat nav. RDS-TMC broadcasts have been in place for over ten years. In the UK TMC model, the cost of the service is included in the sat nav or vehicle or an RDS-TMC adaptor can be added for some older units. There is no other subscription or extra cost to the user. Between INRIX and Trafficmaster, there are now over 4 million UK RDS-TMC sat nav users and this continues to grow as new vehicle makers are adopting TMC all the time. The additional cost of the TMC licence is small compared to the cost of the sat nav or even the vehicle.. A non UK driver or sat nav user with a TMC unit with Europe wide mapping and codes can also receive RDS-TMC and hence traffic information in their own language at no cost. Most vehicle makers provide Europe wide mapping on their vehicles already (BMW, VWõ) and so the appropriate codes are already available for many visitors to the UK.

TPEG: Both Trafficmaster and INRIX provide DAB TPEG services using enhanced data based on the TMC business model.

HD Traffic : TomTom provides a subscription based HD traffic service similar to many other countries using an internet connection paid for by a subscription.

Google Traffic: Google maps are available free but will need an internet connection, as will a variety of apps and services on phone and other devices. All have a cost of communications.

Mobile phone services: There are a variety of dial in mobile phone services and text alerts provided by the private sector and some public services too. These range from national rate to premium line.

Hence all in vehicle traffic information in the UK has to be paid for in some way or other. We trust that is clarifies the situation in the UK, where public and private services live alongside one another.