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Director of Customer Operations
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Dear Mel

Accuracy of roadworks information

I am writing regarding the accuracy of scheduled roadworks information put in the public domain by Highways England. This issue, although of importance to all road users, is of particular concern to the logistics sector. When Transport Focus asks about key issues of the day as far as the Strategic Road Network is concerned, the inaccuracy of roadworks information is often mentioned by freight operators and their trade bodies. The objections are, essentially, that if they have accurate information they can generally work around things; whereas if they plan to use a road that turns out to be closed, or plan around a closure that doesn't happen, it can add cost to their operation as well as risk letting down customers with precise delivery requirements.

Given these concerns we have had discussions with the company, facilitated by Mike Fargher, to understand how the scheduled roadworks information is compiled and what Highways England itself does to measure accuracy. This resulted in a very helpful briefing from Tej Bains. It was clear that the company is well aware of the problem with accuracy and that the freight operators' frustration is not unreasonable. Two key reasons were cited for inaccuracy. First, that the database used to hold the public-facing information was not designed for that purpose – its primary function is as the means to 'book' roadspace to carry out works. Second, that once roadspace has been booked – generally by a contractor – the company itself has limited contractual leverage to require that the information is refined as project planning continues, with the result that it can become out of date. The issue of what contractors can and cannot be required to do seems to extend to providing information in real time about when they close a road, seemingly bearing out the haulage industry perception that Highways England does not always know what its contractors are doing, particularly on the All Purpose Trunk Roads.

I attach a screenshot from the Traffic England website on 19 January which perhaps illustrates some of these issues. The "unconfirmed" nature of the works by definition provides uncertainty and taking the two A12 entries, while it might be wholly accurate, it feels intuitively unlikely that "road repairs" would require these slip roads to be closed continuously until 8 May as is implied.



In terms of Highways England's plans to improve in this area, we heard about a long-term project to replace the database in which scheduled roadworks information is held and so improve the ability to present it to road users. While good, there was no suggestion that this would yield fruit any time soon. Also, it wasn't clear that any specific actions were planned to require contractors to keep the public-facing information accurate about projects they are delivering for the company, nor to routinely report in real time when they are closing roads. In short, and as discussed at our December bilateral with the company, I'm afraid Transport Focus is not confident that Highways England's current plans are going to address road users' reasonable concerns in this area sufficiently far or fast. I should be grateful if we could discuss how the company can put greater focus on this subject than currently appears to be the case.

Yours sincerely

Guy Dangerfield
Road User Director

Encl.

cc Anna Dalroy
Mark Bottomley
Mike Fargher

Road	Type	Severity	Description
A12	Unconfirmed Roadworks	Severe	<p>Event Location The A12 northbound entry slip from the A1023</p> <p>Event Reason Road repairs</p> <p>Event Status Currently Active</p> <p>Event Period expect disruption until 06:00 on 8th May 2016</p> <p>Lanes Closed All lanes are closed</p>
A12	Unconfirmed Roadworks	Severe	<p>Event Location The A12 southbound entry slip from the A130</p> <p>Event Reason Road repairs</p> <p>Event Status Currently Active</p> <p>Event Period expect disruption until 06:00 on 8th May 2016</p> <p>Lanes Closed All lanes are closed</p>
M23	Unconfirmed Roadworks	Severe	<p>Event Location The M23 northbound between junctions J9 and J8</p> <p>Lane Closures The hard shoulder is closed</p> <p>Event Reason Barrier repairs</p> <p>Event Status Currently Active</p> <p>Event Period expect disruption until 08:00 on 31st March 2016</p>
M6	Unconfirmed Roadworks	Severe	<p>Event Location The M6 northbound between junctions J22 and J23</p> <p>Lane Closures The hard shoulder is closed</p> <p>Event Reason Barrier repairs</p> <p>Event Status Currently Active</p> <p>Event Period expect disruption until 17:00 on 24th August 2016</p>
M1	Unconfirmed Roadworks	Severe	<p>Event Location The M1 northbound between junctions J99 and J40</p> <p>Event Reason Road repairs</p> <p>Event Status Currently Active</p> <p>Event Period expect disruption until 06:00 on 21st January 2016</p> <p>Lanes Closed All lanes are closed</p>
M6	Unconfirmed Roadworks	Severe	<p>Event Location The M6 northbound between junctions J23 and J24</p> <p>Lane Closures The hard shoulder is closed</p> <p>Event Reason Road repairs</p> <p>Event Status Currently Active</p> <p>Event Period expect disruption until 23:59 on 31st January 2016</p>
A5	Unconfirmed Roadworks	Severe	<p>Event Location The A5 northbound between the junctions with the A505 Loughton Buzzaun and the</p>

