

Transparency Board Minutes 08.02.11

TRANSPARENCY BOARD

Minutes of a meeting held on 8 February at the Cabinet Office:

Present:	Officials:
Francis Maude (Chair)	Katie Davis (Cabinet Office)
Professor Nigel Shadbolt	Cass Chideock (Cabinet Office)
Tom Steinberg	Rachel Fentem (No. 10)
Dr Rufus Pollock	Jane Sigley (Ministry of Justice)
Andrew Stott	Nick Illsley (Department for Transport)
Guest:	Umran Nazir (Department for Transport)
Philip Hammond, SoS for Transport	Amalie Kjaergaard (Secretary)
Apologies:	
Lord Tom McNally	
Sir Tim Berners-Lee	

The meeting started with the viewing of a short [film](#) made by transport operators and data activists in New York on what they have been doing with data released by city transport operators.

It was noted that it focussed on an urban area similar to London where a lot of good initiatives are already happening to open transport data. It was also noted that there is a difference between private transport operators and that if asked to make their data more available for free it would come at a cost to either the private operator or alternatively subsidy cost from Government and this would need to be managed.

A discussion followed on the economic arguments for opening up the data from the Department of Transport and the wider Transport sector to create opportunities for economic growth and social value.

The Transparency Board noted that the DfT business plan is committed to “put power into the hands of transport users by giving them the information they need to hold government and transport providers to account” - this points to the release of much more data, driven by what people want and how they want to use it.

The Board were particularly pleased to hear that DfT’s ideal vision is a national dataset of base data, which people can use to create value-added products for all domestic modes of transport and expressed an interest in working the DfT on this.

The Department for Transport has already facilitated the release of some really important datasets such as the National Public Transport Access Nodes (NPTAN), Gazeteer (NPTG) and Data Repository (NPTDR); as well as more raw data than ever before including road traffic counts, road congestion data, locations of road accidents and in conjunction with VOSA, MOT test data.

These make up over 150 transport datasets available in a raw and re-usable format on data.gov.uk and the National Statistics website. DfT and its agencies are also planning to publish an information asset register by the end of February.

But a lot of the information which DfT and its agencies have released is in summary and purely statistical. The experience elsewhere in the world is that releasing detailed data on the road system and on the public transport system is key to driving innovation as the film suggests.

The Transparency Board do, however, appreciate that the structure of the UK transport sector makes it more difficult than elsewhere where transport services are in direct political control.

The DfT suggested that as London transport is under direct public control – unlike the rest of the country - this could provide an opportunity to look at a pilot approach to releasing all data in line with the Public Data Principles.

The Transparency Board agreed that it would be good to see more transport data opened up in London but that a lot is already happening under the leadership of the Mayor; and suggested that the fact that transport services outside of London are not in direct political control may actually increase the value of the prize. This is because releasing the data gives people a chance to present and appreciate a whole-system view.

Actions: Cabinet Office Transparency Team to meet with the team in the Mayor of London's office to find out more about what is happening in London
Due: March 2011

The discussion turned to the need to release more detailed datasets. DfT are, for example, working on releasing further datasets and include continuing to roll-out new regions in the Cycle Journey Planner ultimately leading to nationwide coverage and availability of base data; and building on the London Data Store and Open Manchester initiatives to encourage local transport data to be made available.

DfT are also lobbying coach partners to license DfT to release the National Coach Service Database to the public; undertaking a review of rail franchising arrangements; and making progress with the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) through revenue-sharing models for small developers and the successful release and re-use of the NPTDR.

The Transparency Board reflected that good progress has been made and that they would be keen to work with DfT and its agencies to enable further progress to be made quickly. This includes exploring:

- the possibility of building an expectation of transparency into future contracts or subsidies with transport providers;
- extending the 'Right to Data' policy to include Network Rail;
- the extent to which the Open Government Licence could be used across the transport sector; and

- closer working with private transport operators to discuss the commercial and public value of opening up their real time data for free re-use whilst maintaining brand and ensuring quality assurance.

Actions: Department for Transport to develop a paper with or about ATOC setting out what data is currently being released and the business model (costs and revenue benefits).

Due: March 2011

Actions: Cabinet Office Transparency Team to work with the Department for Transport to organise and facilitate a meeting between the Transparency Board, DfT and ATOC to build on their track record of openness.

Due: March 2011

The Board set out their idea for a Transport Sector Panel, similar to the Local Public Data Panel, a group that would provide input and challenge to the department, its agencies and the wider Transport sector on open data. DfT considered that there were merits to the idea, and wanted to discuss further.

Actions: Cabinet Office Transparency Team to support the Department for Transport in further consideration of the merits of establishing a Transport Sector Panel.

Due: March 2011

The Transparency Board noted that it would be incredibly helpful for this agenda if the Secretary of State for Transport were to put out a public statement of support.

Actions: Cabinet Office Transparency Team to work with the Department for Transport to consider a public statement of support.

Due: March 2011

What the Highways Agency releases in terms of its data and what it would like to achieve going forwards.

Actions: Cabinet Office Transparency Team to work with the Department for Transport to set up an officials' meeting with the Highways Agency to discuss what data they are currently releasing, how and what they plan to release going forward.

Due: March 2011