BSA
The Business Services Association
130 Fleet Street,
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Briefing Note

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Speakers

Jen Hawes-Hewitt, Global Cities Management Consulting Lead, Accenture

Sam Li, Innovation Officer for the Cityverve Project, Transport for Greater Manchester

Jonathan Moss, Partner - Head of Transport, DWF LLP

Alastair Richards, Smart Ticketing Programme Director, Transport for the North

David Owens, Design and BIM Manager – Costain Highways Sector

Dave Yip, Partner and the UK lead for Public Sector Technology, KPMG in the UK

Transport Technology in the North: driving our transport network

The BSA, in conjunction with Associate Member DWF LLP, held an event on the role and development of technology and data in the transportation sector, with a specific focus on the North of England.

Following the first BSA 'Tech and Transport' event held in association with DWF, a second session took place in Manchester looking at this theme in the context of the North of England. DWF's Jonathan Moss opened proceedings, outlining the key findings of a recent DWF report into transport and economic prosperity. Business leaders surveyed as part of the report said that a revitalised transport framework built on technological innovation would be key to the UK's future success, with 65% of respondents agreeing that the UK's current transport infrastructure inhibits international trade.

Transport for the North (TfN)'s Alastair Richards then set out the policy background and business case for the Integrated and Smart Travel (IST) programme. TFN was created to address the North's persistent levels of economic underperformance. Alastair said that poor connectivity constrains the opportunities for growth in the North, and reducing barriers to travel will help unlock this economic potential.

The vision for the IST programme is to improve the customer experience and the functionality of the operator through account-based ticketing, simplifying the payment process to avoid queues and delays, and making pricing and travel options easier to understand. Alastair concluded by discussing TFN's proposal for a sequenced, geographic evolution of the IST programme from cities to towns and rural areas.

The final speaker from the opening session was Sam Li, Innovation Officer for the Cityverve Project at Transport for Greater Manchester. Sam stressed that the technology is the 'easy part' of driving change and that the real challenge is cultural and getting people to modify their behaviour. He detailed some of the innovative use cases that Cityverve had been involved with, such as an augmented reality app to help people navigate through Manchester city centre and the Mobike cycle share scheme.

In each example, there was clear potential for data and digital solutions to be used to aid understanding of passenger movements, improve planning decisions and make significant cost savings for the public sector. While the technologies themselves were exciting the key to success was the 'collaboration of things', namely partnership working between different stakeholders.

In the panel Q&A with Sam and Alastair that followed, questions ranged from ways to change and incentivise passenger behaviour to the challenges of implementing technological change within the existing infrastructure assets. Discussion also covered the need for integrated and smart travel to extend beyond cities into rural areas where transport provision is often inadequate and how new technology might enable more efficient movement of freight transportation.

Accenture's Jen Hawes-Hewitt kicked off the morning's second session. Jen focused on the changing understanding of 'smart cities' in the last decade and the role of data in transforming transport and mobility. Citizens want to have the ability to tailor services, including transport, to fit their needs and therefore the 'personalisation' agenda must be at the heart of any conversation around technology.

Open data has also been a game-changer, Jen explained, with London's Datastore leading the way in enabling public-private collaboration to stimulate innovation and create new apps, such as Citymapper. A long-term challenge for cities will be to meet the ever-growing demands of consumers, who want services and goods faster and cheaper, while ensuring cities and their transport systems remain sustainable.

The next speaker was KPMG's lead for Public Sector Technology, Dave Yip. While the underlying transport infrastructure and capacity issues in the North required improvement to enable greater choice, technology could offer benefits in a number of ways. Examples included smart ticketing, digital railways and advanced traffic management systems on road networks. Dave gave a summary of the key steps needed when delivering change programmes in transport. Above all there was a need for there to be simple, clear and agreed objectives across all stakeholders. Other important factors included preparing a Solution Architecture beforehand and having the right resources and skill sets in place to deliver the project.

Costain's David Owens was the event's final speaker and he reflected on building and designing highways schemes from both a public and private sector perspective. He began by saying that construction was still very much an 'analogue' industry in transition to being a digital one. David described the largely paper-based design processes that were prevalent in the industry before greater focus was placed on using Building Information Modelling (BIM) that adopts 3-D models and other technologies.

He used a case study of the A556 Knutsford to Bowdon Improvement, a new four mile dual carriageway connecting the M6 and M56 in south east Manchester, to show how using BIM enabled construction teams to flag potential problems prior to working on-site and led to significant productivity gains during the design phase.

In the final Q&A session, the audience raised issues such as the saturation of data in the modern world, the lack of digital skills within the workforce, public sector procurement and how this can be made more agile to encourage innovation, and making a case for transport investment in areas where there may not be an immediate return in terms of economic value. DWF's Jonathan Moss brought the event to a close, summarising the key points of discussion raised throughout the morning and highlighting some of the emerging technological trends that may impact on the transport sector, from driverless cars to wearable tech that provides real-time travel updates.