

6 Understanding the Customer

“Highways will serve an increasingly diverse and dynamic customer base. Everyone, young or old, on leisure and work journeys, will experience a responsive and positive travel experience.”

Long Term Goals

- ▶ Understand user behaviour including driving in different trunk road conditions, stress reactions, queuing, weather variations and link these to both on and off-road information systems.
- ▶ Balance the simplicity and freedom of the private vehicle against continued, uncontrolled and unfeasible use of the car (e.g. winning votes, ‘User Acceptance of Automated Highways Study’, etc).
- ▶ Consider response to increased urbanisation (e.g. prevent or minimise severance, general accessibility, provision of optimum suitable network, etc).

Short Term Actions

- ▶ Find out who is using the network, when and how. (NB the Route Management Strategies and the Multi-Modal Studies have collected a lot of information but this is usually geared to the ‘peak’ - although they also deliberately avoid holiday periods. There is a need for the HA to know more about off-peak and leisure travel).
- ▶ Promote best service available, across all modes, appropriate to the specific journey (e.g. targeting different user groups as undertaken by the route management studies).
- ▶ Make targeted use of stakeholder consultation panels and set up Citizens Juries to feed in to HA decision making process.
- ▶ Commission research to evaluate communication strategies - is the message getting across.
- ▶ Audit HA operations for communication and meeting the needs of minority groups (e.g. people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, people with learning difficulties). This will also include ensuring the socio-economic profile of HA’s own staff and its suppliers (e.g. construction firms) reflects its diverse customer base. Ethical procurement in this way will help to meet new “Greening Government” obligations.

Case for Network Operator Action

- ▶ Future trunk road management strategies will involve more intervention by the HA to control the use of the network. In order to do this effectively, it will be necessary to know much more about who wants to use the network, how, when and why.
- ▶ Better information about user priorities and tradeoffs will enable optimisation of demand for road space and customer 'buy-in'.
- ▶ Future use will be more evenly spread with more leisure and weather driven patterns of use. People will drive longer distances for both leisure and work. Regional migration will have significant implications for traffic flows on the trunk road network. The concept of 'peak' will decline but there will still be significant surges. The modal mix will also differ by time and area. Understanding and predicting these patterns is a prerequisite for planning infrastructure, personnel and pro-active traffic management.

Supporting Information

- ▶ UK population forecast to increase by almost 10% (1998 base) by 2030 to 65M.
- ▶ Number of household forecast to increase by 19% by 2021.
- ▶ Proportion of population over 60 is expected to rise from 20% in 1998 to 30% by 2031.
- ▶ People will have more available leisure time.
- ▶ Changing lifestyle demands new and sharpened skills for the workforce (e.g. 'e'-lifestyle changes, etc).