

Moving Variable Messaging Signs (Taxi Top)

TfL Lane Rental Industry Publication



Introduction

London is experiencing sustained economic growth and a rise in population that is set to continue into the foreseeable future. London's roads therefore need to be transformed to meet future challenges created by additional demand for jobs and homes, and so an unprecedented volume of roadworks is being undertaken by TfL, London Boroughs, developers and utility companies.

This level of activity is putting extreme pressure on the network and despite the sophisticated systems already in place to manage and mitigate the impacts of congestion; significant disruption and delays to road users will still be experienced.

It is critical therefore to keep innovating and finding new ways of maximising the efficiency of the road network and informing our customers of restrictions to help them make travel choices.



The Project

A proof-of-concept trial was carried out to display traffic related information on 200 taxis that were fitted with digital rooftop advertising boards. The aim was to use these targeted messages to inform road users of traffic conditions and planned works at 50 localities where there are known or expected delays as a result of roadworks.

The main objective of the trial was to prove if GPS technology could relay information displayed on fixed roadside variable message signs (VMS), with messages only triggered when a Taxi entered a zone within a pre-defined distance of the VMS. This ensured that road users were provided with consistent and current that was specific to the geographical region, thus enabling them to reroute their journey as required.

A customer survey was commissioned to understand road user thoughts on this concept.



Outcomes

The trial aimed to improve information on traffic conditions and roadworks for the following stakeholders:

- Taxi drivers
- Drivers
- Pedestrians
- Freight and fleet

Of the 500 customers surveyed, 50% acknowledged the campaign, which was 10% higher than the baselined measure. Other outcomes include;

- 48% felt positive about it
- 38% found that it helped them plan their commute.
- 64% viewed the display at least once per week
- 60% preferred the white on blue design over black text on an orange background



Conclusion/Recommendations

This initial trial was considered a success as it confirmed the operability of the technology and returned positive views from the road user community. TfL will now (through alternative investment) progress with delivering the next phase of their communications strategy by applying this proven concept to digital dot matrix signs that can be retrofitted to the backs of buses.

The roll-out will initially be restricted to buses on route 344 (operating between Clapham Junction and Liverpool Street) for a period of six months, before widening to a second route, the 415 (operating between Tulse Hill and Old Kent Road).

Following this a further road user survey will be undertaken to understand how road users engage with this information channel and if they altered their journeys based on the information received. If successful, TfL will then consider wider rollout of the displays to more buses.

TfL Lane Rental Scheme

Optimising customer journeys through the delivery of safer, innovative and sustainable roadworks



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