



Miles Jackson  
Department for Transport  
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Dear Miles

**NaPTAN maintenance**

I write in response to our recent discussions regarding the maintenance of the national database of bus stops etc, NaPTAN.

Accurate and reliable bus information depends critically on the ability of operators (and others) to present data in a consistent manner. The more competitive the marketplace, and therefore the more choice that travellers have, the more important this consistency becomes.

The NaPTAN database is one of the most powerful assurances of this consistency: a shared list of bus stops, named and localised the same way for all operators, and freely available to third party service providers. The UK's decision to construct and maintain such a database, well over ten years ago – when public transport information was much less mature – was profound and far-sighted. Since then, the quality and availability of NaPTAN data has been steadily improved, and it now represents one of the most popular downloads from the Government's open data portal.

With the increasing relevance of public transport information services, and the maturing of the information marketplace, it is timely to review how NaPTAN can be sustained in the future. At present, local authorities maintain and update this data locally, working closely with local bus operators. However this is current done as a voluntary activity, and is necessarily under pressure as local budgets are tightened. Data maintenance can therefore be inconsistent between authority areas, and may not always be as timely or as accurate as would be ideal.

While recognising the implications of such a regulatory step, we therefore consider that it is time to put NaPTAN maintenance on a firmer footing, by making it a statutory obligation on local authorities (of course including the Combined Authorities). This would build on the existing "presumption" of open data publication for a specific, important, set of local base data.

The details of such an obligation would of course need to be carefully considered and consulted on, and RTIG would be happy to assist the Department in considering such details.

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For the record, this position has been compiled with the unanimous support of the current RTIG Committee which includes local public authorities, bus operators, and system suppliers.

Yours

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MC', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Mark Cartwright  
Managing Director