NaPTAN Technical Group

Notes of meeting on 21st October 2020

Attendees:

Present:
Adrian Falconer - DfT
Angharad Murray – Suffolk County Council
Arsalan Hussain - DfT
Ben Noble - DfT
Corey Drewry - DfT
Dan Saunders - Basemap
David Batchelor - Ticketer
David Mountain - TransportAPI
Rob West - Elydium
Geoffrey Williamson – Hertfordshire County Council
Gerard Butler – TfL
Gerardo Iachetta - DfT
Graham Browne - WYCA
Graham Pether – Go Ahead Group
Mark Hodgkiss – Cumbria County Council
Ian Barratt – Lancashire County Council
J Harrison - Thoughtworks
James Hutchings - DfT
John McCabe - TfGM
Kalyani Homkar Desai - Basemap
Keith Willis - React Accessibility
Kerrie Shackcloth - WYCA
Kim Harper – Durham County Council
Lee Dandy – Essex County Council
Lisa Geraldie - WYCA
Louise Martin – West Berkshire
Mark Taylor – Staffordshire County Council
Michael Haydock - DfT
Michael Muntus - SYPTE
Mike Baxter – Leicester City Council
Nicolas Cary - Waysphere
Oliver Westphal - HiTouch
Peter Stoner – ITO World
Rebecca Roe - SYPTE
Reem Al-Jelawi - DfT
Roger Court – Kent County Council
Sonya Sparks – Essex County Council
Tansy Appleby – Traveline Cymru

Thomas Carter - SYPTE
Tim Rivett - RTIG
Tony Brown – Essex County Council
Tricia Wright – Nottinghamshire County Council

Apologies

1) Introductions

This is the first meeting of this group, it is designed to be technical but in this meeting the background and work over the last few months by the Department of Transport on NaPTAN will be covered.

The group introduced themselves.

2 / 3) Setting the Scene & Way Sessions Work

Adrian Falconer introduced the proposed way of working – the department would like to use the group to test ideas before committing to development or change.

The Government Digital Service (GDS) process for digital delivery will be being followed.
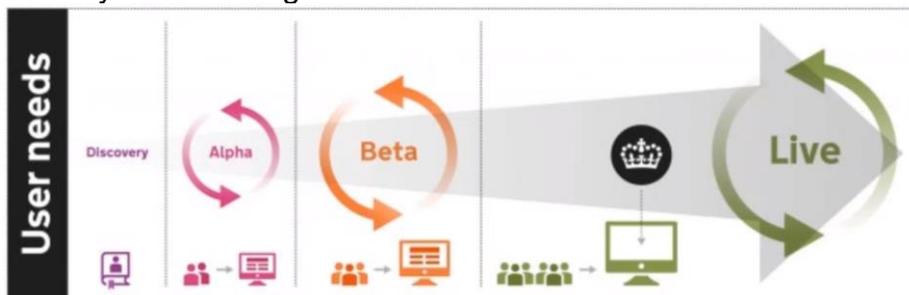
The Department has already had a discovery project.
Adrian will circulate the discovery project report

Adrian
Falconer

Key discovery findings were:
- NaPTAN must adapt to changes in transport
- Technology used to build current NaPTAN database need to change to be supportable.
- The NaPTAN eco-system is delicate

There are a number of different projects dealing with NaPTAN at the moment:
NaPTAN Service
OpenNaPTAN

NaPTAN Rebuild
Bus Open Data

The focus of this group will be the rebuilding of NaPTAN

The short term objectives for NaPTAN rebuild have been completed:
- Security issues
- Support model
- Compliance with accessibility legislation

Over next 3 months:
- Prototype new database
- Train DfT
- Strategy for implementation

Next period of 8-10 months will see:
- Rebuild NaPTAN database with new technology
- Ensure skills in DfT to maintain and support.

4   Key Themes for the Meeting

4.1   Data Upload Preferences

Currently data uploaded using TFP. This is not secure and needs to change.

Propose a change to SFTP but know this will require changes for Authorities and want to understand how much of an impact this will have.

A lot of data consumers use CSV to download the NaPTAN data.

There is no change only downloads at the moment, would be useful but each record has change dates so easy to find out what has changed from a full download.
Data volume for NaPTAN is not large compared to other datasets being handles such as Traveline National Data Set (TNDS).

Developing an API and introducing change only data updates was not important for data consumers- they have working systems that would need investment if things change.
Would rather have work done on data quality and accuracy.

The Department has 4 concepts for what NapTAN could and should be:
- Owned collectively (its not the DfT's data)

- Dynamic (data changes)
- Modular (can develop and change)
- Self-Heal / Correct itself

There is a concept that will be tested during Alpha that the NaPTAN database should be able to consume stop data in a range of formats and output in a range
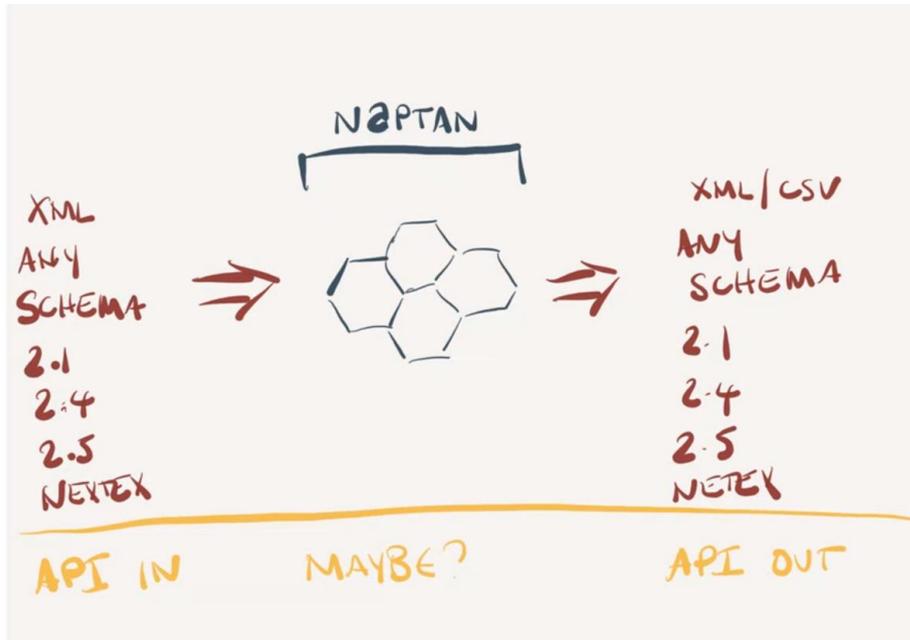
The proposals change the backend and interfaces but not the data fields.

The Department is cautious about removing any interfaces but it is a fragile system.

There is an awareness some parts of the overall NaPTAN system are broken, but don't know if recent changes have done that or they haven't worked for 8 years.

Archiving of stops was discussed. Sometimes stops are moved to the North Sea to get them off the map to stop them being used when they don't exist on street anymore where the software cannot hide archived stops.

4.2   Schema Versions

Some software in use by Authorities support new versions of NaPTAN.

Data producers will have a cost whatever is changed as software will need updating in many places to be able to support versions newer versions than v2.1.

Guidelines on what version is expected, which fields are mandated and naming advice is needed to help Authorities with their new obligation to maintain NaPTAN.

Currently data is supplied in 2.1 – even if software already supports 2.4 or 2.5 then the data may not comply.

Accessibility information about bus stops is lacking in NaPTAN and the current database cannot handle anything above version 2.1.

A separate session on Accessibility in NaPTAN would be sensible.

Adrian Falconer / Tim Rivett

Can people provide accessibility data?

Some Authorities already have accessibility data – for example South East Traveline areas.

Accessibility was originally implemented for the Olympics and the approach taken was by exception – assume bus stops are accessible and mark on an exceptional basis where they were not accessible. This made the work much simpler pre Olympics.

4.3 Reporting Suspected Errors

Currently a lot of Authorities have a good working relationship with operators and work with them to address issues.

Concern if Operators had direct access to update NaPTAN or report problems in a visible way as it could lead to significant needless work for authorities.

Some examples of operators gaming the system were given. Stop locations are not as simple as marking a spot on the map – there need to be site surveys to check the location is safe etc.

There is a challenge to find out who in an Authority is responsible for bus stops / maintaining NaPTAN – a directory of contacts for each ATCO area would be very helpful.

5.   AOB

None raised

6.   Next Meeting

Adrian and Tim to arrange in a couple of weeks.   Adrian
Falconer /
Tim Rivett