

Consultation: The future of UTMC

Summary of responses

4 July 2011

This paper

In June 2011 the UTMC Development Group (UDG) conducted a consultation among stakeholders on options for the future of UTMC. This note summarises the responses received.

Responses received

Responses were received from the following individuals and/or organisations. Most of these were explicitly corporate responses, but some were personal.

- Atkins
- Cloud Amber
- East Renfrewshire
- Envitia
- Hamilton Purdie, Glasgow City Council
- Hampshire County Council
- Gary Umpleby, Hogia
- IDT
- Interglossa
- ITS(UK)
- Transport for London
- Peter Jones, Liverpool 2020
- Merseytravel
- Peter Bull, Sheffield City Council
- Siemens
- Swarco UK
- Techspan
- Telent
- Transport for Greater Manchester
- VixACIS
- Dave Matthewson, Warwickshire County Council
- Ed Riches, WSP

We are grateful for all those who took the time to respond.

The attachment to this note summarises the responses on a question by question basis. Note that not all respondents answered every question, and a few respondents did not tie their response to specific questions; in the latter case we have inserted comments at the point they best fit. In addition, we have tried to avoid repetition; where respondents made essentially the same comment under various questions, we have consolidated these as much as practical.

Next steps

The results of this consultation exercise will be discussed at the UDG Management group meeting on 13 July. As indicated in the original consultation document, this may result in additional, one-to-one, discussions with third parties.

Responses to individual questions

General questions

Q1. Should the UTMC initiative continue? Why?

The unanimous view of those responding was that UTMC should continue. The original goals of providing central guidance on the efficient and effective use of traffic management technologies were felt to remain, even to have increased. The key benefits were the reduction of duplicated development effort, the reduction of integration cost and risk, and the acceleration thereby of more efficient and effective traffic management around the country.

A small number of respondents noted the de facto role of UTMC within the UK's response to the European ITS Action Plan.

Q2. Are there specific activities which a continuing UTMC initiative needs to undertake?

Most respondents highlighted the general function of maintaining existing standards, and creating new ones in light of ongoing developments. A substantial number suggested that a closer alignment was needed with external standards, especially DATEX II but also NTCIP and RTIG standards.

Some respondents suggested that there is a need for a more deep-rooted review of the UTMC systems approach, to address developments in ICT technologies. This would include, for instance, a much greater focus on non-Common Database architectures.

A few respondents provided specific points for investigation: trial the unified UTC MIB ("UG405"), formalise the HTTP/XML exchange protocols.

The potential for expanding horizons was a widespread theme: moving into other SCADA-type sectors, or into other parts of the world. The potential for formalising UTMC as a European standard was mooted.

One respondent suggested that UTMC should be carried out by DfT (or at least with more DfT input). Another noted that if DfT/HA took a more rigorous stance to UTMC implementation, then UTMC would necessarily become formally supported (eg as part of an executive agency).

Q3. Should the *technical* aspects of UTMC continue in essentially their current form? If not, please indicate what changes you believe are necessary.

Most respondents felt that the technical work of UTMC should continue as is. Some added that it needs to be more dynamic, to keep up with technology developments.

One respondent felt that the reliance on voluntary developments was inadequate, and that professional support would be beneficial. However others suggested strongly that technical work should remain a voluntary activity.

One respondent felt that there was a need to better client oversight to ensure that the spec meets operational needs. The reluctance of user authorities to get involved in technical details was, however, noted.

One respondent felt radical change was needed: the abandonment of CORBA in favour of XML, a move away from CDB-based architectures, the inclusion of enforceable compliance testing. The suggestion was that UTMC should step back from technical standards, leaving this to Europe, and focus instead on good-practice guidance.

One respondent suggested that UTMC specifications should be made open source, “so that work can continue on them in a variety of settings and organisations”.

Q4. Should the *non-technical* aspects of UTMC continue in essentially their current form? If not, please indicate what changes you believe are necessary.

While there was some support for the current arrangements, views were mixed.

Many respondents suggested that was scope to do more of this on a voluntary basis, especially in coordination with other groups such as ITS(UK), RTIG and TSG. Several felt that non-technical aspects should really be left to others, in particular ITS(UK), which were better set up for the purpose.

Some respondents felt that the area of outreach needed to be extended and enhanced, perhaps using new-tech options like web conferencing. Conversely, a small number of respondents felt that there was no longer a need for a separate conference, and that UTMC stakeholders should instead contribute to other events.

A small number of respondents felt that outreach should be undertaken by DfT.

Q5. Are the identified Scenarios reasonable ones to consider? If not, please indicate why.

The five identified scenarios were felt by most respondents to be reasonable ones to consider. Some, however, felt that Option 2 (“go commercial”) should not be considered as it undermines the fundamental principles of the initiative. One respondent felt that only Option 1 (“DfT funding”) was reasonable, while another felt that only Option 4 (“gift to another organisation”) was reasonable.

One respondent felt that under Option 4 it would be necessary to “covenant” any organisation to whom UTMC was gifted, in order to ensure that its founding principles were protected.

Q6. Are Scenarios 1-5 prioritised sensibly? If not, please indicate why.

There was a mixed response to this question. Some respondents felt that the Scenarios were sensibly prioritised, and almost all accepted that Options 1 (“DfT funding”) and 5 (“close down”) were correctly placed at top and bottom respectively.

However, many respondents felt that Option 2 (“go commercial”) had many problems, and should fall below Options 3 (“voluntary UDG”) and 4 (“gift to another organisation”). A small number felt that Options 3 and 4 should be reversed, because a voluntary approach would not be sustainable. Two respondents, both suppliers, felt that Option 4 was preferable to Option 1.

Q7. Are there other scenarios that we should be considering? If so, which?

Few respondents suggested any other scenarios.

A small number proposed a hybrid option of transferring out secretariat functions, but retaining technical authority. A few suggested other potential means of raising money: a product levy, a “self-funding website”, or training workshops.

One respondent suggested the option of morphing UTMC to an operations-focussed initiative, with all technical standards work left to Europe.

Q8. Is a professional secretariat necessary? Why?

The great majority of respondents felt that a professional secretariat was either necessary or at least offered significant advantages. A few of these noted that it might be possible to obtain professional secretariat at no cost, if it were provided as a service by an existing professional organisation; however this would be easier to achieve for administrative functions than for technical functions.

A small number noted that a professional secretariat would not be necessary or relevant under a voluntary model for the UDG. One respondent pointed out that, however effective it might be, the work of the secretariat is not very visible.

Specific questions

Q9. In a commercial model, who might pay and what would they pay for?

The general thrust of answer to this question was that this should not be considered, as UTMC needs to be independent; some pointed out that a commercial model would create resistance from LAs, others that it might give rise to “competitors”, which would negate the basic point of UTMC.

Q10. Is it feasible and desirable to take UTMC commercial? If so, please indicate whether this should be done by the UDG or by another party.

Following on from Q9, most respondents felt that the answer was no to this question. A small number said it might just be possible provided the body in question were clearly national in remit – perhaps the HA, or failing that “a similarly aligned body such as ITS(UK)”.

Q11. Which secretariat functions could be delivered through voluntary mechanisms? By whom?

There was a variety of answers to this question. Some respondents said that it was hard to see where any volunteer resource could come from, or noted that voluntary services could not be relied on.

Some respondents said that basic administrative functions (eg convening and minuting meetings) could be done by volunteers. Others noted that specification development had always been done largely with volunteer effort and that this could continue, although it would have to be “policed” to avoid commercial interests taking over.

A small number of people suggested event organisation could be handled through organisations like ITS(UK) on a voluntary basis.

One respondent suggested academic institutions, although it is not clear what services this was to cover.

Q12. Which other organisations could UTMC feasibly be gifted to?

There were a wide variety of suggestions in response to this question.

The most popular suggestions were ITS(UK) (six respondents) and RTIG (five respondents); one respondent went further and hypothesised a three way tie-up between UTMC, RTIG and ITSO.

Three respondents suggested standards bodies – BSI, CEN, ISO. Three respondents suggested central Government – DfT or HA (and one further suggested DBIS).

Two respondents suggested a consortium of key companies in the sector.

Other suggestions include professional institutions (IHT, IET, ICE) or TRL, each made by one respondent.

A small number of respondents noted that this question should really apply only to UTMC administrative functions, and that the specifications either should not be gifted, or (for one respondent) logically could not be gifted.

Q13. Would another organisation be in a better position to raise external funding, or secure the necessary support services on a voluntary basis, than the UDG? If yes, which, and why?

Most respondents to this question said no-one would be in a better position to raise fund. A few respondents suggested that ITS(UK) or RTIG might be in a better position – noting that this would at least eliminate multiple membership fees.

Q14. If UTMC were gifted to another organisation, what should happen to the UDG?

The great majority of respondents to this question felt that the UDG would need essentially to remain, albeit possibly in altered form to fit within the host organisation (a “UTMC users forum”, ITS(UK) interest group, or subgroup within RTIG).

Two felt that the UDG should be disbanded.

Q15. If UTMC closed down, for how long should the current Specification be kept available?

The general response to this question was that the Specification should be available indefinitely, and for at least ten years. One respondent noted that it was in the public domain already, so there was no question of “making it available”.

Two respondents said that an unsupported UTMC Spec would have a limited “shelf life” – not likely to be more than 3-5 years. While the Spec might remain public longer than this, its value would rapidly decrease.