Statement D81-1996
VHF/FM radio - Radio Data System - RDS-TMC (Traffic Message Channel)

EBU Committee	*First issued*	*Revised*	*Re-issued*
BMC	1996		

Keywords: Radio Data System (RDS)

The EBU, considering the recommendations of the Eurotravel '96 Conference [1], is keen to support the broadcast sector in those European countries proposing to introduce RDS-TMC.

New message generation systems, manual or automatic, will create many new sources of Traffic and Travel Information (TTI) which will require editorial management by broadcasters, to ensure compatibility on-air between RDS-TMC and the continuing spoken travel messages on radio and TV, together with teletext on TV and other TTI data services, for example, graphical displays of traffic conditions to car receivers and to personal portable computers, that broadcasters may wish to offer. Basic TTI services should be made available to any media outlet requesting information, on the basis that traffic information services, RDS-TMC included, are offered free-of-charge to the user.

Previously, the EBU had proposed and been awarded a contract by the European Commission to undertake a support action called the EPISODE Project, from January 1996 to March 1998. The EBU also wishes to highlight the Resolution (95/C 264/01) of the Council of the European Union of 28 September 1995 [2], where the use of RDS-TMC is particularly recommended, to achieve the best possible public access to wider Traffic and Travel Information (TTI).

The EPISODE Project is assessing the research and implementation projects, in the European Commission 4th Framework Research and Technology Development programme, with "TMC (Traffic Message Channel) components" at the European and national levels and is creating a single database of activities that affect broadcasters. It is vital to the broadcast sector, that the EPISODE Project coordinates broadcasters, network operators, data service providers and equipment suppliers to ensure common approaches and economic solutions, now that many RDS-TMC implementation proposals are nearing readiness. It should be noted that full-specification broadcast systems for the provision of continuous, 24 hours per day, delivery of RDS-TMC have not been assembled before.

The integration of TTI messages, no matter where they are generated, into existing transmissions is a complex matter. So that existing broadcasting is not compromised, great care will be needed in adding RDS-TMC data to existing programme-related data systems. Broadcasters will ensure that the spoken messages correspond to the encoded RDS-TMC messages, and will generally aim at a continued highly-reliable service to be provided to the user/listener.

It is considered crucially important that RDS-TMC receivers come to the retail market in 1997 with three key items resolved:

- All principal European languages must be available.
- Basic location tables for the whole trans-European road network must be available.
- Payment mechanisms, probably using smart cards, must allow the parties involved to establish both free-of-charge services and value-added services, with appropriate cost-sharing and revenue recovery agreements.

The EBU is acutely aware of the cost issues implied by new TTI services, delivered by RDS-TMC, and wishes to see an open debate between data service providers, broadcasters and transmission operators to ensure that fair charges for transmission facilities are agreed, which will allow successful and quick implementations of RDS-TMC.

The EBU urges the parties to implement their systems on the basis that RDS-TMC delivery, via VHF/FM radio, will be needed for many years to come and without relation to the timescales and steps associated with their DAB developments. At the same time they are encouraged to utilize RDS-TMC message management systems for their DAB-TMC strategies, to lower DAB infrastructure development time and costs. This will lead to the widest possible acceptance of TMC services by both delivery mechanisms over the long term, giving the opportunity for enhanced services to be exploited when appropriate.

Bibliography

[1] EBU RAD 2023 (r), SPG 8909, Appendix A: Recommendations from Eurotravel ’96 (With the End-user’s Needs in Mind)

[2] Official Journal of the European Communities, No C 264/3: Council Resolution of 28 September 1995 on the deployment of telematics in the road transport sector