HAUC(UK) App

HAUC(UK) Lane Rental Industry Publication

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON

Introduction

With limitless amounts of information available at our fingertips, being able to retrieve it easily, while ensuring reliability of the information is vital, particularly in the road and street works sector. With more works being undertaken than ever before and the people involved in the process also increasing, providing planners and designers through to the operatives out on the network, with the latest information is essential to keeping both London and the UK moving.

The pandemic highlighted the speed at which information is needed, with working practices changing overnight to support the latest government advice. Street works were vital during this time, with a large majority of the population working from home, placing additional demand on service networks. Changes needed to be made quickly and with clarity to convey temporary legislation and guidance, to maintain services safely.

The Highway Authorities and Utilities Committee (HAUC(UK)) was established in 1986, and since then, it has strived to bring local authorities and utilities together to ensure street and road works are carried out in a coordinated, timely and safe way. HAUC(UK) has advised government, supported changes in legislation and devised numerous codes of practice. Supporting collaborative and proactive approaches, it's widely seen as one of the most effective cross-industry groups supporting our wider UK infrastructure.

With substantial legislation, codes of practice and guidance available in relation to the works that take place on the road network, HAUC(UK) identified a fundamental need to improve communications with its extensive community. With almost everyone now owning a smart phone, a project was established to utilise this communication channel, to keep workforces and the general public safe.

The Project

Designed to make better use of existing technology to improve safety, while harnessing mobile device habits, the project set out to get information directly into the pockets of those planning works and those working onsite. Named the HAUC(UK) App, the development focused around three areas of work:

- Developing a digital and searchable copy of the 'Safety at Street Works and Road Works: A Code of Practice', commonly referred to as 'The Red Book' for mobile devices.

- Delivery of several walk-throughs of common scenarios that operatives might use as a checklist when carrying out work onsite.

- Developing a process which could get information to people directly such as, news, alerts and guidance.

The Red Book is considered one of the most important guidance documents for the street and road works industries as its focus is on doing things correctly to keep colleagues and the public safe. The main driver for the app was to enable the relevant workforces to easily access the code of practice. Until now the only way to check the requirements was for people to have a paper copy with them.

Now, an easily searchable digital version of it has been produced, it is expected to supplement, or greater still, replace the onsite hard copy. Accessed via the internet, it is available on any smart phone, tablet or computer, and does not require an app to be downloaded, making it really easy to access.

Other Project Drivers

The ability to support operatives through working processes in a practical way, which match those already provided by some companies for consistency. The aim here was to provide quick and easy step by step reminders of best practice, that could act as a checklist. This way, staff could double check they were doing things correctly and nothing had been forgotten.

Information, documents, advice notes and guidance has historically been disseminated through emails or hard copy which is not an efficient means, Pushing notifications through the app to those on the ground would be promptly received and read onsite. A key requirement for the project was to keep everyone up to date with news, changes to legislation and good practice by putting the information directly into pockets through mobile devices.

The most notable element is that while information is updated live, even if a user is in a low signal area, or not on a Wi-Fi network, the app will cache the latest information so that users can access it offline. The content will then automatically update when users next get a signal.

Outcomes

Since the launch of the HAUC(UK) app last year, its received extremely positive feedback. Reporting has shown users are accessing all three aspects of the app, with the Red Book changing the way many people work.

The app proved particularly useful during the pandemic, given the number of updates, with information being able to be changed quickly. The other benefit is that everyone gets the same message so there is no risk of misinterpretation.

The number of activities on the checklists continues to grow as more people interact with the app, some of whom have only received information indirectly in the past. In some instances, companies are actively promoting the use of the app on work devices which is increasing the speed of uptake.

Using geolocation, the app is also able to provide the relevant information based on where the user is located. This will be particularly useful when close to borders between nations.

A feedback loop has been incorporated which allows users to suggest new developments, already receiving several for review already.

In the first nine months after launch, the app received over 20,000 users, with over 1,000 sessions a week. Growth is steady, with further publicity later in the year, the aim is to attract 2,500 session a week.

Lessons Learnt

The project experienced minor delays in delivery as the project was mainly managed by volunteers, some of whom left the sector during the early stages. This was mitigated by the appointment of GeoPlace to support HAUC(UK) with development. GeoPlace provided a dedicated resource enabling the completion, once appointed, in 18 months.

Publicity through different mediums is key for wider promotion. This resulted in the 'Save Dave' video which outlines app functions and how by using it, will assist Dave to go about daily activities safely. In the days following both the video launch and promotion of it at events, there was a marked increase in app users, with the video continuing to be used as promotional material to increase awareness and usage.

Conclusion

The app has proved to be a great success, with some users changing the way they work. HAUC(UK) intends to continue to roll out the app further and widen its usage. To do this, a PR campaign that focusses on a multi-faceted approach will be implemented, working with individuals and companies to support its roll out..

Now that a direct link to the wider workforce has been established, there is the potential to do much more, including development for access to other codes of practice. A clear example would be the addition of the Specification for Reinstatement of Openings in Highway (SROH), and further development of the geolocation functionality to provide more localised information and guidance.

The project has enabled the ability to communicate and connect much more widely with the community, broadening reach. The hope is to explore further developments which could provide even greater benefits going forward.

This is only the beginning. Both the app itself and its use will continue to grow in the coming years. The possibilities are endless.

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TfL Lane Rental Scheme

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

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