Notes from Automotive Workshop XXI

24th June 2025

Nick Piggott and Rosie Smith set the context of the workshop as being an opportunity to interactively discuss issues and problems we are experiencing with the implementation of broadcast radio in vehicles right now. The agenda is user-generated by the attendees, and Nick and Rosie thanked everyone for their contributions.

Detailed minutes of the discussions are not circulated, and individual contributors are not attributed unless they agree.

Radio Station Logo Website

RadioDNS and WorldDAB are creating a website for users, broadcasters and manufacturers to better resolve issues with logos appearing incorrectly in cars.

Currently the user journeys and wireframes are being designed whilst trying to keep the website GDPR free. As the design progresses, there will be a better understanding of the data needed from OEMs/Tier1s in order for it to function as expected. The designs will be coded and tested internally alongside the acquisition of data that will answer the questions posed by users.

The method of information was discussed, and it was agreed that the most effective method might be through a free-form response to an email prompt. Nick and Rosie will send that out with a view to getting responses from OEMs/Tier 1s/Suppliers by the next Automotive Workshop.

Problems accessing radio functionality from Android Auto and Apple Carplay

In many vehicles that implement Android Auto or Apple Carplay screen mirroring, it is very difficult to access the native broadcast radio functionality. This seems to force people into using apps to listen to the radio. Some implementations do follow the WorldDAB User Experience guidelines by offering a navigation route "outside" the screen mirroring to reach the radio.

The discussion was wide ranging, reflecting the complexity and permutations of experiences that exist. There was discussion of the potential for both Android Auto and Apple Carplay Ultra to provide access to native vehicle functionality, like HVAC and Radio, but it's unclear exactly what that will do or how it will work, which concerned the group. Some broadcasters may prefer for listeners to use their app, others may prefer to promote broadcast radio first, and both ambitions should be supported.

Summary is that the situation is complex, and probably not fully understood on all sides, and broadcasters need to develop a set of consistent and agreed requirements to send to OEMs to put forward to Google and Apple in order to make radio work effectively.

Devising effective Test Drive Routes

Simulating real-life conditions in a lab is very difficult. In addition to needing to simulate multiple received signals of differing and changing qualities, there is also the possibility that a live or captured broadcast signal is incorrect, causing a failure on a receiver or head unit. It was asked if this group should collect data on challenging locations - and if so, what is useful to know and should there be a central database to provide better testing for receiver manufacturers.

Current test routes (on the WorldDAB website) don't consistently describe the range of signals that should be received and the group was asked what guidance would be useful. After discussion it was agreed that drive test routes which describe the expected quality of signal on various frequencies/channels, and the expected receiver behaviour would be of most value.

Action for Rosemary Smith to find out which of this has already been completed by WorldDAB, and if the routes need updating and new test routes need to be created.

Developing Android Automotive Apps

Broadcasters are finding it difficult to develop and test apps for Android Automotive because of inconsistent development environments. It's extremely time consuming to have to test and fix each app on actual production vehicles, by sending them to the OEM, and impractical to have a fleet of actual vehicles to test with.

The conclusion was that this reflects on an implementation inconsistency somewhere between Google, the OEMs and their Tier 1 supplies, which should be addressed.

It was noted that it's the OEM's responsibility to deliver a working and tested broadcast radio app. This discussion was about broadcaster produced streaming apps.

Traffic and Announcement Signalling

This issue has been raised at previous workshops, in relation to establishing consistency and general strategy for announcement signalling. There was no request to discuss this issue at this workshop or the previous one, so we'll assume it's in an acceptable (if potentially still inconsistent) state.

Broadcaster Metadata

It is often very difficult for the broadcaster to validate that the metadata they are providing (e.g RDS information, RadioDNS information) is being correctly acquired by the the head unit. Being able to verify what the head unit is seeing would allow a broadcaster to either correct issues on their side, or more accurately raise a fault with the OEM.

The group was asked what the options for monitoring might be, ranging from a specialised test device, putting a normal production radio into a "debug mode", or providing specialised firmware that can be loaded to a production radio.

It seems it might be possible to get information on how to access debug modes, and Nick & Rosie S will follow up on this.

There was a question about whether broadcaster apps could read metadata from broadcast radio functionality in cars, in order to capture and report it. This seemed a harder ambition because of the necessary system permissions required.

Standards Changes

The group was told about some of the changes to standards in the coming months adding that the technical committee of WorldDAB is addressing some service linking changes. Additionally, the next UX guidelines doc is currently being worked on and will be available shortly, it is important this is looked at by everyone. No questions or discussion.

Forthcoming meetings

The next in person is on November 25th in Berlin, dates for 2026 were shared with the group and to be confirmed shortly.