

Let's Talk Fleet Risk - Episode 14

Collaboration and Innovation to improve road risk across a whole sector

Tavid Dobson, Road Risk Lead, Rail Safety and Standards Board

Simon: Increasingly, good management of work-related road risk is becoming a pre-requisite for winning new work, with the power of procurement being used to drive up standards through supply chains, and even across entire sectors. Rail is one sector where this approach is being rolled out

My guest for this episode is Tavid Dobson who is the road risk lead for RSSB – the Rail Safety and Standards Board. Tavid is leading efforts to get rail sector organisations including Network Rail, train and freight operating companies and construction firms to collaborate on an innovative project to improve road risk management across an entire industry. National Highways and the Driving for Better Business programme are working closely with Tavid to ensure its success.

Tavid, welcome to the show.

Simon: My first question is that everyone understands the railways can be a dangerous environment to work in. What does safety management mean in your world

Tavid: Safety management systems and application is incredibly important – it's a very dangerous environment with lots of engineering and passengers moving around. It helps to recognise lots of incidents over the years like the Kings Cross Fire and Clapham Junction which helps us focus to ensure we manage the risks and the causes of those risks. We now have a mature approach to this management, but the roads area is something we haven't looked at until recently.

Simon: When we talk about the rail sector we think about trains and the obvious risks, but what are the typical road risks you have to manage in the rail industry?

Tavid: This is an interesting question. I think there's an assumption that it's just about road fleets. The rail industry has unique road risk profiles to address. Taxis – procurement of taxis, replacement buses, and there are road fleets obviously. Network rail has a road fleet of 10,000 vehicles and there's the road fleets within each of the supply chain areas. There's also grey fleet, people using 2 wheels, so there's a whole range of areas we have to take account of and obviously the process and standards we are looking at need to address all of those.

Simon: Now I've worked with businesses in other traditional hazardous industries such as energy production or dangerous manufacturing processes, and I've found it can be common in other traditionally hazardous industries for business leaders and safety professionals to focus solely on the hazardous work and either forget, or fail to see the level of risk involved in driving. What's driven the increase in focus on road risk?

Tavid: There's been a number of key areas coming to light – it's been activated by things like CIRUS who identified the issues around fatigue and we've also had a number of fatalities investigated by the LORR recently so I think we realised that road risk is a significant issue when we're killing more of our staff on the roads than on the railway itself.

Simon: What's the split between incidents on road and rail within the sector?

Tavid: Quite a difficult one to pin down because the data we have is quite poor. It's influenced by even as far as the DFT in terms of how the Stat 19 information is provided but within our own safety management info systems it's difficult to get accurate data so quite a lot is anecdotal so we need to encourage companies to provide us with the data.

Simon: In the introduction I talked about this as a collaborative project – I know collaboration is one of your real focuses for this kind of work How are you involving the different areas of the rail sector to make sure we get the right approach as an industry wide approach?

Tavid: The industry has a strategy called Leading Health and Safety of British Railways and road risk is one of the 12 significant areas where we can benefit from collaboration among all the parties. We set up a road risk group to be a forum to bring the parties together and what we've started to do is to introduce sector road risk groups to encourage companies and members to share and to learn and generate good practice for reducing and managing road risk

Simon: So, I sit on one of those groups as do some of my colleagues from National Highways and it's a really insightful place to be because across those groups we've got dozens of people from a huge range of organisations contributing different viewpoints that you wouldn't have thought as you don't have the same experience so it's providing a benefit to a complete understanding of what that risk is about and how it arises and the best options for implementing solutions isn't it?

Tavid: It is and I think the focus around each of the railway sectors with Network Rail as the infrastructure manager, train operating companies an freight operating companies, supply chain and contractors – we've tried to put in a whole range of experts around these people from insurance companies, regulators from ORR and HSE together with other benchmarking partners like TFL and HS2 and this gives us a healthy environment to start sharing good practice and get better analysis so we're better informed on the types of improvement programmes we can focus on across the rail sectors. There is no one size fits all. Each sector has a unique range of risks - taxis and replacement buses, with the supply chain the movement of workers using minibuses and other light goods vehicles and network rail has it's own fleet of 10,000 vehicles so all these sectors require different things to help them manage the risk. The idea is to distil that and working with the Driving for Better Business team we now have a good solution to provide that one stop shop where everyone can go for good guidance and information to help them manage road risk.

Simon: How do you see DfBB contributing to this project? We've been working on this together for some time now, what do you see as the contribution DfBB can bring?

Tavid: Immense. The Railway industry – we're focused on the railway. We even refer to road vehicles as non-rail vehicles. So I am pleased we have developed this relationship. I think of National Highways as the landlord of the roads and the DfBB programme and the key work it's done. We're privileged to have the opportunity to grow and develop the programme to help the rail industry around this collaborative framework we've been building.

We've been lucky to have one of the DfBB representatives as our rail Industry representative providing that guidance to the teams.

Simon: Driving across what needs to happen and how people should be viewing work related road risk because it's easy for people in hazardous industry not to understand the level of road risk so that direct involvement with the Dfbb team working closely with the various partners in this collaboration helping them understand what the best way of approaching this issue is – that's worked well hasn't it?

Tavid: It has and the big area for me is seeing the increase in understanding by the safety management teams. Road risk is a health and safety risk, and we need to make sure the safety management systems are properly addressing this particular risk. It is significant. To be fair, it's a cultural change in behaviours that we are trying to introduce. It's a slow process like change always is but with better data and knowledge and experience we are starting to influence areas like fatigue management, working hours, making sure that journeys are planned better. There are significant changes that are coming which will help to raise that effectiveness.

Simon: The DfBB seven -step framework came out of the work we've done together –to help risk managers, driver managers, work through the necessary steps to improve work related road risk management, starting from raising your own awareness of the issues you need to deal with, understanding base line points and whether there are any gaps in your management systems, how to improve the culture by sharing resources and raising awareness and constantly measuring and monitoring – and then right up to the point where you can start to see benefits and share that as a story to inspire others to do the same. What many people won't realise is that 7 step framework came out of our work together with the rail sector - how are you planning to engage businesses in the rail sector and get them to start using the DfBB framework?

Tavid: Yes, thank-you I think there are 3 key areas which support the 7 steps. The first is the charter which we've introduced – the occupational road risk management charter which is a commitment statement by each of the MDs and CEOs of rail companies and organisations to commit their companies to signing up and using the DfBB programme. That's a significant introduction of commitment of leadership, the ability to support the resources necessary to make it happen. The second step is the introduction of the rail sector page on the DfBB programme website and now the introduction of portals which will help each company to focus on the guidance and be proactive in the DfBB programme to make sure they are properly directed to the resources. The 3rd one is the appointment of the road risk champions who are key – that we identify each representative for each company so we can communicate directly on railway matters like analysis and research and to get better use of the DfBB programme.

Simon: The Road Risk Champions are really important – that's something that other businesses and sectors could easily pick up on. What these companies and organisations are trying to do is identify someone in the organisation, someone who takes on the responsibility of ensuring that these actions are met – they're responsible for leading the engagement with senior managers and with drivers and championing this issue throughout the business. Getting them to take it seriously and being the liaison with the rail industry – a lot of these people are expected to sit on some of these groups and share practice and stories with their counterparts aren't they. It's a really key appointment, isn't it?

Tavid: It is significant, we all remember back in the day when we put the 7 steps together and it's only really worked when somebody understands what those 7 steps are and how to communicate the info to make it happen. The road risk champion is a significant role and as we move forward, we will develop competencies and training around this individual. They do sit on the sector road risk groups, it does feedback into the main road risk groups and we have that point of contact, and these guys are absolutely key to making sure that we raise the awareness of the risk and the ability to make sure it is rolled out across their own companies.

Simon: What do you see as the key next steps with this now because we've got to a point where we have done a lot of the work behind it and developed the programme. We're really starting to get that engagement going with the businesses – the road risk champions are contributing their thought processes and driving it forward. Where's the focus at this particular point in the project?

Tavid: So we're bedding down the sector road risk groups, the rail industry now has 3 out of 4 set up and there's one more to do with the passenger operator sector. Once they're in place we have the opportunity to directly communicate with them. In January 2023 we are launching an annual benchmarking assessment using the DfBB gap analysis tool so that we are able to gather that analysis to determine where each company improve and what it needs to do itself to improve the risk management of occupational road risk and we can also help the sectors to understand what they can work on together to address issues within that organisation and nationally, so we get a picture of how the overall benefits are for the industry as whole. So it's a powerful way forward and that will give us the opportunity to engage with the industry to get that commitment to roll out the continuous improvement we're looking for.

Simon: It is quite an ambitious project with strong goals in improvements in risk management and reduction in incidents – there's a lot of effort gone into this. How is it going to be evaluated by RSSB – the rollout and effectiveness of the programme over the coming years?

Tavid: With the road risk champions in place we have the opportunity to directly have those communications and help to support them. We have got a DfBB rail industry representative working with us but we have a whole team and what we're trying to do is make sure through the sector groups, each rail company has that opportunity to contribute and work with us. Much analysis will be done through survey and through those sector groups and some of it will look specifically at particular areas. One key area is accident investigation. The best way to improve and prevent incidents from happening again is to investigate properly and share those findings and that's an area of great weakness at the moment. We recognise if we can improve that we can make further improvements in effective management of road risk.

Simon: A good final question for you would be - what lessons can businesses, and indeed other sectors, learn from this industry-wide collaboration to raise standards of risk management in their own sectors?

Tavid: The biggest lesson is the willingness to have the conversation and to share data and good practice. I think everybody recognizes that road risk is a risk we all do – we all drive cars, not just around, but also in some cases for work, and everybody thinks they understand the risks. The fact is we kill more people on the roads through work than any

other work force related type of incident and so it's time we helped businesses to recognize the significant impact on their business and their workforce and on the public.

So, my lessons are – engage – and particularly get engaged with Driving for Better Business. They have a great team, they're there to answer questions, I've been lucky to work with them closely over the last 5 years and have the benefit of their knowledge and their expertise

Simon: It's been a great pleasure working with you and all our colleagues on this project. It's a fascinating project and I'm looking forward to continuing that good work over the coming years. Thanks for being my guest today.

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Simon: If you manage drivers and their vehicles, and you face similar issues to those discussed in this podcast, there are links in the show notes to some useful resources on the Driving for Better Business website. And these are all free to access. If you enjoyed the conversation, please don't forget to hit subscribe - so you know when the next episode is released. And please also give us a 5-star review, as this helps us to get up the podcast rankings, and makes it more visible to others who might also find it useful. You can follow us – that's Driving for Better Business on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. And most importantly, please help us to spread the word. All our resources are free for those who manage fleets and their employees who drive for work. Thank you for listening to Let's Talk Fleet Risk, and I look forward to welcoming you to the next episode.