

When fear turns to fury

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In this edition:

6

Feature> When Fear Turns to Fury

Alistair Gollop looks at what the ITS sector needs to do to confront rising public hostility

8

Stuck in Purgatory

In the final of her trilogy, **Paula Clayton-Smith** looks at why ITS struggles to scale

12

2026 Gangneung ITS World Congress

Looking forward to ITS Now's coverage from Korea

14

Korea's ITS Technologies

ITS Korea showcases cutting-edge innovation from one of the world's most advanced mobility nations.

18

ERTICO at 35

Joost Vantomme discusses progress so far in 2026

22

Stuck on Red

Max Sugarman on why the government should be concerned about dot-holes.

26

Cyber Security

Why Modern ITS Equipment Must Be Secure by Design

30

CHIP

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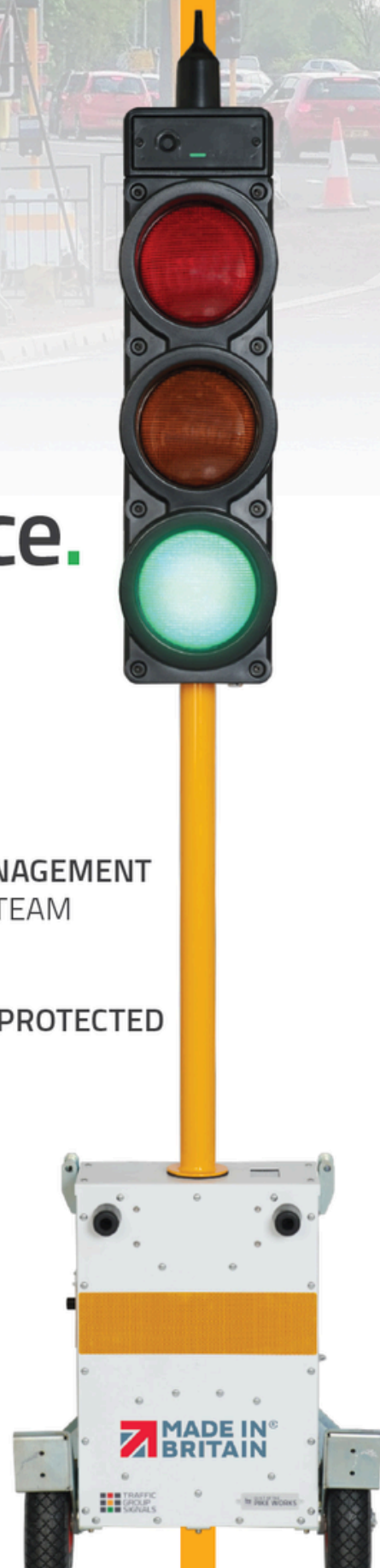
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Hey everyone!

In this edition of **ITS Edge**, in our feature article 'When Fear Turns to Fury', I introduce our Call to Action for the ITS sector to be proactive in response to rising public hostility for the use of technology on our streets caused by conspiracy theories and distrust. This is followed by the third-part of **Paula Claytonsmith's** series, which this time looks at how trust is now the make-or-break factor for ITS.

We are also joined by our partner **ITS Korea** as we prepare for the **2026 ITS World Congress** in Gangneung, we discuss ERTICO's 35th anniversary with **Joost Vantomme**, and look at ITS-UK's new 'Stuck on Red' initiative with **Max Sugarman**.

We also examine the great work being done with modern ITS Equipment to be Secure by Design in our 'Cyber Security' article.

Lastly in this edition is our **Technology Insight** item, where we look at **Chip**, a friendly sidekick which may be defining a new category of 'Life Utility Vehicle'.

See you next time,
Alistair



Find us online at: ITSEdge.org

When Fear Turns to Fury

Alistair Gollop looks at why the ITS sector must confront rising public hostility before it becomes normalised

Across the UK, a quiet but troubling pattern has begun to surface in the world of traffic management and Intelligent Transport Systems. It is not driven by technology, nor by policy, nor by any of the usual forces that shape the sector. Instead, **it is driven by fear, misplaced, unsubstantiated and increasingly weaponised.** Traffic Technology Forum (TTF) members have been raising the alarm about a rise in confrontational behaviour towards people working in traffic systems, and a growing number of incidents where members of the public vandalise, disable, or steal roadside equipment. Vehicle detectors, pedestrian sensors, signal heads, comms cabinets, the very infrastructure that keeps roads safe and transport flowing, are being targeted by individuals convinced that these devices are spying on them.

This is not a fringe phenomenon. It is becoming a pattern. If the ITS sector does not act decisively, it risks allowing a dangerous narrative to take root, **that traffic technology is surveillance technology, and that those who install or maintain it are agents of an untrusted system.**

The irony, of course, is painful. The equipment being vandalised is often the least capable of anything resembling surveillance. Inductive loops buried in the road cannot see anything. Pedestrian push-buttons do not record anyone. Radar detectors measure movement, not identity. Even modern video-based detection systems are designed to classify traffic behaviour. These devices exist to prevent collisions, reduce congestion, optimise signal timings, and protect vulnerable road users. They are the quiet, unglamorous backbone of safe and efficient transport. Yet they are increasingly being treated as symbols of intrusion.

The roots of this hostility run deeper than a misunderstanding of technology. They sit within a wider collapse of trust in public systems, institutions, and data governance. For years, transport has been caught in the crossfire of debates about surveillance, privacy, and state overreach. The public has absorbed a steady diet of misinformation about cameras, sensors, and data collection. Social media amplifies conspiracy theories faster than any local authority can correct them, and Hollywood's depiction of equipment capabilities is, to say the least, wildly wide of the mark. When trust erodes, fear fills the gap. Fear becomes anger. Anger becomes action.

TTF's concerns highlight a critical turning point. When frontline engineers are being shouted at, threatened, or physically confronted for simply doing their jobs, something fundamental has shifted. When roadside equipment is being ripped out of the ground or smashed with improvised tools, the sector cannot dismiss it as isolated vandalism. These acts are not random. They are expressions of distrust. They are signals that a portion of the public no longer believes the transport system is on their side.

The ITS sector must treat this as an early warning and respond with urgency, clarity, and unity.

The first step is acknowledging that the sector has not always been proactive in explaining itself. ITS has traditionally operated behind the scenes, quietly delivering safety, efficiency, and reliability without demanding public attention. That invisibility was once a strength. Today, it is a vulnerability. In a world where people distrust what they cannot see or understand, silence creates space for suspicion. The sector must become far more visible, far more vocal, and far more human in how it communicates.

This means telling the story of ITS in ways that resonate with ordinary people. Not through technical specifications or procurement language, but through human outcomes. A radar detector is not a sensor, it is a device that prevents a child from being hit at a crossing. A traffic signal controller is not a cabinet, it is the reason ambulances reach hospitals faster. A network of detectors is not infrastructure, it is the intelligence that stops a city grinding to a halt. When people understand the purpose, the fear dissolves. When they see the benefit, the hostility softens.

The second step is rebuilding trust through transparency. The sector must be explicit about what data is collected, what is not collected, how it is used, and how it is protected. It must explain, repeatedly and consistently, that most ITS equipment does not capture personal data at all. And where systems do collect identifiable information, such as ANPR for enforcement, the sector must articulate the legal safeguards, retention limits, and governance frameworks that prevent misuse. Trust is not restored through reassurance alone, it is restored through openness.

Local authorities and suppliers should consider publishing simple, accessible “*What’s in your street?*” guides that explain each roadside device in plain language. They should host public demonstrations, open days, and community briefings. They should show people the technology, not hide it. When the public can see how a detector works, the myths lose their power.

The third step is protecting the workforce. No engineer should face aggression for maintaining public infrastructure. Authorities must ensure staff have clear reporting channels, rapid support, and the ability to escalate incidents. Training in conflict de-escalation may become necessary. Joint protocols with police may be required in areas where hostility is rising. The sector must treat frontline safety as seriously as it treats road safety.

The fourth step is addressing misinformation head-on. The ITS community cannot afford to ignore conspiracy theories or false claims circulating online. It must actively counter them with facts, evidence, and calm explanation. This is not about arguing with individuals, it is about ensuring that accurate information is always available, always visible, and always easy to understand. Industry bodies, professional associations, and local authorities should coordinate messaging so that the public hears one clear voice rather than a patchwork of disconnected statements.

Robert Whiteside, Group Engineer, UTMIC at Kirklees Council, has seen this shift at close quarters. Reflecting on recent engagement with people promoting claims about traffic detection equipment, he describes two very different audiences: “*The first are people who are simply curious. They deserve clear, honest explanations about how the technology works, why it is installed and the benefits it provides.*” The second, he says, are those whose views have become so entrenched that “*even manufacturers’ specifications, recognised standards and engineering evidence are dismissed. At that point, the issue is no longer a lack of information but a lack of trust in evidence itself.*”

Whiteside says he has seen Microwave Vehicle Detectors (MVDs), On-crossing and kerbside pedestrian detectors described online as “*phased array weapons, biometric scanners, surveillance devices*” and even as systems designed to trigger nanotechnology supposedly introduced through COVID vaccinations. He notes that military patents, unrelated academic papers and photographs of detector internals are often presented as evidence, despite having “*no demonstrable link to the equipment being discussed*”. What concerns him most is that the misinformation has moved beyond online discussion into real-world vandalism, with detector equipment deliberately damaged and limited public funding diverted away from renewing ageing infrastructure and improving accessibility. “*Some individuals genuinely believe they are protecting the public,*” he says, “*filming themselves carrying out the vandalism because they believe they are exposing the truth.*”

Finally, the sector must recognise that trust is not built solely through communication. It is built through behaviour. When authorities engage communities early, listen to concerns, and demonstrate fairness in enforcement, trust grows. When suppliers design systems with privacy in mind and publish those design principles openly, trust grows. When the sector shows that it values public dignity as much as public safety, trust grows.

The rise in hostility towards ITS equipment and personnel is not yet a crisis, but it is a warning. If ignored, it will escalate. If addressed thoughtfully, it can be reversed. The ITS sector has an opportunity, and a responsibility, to act now, before fear becomes normalised and vandalism becomes routine. Traffic technology exists to protect people, not watch them. It exists to make transport safer, smoother, and more humane. The public deserves to understand that, and the sector must ensure they do.

Call to Action

Join us as we discuss how we as a sector can best be proactive to respond to these concerns. At ITS Now, we will be expanding our series of teaching resources across written and video content on the ITSNow.org website and the @ITSNow YouTube Channel. These will be produced both for adults and children, so could be useful both to correct some myths and to encourage youngsters to join a great industry. We would welcome any other thoughts, comments or assistance on this.

Stuck in Pilot Purgatory

WHY INTELLIGENT TRANSPORT SYSTEMS CAN STRUGGLE TO SCALE

Paula Claytonsmith looks at how trust is now the make-or-break factor for intelligent transport and infrastructure technology. In this article, she sets out what closes the trust gap in practice and what happens when governance and communication lag behind deployment.



Paula Claytonsmith is a leading writer, policy and innovation strategist working at the nexus of transport, advanced technology and policy in the UK. She advises public authorities, industry and policymakers on highway maintenance, AI, intelligent systems and the real-world adoption and implications of emerging technologies. She is a board member of the Institute of Highway Engineers.

In the first two articles in this series, I argued that the future of intelligent transport systems depends on public trust, and that closing the trust gap requires transparency, inclusion, and governance that is built in from the start rather than bolted on after deployment. Both articles pointed, in different ways, to the same uncomfortable truth: we already know what good looks like. The problem is not knowledge. It is execution.

This final article, in this series, asks why execution keeps failing at the same point. Not during trials, which are often technically impressive. Not during evaluation, which frequently shows genuine results. But at the moment when a pilot should become permanent infrastructure. That moment is where intelligent transport systems keep stalling, and the consequences are more serious than the sector has been willing to admit.

The Pattern Has a Name

ERTICO's post-congress report on the 17th ITS European Congress in Istanbul in April 2026 made an observation that deserves more than a passing reference: Europe's ITS sector continues to out-innovate its ability to deploy that innovation at scale. In short, intelligent transport systems have spent the best part of a decade stuck in pilot purgatory, full of promising trials that never quite scaled.

Pilot purgatory. It is a phrase that will resonate with anyone who has worked in this sector. The autonomous shuttle that ran successfully for eighteen months and was then quietly withdrawn when the funding window closed.

The adaptive signal system that reduced journey times by measurable amounts and was never extended beyond the test corridor. The connected vehicle trial that produced an excellent technical report and no permanent deployment.

These are not failures of technology. ERTICO's ITS Market Radar Report 2026, published in March of this year, was direct on this point: the report's lead author, Martina Ferrara Snider, noted that the reality of current pilots remains fragmented and small-scale, and that you cannot understand how solutions work in real-life conditions with a very limited number of pilots and vehicles. The problem is not that the systems do not work. It is that the conditions for scaling them have not been created and I agree with this.

Three Structural Blockers

The ERTICO Market Radar 2026 and the Istanbul Congress findings together point to three interlocking barriers that keep intelligent transport systems trapped between trial and permanence.

Funding structured around projects, not permanence.

Public funding for ITS has largely been delivered through time-limited grant programmes: EU Horizon projects, national innovation funds, city pilots etc. These are often designed to prove concepts, not sustain them. When a pilot ends, the funding ends, and the institutional energy that built the system dissipates. Authorities that want to continue often find there is no budget line for operational systems that were never procured as operational systems. The ERTICO Market Radar 2026 identified budgetary constraints as the primary barrier facing public authorities, noting that the value for money and return on investment of ITS services are not immediately tangible, making it difficult for authorities to justify allocating funds to ITS over more visible competing priorities.

Skills gaps inside the institutions responsible for deployment.

The same report identified a significant and growing skills gap across the ITS sector: rising demand for software engineers, AI specialists, cybersecurity expertise, and data scientists that the public sector workforce is not yet equipped to meet. This matters for scaling in a direct way. Authorities that lack the technical capability to interrogate vendor claims during procurement, to oversee algorithm performance during operation, or to identify and communicate system failures, cannot govern permanent intelligent systems credibly. And systems that cannot be governed credibly cannot maintain public trust.

Fragmented standards that make scale impractical. The Market Radar 2026 also flagged a specific and underappreciated gap between cellular and short-range communication protocols. OEMs already integrating V2X technologies report that the absence of a unified approach makes cross-border, and often cross-authority deployment harder to achieve in practice. A system that works in one local authority area but requires significant re-engineering to operate in the next is not infrastructure. It is a permanent pilot which serves no one.

Why Stalled Pilots Actively Damage Trust

This is the dimension that has been slowest to confront across the board, and it is where this trilogy comes full circle. The ITS sector bears some of this responsibility, but so do governments that structure funding in cycles, institutions that treat pilots as endpoints rather than starting points, and funders that measure success by outputs rather than permanence. This is a shared problem with shared accountability.

In my first article, I argued that trust in intelligent systems is not built once and then banked. It requires sustained investment. Perpetual experimentation does not just fail to build that trust. It actively undermines it.

Every time a pilot is withdrawn, the public draws a conclusion. Not a nuanced one. Not one that accounts for funding cycles or procurement constraints. The conclusion is simple: this did not work, or the people responsible did not care enough to make it last. That conclusion sticks. It is considerably harder to reverse than the scepticism of someone who was never exposed to the technology in the first place. Repeated across enough communities, it becomes the prevailing public view of intelligent systems: promising in theory, unreliable in practice, not for us.

ERTICO's post-congress report on ITS Istanbul 2026 recorded a finding from the opening plenary that deserves to be read carefully: the main obstacles to joined-up travel were no longer technological, but rooted in user behaviour, fragmented digital ecosystems, and a lack of trusted data-sharing arrangements. User behaviour and public trust are not separate problems from deployment at scale. They are consequences of it. A sector that keeps running pilots and withdrawing them is a sector that keeps teaching the public that intelligent systems are experiments, not infrastructure.

What Scaling Actually Requires

ERTICO's own analysis of the Istanbul Congress was clear that cities are entering a new phase, the focus moving beyond experimentation toward delivery, where success is defined not by the number of pilots completed but by the ability to embed solutions into everyday urban life. That shift places greater emphasis on governance, interoperability, and long-term planning: precisely the areas that have received less attention than technology.

What does that mean in practice for the UK and Europe? The honest answer is that it means difficult things. Not technically difficult, but institutionally and politically difficult. It requires changing how money is allocated, how workforces are developed, how standards are agreed, and how contracts are written. None of these are quick fixes. But they are the right fixes, and they are achievable if the will exists to pursue them.

Long-term funding commitments, not grant cycles. Pilots that are intended to become permanent systems need to be funded and procured as permanent systems from the outset. That means capital funding linked to operational budgets, and procurement frameworks that require suppliers to support permanence not just demonstrate capability within a trial window.

>**Workforce investment alongside technology investment.** The skills gap identified by ERTICO is not a background problem. It is a scaling blocker. Public authorities cannot oversee, govern, or maintain trust in systems they do not have the capability to understand. Investment in technical literacy across the public sector workforce is a prerequisite for deployment at scale, not an optional extra.

Standards that are written for cross-authority operation. The protocol fragmentation problem identified in the Market Radar 2026 will not resolve itself. Governments and regulators need to accelerate the standardisation work that makes intelligent systems genuinely portable across boundaries. The EU AI Act and the Digital Decade initiatives are steps in this direction, but the specific communication protocol gaps flagged by the ITS sector require targeted attention alongside broader regulatory frameworks.

Procurement that assumes permanence and demands transparency. As I argued in the previous article, procurement is where trust is either designed in or excluded. The same principle applies to scaling. Contracts that include long-term performance requirements, transparent reporting obligations, and clear failure communication protocols create the conditions for systems that can earn and sustain public confidence over time not just during a funded trial.

The Trilogy Closes Here

Three articles. One argument, built in three stages.

The first established that trust is the decisive factor for intelligent transport systems: not technical performance, but whether the public genuinely believes in them. The second showed what closing the trust gap looks like in practice, and what happens when governance and communication lag behind deployment. This third article makes the structural argument: none of that matters if intelligent systems remain experiments rather than infrastructure.

ERTICO's conclusion from Istanbul 2026 was that the future of mobility will depend not only on innovation, but on the ability to connect systems, data, and stakeholders. That is right. But connecting systems, data, and stakeholders is not a technical problem. It is a political and institutional one. It requires funding decisions that look beyond grant cycles, workforce strategies that build genuine capability, and a willingness to make the long-term commitments that permanent infrastructure demands.

The UK and Europe have spent a decade proving that intelligent transport systems can work. The evidence base is substantial. The pilots have been run, the data gathered, the technical case made. What has not yet happened, consistently or at scale, is the decision to treat these systems as infrastructure rather than innovation.

Until that decision is made, the trust race cannot be won. You cannot build durable public confidence in systems that keep disappearing. And you cannot build the intelligent transport network that safety, sustainability, and resilience all require on a foundation of perpetual trials.

Pilot purgatory is a choice, and it can be reversed. For public authorities, that means demanding permanence in procurement rather than accepting trial windows. For funders and government, it means structuring investment around operational outcomes, not just project deliverables. For the ITS sector, it means making the case for infrastructure commitment as clearly and persistently as it has made the technical case. The evidence is there. The pilots have been run. What is needed now is the decision to build on them rather than repeat them.



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ITS Now, Official Media Partner at The 2026 Gangneung ITS World Congress

ITS Now enters the **2026 Gangneung ITS World Congress** not just as a participant, but as **Official Media Partner** for what promises to be one of the most dynamic and future-shaping gatherings the sector has seen in years. There is a particular energy around this Congress: a sense that Gangneung is not merely hosting the world's ITS community but signalling where the next wave of intelligent mobility innovation will come from. For us at ITS Now, that makes this partnership both a privilege and a responsibility, one we are genuinely excited to fulfil.

South Korea has long been recognised as a global technology powerhouse, but its leadership in intelligent transport systems is now impossible to ignore. The country's approach blends national ambition with regional experimentation, allowing cities and provinces to trial advanced mobility solutions at scale. From connected corridors and autonomous vehicle testbeds to AI-driven traffic optimisation and seamless multimodal integration, Korea has built an ecosystem where innovation is not an aspiration but a lived reality. It is, quite simply, somewhere to watch.

That is why Gangneung, a city with a strong record of digital transformation and a growing reputation for mobility excellence, is such a fitting stage for this year's World Congress. Delegates will arrive to find a country that treats ITS not as a niche discipline but as a strategic national asset. They will also find a host nation eager to share its experience, collaborate openly, and accelerate global progress. As Official Media Partner, ITS Now will be reporting throughout, capturing the stories, insights, debates and breakthroughs that define the week.

We are especially pleased to be working closely with **ITS Korea**, whose partnership has already enriched this edition of ITS Edge Magazine. Their introductory article offers a clear, authoritative and engaging overview of the Korean ITS landscape, with its history, priorities, and the innovations shaping its future. It sets the tone beautifully for the Congress ahead and provides international readers with the context needed to appreciate just how significant Korea's contribution to the sector has become.

Across the week in Gangneung, ITS Now will deliver daily reporting and analysis designed to bring the Congress to life for readers everywhere. Whether you are travelling to Korea or following from home, our aim is simple: to ensure you feel part of the conversation, part of the momentum, and part of the global community driving intelligent mobility forward.

The 2026 ITS World Congress is more than an event. It is a moment, one shaped by a country at the forefront of innovation and a sector ready for its next leap. We look forward to telling the story and sharing it with you through ITS Now and ITS Edge Magazine.



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ITS Korea showcases cutting-edge innovation from one of the world's most advanced mobility nations.

South Korea has long been recognized as a global leader of IT. Today, its Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) stand as a testament to this leadership. With decades of investment in smart infrastructure and transportation, Korea is now demonstrating a new wave of innovation through pioneering companies and demonstration programs that highlight the nation's vision for safer, greener, and more efficient mobility in the fields of AI, transportation edge, digital twin, V2X, autonomous driving, etc. The country's approach is not merely about adopting new technologies but about creating a holistic ecosystem where technology, policy, and everyday life converge to redefine how people and logistics move.

At the core of Korea's ITS ecosystem, there are companies that successfully merge cutting-edge digital solutions with practical applications for everyday transport. From advanced traffic management platforms to AI mobility services, Korean innovators are redefining how cities move. Numerous Korean companies in the field are deploying real-time traffic prediction systems that integrate big data analytics with cloud-based platforms, enabling municipalities to reduce congestion and improve commuter experiences. They are also taking the lead in connected vehicle technologies, ensuring seamless communication between cars, infrastructure, and pedestrians. These efforts are not only improving traffic flow but also laying the groundwork for autonomous driving environments where safety and efficiency are optimised.

A major highlight is Korea's demonstration program, which brings together startups, established enterprises, and public agencies to test and refine next-generation ITS solutions in real-world environments. These demonstrations range from autonomous shuttle services operating in several Korean cities to intelligent road safety systems that leverage sensors and AI to prevent accidents. By fostering collaboration between private innovators and public authorities, Korea ensures that its ITS advancements are not only technologically sophisticated but also widely beneficial. The program emphasises scalability, ensuring that successful pilot projects can be expanded nationwide and even exported abroad.

At the centre of this progress is ITS Korea, the association dedicated to advancing intelligent transportation. Established under the National Transport System Efficiency Act, ITS Korea was founded to provide a legal and institutional framework for the country's ITS development. Its mission is clear: to connect government agencies, research institutions, and private companies, ensuring that innovation is aligned with policy goals and industry needs. Over the years, ITS Korea has grown into a central hub for collaboration, coordinating demonstration programs, promoting international cooperation, and disseminating best practices across the sector. The association's history reflects Korea's broader ITS journey. In the 1990s, Korea began experimenting with traffic management systems and launched pilot projects such as the FTMS on the Gyeongbu Expressway. By 1998, the country hosted the 5th ITS World Congress in Seoul, signalling its ambition to become a global leader. The early 2000s saw the rollout of nationwide ITS standards, the introduction of electronic toll collection (Hi-Pass), and the establishment of model ITS cities like Jeonju and Daejeon. In 2010, Korea again drew global attention by hosting the 17th ITS World Congress in Busan. Building on this momentum, ITS Korea was formally established the following year to institutionalise these efforts and provide continuity.

Today, ITS Korea plays multiple roles. It drives policy and standardisation, ensuring that ITS technologies are interoperable and future-proof. It supports research and development, coordinating national R&D projects and facilitating collaboration between academia and industry. It also serves as Korea's international representative, engaging with global ITS organisations and promoting Korean solutions abroad. Significantly, ITS Korea invests in education and outreach, raising awareness of ITS benefits and training professionals to sustain the industry's growth. The association's membership structure, which includes corporations, universities, and public agencies, ensures that diverse perspectives are represented in shaping Korea's ITS future.



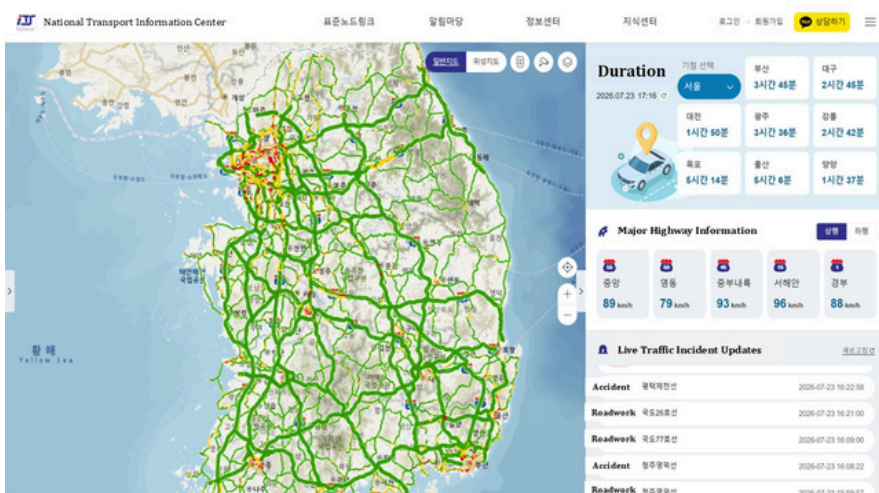
Innovation Driving the Future of Mobility

Sustainability is another pillar of Korea's ITS agenda. The integration of sustainable transportation into ITS platforms is accelerating, with smart charging networks and energy-efficient traffic systems designed to support Korea's ambitious carbon-neutral goals. A number of companies, under the guidance of ITS Korea, are pioneering eco-friendly logistics solutions, using ITS to optimise delivery routes and reduce emissions in urban areas. These initiatives demonstrate how ITS can serve as a bridge between mobility innovation and environmental responsibility, reinforcing Korea's commitment to a sustainable future. Moreover, ITS Korea has begun exploring synergies between renewable energy and ITS, such as integrating next generation energy solutions into smart grids, ensuring that mobility solutions contribute to broader energy transition goals.

Internationally, Korea's ITS technologies are gaining recognition as models for global adoption. Demonstrations have attracted interest from stakeholders across Asia, Europe, and North America, positioning Korean companies as key players in shaping the future of intelligent mobility worldwide. ITS Korea has been instrumental in this process, acting as a facilitator of cross-border projects and ensuring that Korea's innovations are harmonised with global standards. By sharing expertise and engaging in international forums, Korea is not only enhancing its own mobility systems but also contributing to the global advancement of smart transportation. The association's active participation in the ITS World Congress and its leadership in international working groups underscore Korea's growing influence in shaping global mobility norms.

The broader implications of Korea's ITS leadership extend into economic competitiveness and social well-being. By reducing congestion, improving safety, and lowering emissions, ITS technologies directly enhance quality of life for citizens. At the same time, they create new industries and job opportunities in software development, sensor manufacturing, and data analytics. Korea's ability to integrate ITS into urban planning also strengthens its position as a global exporter of smart city solutions, offering a blueprint for other nations seeking to modernise their infrastructure. ITS Korea's role in coordinating these efforts ensures that Korea's ITS ecosystem remains cohesive, forward-looking, and internationally competitive.

As Korea continues to lead ITS innovation, the message is clear: the nation is not only building smarter transportation systems but also laying the foundation for a safer, more sustainable, and more connected future. With its dynamic companies, the leadership of ITS Korea, and forward-looking demonstration programs, Korea is setting new standards in how technology can transform mobility by establishing benchmarks that will inspire and guide the future of transportation worldwide. The country's journey illustrates that intelligent transportation is not just about moving faster, but about moving smarter, cleaner, and more inclusively, ensuring that the benefits of innovation reach all sectors of society.





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ERTICO at 35

From Shared Ambition to Real-World Mobility Impact



As mobility is reshaped by artificial intelligence, connectivity, automation, climate targets and new user expectations, he sees ERTICO's legacy as both credibility and responsibility: to keep shaping trusted, human-centric and sustainable transport systems.

The first half of 2026 has reinforced that view. The annual partner gathering in June was both a celebration and a working session, reminding participants that intelligent transport is no longer judged only by promising pilots or emerging technologies. It is increasingly judged by whether those technologies can be deployed safely, scaled effectively and trusted by the people and organisations that depend on them.

That sense of common purpose was visible at the ITS European Congress in Istanbul, which Vantomme describes as one of the clearest signs of momentum this year. Istanbul was a fitting stage: a city connecting continents and reflecting many of the pressures facing modern transport systems. The Congress brought the international community together around a shared challenge: how to turn innovation into systems that work reliably in the real world.

The message he took from Istanbul was not that the sector lacks ideas, but that ideas now need to be organised around impact. Data sharing, artificial

Alistair Gollop sat down with **Joost Vantomme**, CEO of ERTICO, during the organisation's 35th anniversary year to discuss progress so far in 2026 and the wider direction of intelligent transport. What emerged was less a conventional question-and-answer review than a reflection on a sector moving from ambition into delivery, and on the role collaboration must play if intelligent mobility is to make a visible difference to everyday journeys.

For Vantomme, the anniversary is a moment to acknowledge the distance travelled, but not simply to look back, *"Celebrating 35 years of ERTICO is more than marking an anniversary; it is celebrating 35 years of collaboration, innovation and shared commitment to transforming mobility across Europe and beyond. ERTICO's success has always been built on the strength of its public-private partnership, bringing together industry, public authorities, research and users to turn ideas into real-world deployment."*



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intelligence, automated driving, smart charging, urban logistics and connected infrastructure are all advancing quickly. Their value, however, depends on how they are governed, integrated and understood. The aim must be safer journeys, cleaner mobility, better use of infrastructure, more efficient freight movement and services shaped by citizens' needs rather than technological novelty.

This is why Vantomme returns repeatedly to public-private partnership. Recent months have broadened expertise across shared mobility, digital transport, AI, parking, infrastructure and public-sector innovation. He sees strength not simply in the number of organisations involved, but in the way their perspectives can be connected. A city access policy, a charging strategy, an automated vehicle trial and a mobility data space may appear to belong to different domains, yet each depends on trusted data, clear governance, interoperable systems and user acceptance.

Policy is also moving closer to deployment. Vantomme points to the need for a stronger European funding framework for transport, both to protect competitiveness and to advance climate neutrality and digital sovereignty. Dedicated investment in intelligent transport infrastructure, research and deployment will be essential if Europe is to close the gap between promising concepts and widespread implementation. The same applies to connected and automated vehicles, where work on software-defined vehicles, data, AI and cross-border testing is helping to shape a more coherent industrial roadmap.

As regulation evolves, speed must be matched by care. AI can support safer traffic management, more efficient logistics and better traveller information, but public trust will depend on systems that are transparent, proportionate and secure. The same is true for automated mobility. Technical readiness is only one part of the equation; deployment also needs operational evidence, clarity around responsibility and acceptance from the communities that will experience these systems first hand.

Urban mobility remains one of the hardest tests. Cities must manage limited space, competing demands, environmental targets, economic pressures and the daily need to keep people and goods moving. Work on city access, smart charging, demand response and automated parking shows how digital systems can support more efficient and liveable urban environments. Yet Vantomme's point is that technology cannot be separated from behaviour, governance or local reality. Successful deployment must fit the street as well as the strategy.

The conversation also ranged beyond Europe. Vantomme sees the global agenda expanding as national ITS communities and international events exchange lessons about resilience, safety and digital transformation.

Cont.>

Angelos Amditis - Chairman of ERTICO and Joost Vantomme cutting a 35 year celebratory cake at the ITS European Congress in Istanbul



>Climate events, cyber risk, ageing infrastructure, skills shortages and shifting travel behaviour all demand new forms of preparedness. Intelligent transport has a vital role not only in optimising networks during normal operation, but also in helping them anticipate, absorb and recover from disruption. At project level, the first half of the year has brought both new beginnings and completed work across clean mobility, logistics, road safety, automated transport, inclusive public spaces, data exchange, charging, simulation and connected infrastructure. For Vantomme, the common thread is capability. The most valuable projects move beyond research outputs and leave behind methods, tools, evidence and partnerships that others can use.

Data is one of the clearest examples of this transition. Mobility data spaces, road safety data sharing and connected vehicle information are becoming central to the way transport systems are managed. Better information can help prevent incidents, improve traffic flow, support cleaner choices and make services more responsive. But data only creates public value when it is trusted, usable and shared under rules that protect the public interest.

The same applies to artificial intelligence. The sector is moving beyond broad enthusiasm towards practical questions: where AI can genuinely improve safety or efficiency, how systems can be validated, how responsibilities should be allocated and how citizens can understand decisions that affect their journeys. Vantomme argues that thought leadership is essential because transport is a public system, even when many of its components are privately developed.

Looking ahead, the international calendar will keep that momentum alive. The next World Congress in South Korea will place automated driving, smart infrastructure and data-centric systems in the spotlight, while preparations for Birmingham in 2027 are already gathering pace. Vantomme sees Birmingham as an opportunity to demonstrate how intelligent transport can support human-centred mobility, sustainability, breakthrough technologies and business innovation.

There is a useful discipline in this shift from ambition to delivery. In Vantomme's framing, the sector must ask what changes for the user, the operator, the city and the wider economy. Does a system make travel safer? Does it reduce emissions? Does it help freight move more efficiently? Does it improve access for people who are too often overlooked? Does it strengthen public services and support competitiveness?

These questions are likely to define the next decade of intelligent mobility.

After 35 years, collaboration is not diminishing in importance. If anything, Vantomme believes it is becoming more central. Intelligent mobility is now shaped by software, energy, telecommunications, public policy, infrastructure, behavioural change and new business models. The boundaries of the sector have widened, and so has the need for a shared language that allows different organisations to align around practical outcomes while bringing their own expertise and priorities.

The first half of 2026 has therefore been more than a busy period of meetings, projects and events. Seen through Vantomme's perspective, it has demonstrated a sector entering a more mature phase. The foundations built over decades are now being tested in real-world conditions, and the direction is clear: Europe's mobility ecosystem must become more connected, resilient, inclusive and capable of turning innovation into everyday benefit.

As the anniversary year continues, the central message is not nostalgia, but responsibility. ERTICO's 35th anniversary arrives when intelligent transport has the tools, experience and partnerships to shape tomorrow's mobility systems. The task now is to keep moving from shared ambition to concrete delivery, ensuring that digital and intelligent transport solutions improve lives, strengthen economies and support a safer, cleaner and more connected future.





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Stuck on Red

For years, the UK's transport technology community has warned that the country's ageing traffic signal infrastructure is quietly slipping into obsolescence. It is a problem that rarely makes headlines, rarely animates political debate and rarely captures public imagination. Potholes, yes. Congestion, certainly. But the silent, blinking backbone of the road network? Almost never. That silence is precisely what Intelligent Transport Systems UK (ITS UK) is determined to break.



Max Sugarman, Chief Executive of Intelligent Transport Systems UK, launching 'Stuck on Red' at Tech Talks - Traffex 2026.

Their new initiative, **Stuck on Red – From Obsolescence to a Network Fit for the Future**, is a sector-wide call to action, a demand that the UK confront the scale of its outdated traffic systems and commit to a modernisation programme that matches the ambitions of a digitally connected transport future. It is a campaign that ITS Now is proud to support, not simply because it is overdue, but because it speaks directly to the safety, efficiency and technological readiness of the UK's roads.

A Network Past Its Prime

The headline numbers are stark. According to ITS UK, **around 15,000 traffic signals (roughly 51% of the national network), are now technologically obsolete**, with that figure projected to rise to **60% within two years** if no intervention is made. These are not minor inconveniences. Obsolete systems mean higher operational costs, reduced reliability, limited capability to incorporate new and adaptive features, increased carbon emissions and heightened cyber-security vulnerabilities. In a world where connected vehicles, AI-driven optimisation and multimodal digital management are no longer speculative but emerging realities, the UK risks building tomorrow's mobility on yesterday's foundations.

Max Sugarman, Chief Executive of ITS UK, has become one of the most vocal advocates for confronting this challenge head-on. Speaking at Traffex 2026, his keynote cut through the noise with clarity and urgency. *"We often hear about potholes," he told the audience. "but we're trying to bring attention to the **dot-hole**, the digitally obsolete traffic technology."* It was a neat line, but behind it sat the serious warning that the UK's traffic control systems are ageing out of usefulness at precisely the moment when the country needs them most.

The Risks of Standing Still

Sugarman's message at Traffex was reinforced days later at ITS UK's Parliamentary Reception, where he again highlighted the scale of the challenge. *"Transport technology is no longer a niche industry,"* he said, pointing to research showing the sector contributes **£3.2 billion to the UK economy**, supports **45,000 jobs** and generates **£500 million in tax revenue**.

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In other words, this is not a fringe concern. The health of the UK's transport technology infrastructure is directly tied to economic performance, public safety and national resilience. Ageing signals, Sugarman argued, are not simply inefficient, they are actively holding back progress. Outdated systems hinder smarter traffic management, limit the deployment of bus priority measures, slow down active travel optimisation, and make it harder for local authorities to meet carbon reduction targets. They also create vulnerabilities that modern cyber-security frameworks struggle to mitigate. But, perhaps most importantly, they make it harder for the UK to adopt new and emerging technologies. Connected vehicle data, AI-driven optimisation, digital twins, automated incident detection, dynamic kerbside management, all of these rely on a baseline of modern, interoperable infrastructure. Without it, innovation becomes patchwork rather than systemic.

A Call for Long-Term Investment

The Stuck on Red campaign is not simply a warning, it is a roadmap. ITS UK is calling for a **rolling five-year funding programme** to modernise traffic technology infrastructure across the country. This is significant. For decades, traffic signal upgrades have been funded sporadically, reactively, and often only when systems fail. A rolling programme would allow local authorities to plan strategically, suppliers to innovate confidently and the sector to align around shared standards and long-term goals. Sugarman's argument is simple, that modernisation is not a luxury, it is a necessity. *"We're trying to bring attention to the digitally obsolete traffic technology,"* he reiterated a reminder that the UK cannot afford to treat digital infrastructure as an afterthought.

Voices Across the Sector

The urgency of Stuck on Red has resonated widely. At Traffex, **Darren Capes** of the Department for Transport offered a complementary perspective, emphasising the need for **standards, interoperability and operational resilience**, all of which become harder when half the network is running on legacy systems. Local authorities, too, have been increasingly vocal about the pressures they face. With budgets stretched and expectations rising, many councils are struggling to maintain basic functionality, let alone invest in future-ready systems. Stuck on Red gives them a platform to articulate those challenges and a national campaign to rally behind. Suppliers, meanwhile, see the initiative as an opportunity to accelerate innovation. Modernisation unlocks the ability to deploy edge processing, AI-driven optimisation, advanced detection, multimodal integration and more responsive control strategies. It is not simply about replacing old kit, it is about enabling a new generation of capability.

Why ITS Now Supports Stuck on Red

For ITS Now, the case for supporting Stuck on Red is clear. First, **safety**. Ageing systems are more prone to failure, less responsive to changing conditions and less capable of supporting vulnerable road users. Modernisation is not just a technical upgrade, it is a public safety intervention. Second, **efficiency**. Smarter signals mean smoother flows, reduced congestion, better bus reliability and more predictable travel times. In a transport landscape where every second counts, outdated systems are a drag on national productivity. Third, **future readiness**. The UK cannot hope to adopt connected vehicle technologies, AI-driven optimisation or integrated multimodal management at scale if the underlying infrastructure is stuck in the past. Modernisation is the gateway to innovation. And finally, **sector confidence**. As Sugarman noted, 62% of ITS UK members are optimistic about future growth. That optimism is justified, but only if the country invests in the foundations that make innovation possible.

A Moment of Choice

Stuck on Red arrives at a pivotal moment. The UK is redefining its transport priorities, grappling with climate commitments, embracing digitalisation and preparing for a future shaped by automation, connectivity and data-driven decision-making. The question is no longer whether the UK should modernise its traffic signal infrastructure. The question is whether it can afford not to. Sugarman's keynote at Traffex captured that sentiment perfectly: *"It's not just a technical challenge, it's a shared national responsibility."* The UK's transport technology community has always punched above its weight. Stuck on Red is an opportunity to ensure it continues to do so with infrastructure that is fit for purpose, fit for the future and fit for the ambitions of a sector that refuses to stand still.

Integrated ITS solutions - for safer, and more efficient traffic flow

Traffic congestion is one of the biggest challenges facing modern cities and interurban road networks. Stop-and-go traffic, lost time, dangerous situations, air pollution and noise all reduce quality of life and increase societal costs. SWARCO offers an advanced ecosystem of mobility that integrates all types of traffic data and Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) to reduce congestion, improve safety and improve highways networks.

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Cyber Security –

Why Modern ITS Equipment Must Be Secure by Design

For years, the ITS sector has talked about connectivity, interoperability and digital transformation. But in 2026, one theme has pushed itself firmly to the front of the conversation: **Cyber Security**. As roadside technology becomes smarter, more connected and more critical to the safe operation of our transport networks, the resilience of the systems behind it is no longer a specialist concern. It is a foundational requirement.

The introduction of the **Cyber Resilience Act** and new European harmonised cybersecurity standards for internet-connected radio equipment marks a decisive shift. Highway Authorities are now expected not only to deploy intelligent systems, but to demonstrate that those systems are secure, monitored and managed in line with modern cyber expectations. In other words, cyber security has become an operational responsibility, not an IT aspiration.

This is the backdrop against which **AGD Systems** has launched *AGD Connect*, a new cloud platform designed to simplify secure access to intelligent traffic detection products. It is a timely development, and one that speaks directly to the sector's growing need for practical, real-world cyber solutions.

At its core, AGD Connect replaces shared passwords with secure, individual user authentication. It gives Highway Authorities granular control over who can access and manage roadside assets, and it does so in a way that reflects the realities of traffic engineering rather than the assumptions of enterprise IT. Every user has a unique account, permissions can be granted or revoked at an individual level, and the days of juggling multiple passwords across devices, contractors and organisations are quietly retired.

This matters because the cyber threat landscape has changed. Roadside equipment is no longer isolated. It is part of a connected ecosystem of sensors, controllers, communications networks and cloud services. A single weak point, such as a shared password, an unmanaged device or an untracked login, can create vulnerabilities that ripple far beyond a single junction. The industry has recognised this, and AGD Connect is one of the first platforms to respond directly to that challenge.

What makes the platform particularly interesting is its engineering pragmatism. Many authentication systems assume constant connectivity, seamless mobile coverage and uninterrupted access to the cloud. Anyone who has ever worked on a roadside cabinet knows that reality is different. Connectivity is patchy. Environments are harsh. Maintenance tasks often happen in places where mobile signals simply do not reach.

AGD Connect tackles this head-on. Using the *AGD Secure Browser*, engineers authenticate while an internet connection is available and can then continue working securely on site, even in areas without coverage. It is a simple idea, but one that reflects a deep understanding of how ITS equipment is actually deployed and maintained. Security is strengthened without compromising usability, and the platform supports the operational rhythms of the sector rather than forcing new ones upon it.

The immediate benefits are clear: reduced administration, improved accountability, easier collaboration between Highway Authorities and subcontractors, and a single login across compatible AGD products. But the wider significance lies in what this signals for the future of ITS cyber security.

Moves Centre Stage

For years, cyber resilience has been discussed in terms of risk, compliance and regulation. AGD Connect reframes it as an enabler that creates a foundation for digital services, better data management and more connected traffic systems. As AGD notes, this is *“the first stage of AGD Systems’ long-term digital strategy”*, built to evolve with additional services that will *“enhance connectivity, improve data management and deliver even greater value to customers in the years ahead.”*

That future-facing ambition is echoed in the words of **Darren Hudson**, Technical Director at AGD Systems, who describes the platform as a strategic step rather than a tactical fix. *“AGD Connect is much more than a new login system, it’s the foundation of our digital future. We wanted to create a platform that helps customers meet the latest cyber security requirements while making everyday access to AGD products simpler and more secure. By combining enterprise-level security with a solution designed for the realities of roadside maintenance, AGD Connect provides a strong platform for the next generation of intelligent traffic management.”*

This captures the moment the sector finds itself in. Cyber security is no longer a bolt-on. It is becoming the architecture upon which future ITS capability will be built. Whether we are talking about AI-enhanced detection, connected signal control, multimodal data flows or cloud-based optimisation tools, secure access and secure operation are the foundations that make everything else possible.

The launch of AGD Connect also reflects a broader trend: the shift from hardware-centric thinking to system-level outcomes. Modern ITS equipment is increasingly defined not just by what it does, but by how it connects, how it is managed and how it fits into wider digital ecosystems. Cyber security is the thread that ties these elements together. Without it, the promise of intelligent transport risks being undermined by vulnerabilities that are invisible until they are exploited.

AGD’s decision to provide the core authentication service free of ongoing charges for Highway Authorities and subcontractors is also notable. It removes a barrier to adoption and signals a recognition that secure access management should be a baseline expectation, not a premium feature. In a sector where budgets are tight and responsibilities are expanding, this kind of approach helps accelerate the shift toward secure-by-default operations.

As ITS continues to evolve, the importance of cyber security will only grow. The systems we deploy today will form the backbone of tomorrow’s mobility networks, and their resilience will shape public trust, operational reliability and the sector’s ability to innovate. AGD Connect is one example of how manufacturers are responding to this challenge, but it is also a reminder that cyber security is now a shared responsibility that spans suppliers, authorities, integrators and frontline engineers.

The future of intelligent transport will be connected, data-driven and increasingly automated. To unlock that future, the sector must ensure that its digital foundations are secure, robust and ready for the demands ahead. Cyber security is no longer a specialist discipline. It is the quiet infrastructure that keeps everything else moving.



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TECHNOLOGY INSIGHT

Chip — The Life Utility Vehicle Rewriting Everyday Mobility



Every so often, a mobility concept arrives that feels less like a product launch and more like a gentle nudge toward a different way of living. **Chip**, which is described by its creators as a **Life Utility Vehicle (LUV)** is one of those ideas. Built from the ground up, Chip sits in a space the industry has never quite defined, in a space between a bulked-up golf cart and a shrunken SUV, but an electric vehicle designed for the miles that actually make up family life.

Chip's creators frame "*him*" as a "*friendly sidekick*", and the tone is deliberate. He talks to you in the car, appears in your family group chat, and can be customised endlessly to suit the chaos, colour and personality of modern households. The interior hoses out, the panels wipe clean, and the frunk can be turned into a miniature entertainment suite (complete with TV and speakers) with the "*Party in the Frunk*" optional package. It's playful, but it's also practical in a way that feels refreshingly honest.

Behind the charm sits a serious engineering agenda. Chip's founders have drawn on experience from Tesla, Canoo, NASA and years spent building digital maps, computer vision and driver-assistance systems, to target a gap in mobility that has quietly widened. Families have been pushed toward vehicles that are either too large, too expensive, or simply not designed for the short, local journeys that dominate daily life. Chip is their answer: a safe, affordable EV built specifically for school runs, grocery trips and beach days.

The most intriguing feature is *Chip Go!* a remote-driving service that lets a real human take the wheel when the car is empty. Commands such as "*Chip Go! park*" or "*Chip Go! get my groceries*" hand control to a remote operator who navigates the dull bits while you get on with your day. Every mile driven this way becomes a training example, building toward Chip's long-term goal of full **Level 4 autonomy**. As the media kit puts it, "*Level 4 isn't a someday slide in a deck. It's where this goes.*"

Available in the US, Chip's pricing is intentionally disruptive: \$15,000 for the four-seat model and \$18,000 for the six-seat version, with a fully refundable \$250 reservation. It's a bold attempt to democratise autonomy-ready mobility with a vehicle designed not for prestige, but for the practical realities of family life.

Chip is a reminder that innovation doesn't always arrive wrapped in futurist minimalism. Sometimes it looks like a cheerful, hose-cleanable EV with a personality, a remote driver on standby, and a mission to make everyday travel feel "*bigger and lighter at the same time.*" It's quirky, but it's also a glimpse of how autonomy, affordability and human-centred design could converge in the years ahead.

Find out more at:
<https://chipmotors.com/>

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As a highly experienced and respected freelance consultant, I provide a comprehensive range of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) and Traffic Signal consultancy services to navigate this complex landscape. My mission is to be the critical link between technological potential and practical implementation, ensuring innovation delivers meaningful outcomes.

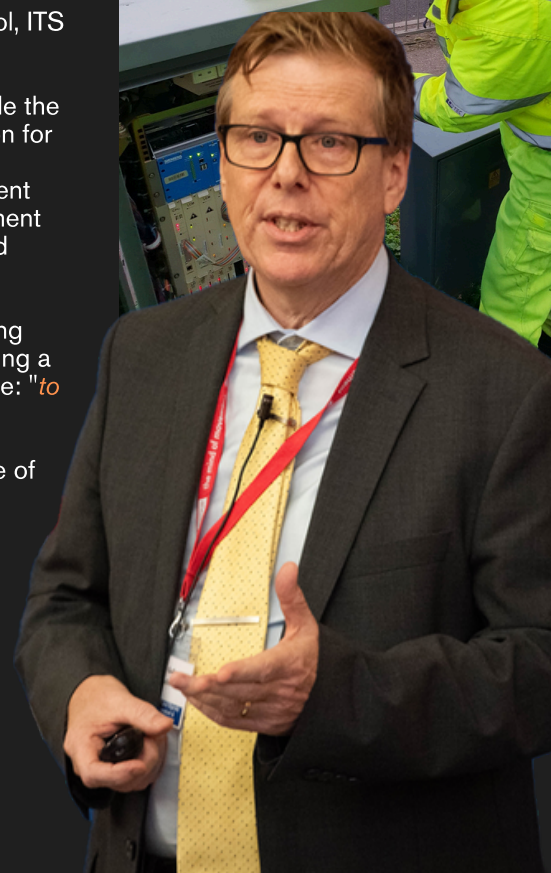
I work with a diverse client base, including **highway authorities, engineering / management consultancies** and **commercial technology firms** to deliver expert guidance, innovative solutions and tangible results for transport infrastructure projects. The common thread in my work is bridging the critical gap that often exists between different stakeholders. Public authorities need to procure effective, future-proof solutions; technology companies need to align their products with genuine market needs; and engineering consultancies require specialist knowledge to deliver robust project designs. I operate at the nexus of these requirements, speaking the language of public policy, commercial strategy and technical engineering with equal fluency.

For my **public sector clients**, I provide independent, expert advice on everything from strategy development and systems specification to procurement support and project assurance. My guidance ensures that investments in new technology are sound, deliver maximum public benefit and avoid costly pitfalls. When partnering with other **consultancies**, I act as a specialist extension of their team, bringing niche expertise in advanced traffic signal control, ITS architecture and emerging mobility trends to enhance their project delivery capabilities.

For commercial **technology firms**, both established players and market entrants, I provide the strategic insight needed to succeed. This includes critical guidance on product localisation for the UK market, identifying the most appropriate applications for new solutions, facilitating strategic introductions to key industry players and providing technical business development support. By aligning your innovative technology with the specific challenges and procurement frameworks of the transport sector, I help accelerate your path to commercial success and impactful deployment.

Ultimately, my work as a technologist, author and speaker is driven by a passion for creating better transport systems. Whether I'm designing an advanced traffic signal strategy, advising a company on market entry or speaking at an industry conference, my goal remains the same: *"to apply deep technical knowledge and strategic thinking to solve real-world problems"*.

I invite you to explore my services and learn how we can work together to shape the future of mobility on my **newly updated website**, I look forward to hearing from you.



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ITS now .org

ITS Now exists to provide informative and educational resources about Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS), and should be of interest to technology practitioners in highways and mobility, along with people working in other engineering disciplines and for anyone who has an interest in transport generally.

Resources include our website - **ITSNow.org**, YouTube channel **@ITSNow** and **ITS Edge** magazine, along with our original books and articles on a broad range of related topics.

Intelligent Transport Systems - Explained



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