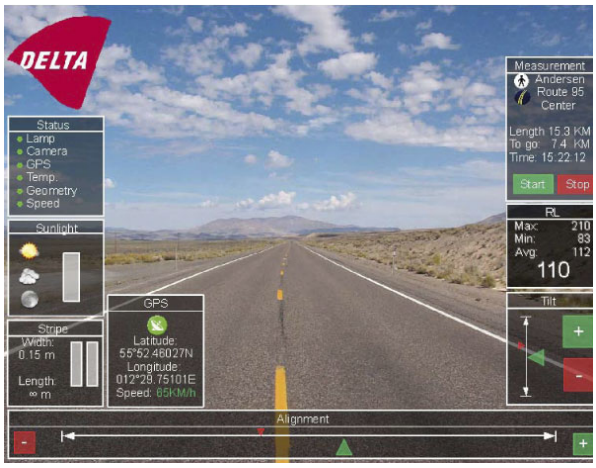
Questions to MENA infrastructure round table discussion January 2010

Why are road markings and road signs important for improving safe driving in the MENA region?

Driving on roads especially at nighttime can be a challenge. US statistics show that driving at night time increases the risk of fatal accidents almost three times, a figure that is probably not too different from the MENA countries. Road markings and road signs are important traffic aids in guiding the traffic safely and reducing the risks of accidents. Tear and wear from e.g. traffic and sunlight will over time reduce the retroreflection from road markings and road signs, and they need to be maintained or replaced before they lose performance. Only well maintained road markings and road signs will offer the maximum traffic guidance and safe driving conditions.



How is it possible to know when a road marking or a road sign supporting safe driving need maintenance or replacement?

Road markings and road signs have to be checked at intervals to make sure they perform and provide proper traffic guidance. If they do not meet the performance criteria they need to be maintained or replaced. Performance evaluation can be done in different ways, but the only objective way is to measure the retroreflection using a retroreflectometer. A retroreflectometer is placed on the road marking or road signs and will within seconds tell if the marking or sign meet the criteria valid for the actual source.

Are there any standards supporting safe driving?

There are written standards available, the main ones normally referred to are the European (EN 1436, EN 12899) and the US (ASTM E 1709, ASTM E 1710, ASTM E 2540) standards. A standard first of all states how to measure retroreflection from road markings and road signs. In addition the European standards provide guidance for minimum retroreflection levels for different types of roads, road markings and road signs. Such guidances are for the US to be located in National Standards for Traffic Control Devices. It is my impression that many countries in the MENA region have not yet standards ready for measuring retroreflection or guidance for minimum retroreflection levels, an area which would benefit from improvements, if more safe driving conditions are to be obtained.

RetroSign

Will improved performance of road markings and road signs alone provide more safe driving conditions in the MEAN region?

I have no doubt that high quality road markings and road signs will help improve safe driving – but it will not do it alone. Many other factors affect safe driving like speed, quality of the roads, experience and age of the driver (elderly people need more light at night for safe guidance). The challenge in the MENA region is to evaluate each possible factor that may affect unsafe driving conditions and decide which measures to undertake to improve the situation. Making sure that road markings and road signs perform well is one of the easy and cheap ways towards improving safe driving conditions.

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