



# Kansas LTAP Fact Sheet

A Service of The University of Kansas Transportation Center for Road & Bridge Agencies

## “Recalculating...”

By Nora Fairchild

How to tell GPS companies about changes to routes through your community.



**L**et's say you have a road construction project planned or a bridge out and you would like to notify GPS companies to route their customers around those obstacles. How do you do that?

Companies like Garmin, TomTom, Magellan and MapQuest provide electronic navigable maps for consumers. Most of these companies use a GIS database from NavTeq, owned by Nokia, to create and update their maps. NavTeq sends updated maps on a quarterly basis to the GPS navigation system providers, who in turn do field studies and incorporate customer feedback to edit and finish their own maps.

If you need to report a route change, note that it may take three months or more for changes that are reported to be put in effect. So, for short-term changes like a road surfacing project, drivers will just have to follow your detours. For larger projects, however, or to report an out-of-commission bridge that may take months to repair, you could report your detour route and save drivers some headaches.

There is no single clearinghouse for reporting route changes, but NavTeq is a good place to start, since its database is used by so many mapping services.

Roy Kolstad, NavTeq's Vice President, Enterprise Sales, Americas, notes that NavTeq is already connected with the communities it maps.

“Because we have people locally on the ground, we have direct relationships with city officials, DOTs etc., from whom we get advanced information on new developments, planned construction projects and the like.” The company also checks other sources such as chambers of commerce and carries out data collection and verification using local experts if the data cannot be sourced or is not up to company standards. Kolstad said NavTeq has over 1100 geographic analysts around the world who drive the roads to collect data.

So it would seem that NavTeq has mapmaking covered. However, NavTeq's GPS customers, such as Garmin and MapQuest, determine how many map updates they will receive and which ones they wish to implement. Kolstad says that, “because of the combination of our publication cycle and the control which our customers have over when they make updated data available, something like a short term closure of a road may not appear.”

So it's best to communicate a change to both NavTeq and individual GPS companies. Here's how.

### How to suggest changes to routes

GPS customers use a variety of mapping service companies, and you will need to contact them separately to report a change in a route. Start with NavTeq and go from there.

1) Contact NavTeq. Local officials can provide route changes online at <http://www.mapreporter.com>.

2) Contact Garmin. Garmin does field work after receiving maps from NavTeq. When it comes to simple changes at a single location, Garmin can be reached through an online form at <https://my.garmin.com/mapErrors/report.faces>. To report more complicated route changes, write to [cartography@mail@](mailto:cartography@mail@)



garmin.com. Garmin's cartography administrator, Loy Clinkenbeard, explained that the form makes it easier for Garmin to process, but a more complicated change may require a conversation with one of their cartographers to work out the details.

3) Contact Google Maps. If you pull up a Google Maps "Get Directions" route and see that it is incorrect, click "Report a Problem" at the bottom of the toolbar, and fill out a form that gives you the option of receiving an email alert when the problem is resolved. You may also access this feature by right clicking anywhere on a Google Map and selecting "Report a Problem." If you have a Google account, you can also edit information directly on the site by looking up a specific place, clicking the "Edit" link and move its marker or edit its details. These changes appear right away.

4) Contact Yahoo Maps. You must have a Yahoo, Google or Facebook account to provide feedback to Yahoo Maps, but the company promises a response within 24 hours. Simply visit <http://helpyahoo.com/us/yahoo/maps/general.html> and fill out the form.

5) Contact MapQuest. MapQuest has a link to feedback forms on their help page: <http://www.mapquesthelp.com/>

6) Contact other services you may hear about. Most navigational systems companies have online feedback forms that anyone can fill out to report route problems and changes—simply do an online search for the company whose product is giving incomplete or faulty data, and fill out a form to let them know.

### **Take the time to give feedback**

Providing feedback to navigational systems companies can seem like a chore, and it takes a while to see results. Sometimes, the mapping companies request very specific information on the location, including even GPS coordinates. Despite the hassle, GPS companies do take customer feedback to heart and have field operators that help develop better routes.

Garmin is not yet at the point that it can provide real-time directions in the way a human can, but responding to feedback is one of the ways it can get closer to that point. Clinkenbeard said: "If there is something wacky about a route, we definitely want to hear about it. We are here, after all, to try to make the very best product we can." ■

*When possible, plan ahead. It can take up to three months for a reported change to take effect.*

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#### Sources:

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- GPS buying guide. Consumer Reports Online. <http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/gps/buying-guide.htm>
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- Interviews: Roy Kolstadt on February 3, 2011; Loy Clinkenbeard on February 10, 2011.