

Describe that?

This Kibbitzer is based on a report by a Korean-speaking postgraduate student of Civil Engineering:

Original	Revision
Fisk describes that Theta corresponds to an information level about travel time of all drivers in a road network.	Fisk defines Theta as corresponding to the level of information about travel time of all the drivers in a road network.

The major problem in the original is the bar on that-clauses after 'describe'. My first proposal was to replace 'described' by 'has stated' - but discussion with the student suggested that what was at issue here was neither a statement nor a description, but a definition: hence the revision shown above.

'Describe that' is a favourite 'false structure' of English among my consultees. Note that there are occasions when it can be re-written in such a way that the verb is preserved, as in the following two re-writes:

Mitsubishi describes that it is planting an experimental 50-hectare plot of trees on a university campus in the hope of recreating a small 'primeval' forest.	Mitsubishi describes how it is planting an experimental 50-hectare plot of trees on a university campus ...
	Mitsubishi describes its planting of an experimental 50-hectare plot of trees on a university campus ...

See also Kibbitzers 40 & 64 for similar restrictions with [view](#) and [express](#).