

APPENDIX 5: COPY OF PRESS RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

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Safe roads, reliable journeys, informed travellers

Find out more: proposals to transform 32 miles of the M4 between junctions 3 and 12, London/Bucks/Berks

13 March 2014 11:00

Road users, local residents and businesses can find out more next week about proposals to transform the M4 into one of the longest stretches of 'smart motorway' in England by 2021.

The improvement, between junction 3, Hayes in London, and junction 12, Theale in Berkshire, would increase capacity, improve journey reliability and maintain safety.

The proposals are part of the Government's investment into England's motorways and major A-roads, which will see up to £3 billion a year pumped into improving the roads by 2021, underpinning economic growth and high quality jobs across the region.

Lynne Stinson, Highways Agency Project Manager said:

"The M4 is an important corridor in and out of London for those who live and work in Buckinghamshire and Berkshire, as well as those further afield in the South West and Wales, with around 130,000 vehicles using this stretch every day.

"Based on proven benefits elsewhere, we have produced outline proposals that would see 32 miles of the M4 transformed into a 'smart motorway'; we're planning extra capacity by converting the hard shoulder into an additional traffic lane and introducing variable mandatory speed limits displayed overhead to help smooth the flow of traffic and reduce congestion, and to provide traffic information, with safety bays in place to maintain safety.

"We're inviting members of the public to come along to their nearest public exhibition to find out more about the scheme and give the project team their initial thoughts on the proposals to feed in to the ongoing scheme development. We will host further exhibitions later this year when assessments are complete and our proposals are nearing finalisation."

Subject to gaining consent, construction would be carefully planned to be carried out in phases from 2016.

As part of the proposals to convert the 32 miles of the M4 between junction 3 and 12 into a 'smart motorway':

- * There would be 64 miles of new traffic lane taken from the existing hard shoulder, increasing capacity.
- * The initial scheme design also includes 131 new gantries, with 32 existing gantries remaining.
- * 11 bridges would be rebuilt to provide space for the additional traffic lane and provide safe journeys over the M4 for decades to come.
- * 32 refuge bays are proposed alongside the carriageway for use by drivers in an emergency.

Seven public exhibitions are being held:

- * **Tuesday 18 March between 2pm and 8pm** – St Giles Hotel, Hounslow Road, Feltham, TW14 9AD.
- * **Wednesday 19 March between 2pm and 8pm** – Hillingdon Baptist Church, 25 Hercies Road, Uxbridge UB10 9LS.
- * **Friday 21 March between 2pm and 8pm** – Theale Village Hall, Englefield Road, Reading, RG7 5AS.
- * **Saturday 22 March between 10am and 4pm** – Holyport War Memorial Hall, Moneyrow Green, Holyport, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 2NA.
- * **Thursday 27 March between 2pm and 8pm** – Copthorne Hotel Slough, Cippenham Lane, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 2YE.
- * **Friday 28 March between 3pm and 8pm** – Winnersh Community Centre, New Road, Wokingham RG41 5DU.
- * **Saturday 29 March between 10am and 4pm** - St Martin's Church Hall, Church Road, West Drayton UB7 7PT.

Notes to Editors

Ref: SE068-14

1. The Highways Agency is an executive agency of the Department for Transport. We manage, maintain and improve England's motorways and other strategic roads on behalf of the Secretary of State.
2. The M4 Junctions 3 to 12 scheme would be one of the longest stretches of smart motorway in England with a total length of 32 miles converted. The current estimated cost for this scheme is between £614 million and £862 million however this is subject to design change and possible future efficiency savings.
3. A consortium consisting of URS, Hyder Halcrow Joint Venture and Mouchel are the designers for the scheme. At this stage of the development of the scheme, there is currently no delivery partner for the scheme they will be procured later in the schemes development .

4. Smart motorways: As an Agency we have changed the name of managed motorways to smart motorways. We are making smarter use of our motorway network, smart motorways encompasses all sections of our network that incorporate technology to manage congestion and improve journey time reliability. This includes controlling speeds to improve traffic flow through the use of variable mandatory speeds and providing driver information on overhead signs. Most recognisably smart motorways can use technology to open the hard shoulder at times of peak demand or the hard shoulder is permanently converted to a traffic lane with additional emergency refuge areas. This adds extra capacity on some of the busiest sections of our motorway network.

It is important to the Agency that all road users understand the layout, signs and signals used on our smart motorways sections. We have been working to introduce a series of information products that can be easily identified and understood as smart motorways. From November 2013 these will begin to be promoted and shared with road users and our partners. More information and background on smart motorways is available at: www.highways.gov.uk/smartmotorways.

5. Key findings from research published in March 2011 shows that accidents have more than halved since hard shoulder running was introduced on 10.5 miles of M42 (J3a to J7), to the east of Birmingham; with journey times improved between the M40 J16, near Lapworth, and M6 J5, near Birmingham.

6. The first hard shoulder running scheme was introduced on the M42 J3a-7 in 2006 as a pilot scheme. This was followed by M6 J4 to J5 scheme in 2009 and the M6 J8 to J10A scheme in 2011. The system is known as smart motorways and uses variable speed limits and opening up the hard shoulder as an additional traffic lane. The operational changes to the M40 J16-3A and M42 J7-9 which were completed in August 2009 are known as controlled motorways. This involves the use of features such as variable speed limits but without hard shoulder running.

7. Click here for the Highways Agency's roads programme, including where work on smart motorways schemes are underway and planned: <http://www.highways.gov.uk/our-road-network/managing-our-roads/highways-agencys-future-delivery-programmes/>.

8. Maintenance and improvement projects: We plan maintenance and improvement projects carefully to allow road works to be completed safely, in a cost effective way while keeping disruption to road users to a minimum. We do as much work as possible overnight and when roads are less busy in order to keep more lanes open for road users at peak travel times. Drivers are advised to check their route for road works and allow extra time for their journeys where needed. We have a variety of journey planning tools that road users can use to check travel conditions on the roads we manage, and we will do all we can to keep road users informed.

9. Safety at roadworks: The Highways Agency is working with the industry and road users to reduce the risks of working on the roads. For the safety of road workers and all road users, when you are approaching roadworks:

- Keep within the speed limit – it is there for your safety.
- Get into the correct lane in good time – don't keep switching.
- Concentrate on the road ahead, not the roadworks.
- Be alert for works' traffic leaving or entering roadworks.
- Keep a safe distance – there could be queues in front.
- Observe all signs – they are there to help you.

10. Real-time traffic information for England's motorways and other strategic roads is available:

- From the **web** at www.highways.gov.uk/traffic.
- By **phone** from the Highways Agency Information Line on 0300 123 5000 at any time. (Calls to 03 numbers are charged at no more than a national call to an 01 or 02 number and are included in all discount schemes and call allowances. This applies to all landlines, mobiles and payphones. Call costs will vary depending on your landline or mobile supplier.) Make sure it's safe and legal before you call. Before using any mobile, find a safe place to park. Never stop on the hard shoulder of a motorway except in an emergency.
- On an **iPhone** app which will automatically select the region you are in. Free to download from the iTunes store or search for Highways Agency on your device.
- From **Twitter** – there are eight feeds with live traffic information provided by region. For information on roads in the south east region follow us @HAtraffic_seast or for the full index visit www.highways.gov.uk/twitter.

11. Receive our national and regional press releases by **RSS** and get the latest headlines straight to your desktop the moment we publish them to our website. Choose to receive a national press feed or one of our regionalised feeds - go to www.highways.gov.uk/rssnews for more information.

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