

M25 J12 / M3 J2 West Bound Trial Improvements Scheme

**Report on Consultation undertaken
as part of the process to make the
temporary speed reduction
permanent**

HA 9/41/47

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1) Introduction

Our monitoring of the M25/M3 junction showed that high volumes of traffic wishing to join the M3 westbound from the M25 anticlockwise at peak periods caused congestion and tailbacks onto the M25. In the evening peak period, approximately double the volume of traffic joins the M3 westbound from the M25 clockwise and anticlockwise than is already on the M3 westbound (from London).

On a typical weekday 32,000 vehicles travel on the M25 and join the M3 Coast bound, compared to 20,000 vehicles travelling on the M3 past the M25/M3 junction.

In March 2007 the Highways Agency introduced a trial scheme at the M25 J12 / M3 J2 that would give priority to the predominant flows (M25 A/C to M3 W/B and M25 C/W to M3 WB). The trial gave an extra lane for M25 traffic from the 'A' and 'B' Carriageways merging onto the M3 West Bound carriageway. To facilitate this the M3 W/B was taken down to a single lane prior to J2.

Overall, the new layout has delivered a net journey time benefit to the Highways Agency Network of 297 Vehicle Hour Delay (VHD) saving hours per weekday or 77,220 VHD per year over the original layout (this figure includes a net journey time saving of 133,900 Vehicle Hours Delay (VHD) per year on the M25 anticlockwise and 3120 VHD per year on the M25 clockwise, and a disbenefit to M3 users of – 59,800 VHD per year). Overall this delivers an estimated cost saving to the economy in excess of £900,000 per year.

Whilst some congestion on the M3 approach to the new layout has been generated in the evening peak period, traffic monitoring and analysis carried out since implementation has confirmed that this is far outweighed by the reduced congestion on the M25 anticlockwise approach.

For this trial scheme and any permanent scheme adopting this layout an essential requirement is the reduced speed limit of 50 mph. This reduced speed limit allows for the safe merging of vehicles especially HGVs which need to move from Lane 3 into Lane 1 at the end of the M25/M3 merge.

2) Consultation Process methodology

Following liaison with XXX XXXXX (HA NO SE NAR team) it was confirmed that the process to make the speed restriction at M25 Junction 12 permanent did not include publication of a notice in the local paper(s) or the London Gazette etc.

A list of the 23No. Statutory consultees names and addresses was sourced from the M11 Junction 4 Northbound scheme consultation undertaken in 2003.

A full list of the statutory consultees is contained in Appendix A. We received one letter back from the Royal Mail stating that the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK had gone away.

After consultation with colleagues the Project Sponsor decided in the interests of good Customer relations we would take the step of publishing the Consultation letter on the HA website.

The HA website page for this scheme received 535 'hits' during September 2008, if we assume that that is an average number of hits then potentially 1600 Customers would have seen the Consultation letter on the website, during the three months.

Written representations by letter or by email were considered valid consultation responses.

A copy of the consultation letter is contained in Appendix B

3) Responses to Consultation

Statutory

Only one response was received from a Statutory Consultee, which was from the Head of Corporate Affairs National Express Bus and Coach which was a letter of **Support** stating the proposal was discussed with their coach drivers operating services that use the M25 J12/M3 J2 and they welcome the suggestion

Non Statutory

For data protection reasons the full names and addresses (where given) are not listed below, hard copies of these responses are kept on the HA registered file HA 9/41/47.

XXXXXXXX – **Objecting** as although recognising that we want to improve the M25 it is unacceptable to do this at the expense of another road, making the M3 significantly worse. Also people choose their routes and where they live using the roads that are available at the time.

XX (via email, no address given) – **Objecting** as he perceived that the 50mph limit was making merging more dangerous, HGVs finding it difficult to move back into Lane 1, the length of the speed restriction and the need for variable speed limits at off peak times.

XX (via email, no address given) – **Objecting** as she was not happy with the methodology of the Independent Customer Survey undertaken by Halcrow in 2007.

Perception that HGVs have some difficulty getting back into Lane 1. Would like to see full Carriageway widening at this location to address the capacity problem.

XX (via email, no address given, later confirmed as XXXXXX – **Objecting** Concerned about the safety implications of temporary traffic management and the delays caused. Concerned that the average speed cameras are an excuse to collect more revenue from the motorist.

XXXXXXXXXX – Made **Observations** Believes that delay on the M3 W/B approaching J2 is significant. Concerned about stationery traffic on the M3 approaching the single lane section. Pleased with our 'merge in turn' and 'use both lanes' signage. Believes the delay is due to the 2 to 1 lane merge and not the 50mph speed limit. Believes the lane destination markings could be improved.

XX (via email, no address given) - Gave **Feedback** Believes the new layout is effective. Questioned the need to reduce the speed limit by 20mph and believed that the trial should be tested at the national speed limit and 60mph to compare the 3 options, also the length of temporary speed reduction is excessive.

4) Assessment of Consultation Responses

Issue of the belief that the new layout is unfair because it favours the M25 traffic at the expense of the M3 traffic. **HA Response** - this is a very understandable reaction but as the main objective of the scheme is to reduce congestion by reallocating road space in favour of the predominant flow there no opportunity to make any changes in this regard.

Issue that the 50mph limit makes the merging of HGVs more difficult. **HA response** – It is reasonable to assume that vehicles with a speed limiter (56 mph in compliance with current legislation), such as fitted to some HGV's, would be unable to reach a sufficient speed to merge safely with other traffic moving at 60mph or greater.

Issue that a variable speed limit should be used . **HA response** - There is no variable speed limit technology on this stretch of the M3 and such technology is outside the scope of this scheme.

Issue that full carriageway widening should be introduced. **HA response** - Such a scheme with an estimated cost of £20m+ is outside the scope of this scheme.

Issue of the safety implications of temporary traffic management (TM) **HA response** – The temporary TM will be removed if the trial is made permanent and removed if it is not.

Issue that the Average Speed Cameras are a revenue making device **HA response** – Average Speed Cameras are there for the safety of road users at this junction. Compliance with the speed limit is high, therefore revenue is low.

Issue that the lane destination markings could be improved – **HA response** - This could be addressed as part of a future phase of works at this junction.

Issue of the validity of HA evidence that 50mph is the optimum speed limit for the trial and permanent scheme **HA response** - The principal factor behind the 50mph limit, enforced with cameras, was to provide an environment where all vehicles from all approaches would be travelling at 50mph for an adequate distance in order to reduce the likelihood of lane change accidents involving Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) in lane 3 as far as reasonably practicable. From the end of the merge we have provided a 1km length subject to 50mph on the westbound M3 for HGVs to move out of lane 3. At 50mph, this equates to 45 seconds in travel time which we felt was appropriate given the peak hour flows on this section. To travel the same 1km length at 70mph would take 32 seconds, only 13 seconds less.

We have carried out analysis of the video survey to examine HGV lane usage in evening peak conditions at a point 600m before the end of the speed limit. The results of this analysis show that a significant proportion of HGVs are still occupying lane 3 which is a clear indication that the full extent of the existing 50mph limit is required for these vehicles to move out of this lane safely.

5) Further communications with those who responded to the Consultation process

The Project Sponsor will email or write to those who have responded to the consultation when a decision has been made by the Highways Agency.

6) Conclusion and recommendations

The author believes there is nothing contained in any of the objections received that should prevent the HA from making the trial layout permanent and therefore make the permanent order to reduce the speed limit to 50mph at this location.

Appendix A

M25 Junction 12 Consultees

Name Company Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Town County Postcode

National Express 4 Vicarage Road Edghaston BIRMINGHAM B15 3ES
 Management Committee Member Disabled Drivers Association 5 Cedar Road Oxhey WATFORD WD1 4QP
 Emergency Planning Officer Surrey Air Ambulance Kent Air Ambulance Trust Wheelbarrow Park Estate Pattenden Lane Marden Kent TN12 9QJ
 Emergency Planning Officer London Air Ambulance 220 Waterloo Road LONDON SE1 8SD
 Surrey Police Mobile Support Centre Fosterdown Godstone Hill GODSTONE SURREY RH9 8BQ
 Government Relations Executive British Motorcyclists Federation 14-16 Briton Street LEICESTER LE3 0AA
 Local MP- Mr Phillip Hammond (Runnymede) House of Commons LONDON SW1A 0AA
 Local MP- Mr David Wilshire (Spelthorne) House of Commons LONDON SW1A 0AA
 GOSE Bridge House 1 Walnut Tree Close Guildford Surrey GUI 4GA
 Transport and General Workers Union Central Office Transport House 128 Theobald's Road Holborn LONDON WC1X 8TN
 Surrey County Council Tandridge Area Office Station Road East Oxted Surrey RH8 0BY
 Spelthorne Borough Council Technical Services Council Offices Knowle Green Staines Middlesex TW18 1XB
 Runnymede Borough Council Runnymede Centre Chertsey Road Addlestone KT15 2EP
 Elmbridge Borough Council Engineering Dept Civic Centre High Street Esher KT10 9SD
 Ranks & Highways Representative Licensed Taxi Drivers Association 9/11 Woodfield Road LONDON W9 2BA
 Operations Director Confederation of Passenger Transport UK Imperial House 15.19 Kingsway LONDON WC2B 6UN
 Group Public Policy Automobile Association Norfolk House Priestly Road BASINGSTOKE Hants RG24 9NY
 Traffic and Road Safety Manager RAC Foundation for Motorway Ltd 89-91 Pall Mall London SW1Y 5HS
 Regional Director, London & South East Freight Transport Association Hermes House St Johns Road Tunbridge Wells Kent TN4 9UZ
 CBI Centre Point 103 New Oxford Street London WC1A 1DU
 Surrey Fire and Rescue Contact Centre, Floor 3 Conquest House Wood Street Kingston-upon-Thames KT1 1AB
 The Secretary Road Haulage Association Roadway House 5 Monument Hill Weybridge KT13 8RN
 TfL, Street Management Faith Lawson House 16 Dacre Street London SW1H 0NR

Appendix B

Our ref: HA 9/41/47
Your ref:

4A
Federated House
London Road
Dorking RH4 1SZ

9 July 2008

M25 JUNCTION 12 PROPOSED NEW ROAD LAYOUT INCLUDING A LOWER SPEED LIMIT

The Secretary of State for Transport is currently considering a scheme to make permanent the current temporary new road layout at the junction of the M25 and the westbound carriageway of the M3 at Thorpe Interchange. The scheme is designed to reduce congestion on the M25 for traffic wishing to join the M3 westbound.

The proposed scheme would provide an upgraded entry onto the M3 westbound. This consists of two dedicated lanes for traffic joining from the M25 and a single lane for the M3 westbound. At the merge, the single lane of the M3 is joined by two dedicated lanes from the M25. After this point the M3 westbound is restored to a three lane motorway. To ensure the safe operation of the new layout, it is proposed that a permanent mandatory 50mph speed restriction is implemented on, the westbound carriageway of the M3 from the A320 (Staines Road) bridge, east of Thorpe Interchange (M3 Junction 2/ M25 Junction 12), to Kitsmead Lane bridge, west of Thorpe Interchange, and the link roads leading from the M25 to the westbound carriageway of the M3 at Thorpe Interchange.

On a typical weekday 32,000 vehicles travel on the M25 and join the M3 Coast bound compared to 20,000 vehicles travelling on the coastbound M3 past the M25/M3 junction. Overall the new layout has delivered a net journey time benefit saving of 77,000 Vehicle Hour Delay per year saved over the original layout.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require further information. If you wish to make any formal comments on these proposals, I should be grateful if you would let me have them in writing not later than 1 October 2008.

Yours faithfully

Clive Cooper
Project Sponsor
Network Operations South East Area 5