

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Development
2.	Date:	4 February 2013
3.	Title:	Highways Agency Managed Motorways programme
4.	Programme Area:	Environment and Development Services

5. Summary

The report outlines the Highways Agency's (HA) proposed Managed Motorways proposals on sections of the M1 motorway within South Yorkshire, which are due to commence in April 2013. The proposals involve the introduction of a new All Lane Running standard which sees the conversion of the Hard Shoulder to a permanent running lane. The report also sets out the risks associated with the proposals and the views of the emergency services.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet Member:

- i) Note the Highways Agency's proposed Managed Motorways All Lane Running (MM-ALR) proposals.
- ii) Note that due to the timescales associated with responding to the HA's formal consultation that Cabinet considered the draft consultation response at its meeting on 16 January 2013 and subsequently Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) considered the report on 25 January 2013.
- iii) Agrees to include the further comments suggested by OSMB (shown in red at appendix D) within the final response to the HA
- iv) **That approval from the Mayor is sought to exempt this decision from call in is sought.**

7. Proposals and Details

Background

In early 2012 the Highways Agency (HA) announced their intention to undertake improvements to the national motorway network, including capacity improvements on the M1 between Junctions 28 to 31 and 32 to 35A. These sections of the M1 are some of the worst congested and improving the capacity along these sections of motorway is welcome in terms of both its benefit to improved traffic flow and journey times, and its associated impact on the economy. Plans indicating the proposed extents of the Managed Motorways schemes within South Yorkshire are attached at Appendix A and B.

In March, the HA published its Interim Advice Note (IAN) 161/12, Managed Motorways – All Lane Running (MM-ALR) and it became clear that the scheme design represented a departure from the existing motorway standards associated with existing hard shoulder running schemes contained within the national Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). The HA in issuing the IAN acknowledge that this is a new standard to work from and the section of the M1 between junction 32 and 35A is proposed to be the first section of motorway implemented using this new standard.

The M42 was the first motorway to operate a Managed Motorway scheme called Dynamic Hard Shoulder (DHS) running. This involves active traffic management using overhead gantry signs to indicate to drivers those periods (usually the most congested) when the hard shoulder can be used by all traffic. Active traffic management involving reduce speed limits are also in place. Whilst many of the features of dynamic hard shoulder running are automated the opening and closing of the hard shoulder requires a HA resource to remotely check that there are no obstructions or other safety risks. The M42 scheme has then been followed by further DHS schemes on the M62 between Junctions 25 and 26, and 29 and 30.

The proposed MM – ALR removes the need for this resource as the scheme will involve the permanent conversion of the hard shoulder to a running lane for use at all times of the day, both during busy periods and at quieter off peak periods. The default position will be that all lanes of the motorway will operate at a speed limit of 70mph. In addition queue protection and congestion systems will be introduced to determine when variable mandatory speed limits will automatically be displayed on verge mounted and overhead gantry signing. At the side of the previous hard shoulder emergency refuge areas with roadside telephones will be provided.

Emergency Services view

South Yorkshire Police (SYP) and South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) have considered the proposed MM-ALR standards and have raised their concerns regarding new standard. These views have also been shared by ACPO and CFOA and have been expressed to the HA.

From an operational experience perspective the emergency services suggest that the risk of collisions involving stationary vehicles during non-peak times is an unacceptable risk and one which will have serious and potentially fatal consequences. This risk also involves those personnel who work on the motorways along with the public. There are also significant issues relating to the ability of the Police to conduct pursuit and enforcement activities on this stretch of motorway as it is currently designed.

As a result of the above, and given that South Yorkshire will be the first area that will see the new standard introduced, representatives from SYP, SYFR and the South Yorkshire Local Transport Plan Team have been meeting with the HA to consider these concerns with the aim of reaching a way forward that can be accepted by all parties.

Over the last couple of months the HA have explained, in significant detail, their position regarding the safety predictions for this new scheme. They have talked through the detail of their predictive risk registers and the rationale they have used for modelling and testing the scheme design. At this stage they predict an overall decrease in risk of up to 15% although it is worth noting that this reduction in risk is not reflected in the objective for Killed and Serious Injuries (KSI's) on this new design, which states the safety objective to be 'no worse off'. This is against a local objective of reducing KSI's by 4% per annum to 2020. However, the HA also accept that within the overall decrease in risk of 15% that the risk of a collision with a vehicle stopped in a running lane outside of peak periods increases by 200%.

Current position

In order to ensure that specific risks relevant to the section of the M1 between 32 and 35a are mitigated, the HA will continue to work collectively with the South Yorkshire Safer Roads partnership as part of a technical working group to understand what further solutions might be employed that will enable further evidence to be gathered to support the operation of All Lane Running. It is understood that in order to progress with the scheme that an agreed way forward will need to be reached at the end of January 2013.

Timescale

It is anticipated that construction of the scheme will commence in Spring 2013 and take approximately 2 years to complete. The construction will be undertaken in phases starting with amendments to the central reserve and then in coordinated sections of the motorway.

Consultation

On the 21 December 2012 we received formal consultation from the HA, which poses three specific questions in relation to the proposed Managed Motorways All Lane Running scheme. A copy of the consultation pack is attached at Appendix C. The deadline for the consultation is 11 February 2013. As an informatory report on the detail of the MM-ALR scheme had already been placed on the agenda for Cabinet meeting on the 16 January 2013 it was considered that in order to meet the consultation deadline the draft consultation response would be considered by Cabinet and then by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on the 25 January 2013. A copy of the draft consultation response is attached at Appendix D. The further comments and observations raised by Members of OSMB are shown in red at Appendix D and it is recommended that these are incorporated into the final response to the HA.

8. Finance

There are no direct financial implications to Rotherham MBC as a result of these proposals as the programme will be fully funded by the HA.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

As mentioned above the road safety risks and operational difficulties that the proposed MM-ALR standard present to the Emergency Services are still being discussed with a view to an agreed position being reached.

At this time we have not seen the outcome of the environmental assessment that the HA are undertaking. Clearly the current volume of traffic and congestion on the motorway results in poor air quality particularly in those neighbourhoods adjacent to the proposed scheme, such as Tinsley.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The Managed Motorways proposals align well with the objectives of the Sheffield City Region Transport Strategy, notably Policy B: To improve the reliability and resilience of the national road network using a range of management measures. Some caution needs to be extended in the policy areas related to road safety and air quality, where the potential outcomes are less clear.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

The Highways Agency intend to undertake a significant consultation exercise as part of delivering the scheme, including presentations to Elected Members, engagement with Local Action Groups, concerned residents, business groups and undertake public exhibitions.

In addition, the HA will be liaising with RMBC regarding the detail of the construction to ensure that the scheduled works are coordinated in line with any local programmes, particularly those on potential diversion or routes that may experience an increase in traffic volumes.

Contact Name:

Tom Finnegan-Smith, Transportation and Highways Projects Manager, Streetpride, extension 22967, tom.finnegan-smith@rotherham.gov.uk