

HA Tactical Diversion Routes

A report by the Head of Network Management to the Highways Advisory Board on 8th May 2008

Introduction

1. This report provides information on the progress of the proposed HA Tactical Diversion Routes.

Background

2. The Traffic Management Act, and its specific Network Management Duties, emphasises the need for adjacent highway Authorities to work together to reduce congestion on the network.
3. It is the duty of the local traffic authority to manage their road network with a view to securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network and facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for bordering authorities.
4. In other words this means that we must proactively manage traffic on our network even if this traffic is a result of an incident caused on our bordering traffic authority's network, and this includes the Highways Agency motorway & trunk road network.

Identification of Routes

5. Over several months we have been working with the HA to identify suitable Tactical Diversion Routes. The success of this work and the progress we have made over a short period of time has been as a result of each authority's willingness to work harmoniously together to improve how we deal with the aftermath of congestion as a result of traffic incidents on the motorway and trunk road network.
6. The Tactical Diversion Routes will be used to divert traffic off the HAs network onto KCC roads to assist in incident management. **These will only be used as a last resort.** The HA will use its variable message signs to implement Strategic Diversions using its own roads first. In Kent this would involve advance signing from M25 and beyond. When an incident closes a section of motorway at present traffic is given no directions when it is forced to leave the motorway. The purpose of signing a diversion route is to manage the situation. Local traffic may still make its own decision about the route to take but longer distance traffic will be seeking guidance and should be expected to follow the signed route.
7. The procedure for identifying routes is set out in the National Guidance Framework. This details that whilst the HA and local traffic authority will bear their own costs for identifying routes, the HA will fund the introduction of the route, including sign design and, if appropriate, make a contribution to an improvement on a local road to facilitate the establishment of the tactical diversion. We chose M20 Junctions 2 to 13 to pilot this procedure. There are already a number of de facto diversions in the area and suitable roads linking with M2.
8. Plans of all the potential routes were drawn up and these were then assessed on a risks basis recognising that the potentially high volumes of traffic would be difficult to handle on local roads. We identified certain areas as unsuitable for use, such as A20 through Ditton and all town centre routes in Maidstone, and these have been excluded.

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9. The most suitable route for each section of motorway was then examined in detail. KHS surveyed the routes and made proposals for various improvements that would mitigate the impact of the diverted traffic. These improvements have been agreed and will be funded by the HA.
 10. The routes identified are principally on 'A' roads or major strategic routes that are capable of occupying large volumes of traffic at any given time.

Establishing the Routes

11. KHS and HA are currently preparing costs for the improvements in order to get the necessary funding from the HA. The majority of this work comprises signing the route, with agreed symbols fixed to KHS signs, some carriageway markings, improvements to traffic signal operations to allow special timings to be introduced remotely and some other small measures. Each route would only be available for use once this work is complete.

Operating the Routes

12. In the event of an incident on the HA network that requires the activation of a Tactical Diversion route, the implementation will only be with the agreement of KHS. We will need to compile information on conditions on the route, including roadworks, events and other conditions which would prevent the use of the route. This will be a responsibility of our Network Management Team. We would look to combine all these factors into a common database and make them available to the HA through a preferred system called eLGIN (Electronic Local Government Information Network).

Further Routes and Proposed Implementation Timeline

13. Once these initial routes have been formally agreed and the process for establishing and operating the routes is understood, it is intended to carry out the same process for the remaining motorway and trunks roads across the County. The following list is a proposed implementation timeline:

M20 Jct 2-13 to be fully operational by December 2008
A259 from Brenzett to Rye to be fully operational by spring 2009
A249 from Stockbury to Sheerness to be fully operational by spring 2009
M20 Junction 1 to 2 to be fully operational by spring 2009
M2 to be fully operational by summer 2009
A2 to be fully operational by summer 2009
A20 to be fully operational by summer 2009
A2070 to be fully operational by summer 2009
A21 to be fully operational by summer 2009
M25 motorway section within Kent to be fully operational by summer/autumn 2009
M26 to be fully operational by summer/autumn 2009

14. This timeline will be delivered subject to the authorisation from KHS of the proposed routes and approval from the Highways Agency to implement the recommended route improvements.

Conclusion

15. Further routes will be reported back to the Highways Advisory Board in the coming months for information.

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