

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

27 May 2009

Report of the Director of Planning Transport and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 M20 J4 TO J7 – CONTROLLED MOTORWAY CONSULTATION

Summary

The Highways Agency has opened a consultation on a project to introduce 'Controlled Motorway' status on the M20 between J4 and J7. The Board is invited to confirm support for the proposal.

1.1 The Consultation

- 1.1.1 The Highways Agency has invited comments on its proposals to introduce 'Controlled Motorway' status on the M20 between junctions 4 (A228) and 7 (249). The consultation opened on 5 May and will close on 28 July.
- 1.1.2 This Controlled Motorway Scheme will allow mandatory speed limits displayed on special signs on gantries to take account of prevailing traffic conditions aimed at ensuring the smooth flow of traffic. The limits could also be introduced as an aid to incident management on the motorway. When the signals are blank, the normal national limit of 70mph will apply.
- 1.1.3 Signals will automatically display one of three mandatory speed settings, 40, 50 or 60 mph, based on the traffic conditions detected by sensors set into the surface of the road. The mandatory speed limit will have a red circle around it and some of the gantries will have digital speed enforcement equipment to facilitate enforcement and encourage compliance.
- 1.1.4 During incidents, the Highways Agency will be able to manually set the variable speed signs to values lower than 40 mph when it is considered necessary for the safety of the travelling public or people working within the carriageway.
- 1.1.5 The Highways Agency hopes to achieve a number of benefits from the Scheme.
- Reduce congestion;
 - Provide more reliable journey times

- Reduce the frequency of crashes
- Reduce carbon emissions
- Reduce driver stress.

1.1.6 The Agency has been operating such a Scheme on the M25 between Junctions 10 to 15 for a number of years and has been able to demonstrate that the above benefits have been achieved. In addition and an important consideration for residents of this Borough, it was also able to secure a reduction in noise levels.

1.1.7 A copy of the full consultation booklet has been placed for reference in the Members' library but it can also be accessed on the Agency's website.

1.1.8 Traffic conditions along the M20 through Tonbridge and Malling, especially at peak hours, have been a concern for many years. The proposed speed control scheme offers an opportunity to improve to some degree the adverse air quality and aural impacts of the motorway, as well as reducing crash risk and its immediate consequences for traffic flow on local roads such as the A20.

1.1.9 There is a mass of technical detail in the consultation booklet, for example, about how the signs operate or which sections of the Road Traffic Regulation Act need to be cited in the associated traffic orders. For present purposes, these are incidental and the response to the Highways Agency need only deal with the broad question of appropriateness of the approach to traffic management on the M20. Consequently, I would simply propose confirming that the Borough Council supports the Highways Agency proposal to introduce the Controlled Motorway Scheme on the M20 between Junctions 4 and 7 based on variable mandatory speed limits.

1.2 Legal Implications

1.2.1 None for the Borough Council.

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.3.1 None for the Borough Council.

1.4 Risk Assessment

1.4.1 The proposal by the Highways Agency presents an opportunity to address an existing Air Quality Management Area along the M20 corridor.

1.5 Recommendations

1.5.1 The Borough Council registers its support for the Highways Agency's proposal to introduce a Controlled Motorway Scheme as described in the report between Junctions 4 and 7 of the M20.

The Director of Planning Transport and Leisure confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Mike McCulloch

Consultation document from the Highways Agency –
'Controlled Motorway M20 Junctions 4 to 7'

Steve Humphrey
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