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A21 Tonbridge to Pembury upgrade moves forward

The Highways Agency is to resume the statutory process for a multi-million pound upgrade to the A21 in Kent, transport minister Stephen Hammond announced today (Tuesday 30 October).

Under the Highways Agency's plans, a 2.5 mile section of the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury in Kent would be upgraded from single to dual carriageway, adding a lane in each direction, upgrading junctions and improving the road layout.

The infrastructure investment in the major road scheme would make journeys on the A21 safer and more reliable and bring economic benefits estimated at more than £400m.

Today's announcement paves the way for the project to progress to the next stage in its delivery, with a public inquiry for the major scheme now possible as early as next May and – subject to a successful outcome from the inquiry - a potential start date for construction in 2015.

Transport minister Stephen Hammond said:

"We will shortly be restarting the statutory process for the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury dualling scheme with the intention of the Public Inquiry taking place in May 2013. Formal Notice of the intention to hold a Public Inquiry will be issued in November and details of the venue, exact date and sitting times for the Inquiry will follow in due course."

Between 2010 and 2015, the Highways Agency is starting work on 20 major improvement schemes, subject to statutory processes. Together, they will deliver billions of pounds worth of economic benefits, improving safety and journey times on the country's major roads. In May this year, the Government announced development funding for six further schemes – including the A21 improvements – to help ensure that they can be delivered as soon as possible after 2015.

In November, the Highways Agency will publish formal notice of the intention to hold a Public Inquiry for the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury major road scheme. Dates, times and venue for the inquiry will then follow in due course.

Notes To Editors

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. More information on the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury upgrade is available on the project pages of the Highways Agency website:
<http://www.highways.gov.uk/roads/road-projects/a21-tonbridge-to-pembury-dualling/>

3. The cost range estimate of the scheme is £100m - £151m. The Highways Agency has been working to achieve significant cost savings that retain the scheme's important benefit and will maximise the project's value.

4. More information on the Highways Agency's major scheme portfolio is available here: <http://www.highways.gov.uk/our-road-network/managing-our-roads/highways-agencys-future-delivery-programmes/>

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

- From the web at www.highways.gov.uk/traffic or www.highways.gov.uk/mobile if using a phone or mobile device.
- By phone from the Highways Agency Information Line on 0300 123 5000 at any time. (Calls to 0300 numbers will cost no more than 5p per minute from a standard BT residential landline. Call charges from other landlines and mobile networks may vary, but will be no more than a standard geographic call and will be included in all inclusive minutes and discount schemes). 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 @HAtTraffic_seast or for the full index visit www.highways.gov.uk/twitter.

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