

## **Transport Working Group Notes – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2017, Smart Motorways Operations Centre, Kestrel House, Calder Business Park, Wakefield WF2 7UA**

### **In attendance:**

Andrew Denniff (Chamber of Commerce)  
Adrian Platts (Chamber of Commerce)  
Nick Whitford (Highways England)  
Gareth Owen (QFM Group)  
Ian Ashmore (RMBC)  
Matt Travis (Enzygo)

Clive Watkinson (JC Snell) – Chair  
Paul Jagger (Regional Chambers)  
Simon Brown (Highways England)  
Tony Hickton (Consultancy)  
Matt Reynolds (RMBC)

### **Apologies from:**

Lisa Pogson (Airmaster Air Conditioning)  
Brett Hawke (NRL Ltd)

David Boden (TM Travel)

### **Highways England - Smart Motorways Control Centre**

Forum members were provided with a background presentation explaining the Smart Motorways Scheme and its impact on safety improvements for roads across the Yorkshire and Humber Regions. Attendees were then invited to see the control centre in action with a demonstration of how the system works and how quickly the system can be updated to minimise disruption while keeping road users safe.

- There is a future intention to extend the coverage of the smart motorways that are operated by the control centre, through major infrastructure programmes. This is however subject to 5-year funding cycles through the RIS fund (Road Investment Strategy), so roads will be incorporated into the Smart Motorways system in phases as time progresses. The government is currently poised to invest further into infrastructure and Highways England hope to see significant improvements to roads over the coming years
- Ian Ashmore (IA) commented that they continuously work in harmony with Highways England to relay relevant information to stakeholders where issues occur with motorways
- Clive Watkinson (CW) mentioned that current messages on overhead signs are often unclear or inaccurate and that better information would allow drivers to make more informed decisions about diverting if necessary, decrease driver frustration and increase confidence in the accuracy of the message.
- Andrew Denniff (AD) asked for an update on the removal of the hard shoulder and the effect this had on breakdowns. Nick Whitford (NW) clarified that with the frequency of camera equipment to identify issues, situations are dealt with effectively.
- CW asked that consideration was given to limiting HGV;s to the left 2 lanes during 4 lane running as many HGVs were blocking 3 of the 4 lanes whilst overtaking each other. Simon Brown (SB) stated this had not been considered, but if it did it would be subject to government policy that Highways England would have to deliver
- Gareth Owen mentioned that a significant issue facing the Smart Motorway system is that people would likely ignore the messages on the gantry signs. NW mentioned that a recent study had taken place noting that drivers tend to ignore the red 'x' on signage. Activities are to take place to raise driver awareness
- Paul Jagger (PJ) queried if 70 was still an appropriate speed for early hours when roads were less busy. SB said it was a matter for government to decide where speed restrictions are relaxed in certain instances
- CW queried why at certain times the speed limit was reduced when there were clearly no issues on the motorways in those areas. NW clarified that not only does it pace motorway traffic at busy times, but lower limits are also implemented to assist in other issues such as air quality management in areas that suffer high levels of pollution

- SB indicated that the utmost priority is given to safety and protection to human life where the Smart Motorways are concerned

### **HS2 Update**

- CW stated that not much had changed since the previous confirmation of the route for HS2, however the Chamber will continue to lobby for a station in South Yorkshire that is part of the main HS2 line in addition to the Sheffield station.
- AD advised of a meeting proposed by HS2 taking place on the 17<sup>th</sup> October and suggested it was important that Policy and Transport forum members contribute to feedback. IA stated that he had been to a local authority organised version of the meeting and recommended being prepared with some questions to propose to the HS2 team prior to the meeting

### **Trans Pennine Tunnel**

- TH mentioned that more money is being made available for the Trans-Pennine Tunnel study to continue, and that progress continues to be made

### **Local Transport Issues**

#### **Barnsley**

- The majority of work taking place at M1 J36 & J37 is almost complete and traffic disruption is being minimised

#### **Rotherham**

- The planned road widening bid for the A630 Sheffield Parkway from M1 J33 to Waverley (Catcliffe) is still in progress and a planning meeting with the Department for Transport is planned
- A planning application has been submitted for a service area at M1 J33, which will involve a revised junction layout and RMBC are working with Highways England to on a best plan for safety and efficiency
- The road adjustments have been completed at the A57 roundabout for Wales Bar / Swallownest
- The Department for Transport are funding a feasibility study for the SCR innovation corridor, between the newly built Ikea and Meadowhall to reduce congestion between M1 J33 and J34. TH indicated that a feasibility study is essential in this area as it will soon become too difficult to control the volume of traffic in the area without additional relief routes
- The new road link under Tinsley Viaduct is improving the take up of public transport to Rotherham and relieving some pressure at J34A
- The tram train is now planned to run from Summer 2018. The transport units are already in use and is expected to be on time
- The update to the Rotherham Interchange is expected to start in March 2018, as part of plans to improve transport infrastructure in Rotherham

### **Any Other Business**

- AD advised of the Business North Autumn Forum taking place in Manchester and asked if anyone would like to attend. The event included updates about their transport campaign and Transport for the North's Strategic Transport Plan, however but the main focus of the meeting was on Education and Skills. TH confirmed he would attend for the Chamber

### **Date of the Next Meeting**

The next meeting will take place on the 13<sup>th</sup> December from 8.00am, at Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber of Commerce, Rotherham.