M1 Junctions 28 to 35a Maximum Mandatory Speed Limit

Consultation response from Brake, the road safety charity

Do you consider that the proposal to introduce a maximum mandatory 60mph speed limit is an acceptable measure to mitigate any adverse impacts that these schemes could have on local air quality?

YES

Comments:

Brake is supportive of the introduction of a maximum mandatory 60mph speed limit. As well as improving air quality, the enhanced monitoring and control of traffic combined with the reduction of top speeds will have a positive effect on road safety. Research has proven lower speeds mean fewer and less serious crashes [1]; a 1% reduction in speed causes a 4% reduction in fatal crashes [2].

[1] *New Directions in Speed Management: A Review of Policy*, Department for Transport, 2000
[2] *Managing Speed: Towards Safe and Sustainable Road Transport*, European Transport Safety Council

Which of the following times of operation do you consider most acceptable?

7 days a week, 24 hours per day

Do you consider that different time durations (by the way of example only, two or three years as opposed to seven or eight years) might affect you or your organisation differently?

YES

Comments:

Since the introduction of the 60mph maximum limit is likely to result in improved safety, Brake considers that increasing the limit again if and when air quality improves would be a missed opportunity to achieve a permanent improvement.

Are there any aspects of the proposal to introduce a maximum mandatory 60mph speed limit on the M1 between junctions 28 and 35a which give you concerns?

YES

Comments:

As stated above, Brake considers that the use of the 60mph maximum limit as a temporary proposal only constitutes a missed opportunity to achieve a permanent improvement in safety.

Are there any additional comments you would like to make about that proposal to introduce a maximum mandatory 60mph speed limit on the M1 between junctions 28 and 35a?

YES

Comments:

Brake supports controlled motorways with variable speed limits as they involve close monitoring and control of traffic and reduction of top speeds in busy periods and bad conditions, which has a positive effect on safety.

However, Brake has serious concerns about the dangers of removing the hard shoulder, especially on a permanent basis through all lane running. The Highways Agency has itself indicated through the media that it only expects half of people who break down on these all lane running stretches will be able to make it to refuge or off the motorway. Brake is concerned this will leave many people who break down perilously exposed to fast moving traffic. The lack of a hard shoulder could also cause potentially deadly delays in the arrival of emergency service vehicles at crashes.

Brake believes the reduction in crashes achieved by the managed motorway pilot on the M42 is due to the variable speed limits and controlled environment, not hard shoulder running. Refuges are also provided much more regularly on the M42 (every 500-800 metres) than on this stretch of the M1, and the hard shoulder is only opened to traffic during busy periods. Brake is concerned that the evidence is too limited to show whether the safety gains of variable speed limits and close traffic control are enough to compensate for the possible risks of all lane running [1].

Brake believes the removal of the hard shoulder, temporarily or permanently, risks reducing or cancelling out the improvements in road safety that can be achieved through the other elements of managed motorways. Any crashes or casualties that result from all lane running will not only cause horrendous and needless suffering, but could also negate the economic benefits of managed motorways by causing more motorway closures, which already cost £1 billion per year [2], and by increasing the human and public services costs of crashes and casualties, estimated to be £1.9 million per fatal crash [3].

However, Brake supports the rolling out of managed motorways incorporating variable speed limits and traffic monitoring and control, without hard shoulder running, given indications that these measures significantly improve safety as well as traffic flow.

[1] *M42 MM Monitoring and Evaluation: Three Year Safety Review*, Highways Agency, 2011
[2] *Tackling £1 billion cost of motorway closures*, Department for Transport, 2011, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tackling-1billion-cost-of-motorway-closures
[3] *A valuation of road accidents and casualties in Great Britain in 2012*, Department for Transport, 2012