



Populus

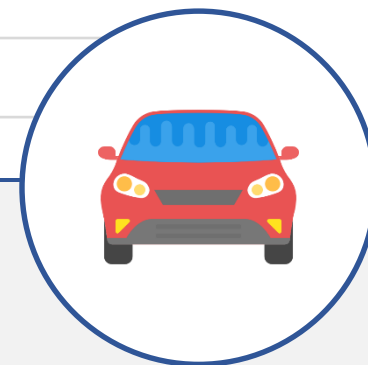
M4 Smart motorway roadworks May 2019 – qualitative research

transportfocus 

 highways
england

Contents

1. Methodology and sample
2. Wider road use context
3. Understanding the M4 smart motorway upgrade and roadworks
4. Understanding the impact of changes to the motorway during roadworks
 - Car and motorcycle drivers
 - Disabled drivers
 - HGV and commercial drivers
5. Phasing and stakeholders
6. Information and communication needs
7. Conclusions
8. Research timings and next steps



SECTION 1

Methodology and Sample

SECTION 2

Wider Road Use Context

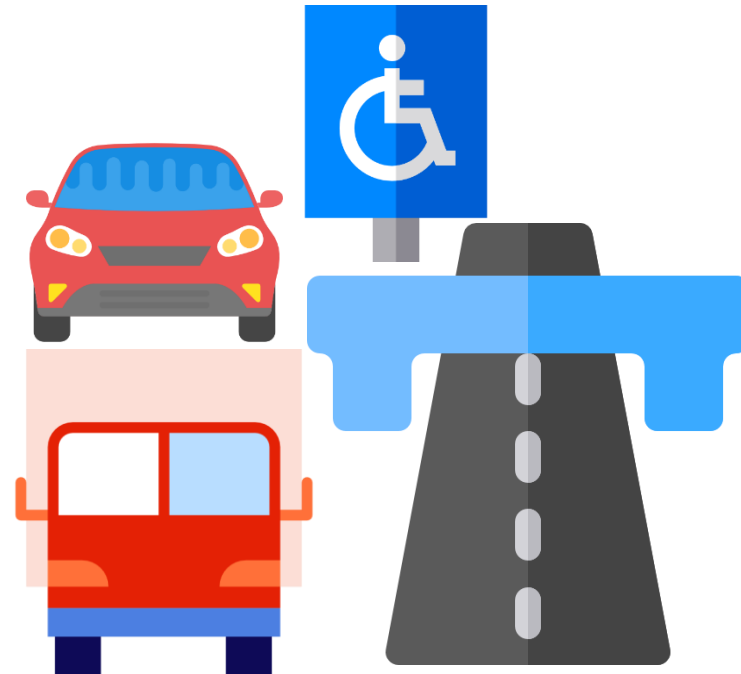
Driving on the M4 is part of everyday life for most people

- Whether a short cut around town, the journey to school drop off or work, a long distance leisure trip or HGV delivery, the M4 is a familiar feature of our audience's travel habits
- As such roadworks and changes to the motorway have a direct impact on drivers and they are keen to understand how their driving experience will be affected
- What's more, many drivers (especially non-professional drivers) admit that they currently have low awareness of how to drive correctly through roadworks or on smart motorways



People have a specific relationship with motorways which affects their expectations of the M4 upgrade works

- Driving is a direct, personal experience - you are in control (e.g. compared with being a “passenger” on other modes of travel)
- The road/motorway is also seen as a ‘right of way’ that they are ‘entitled’ to use
- Drivers have a perception that a motorway is ‘only a road’ and most believe that roads/motorways are much less complex than they actually are
- Roadworks and disruption restrict their autonomy as a driver and prevent them from travelling ‘freely’ e.g. making decisions on the road, having autonomy over their route etc.

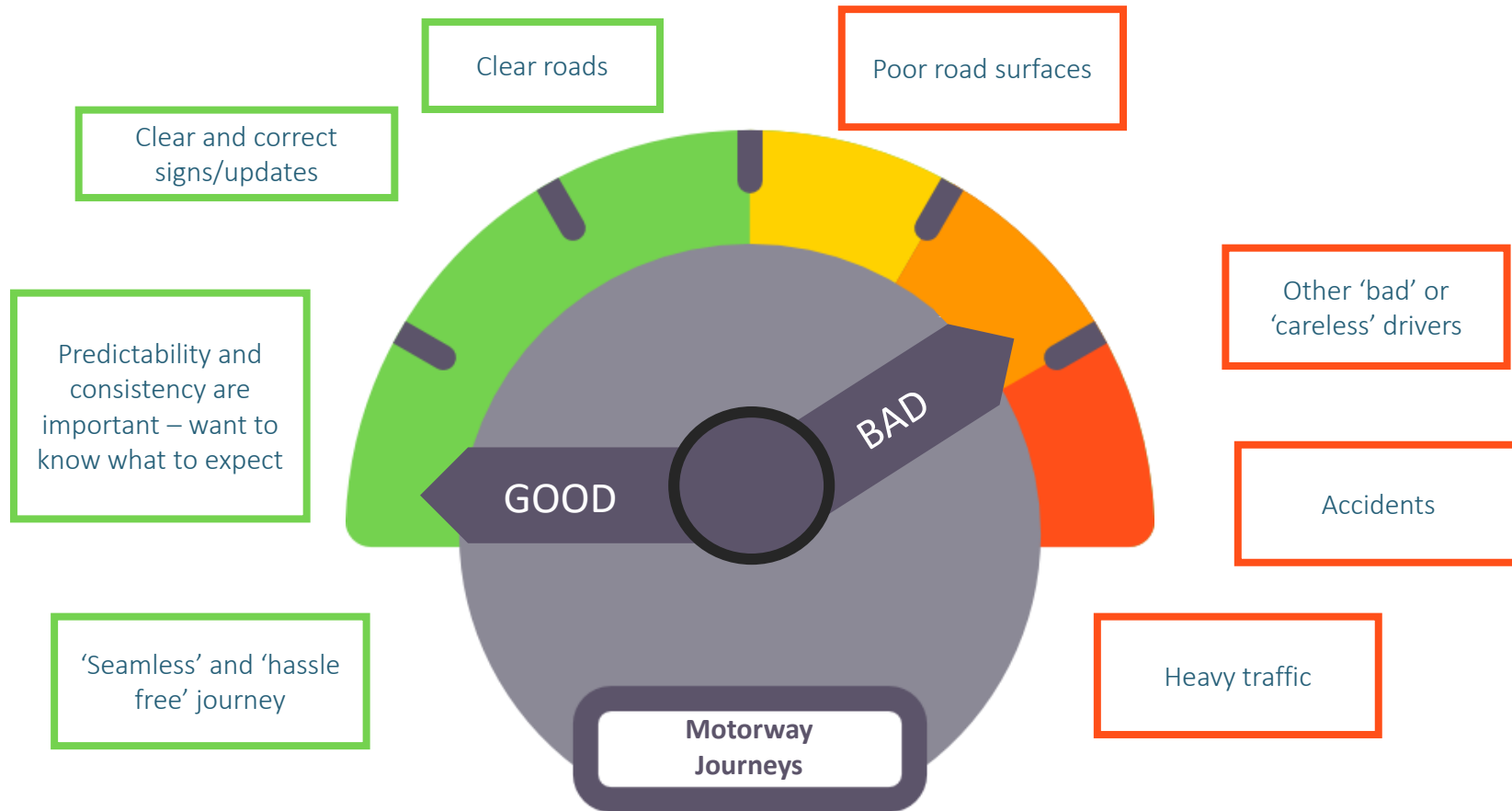


This has a knock-on effect for how they feel and what they want to know about road disruption

Their communication needs can be grouped into three distinct factions

A need to understand the benefits to drivers for the roadworks/subsequent smart motorway system	A need to understand in depth how they will be impacted as drivers	A need to be educated on how to correctly use the new infrastructure
<p>Want to know more about the reasons and need for the upgrade as they have a primitive understanding of the complexity of road management. A number of people want to know how much the upgrade will cost</p>	<p>Need to know know more than the 'basics' e.g. length of delays. They would like to know specifically when and how they can expect to be affected and what they can do personally to lessen the impact e.g. details about alternative route such as the difference in time to journey, expected driving conditions etc.</p>	<p>As road users are more engaged in this activity, they felt they needed to be educated on how to use both the roadworks and the smart motorway once completed. The use of the hard shoulder and instructions from gantries were two examples of aspects road users felt they could be better informed about</p>

A good experience of (M4) motorway driving involves an absence of some of the issues they are likely to experience during the upgrade



Let's hear from our drivers

A good journey...

“Is **all lanes** being open”

Less frequent cycle / motorcycle driver

“You feel relieved, more relaxed, less stressed”

HGV/commercial driver

“I think I **genuinely feel chuffed**, I think of all the things that could have happened and if they don't happen I do notice that and I think oh this has been really quick!”

Less frequent car/motorcycle driver

A bad journey...

“You have to **slow down** and it says men at work but there's no one there, there appears to be **nothing causing the reduction in lanes** or reduction in speed”

Less frequent cycle / motorcycle driver

“If I go home early from work, say 4 or 5 I'll get home at 8 same time as I would if I'd left at 7”

Local authority

“There's always some idiot trying to **overtake or undertake** you”

HGV/commercial driver

“When drivers panic a bit and everyone starts to rush... to get there quicker”

Frequent car/motorcycle driver

SECTION 3

Understanding the M4 Smart Motorway Upgrade and Roadworks

Although the areas we visited are close geographically, they each have different characteristics

This area context indicates how the roadworks and smart motorway upgrade are received, how our audiences feel about it, and what they are likely to do as a result

Reading	Slough	Hayes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger city that is geared up to deal with the extra traffic from the M4 smart motorway roadworks • Seen as a 'self contained satellite' • The M4 is seen as part of an everyday journey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller area seen as a 'large town' • As such it isn't able to cope as well as Reading with added pressures of the M4 smart motorway roadworks • It is also not far enough away from the M4 or close enough to London to benefit from other obvious routes • Seen as a very busy network, with few options to escape • The M4 is seen as part of an everyday journey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closest to London so most know there are alternative routes they can take • More acceptance of traffic and business needs • Heathrow proximity adds to this acceptance • The M4 is less likely to be part of an everyday journey

People's attitude to roadworks depends on three key criteria



1. The purpose of travel

Whether they are travelling for leisure or work the journey purpose has an impact on how they feel about roadworks, particularly the level of frustration they experience

2. The travel start / end point

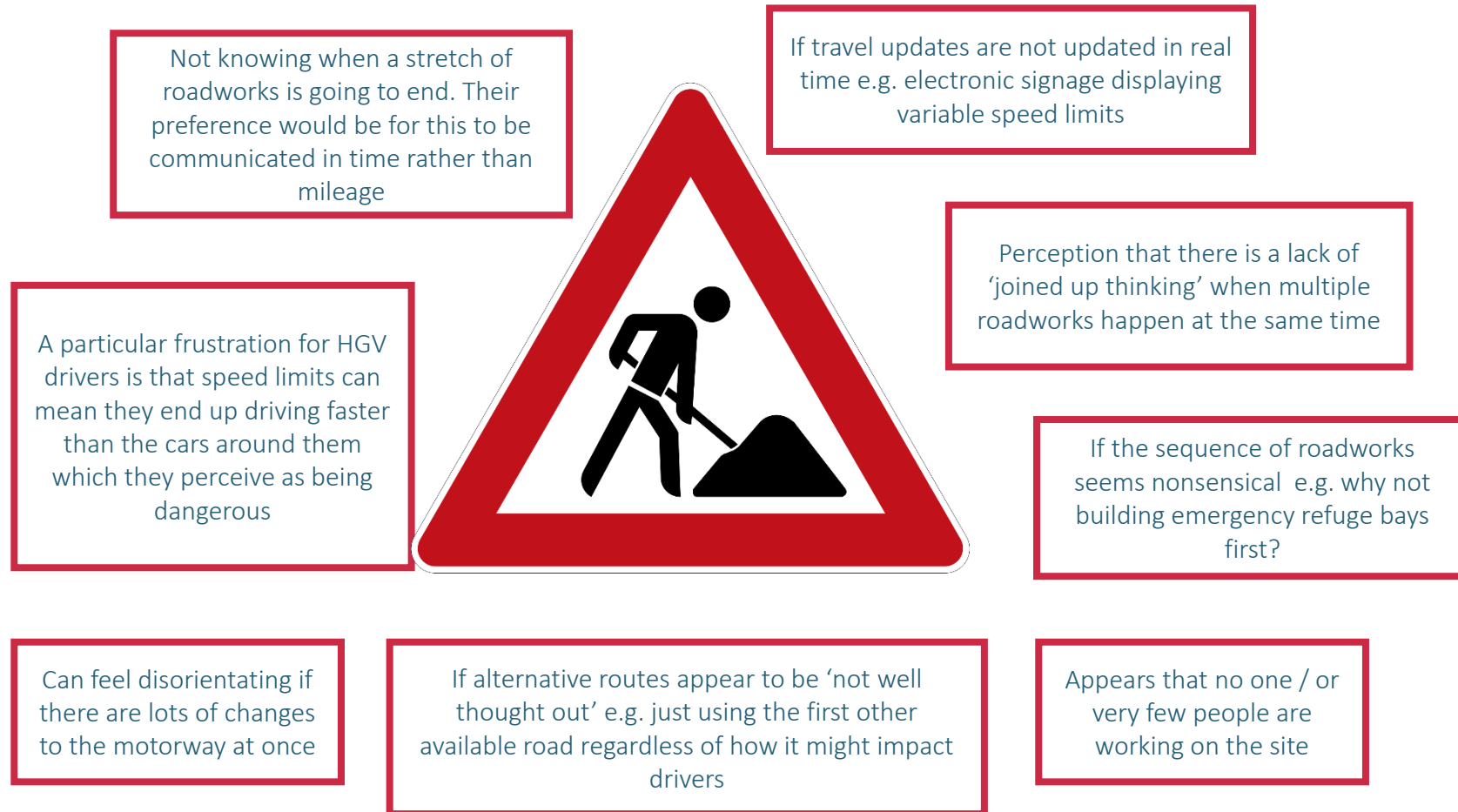
It also depends on where they are coming from or going to e.g. Hayes area travellers are more used to disruption and so generally have a higher tolerance

3. Frequency of travel

If they're a frequent user of the motorway system, roadworks are seen as less of an issue and more as part and parcel of using them

Drivers' attitudes can change from journey to journey and their frustrations can be mitigated by the benefits of the roadworks being communicated correctly (please see our communication section later in this deck for more information)

Certain aspects can impact drivers more and add to frustration if the reasons for a situation are not clearly communicated



There is a need to educate people further about how to use the smart motorway/roadworks and reassure them about changes to the road

- People currently have limited knowledge of smart motorways and how to correctly use one. Some were able to talk about the smart motorway in a limited capacity
- Changes to the hard shoulder and variable speed limits were top of mind for most
- However, they were often unsure of the specific details and looked to each other to fill in any gaps in knowledge they had
- Their knowledge was heavily based on their experiences of driving on other smart motorways in England rather than communication
- HGV and commercial drivers were more knowledgeable about smart motorways due to their frequency of use

“I drive on the M42 and the M6 a lot and I know that the M6 is moving to a smart motorway but the frustrating thing is if you hit Birmingham at 3pm on a Friday there is still the same amount of cars...I wouldn't say it's smart at all in fact now I've seen the signs for the M4 I'd say I'm really frustrated because I know how bad that motorway is”

Local authority

Most drivers were aware of the roadworks on the M4 but most didn't link this to the smart motorway upgrade

- Their awareness of the roadworks and their purpose, depended on their routes/area
- Awareness was higher where the roadworks have already started (Reading junctions) whereas those in Slough and Hayes were less informed
- Those who were less aware of the roadworks/their purpose weren't notably surprised, shocked or angry but more saw them as being 'a fact of life'
 - There was a perception in Reading that the M4 is often a place you find motorway roadworks (with both J10 and J11 having been subject to roadworks in recent times) and so not surprising
 - Slough participants were more anxious about how this would work because they feel the area doesn't have much extra capacity
 - Hayes drivers felt the area was different to Slough or Reading as there were other routes available
- Again, HGV drivers were the group that knew the most about how to correctly drive through the roadworks and on completed smart motorways and so were more confident (although they still need effective communication)

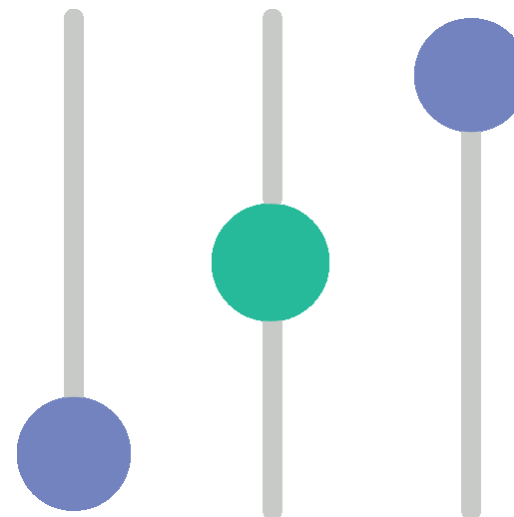


SECTION 4

Understanding the impact of the changes to the Motorway during Roadworks

HGV/commercial drivers, car/motorcycle drivers and disabled drivers all felt different levels of impact for both the upgrade roadworks and end result of a smart motorway

- Impact from the roadworks depends on the type of vehicle they are driving and there are clear differences for each audience
- Generally HGV and commercial drivers were the most knowledgeable about how to navigate through the roadworks (and indeed drive “correctly” on a smart motorway)
- In fact, the majority of the concerns raised by HGV and commercial drivers had more to do with lessening the impact for other road users (such as educating motorists on lane closures) as this would have a more positive impact on them as a result
- Our disabled and car/motorcycle drivers were impacted in similar ways by similar aspects of the roadworks however the level of impact was often felt more acutely by disabled drivers
- Car/motorcycle and disabled drivers in particular spoke about the impact they feel the finished smart motorway would have on them, specific (related) areas of concern for all groups were how to use the emergency refuge areas and what changes there would be to the hard shoulder



Implication

Communication should be tailored for each audience highlighting key areas with known impacts for each (please see slide 40 for more information on our audience’s communication needs)

SECTION 4

Car and Motorcycle Drivers

HGV/commercial drivers, car/motorcycle drivers and disabled drivers all felt different levels of impact for both the upgrade roadworks and end result of a smart motorway

- Ultimately if you are a frequent and confident driver then the level of impact both the roadworks and the resulting smart motorway has is low
- Whereas if you lack confidence and/or are an infrequent motorway user then you can find the roadworks and perceived smart motorway experience unnerving. These drivers' main concern is about having an accident because they were unsure of what to do!
- Signs with too much information were also spontaneously mentioned here as an element that can be impactful
 - Car/motorcycle motorists felt they can cause them to become distracted and that often they don't have enough time to take in the information



- Motorcyclists have a different motorway experience to car users
- This group feel they have to concentrate more than other drivers in order to stay safe in general
- They also pointed out that their field of vision is more limited, which impacts the level of information they can take in e.g. as they are focusing on the road they might miss vital instructional signage
- Their main concerns included lane markings being covered and uneven road surfaces e.g. either 'slippery' or 'uneven surface'

Changes to the motorway that have a high or low impact on car/motorcycle drivers



= Larger impact when upgrade complete

High Impact



Signage



Visibility of workforce



Temporary Barriers



Changes in lane width



Emergency refuge areas



Changes to hard shoulder



Temporary closures



Contraflow

Low Impact



Cones



Speed limits



Lighting



Temporary lane markings



Changes to the road surface

Lessening high impact situations for car/motorcycle drivers

Impact



Signage

Signage is considered important although the amount of information can be distracting and hard to take in when driving at speed



Visibility of workforce

Felt it was important to be able to see workers not only for safety reasons but also to give a sense of 'activity' to the roadworks for drivers e.g. feeling that things are being done



Temporary Barriers

Felt uncomfortable about the 'strength' of these barriers especially when they are used to separate traffic moving in different directions. Ultimately they felt this leaves them very little room to manoeuvre if something goes wrong



Changes in lane width

These create anxiety for drivers who can feel squeezed by HGVs and worry about the heightened risk of collision as well as other road users' "bad behaviour"

User suggestions for lessening impact

Ensure that only vital information is displayed and have EASY links to websites where they can find further information

Ensure workers are visible and potentially communicate reasons for absence where necessary

Ensure enough room is left for possible manoeuvres and reassure drivers

Wanted more communication and education about how to use these and what to expect, suggested YouTube videos

Lessening high impact situations for car/motorcycle drivers

Impact



Emergency refuge areas

Large impact due to how this is a considerable change for motorway drivers. Worry about an emergency happening at a distance away from a refuge area



Changes to hard shoulder

Particularly worrying for bikers who feel they have low visibility anyway. Hard shoulder seen as a 'comfort', an escape route which is why they are concerned about changes to its use



Temporary closures

Cause a large impact for drivers' journeys, regardless of if they happen during the day or night, as they have to take alternative routes that they may not be familiar with



Contraflow

Find these confusing to use and not particularly pleasant to drive through because of the perceived lack of space each vehicle has. Some are also unsure about how to use them and so actively avoid the single lane

User suggestions for lessening impact

Much more reassurance needed about how these operate. Drivers' were not comforted by the fact there would be one every 90 seconds as they calculated you could potentially have an emergency a mile away from a bay

Communicate more about how emergency situations are handled when the hard shoulder is in use, preferably with specific examples

Make closures and alternative routes known well in advance and not only communicated by signs on the motorway

More education needed to demonstrate necessity and benefits to contraflow. When using the contraflow system respondents hoped for signs telling them how long until they ended



Let's hear from car/motorcycle drivers

[Contraflow] "I don't want to be stuck/get stuck in a single lane"

Frequent car/motorcycle driver

"It gives us less room to manoeuvre if there is a problem, if there's no hard shoulder and we have a small area between me and the oncoming traffic, I'm not happy"

Less frequent car/motorcycle driver

[Diversion] "Need to be thought through...they need to think people aren't going on the motorway they have to use this route therefore we're not going to put temporary traffic lights there to cause insult to injury"

Frequent car/motorcycle driver

"If you can see that they are actually doing something and actually working...I won't get my back up as much"

Frequent car/motorcycle driver

"It depends on who you are. If you're a young driver that hasn't got much experience with where you are and suddenly you've got to take an alternative route and you have no idea where you're going that can be quite serious, especially in the dark"

Less frequent car/motorcycle driver

"I'll be driving along and suddenly I'll see the word 'closure' and then I'm gone and I almost actually need to go back past it to see when it's actually going to be closed, because I don't know when its going to be closed! I don't have time to register it because obviously I'm driving"

Less frequent car/motorcycle driver

SECTION 5

Disabled Drivers

Disabled drivers share the general concerns of car/motorcycle drivers

- Their ‘pet peeves’ during a journey are heavy traffic and traffic jams. However the consequences of such situations can be more serious for disabled drivers, for instance:
 - Sitting in car for longer is painful and can reduce mobility
 - Anxiety about availability of toilets if bladder instability is part of their disability
- Most are anxious, like car/motorcycle drivers, about the removal of the hard shoulder during the roadworks and when the upgrade is complete
- Again, consequences of the lack of a hard shoulder were more serious for disabled drivers
 - Mobility issues may mean they would not be able to leave the car by the passenger side or indeed at all in some cases
 - Some feared they might fall over and be unable to get up once they had left the safety of the car
 - Several wanted some kind of visual signal which would prioritise their Blue Badge status to the monitors (e.g. blue number plates, a blue flag)
- All are clear that switching to public transport is not an option for them
 - A car is vital when mobility issues mean walking to a bus stop, using stairs, is impossible
 - Driving also enhanced their self esteem, putting them at a level with able-bodied drivers
 - Several felt they would be especially vulnerable traveling on public transport because of their mobility issues



Changes to the motorway that have a high or low impact on disabled drivers

High Impact



= Larger impact when upgrade complete



Signage



Changes to the road surface



Emergency refuge areas



Changes to hard shoulder



Changes in lane width



Cones



Temporary Barriers



Temporary lane markings



Temporary closures

Low Impact



Lighting



Speed limits



Visibility of workforce

Lessening high impact situations for disabled drivers (in addition to car/motorcycle drivers' impacts)

Impact



Changes to the road surface

Linked to general dissatisfaction with local road surface but damaged road surface can be painful for disabled drivers



Cones

Can confuse nervous drivers and cause swerving if out of alignment



Temporary lane markings

Can be difficult to identify correct lane to follow

User suggestions for lessening impact

Repair surfaces as soon as possible and use instructional signage where possible to reduce speed near larger bumps and holes

Use more robust barriers where possible, especially at key points such as lane switches etc.

Burn off markings rather than paint over them and add cats eye markings where possible

Let's hear from disabled drivers

"If I've sat in the car a while I can't walk"

Disabled driver

"I was on a motorway. Multiple Sclerosis is bad bladder-wise...If I can't make it to a service station"

Disabled driver

"I've got that thing in my head that if you do break down there's no hard shoulder still"

Disabled driver

"Anyone would be petrified [*to be broken down on a Smart Motorway*], it would scare me more because I know I can't do anything. I can't get my wheelchair out in the middle of the road. I can't ask anyone for help"

Disabled driver

"Anyone would be petrified [*to be broken down on a Smart Motorway*], it would scare me more because I know I can't do anything. I can't get my wheelchair out in the middle of the road. I can't ask anyone for help"

Disabled driver

[*A car*] "It's a necessity, it's my lifeline...I wouldn't be able to get to a bus stop...It's your zone, it's your safe area, you feel comfortable. It's so important"

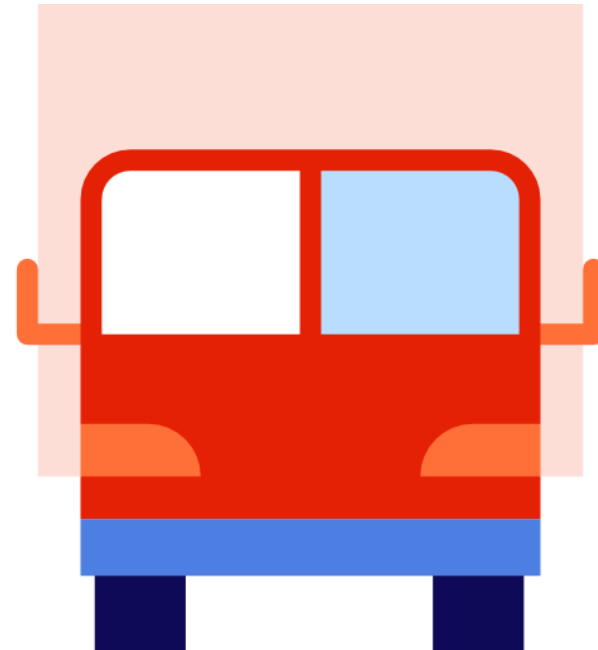
Disabled driver

SECTION 6

HGV and Commercial Drivers

HGV/commercial drivers, car/motorcycle drivers and disabled drivers all felt different levels of impact for both the upgrade roadworks and end result of a smart motorway

- This group is particularly safety conscious, not for themselves but for other cars on the motorway and feel that it must be unpleasant to drive next to them in a car!
- They are also often able to put themselves in other drivers' shoes and factor in the impact they have on other road users when considering their own driving experience
- This audience is very time conscious, as their journey is completely regulated by time slots including time to stop and delivery times. As such diversions can cause major problems and sometimes are unsuitable for HGV's with weight/height restrictions etc.
- Overall most try and maintain a certain speed (often the maximum they can) so variable speed limits can interrupt this. They would like the inside lane to be a dedicated HGV lane to ensure they are not slowed by nervous drivers travelling at 40mph



Changes to the motorway that have a high or low impact on HGV/commercial drivers



= Larger impact when upgrade complete

High Impact



Temporary closures



Emergency refuge areas



Changes to hard shoulder



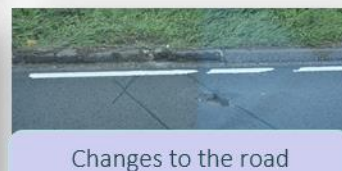
Changes in lane width



Speed limits



Temporary lane markings



Changes to the road surface



Signage

Low Impact



Lighting



Cones



Temporary barriers



Visibility of workforce



Contraflow

Lessening high impact situations for HGV and commercial drivers'



= Larger impact when upgrade complete

Impact



Temporary closures

These can cause significant problems particularly if not communicated prior to the driver starting their journey



Emergency refuge areas

Concerns about what they would do if they broke down due to the size of their vehicle. Some even wondered about the legality of stopping in these bays for non emergency related reasons



Changes to hard shoulder

Feel that road users panic when this happens and that they can lack common sense in the situation. This impacts HGV drivers who have to be more aware of nervous drivers



Changes in lane width

Feel the impact for others of being in closer proximity with HGV and commercial vehicles, however they can do little to lessen this impact. Trying to make it as safe of possible they will 'hog two lanes'

User suggestions for lessening impact

HGV drivers suggested that more could be done to communicate closures to their transport managers so that they could plan routes effectively

Clearer communication on how emergency refuge areas can be used and what to do in an emergency for this specific audience so

More education for road users on what to do in this situation, having 'just an arrow' is seen as not informative enough

Potentially think about the sizes of lanes. HGV and commercial drivers' would want all lanes to be the same size if they are altered, not just one large and two small for example

Lessening high impact situations for HGV and commercial drivers'

Impact



Speed limits

Feel that forcing all vehicles to drive at the same speed limit can be dangerous and that often they drive faster than car users which can cause problems



Temporary lane markings

These can have an impact on HGV and commercial drivers due to their high up position in the vehicle. As they are not as close to the road surface as car users, changes to lane markings can be difficult to spot



Changes to the road surface

Can get 'stuck' in the tram lines which is unpleasant. Noise is an impact as well as vibration levels



Signage

Specifically about signs telling them to divert as they can't just do this because they are worried about restrictions on the diversion

User suggestions for lessening impact

Potentially have a dedicated lane for HGV and commercial vehicles to use during stretches of the motorway with enforced speed limits or up the speed limit to 60mph

Help HGV drivers awareness of upcoming lane marking changes by informing them prior to them driving on that stretch of motorway e.g. signs, speaking to transport managers etc.

Would like prior warning about road surface changes, where to expect them and also how to avoid them if possible

More signage/information about diversions would increase confidence levels amongst this audience

Let's hear from HGV & commercial drivers'

"A lot of people [*car users*] panic if you take them off their usual route"

HGV / commercial driver

"I do think there should be a minimum speed for each lane, nervous drivers slow right down"

HGV / commercial driver

"It would have been ideal if my managers had been informed before the roadworks"

HGV / commercial driver

"I'll hog both lanes ... just to make it as safe of possible so then you don't get an idiot trying to overtake you"

HGV / commercial driver

"M4 bloody roadworks! The lanes are very tight and they keep going, moving over that way, this way. Going over tramlines – it don't half make the truck wobble!"

HGV / commercial driver

"Changes in lane width. Cars all use the lorry lane. It's the stopping distance, you left the gap there for a reason. Petrol [*his cargo*] sloshes about, it's mobile"

HGV / commercial driver

"It's educating people ... the worse thing is if it says 50mph, then you do 50mph not 35mph or 40mph... and when you have those people there they are the ones that cause the problems... if everyone was doing 50mph more or less it would be much easier"

HGV / commercial driver

"Change in lane width...can be a problem. Cars always want to get in front of a lorry. They cut in at the last second...You have to brake and it causes a ripple effect"

HGV / commercial driver

SECTION 7

Phasing and Stakeholders

The stakeholders we have spoken to so far report having a positive working relationship with Highways England

- Overall, stakeholders were happy with the relationship they had with Highways England, and felt positive about the level of communication they receive/have received from them about the smart motorway upgrade
- They had been visited by HE several times to talk about the smart motorway upgrade plans and discuss how it could/would impact their areas. They also maintain regular contact with them via email and phone
- There was some concern about the rigidity of the Development Consent Order for the smart motorway upgrade. One felt that it didn't go far enough to help the local areas with the potential traffic pressures their road networks might receive due to diversions, accidents etc.
- When asked about their preference for phasing the roadworks there was push back about having them take place at one time in a longer stretch
- They felt there would be a significant impact on their areas and one even said they would go so far to counsel against this or in his words 'block' it



SECTION 8

Information and Communication needs

All road users' communication needs can be prioritised thus:



All audiences share the same communication hierarchy but channels and specific content focus will differ

First and foremost drivers need to be told basic facts about what is happening

Notification

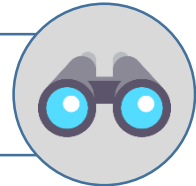
1

What do they want to be told?



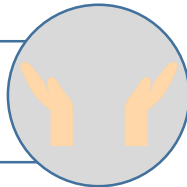
- Which stretches/junctions are affected and when
- Details of lane and speed restrictions
- Planned closures
- Diversions
- Duration of phase of roadworks

Where do they want to be told?



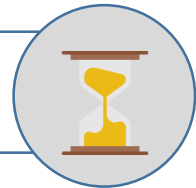
- Motorway signage
- Local road signage
- MSA info and pop ups
- Website and social media
- Print for local area and MSAs
- Radio for 'on the day' traffic alerts
- Mapping detail (apps) for planning
- Hauliers for HGV

How do they want to be told?



- M4 and local feeder road signage
- Feeder motorway signage
- MSAs on whole of M4 and long range feeder motorway network (M25, M3, M40, M1, including 50+ miles)

When do they want to be told?



- For infrequent users; 3-6 months in advance
- Frequent/local; broad notification 3 months in advance, more detailed within a month of roadworks, specifics of closures/diversions etc.

Next, drivers need to be told about the impact (and any alternative routes)

Assistance

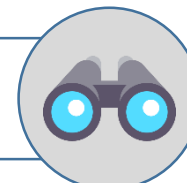
2

What do they want to be told?



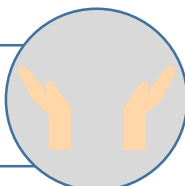
- Specific details of restrictions and closures
- Specific details of diversions
- Likely effect on journey time
- Likely effect on local area/other routes

Where do they want to be told?



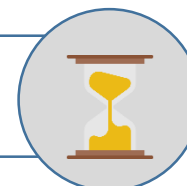
- Along M4 and immediate feeder network
- Further afield information can be more generic ('Significant delays likely' rather than '20 minutes from J3 to J4')

How do they want to be told?



- Similar to 'Notification' channels
- But with more emphasis on the immediate/short term use channels (e.g. signage, social, radio, mapping)

When do they want to be told?



- Similar to 'Notification' but more specific impact closer to actual roadworks (e.g. within a month)

Next, drivers need to be told about the impact (and any alternative routes)

Education

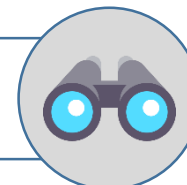
3

What do they want to be told?



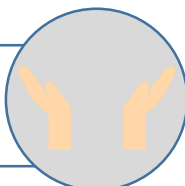
- Why the M4 needs upgrading
- What a Smart Motorway is
- Specific education around lanes and signage changes
- What the benefits are to all drivers
- Reassurance on safety of all lane running/refuge areas (especially for disabled drivers)

Where do they want to be told?



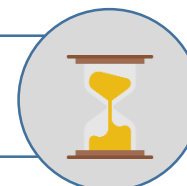
- 'National' via website, social and hauliers
- M4 MSAs
- Local events/pop ups and media
- Can be signposted from Motorway signage (e.g. 'search M4 upgrade') in immediate and wider area

How do they want to be told?



- Less appropriate for 'immediate' channels such as signage, alerts, social, mapping etc.
- Longer form channels such as website, leaflets, newsletter, MSA display, events, local community and specific interest groups
- Local news media

When do they want to be told?



- To accompany the whole comms programme (as people will look once alerted)
- Updated as the roadworks develop (e.g. as sections are up and running)

Most channels can play a part in the comms mix, with different roles

Signage

- Signs on M4, feeder motorways & local A roads for advance notification of specific works & to announce imminent closures
- Signs on wider motorway network to give general, advance notification

Print

- Leaflets and newsletter to hand out at events, display at MSAs and for subscribers
- Leaflets provide background information, newsletters are for progress, updates and proposed works

Events and Displays

- Events and MSA displays should not be relied on for primary comms but can really help with general comms and explanation of the works

Updates/ Notifications

- Social media is great for immediate notifications of imminent works as well as pointing to website for more detailed info
- Many drivers happy to sign up for SMS/email alerts
- Signage on motorway can signpost social media

Channel mix cont'd

News Media

- Local and national (R2) radio and TV traffic updates key “on the day” channel
- Local news a potential channel for wider explanation and benefit communication

Specific Groups

- Hauliers and other special interest commercial or community groups are a ready made channel for general and specific comms

Navigation

- Satnav and mobile mapping (e.g. Google) is key for short term and “live” planning
- Many people only route check on the day/day before

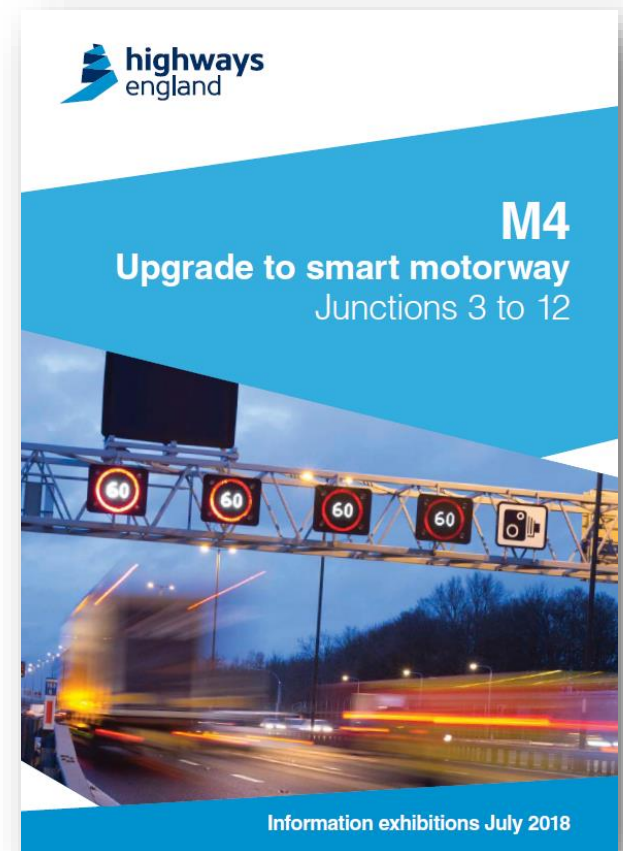
Highways England Website

- Core source of all communications
- Expectation that would be up-to-date, official, easy to find

Home visits were not seen as a suitable approach by the majority as they felt this method would be an excessive reaction to their information/communication needs for the roadworks and the smart motorway upgrade

The leaflet is a good balance of education and information, but drivers wonder how/where/when they would see it?

- Information is quite clear and simple
- The amount of information featured is not too much to digest
- Balance of what is planned and what the result will be
- The map is particularly useful with locations, phases and dates
- The details of how a smart motorway roadworks could be expanded to include reassurance, or even demonstration of the benefits (e.g. time saved, safety improvements etc.)
- Reassurance about safety is a key need and the leaflet is a core channel for this
- They also pointed out that the url on the back of the leaflet seemed 'long' which could put people off from using it
- Drivers expected a wide distribution of this type of leaflet at MSAs, local area mail drops, on HE website/microsite with effort put into driving people to the site via a range of other channels including signage



Ultimately whilst people want disruption to be minimised, completing the roadworks in one large stretch was not seen as the right approach

- Newsletter was only briefly tested but is a useful tool to include in the mix
- A digital version would be useful as a regular subscription update
- This channel is appropriate for less time-sensitive information e.g. next month's planned closures
- But not appropriate for more general education and reassurance needs
- Paper version could be distributed by MSAs, or at local supermarkets and retail parks close to the area



Upgrade to
smart motorway
Junction 3 to 12

January 2019 news bulletin

Happy New Year and welcome to the first monthly information bulletin of 2019. This year will see a step up in the project as we move forward with bridges and structures work and prepare for the start of phase 2 of construction between Junctions 8/9 at Maidenhead and Junction 3 at Hayes.

Our public engagement for this year is currently being organised. In March and April 2019 we will be holding the next set of Public Information Events for areas between junctions 8/9 to 3. Watch this space for information about these in the next bulletin.

We are now moving into the new office and compound near Junction 10 which recently finished construction. The new compound will allow us to store the vast majority of our equipment and materials and reduce the need for large local compounds. It will also provide space for vehicle rescue and recovery facilities for users of the M4.



What's happening on the M4 project during January?

Phase two of construction starts in 2019

Phase one of the project started in July 2018 and comprises the area west from Junctions 8/9 leading to Junction 12. While this is a significant piece of work in itself, phase two covering Junctions 8/9 eastwards into London and Junction 3 is a much more complex endeavour. We are now preparing for kick off in May.

Much of the M4 was originally built as a two-lane dual carriageway, and has been upgraded over the years. Eleven bridges over the motorway need to be replaced to make room for a new lane where there is no existing hard shoulder.

Where the motorway passes over, for example, the River Thames at Bray and the railway line to Windsor, we will need to widen bridges to support the new smart motorway. Two subways, including at Sipson, and several culverts that run under the motorway will also need work in order to accommodate the upgrade.

Some weekend closures will be required for bridge works. Road diversions for any of these works have been agreed with the local and statutory authorities. Full details will be communicated and posted on our project webpages well in advance.

M4 overnight closures during January

There are several overnight full closures (usually 22:00 to 05:00) currently planned in January. The best way to keep up to date with the various closures, including slip road closures, is the Traffic England website at: www.trafficengland.com.

Please check your car and your route before you travel.



NB: In the event of poor weather conditions or other issues out of our control, planned works may be postponed at short notice. If works complete ahead of schedule the motorway may reopen early. Signage will be in place to update road users of changes.

SECTION 9

Conclusions

Conclusions

- 1** Drivers on the M4 might be aware that roadworks are taking place but not all know about the smart motorway upgrade; they want to know both the benefits (i.e. the reason why) as well as be reassured about the safety of smart motorways alongside “disruption” communication
- 2** There was a lot of uncertainty about smart motorways in general e.g. how to drive on them correctly, what the rules were, when/how the hard shoulder could be used etc.
- 3** Many drivers feel they need more education about how to navigate roadworks associated with the smart motorway upgrade and also how to correctly drive on a smart motorway. This was felt not only by car/motorcycle drivers but also recommended by HGV and commercial drivers as well
- 4** Drivers need a mix of advance warning that roadworks will be taking place (where, when, how, long) as well as more specific, timely information about local roadworks, impact on journeys and any alternatives/help to avoid the disruption
- 5** Drivers are open to all communication channels from signs on the carriageway to social media updates and integration with Google Maps. The channel used will depend on the communication need/objective and people expect a mix of channels to be used in order to reach everyone

Research programme timings and next steps

Activity	Timings
Quantitative Stage	
Questionnaire draft available	19th February
Questionnaire signed off	22nd February (Midday)
Fieldwork	4-11th March
Report available	25th March
Debrief available	29th March