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Dear Secretary of State

All-lane running smart motorways

Transport Focus welcomes your evidence stocktake about the safety of all-lane running smart motorways and looks forward to publication of the findings. I encourage you to consider in your conclusions how road users *feel* about all-lane running, as well as the objective safety data.

It is clear from Transport Focus research that the key issue is fear about your physical safety if you break down – essentially, being hit from behind. And of course that fear will remain irrespective of the statistics and the reliability of modern cars: it *could* still happen to you.

Transport Focus believes that Highways England should do three things:


- keep communicating what to do if you break down
- keep communicating why obeying the red 'X' matters
- set an early date to install automatic stopped vehicle detection on every all-lane running section.

The importance of automatic stopped vehicle detection cannot be overstated. We know from research that road users put a high degree of trust in 'the authorities' to look after them. I suspect many would be surprised that automatic stopped vehicle detection isn't already on every all-lane running section. Implementing it should be the highest priority for Highways England. You could then say, hand on heart, "if you break down, we'll spot you fast, we'll protect you fast, you're actually safer without a hard shoulder".

One part of Highways England's recent letter to the Transport Select Committee stood out for me. Namely that the safety objective of any all-lane running scheme is to be at least as safe as the traditional motorway it replaces. Is that actually good enough? Shouldn't the objective be improvement? After all, the government's objective is no death on strategic roads by 2040.

I am pleased to let you know that we will shortly carry out new research to further understand road users' views about all-lane running, building on Getting to the Heart of Smart (copy enclosed). I will make sure you and your officials have findings from the new research as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely


Anthony Smith
Chief executive

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