

The Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps MP
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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. It is important that the evidence considered includes how road users *feel* about all-lane running as well as the objective data, including the views of vulnerable drivers, such as the disabled, elderly and parents travelling with young children. I am not convinced that safety fears will ever be allayed by statistics alone.

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 or serious injury on strategic roads by 2040.

Yours sincerely


Anthony Smith
Chief executive