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## Kelly announces new ways to beat motorway jams

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An innovative traffic management system that cuts journey times and helps keep motorways moving is to be extended to other parts of the network, Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly announced today.

Following a successful trial on the M42, new ways of managing motorway traffic - including hard shoulder running - will be implemented as part of a £150m scheme on the motorway box around Birmingham, and a feasibility study will be undertaken to consider if similar schemes could help to beat congestion on other parts of the motorway network.

Ruth Kelly said:

“The M42 trial shows that using innovative thinking to help drivers beat motorway jams really works.

“New traffic management techniques, like hard shoulder running and varying speed limits, offer practical and cost-effective solutions to cutting congestion and I now want to explore whether other motorways could benefit from similarly creative measures.

“Other important benefits are less disruption from road works, reduced environmental impacts, better information for drivers and a faster, more effective response to accidents.”

The first six months of the full M42 trial saw significant benefits for motorists, the environment and the economy. Use of the hard shoulder in peak periods saw average journey times fall by more than a quarter on the northbound carriageway and drivers’ ability to predict their weekday journey times improved by 27%. Alongside this, overall fuel consumption reduced by 4% and vehicle emissions fell by up to 10%.

Importantly those involved did not feel road safety was compromised - with 84% of drivers saying they felt confident about using the hard shoulder. Alongside this, since the introduction of hard shoulder running the personal injury accident rate has fallen from 5.2 per month to 1.5 per month on this section of the M42.

The Department for Transport will now begin a major study to examine the costs and technical feasibility of extending signalling and traffic management systems on a wider scale as well as looking at innovative ideas for future traffic management.

Notes to editors:

1. The Department for Transport's Feasibility Study into extending motorway signalling and traffic management systems on a wider scale will examine a range of ideas and options including:

- whether new systems could offer additional lanes and traffic flow capacity when and where needed, within the land corridors of existing motorways;
- ideas for lane reservation such as high occupancy vehicle lanes, heavy vehicle lanes and through traffic lanes;
- better separation of slower and faster moving traffic, possibly associated with differential speed limits on different lanes;
- the provision of better and more timely information to drivers; and
- ways to secure environmental benefits from better flow management.

2. The study will examine where and to what extent advanced traffic management systems might offer a quicker and better value solution than conventional widening, although it is unlikely that they will entirely supplant the case for widening in all instances.

- whether new systems could offer additional lanes and traffic flow capacity when and where needed, within the land corridors of existing motorways;
- ideas for lane reservation such as high occupancy vehicle lanes, heavy vehicle lanes and through traffic lanes;
- the use of differential speed limits for different lanes;
- the provision of better and more timely information to drivers;
- ways any environmental benefits can be maximised.

3. This study does not preclude the use of conventional road building or improvement schemes on the motorway network, but advanced traffic management systems may offer a quicker and better value solution in some parts of the network.

4. The use of Active Traffic Management (ATM) techniques began on the M42 in Spring 2005 and full use of the system, including hard shoulder running, began in September 2006. The results below are from the first six months of the full, £100m trial. Key findings are:

- Drivers are now able to better predict their journey time as variability of journey time reduced significantly, by an average of 27% on weekdays;
- ATM improved the distribution of traffic between lanes, indicating a better use of road space;
- Use of the hard shoulder during weekday (Tuesday - Friday) afternoon peak periods saw average journey times reduced by 26% northbound and 9% southbound when compared to using variable speed limits on three lanes;
- Of drivers surveyed, 93% of those who used the hard shoulder felt that the instructions for using it were clear and 84% felt confident about using it as a running lane;
- 68% of respondents felt more informed about traffic conditions;
- 60% would like to see ATM used elsewhere on the motorway network;
- Since the introduction of ATM, the personal injury accident rate has fallen from 5.2 per month to 1.5 per month;
- Overall fuel consumption reduced by 4% and vehicle emissions fell by between 4% and 10%.

5. Active Traffic Management allows existing motorway space to be used more flexibly. It is a tool box of traffic management measures, including automated signalling and enforcement, driver information displays and comprehensive traffic monitoring, enabling rapid incident detection and response. Sensors in the road collect information to inform automatic systems and operators at the Highways Agency's West Midlands Regional Control Centre of traffic conditions. This is used to plan a more flexible use of the motorway lanes, including opening up the hard shoulder and setting variable speed limits to respond to traffic levels or incidents and avoid or reduce traffic jams. This is conveyed via the display of real time information and instructions on overhead gantries. The control centre uses the latest proven technology to oversee the operation of the motorway 24 hours a day, and CCTV enables operators to mobilise a quick and effective response if incidents occur. Emergency refuge areas are provided for broken down vehicles, equipped with emergency telephones

6. Further information is available at [www.dft.gov.uk](http://www.dft.gov.uk) and [www.highways.gov.uk](http://www.highways.gov.uk)

7. If you are a member of the media with a question, please call Ben Wills on 020 7944 6898

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