

## **CLIENT PROJECT REPORT CPR2414**

### Monitoring and evaluation of the 55/60mph pilots

Results from stakeholder engagement following the on-road trial  
of 60mph at the A1 Leeming to Barton scheme

A Tailor

## Report details

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## 1 Background

Improving customer satisfaction, particularly through roadworks, is a priority for Highways England. One potential measure to achieve this is raising the speed limit through roadworks from the current 50mph limit to 55mph or 60mph. This approach aligns with recommendation 6 from the ‘Incidents and roadworks – A road user perspective’ report which suggests that “Highways England should set speed limits in roadworks no lower than is required to maintain safety” (Transport Focus, November 2016).

This project supports the monitoring and evaluation of trials which involve raising the speed limit through roadworks, where the scheme is designed in a way that makes it safe to do so, and when road workers will not be exposed to increased risk from the increased speed limit.

An on-road pilot of a 60mph speed limit on the A1 Leeming to Barton scheme was conducted over the 2016/17 Christmas ‘embargo’ period. A 60mph speed limit was installed for part of the scheme on both carriageways, resulting in a ‘step down’ from 60mph to 50mph for drivers travelling on the northbound carriageway and a ‘step up’ from 50mph to 60mph on the southbound carriageway. Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) and Variable Message Signs (VMS) were used to improve driver awareness of changes in the speed limit during and after the trial period.

This report presents the findings from two stakeholder feedback surveys following the on-road pilot. The objective of the ‘lessons learned feedback survey’ was to understand any challenges relating to the planning and implementation of the 60mph speed limit, and how these could be addressed at future schemes. The objective of the ‘road worker engagement survey’ was to obtain the views of individuals who worked on or near the roadworks during the pilot of the 60mph speed limit, to understand how it impacted on worker safety and operations.

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## 2 Method

### 2.1 Study design

To meet the objectives of this study, a qualitative research approach was adopted. Feedback was initially intended to be discussed in face-to-face meetings with stakeholders. However, due to the availability of the relevant people from the scheme, two qualitative feedback surveys were developed and administered instead; a lessons learned survey, and a road worker engagement survey.

The surveys included open-ended questions to ensure that participants could provide structured, detailed and unbiased feedback. Allowing participants to make comments in their own words also enabled them to raise topics that may have been unexpected but were nonetheless important to them. Participants were assured that their responses would not be personally linked to them when reporting the results.

### 2.2 Surveys

For the lessons learned survey, respondents were asked to provide comments on the positive and negative aspects of the trial, and their opinions on and recommendations for future trials and the wider implementation of a 60mph speed limit in roadworks.

For the road worker engagement survey, respondents were asked to comment on their experience of working on road during their trial, including safe working practices, near misses and incidents, and opinions on future trials and the wider implementation of a 60mph speed limit in roadworks.

The full list of questions is presented in Appendix A.

### 2.3 Respondents

The surveys were sent to a selection of individuals identified by the Project Sponsor as having been involved in either the planning of the trial (lessons learned survey) or as having worked on road during the trial (road worker engagement survey).

Responses were received from scheme representatives, recovery drivers, police officers, and Highways England Traffic Officers (HETOs).

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## 3 Results

This section presents the combined results from analysis of the two surveys.

### 3.1 Trial planning

#### 3.1.1 *General perceptions*

Respondents perceived that the process of planning for the trial was carried out well. Regular meetings between Highways England representatives and the scheme to align approaches and communicate the purpose of the trial were thought to have aided the development of a thorough and robust GD04 risk assessment.

In the later stages of the planning phase, it was felt that stakeholder management and lack of communication made it more difficult to implement the final arrangements for the trial. Discussions with North Yorkshire Police (NYP) were perceived to be difficult due to their concerns about the trial<sup>1</sup>. In order to mitigate these concerns, a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) was raised and aligned with the scheme's approach, to ensure a fully enforceable speed limit was in place during the trial. It was noted that NYP did not see any benefit to the trial, and raised a number of concerns even with full enforcement in place.

#### 3.1.2 *Perceptions of GD04 and other safety-critical processes*

Respondents described how they carried out tasks during the trial. Recovery teams described using a Rear Impact Protection Vehicle (RIPV) for every incident and having the assistance of Highways England Traffic Officers (HETOs). HETOs patrolled the network, driving at the speed limit in order to keep up with the flow of traffic. They were briefed to highlight safety issues within the area of the trial. Comments about whether these processes were deemed to be sufficient for ensuring safety were not provided by respondents.

### 3.2 During the trial and after the return to 50mph

#### 3.2.1 *Monitoring requirements*

Respondents indicated that extra work was required due to the monitoring requirements of the trial, particularly during the final stages of trial implementation. For example, additional monitoring stations were added at TRL's request after the design of the scheme had been

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<sup>1</sup> Some concerns were raised in separate communications between NYP, Highways England, the scheme and TRL on 25 October 2016. This included concerns about: an increase in risk to the travelling public as a result of tailgating; the need for two new Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders; uncertainty around completing the necessary re-calibration of camera equipment within the required timescales; enforcement difficulties due to driver confusion resulting from speed limit changes but no visible changes to the environment; reputational risk associated with drivers exceeding the lower speed limit and being subjected to 'due process', and pressure on resources resulting from a need to respond to customer complaints and enquiries.

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agreed. Requests for additional information on incidents and reference drawings were perceived to have increased workload before, during and after the trial. This workload was beyond what was anticipated during the planning phase, suggesting there may be a need for better communication upfront about the requirements of monitoring.

### **3.2.2** *Changes to tasks based on GD04 and additional tasks required*

There were no reported changes to the way existing tasks were carried out, and no additional tasks were required.

### **3.2.3** *Incidents and near misses*

No incidents or near misses were reported.

### **3.2.4** *Perceived benefits and disbenefits*

HETOs reported an improvement in responses to incidents within and outside of the road works scheme. General traffic flow was also perceived to have improved.

Some motorists were reported to have missed the increase in speed limit, and therefore continued to drive at 50mph. Other drivers were reported to have noticed the increased speed limit and “abused it” by driving above 60mph.

### **3.2.5** *Challenges performing role*

No challenges were reported. The implementation of the trial was perceived by the scheme to have been undertaken “without a hitch”; this was attributed to the early involvement of TM teams in the planning.

### **3.2.6** *Observations of driver behaviour*

The recovery team did not observe any changes in driver behaviour, perceiving that most drivers did not increase their speed to 60mph. There were no perceived changes in traffic conditions, although this section of motorway was already perceived to be free of issues.

The police noted that 13 offences were detected in the enforcement period for the 60mph trial. Of these, 10 were in the Speed Awareness course bracket and the remaining three were in the Fixed Penalty bracket. No suggestions were made that these were related to the trial of a 60mph speed limit. It was felt that despite original concerns about public perceptions of the return to the 50mph speed limit, the changes in speed (first from 50mph to 60mph, then back to 50mph) were unproblematic. The survey respondent representing the police was not aware of any complaints being raised via the Traffic Bureau.

In the post-trial period when the speed limit returned to 50mph, there were no perceived issues with vehicle speeds and the safety of road workers was reported as being uncompromised. It was felt that this was in part due to the “level of communication from Highways England” and the increased signage incorporated into the Traffic Management design.

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### 3.3 Future trials and rollout

#### 3.3.1 *Improvements which could be made to future trials*

It was reported that in future trials of a 60mph speed limit, communications with the local police force should happen at the earliest opportunity. Recommendations were made to start the TTRO process as early as possible; ample notice of when the trial will be implemented is very important for facilitating this. It was perceived that trial planning would be improved by detailing the monitoring requirements at the earliest opportunity, with site visits and on-site representation included as part of this. It was anticipated that this would enhance communication and provide a leaner approach to the monitoring of the trial.

The scheme reported that they would consider participating in the trial again, so long as the actions described above were implemented.

#### 3.3.2 *Future roll-out of 60mph limits across the network*

If 60mph speed limits were to become common practice across the network during holiday periods, it was perceived that this would need to be included in contracts at the earliest opportunity. A need to account for material costs, such as additional Temporary Vehicle Restraint Systems (TVRS), was also identified.

It was anticipated that implementing a standard method of working with 60mph during holiday periods would have a serious impact on construction programming, have an impact on sequencing (removing hazards prior to holiday periods), and require the TTRO process to be overhauled to allow more flexibility in the enforceable speed limit and the dates on which enforcement would occur.

Recovery drivers typically operate on 70mph roads when not recovering vehicles within roadworks. As such, it was perceived that the 60mph speed limit was not substantially different from normal recovery operations, as long as an RIPV was in place and HETOs were available if required. Ensuring working speed cameras were in place was also described as important.

The HETO representative reported that they would “welcome a 60mph speed limit in the future”. It was felt that the following conditions would be required to implement a 60mph more widely:

- Average speed cameras as a deterrent
- Increased signage to raise awareness
- Ensuring a place of safety exists for emergency services to use
- More works exits
- Allowing HETOs to safely exceed the speed limit in an emergency or when responding to an incident<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> While this was reported as a necessary condition for implementing 60mph speed limits, this may have been a more general request unrelated to changes in speed limits in roadworks.

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## 4 Summary and conclusions

Following the trial of 60mph on the A1 Leeming to Barton scheme, feedback surveys were sent to stakeholders involved in the planning and implementation of the trial, and stakeholders who worked in or around the roadworks during the trial. The surveys aimed to ascertain any challenges relating to the planning and implementation of the 60mph speed limit and to understand how it impacted on operatives' safety, operations and perceptions.

The results of the surveys suggest that on the whole, stakeholders perceived the trial to be reasonably well communicated and planned, and the trial period and the return to 50mph were generally perceived to have been implemented without problems. Operatives did not report any safety concerns in relation to the increased speed limit, either with respect to this particular trial, other trials, or a wider rollout.

Some suggestions were made to improve stakeholder management in the planning stage, particularly where concerns were raised by the police. It was felt that early and comprehensive communications about monitoring requirements would increase efficiency and reduce workload in future trials.

Similar to the M1 scheme, stakeholders typically perceived that drivers drove at or near the pre-trial speed limit (i.e. 50mph) and therefore there was little observable change in driver behaviour. Stakeholder feedback on the trial was generally more positive than that obtained for the M1 scheme; operatives had fewer concerns about safety and provided more positive feedback on communication about the trial, as well as some perceived benefits of the increased speed limit.

It is recommended that the findings from this trial are reviewed in conjunction with the earlier findings from the M1 scheme and the findings from future trials implemented as part of this project.

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## Appendix A Survey questions

### A.1 Lessons learned survey

1. What is your job role?
2. Thinking about the aspects listed above, what things went well during the trial of the 60mph speed limit?
3. Thinking about the aspects listed above, what things didn't go well during the trial of the 60mph speed limit?
4. What changes would need to be made for future trials of a 60mph speed limit?
5. What changes would need to be made if 60mph speed limits were to become common practice across the network during holiday periods?
6. If you were asked to do the trial again, how willing or unwilling would you be to participate? Please explain your response.

Please consider the following aspects when providing their responses:

- Planning
- GD04
- Stakeholder management and communications
- Implementation of the plan
- Monitoring
- Post-trial period when the scheme returned to 50mph

### A.2 Road worker engagement survey

1. What is your job role
2. How were your tasks carried out safely whilst a 60mph speed limit was in place?
3. Did the 60mph speed limit result in changes to the way existing tasks were undertaken that were not foreseen in the GD04 or Safe Systems of Work? If yes, please describe.
4. Did the 60mph speed limit result in additional tasks being required that were not foreseen in the GD04 or Safe Systems of Work? If yes, please describe.
5. Were there any incidents or near misses during the trial that were related to the 60mph speed limit? If yes, please describe.
6. Were there any improvements or benefits during the trial related to the 60mph speed limit? Please consider all aspects of the trial including driver behaviour, workload, maintenance and management, and traffic. If yes, please describe

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7. Were there any drawbacks during the trial that were related to the 60mph speed limit? Please consider all aspects of the trial including driver behaviour, workload, maintenance and management, and traffic. If yes, please describe.
  8. Did you experience any challenges in performing your job role which were related to the 60mph speed limit? If yes, please describe.
  9. If a 60mph speed limit was rolled out across the network at roadworks where no road workers are present, what steps would need to be taken, if any, to ensure it was safe for everyone?
  10. How would you feel about working on a project that was using 60mph speed limits in this way in the future?

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