

From: [Chris Hillcoat](#)
To: [REDACTED] [Matt Rodda MP](#); [M4 Junction 3-12 Smart Motorway](#)
Subject: M4 Smart Motorway
Date: 14 June 2022 21:28:48

Dear Transport Select Committee, Matt Rodda, Planning Inspectorate,

I am a resident in Reading East constituency and have followed with interest and concern the M4 smart motorway project. I noticed last week that a consultation is taking place on some amendments to the scheme. I would like to highlight a few key points:

- I am registered for updates on the scheme and have corresponded with them on multiple occasions but was not notified of the existence of this consultation, which relates to post-hoc changes to the DCO. I suspect that NH wanted as little publicity as possible.
- The scheme was developed and given consent on the basis of providing four running lanes. In fact, the scheme has been constructed with only three lanes through almost every junction, which means that four years of construction and over £800 million spent has created a series of extended slip roads.
- Already it is clear from the completed western section that most vehicles avoid Lane 1 because they know it will be lost at the next junction, squandering the capacity benefit. Driver behaviour does not always reflect traffic modelling predictions.
- Most notable of all is the retention of three lanes at junction 5, which has historically been a bottleneck on the M4 and will not be improved at all by the scheme.
- In my correspondence with the project team when I realised the scheme was being built like this, they stated that modelling shows adequate capacity up to 2037. Firstly this seems unlikely and secondly it is a very unambitious lifespan for such an expensive and disruptive project.
- Not included in this consultation but also relevant is the removal of street lighting between j7-8 and j10-12. The scheme was developed and given consent on the basis that all street lighting would be retained, but in fact this has not happened. The concerns about safety on smart motorways are not helped by the lack of lighting.
- Also not included but worth your consideration are the extraordinary number of full closures put in place to build this scheme. I think there must have been over 40 weekend closures of the M4 over recent years which is many more than for previous similar schemes. I would like to know the modelled and measured impact on journey times and the environment of these closures, and for these disbenefits to be netted off against the benefits of the scheme in future.

In my view the scheme should be constructed as it was given permission: with four running lanes through every junction except with the M25, and with street lighting retained. Not doing so means that capacity and journey time benefits are reduced, and safety is compromised.

Thank you and kind regards,
Chris Hillcoat

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