

M3 Junction 9 Improvement Project

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Questions arising out of Hearing 2

There were a number of questions related to the traffic modelling which did not get resolved at Issue Hearing 2.

Winchester street modelling.

In my submission on the modelling, I pointed out that the model-to-observed-data was not good for the streets of Winchester. At the basic validation level, the SD of the fit was around 26%. If the observed data was a single snapshot then it was important to establish the variance of the observed data. I was only able to make a very rough estimate of what that might be from parking occupancy data and variability of pollution measures. That variance ranged from SD 20-60%.

Mr Lumsden stated that the observations used within Winchester were not for a single day, but taken over a period of time.

Question WinFoE1 (to NH): For the streets detailed in the validation of the Winchester network, what survey data has been collected over what period of time?

- Can we please see this data?
- And could the Applicant please show its reasoning for giving statistical significance to its assertions of benefits on the streets of Winchester?

We were confused by the statements from the Hampshire County Council side relating to the modelling on Winchester's streets. In its Local Impact report says:

It is recognised that the model has more limited application when modelling changes on the local highway network given that the model has been designed to assess changes to strategic flows using the trunk road network. Therefore the County Council takes a more cautious approach to assessing the impact of the Scheme on the local network.

But then it asserts, without caution, that:

The County Council recognises that the Scheme will bring congestion and journey time benefits to the local network with resultant positive impacts for the policy ambitions contained within the Winchester Movement Strategy, as set out in the next section.

We think that HCC went on to say that they didn't, themselves, do any modelling of Winchester's streets, so it is difficult to understand on what the assertion of positive impact on those streets is based. HCC did say, however, that it had carried out a validation exercise on the model comparing it to the data they had from cameras and other devices.

Question WinFoE2 (to HCC): Does a report exist of the validation exercise that HCC carried out? If so can we see it please?

Question WinFoE3 (to HCC): Does the HCC position on the effect of the scheme simply take the Applicant's position at face value or does it have other evidence, to suggest a positive effect of the scheme?

HCC also state that this scheme serves the aims of the Winchester Movement Strategy (WMS). As Phil Gagg pointed out, the WMS may have some aims including reducing traffic in the City Centre, but, after 5 years of gestation, we have still not seen any specific proposals. Since modal shift and demand management, including workplace parking levies were being proffered by the two Councils as likely ways forward, we wonder why HCC has reverted to classic highways engineers' predict-and-provide mode of thought. The County Council has certainly not given the public any reasons why the aim of traffic reduction is supported by increasing the capacity of the motorway network – and it certainly has no public mandate for this position.

Question WinFoE4 (to HCC): What public case has been made and when, for asserting capacity increase at Junction 9 supports the aim of traffic reduction in Winchester?

Question WinFoE5 (to HCC): Has such a case been made to the City Council and, if so, when has it been discussed in Council?

The Applicant was arguing that the scheme, being there for local junction relief, did not amount to capacity increase so far as the M3 A34 corridors elsewhere would see it. Ms Tracey went so far as to say that the Applicant did not see that the scheme would have the effect of inducing traffic. The Applicant appears to be saying two opposite things – that induced traffic is insignificant and that journey time savings are significant. Yet these two things are known to be related (TAG M2.1 Table A.1). The traffic modelling is not a simple re-assignment model, but includes a variable demand model, which presumably would be assigning a value to induced traffic, through the rule-of-half. What we are not seeing in the modelling report is the amount of induced traffic or the value being assigned to it in the economic modelling.

Questions WinFoE6 (to NH): What are the differences between the Fixed Trip matrix and the VDEM matrix?

- What does the VDEM model say about the level of induced traffic (e.g. south of the junction)?
- What part of the user benefits is attributable to the induced traffic?

We are not clear that modal choice is being modelled at all. TAG M2.1 §4.7.3 suggests that it should be:

A few models omit the mode choice mechanism altogether because modal transfer is not considered to be important. This is not recommended in most cases (see section 2.3), but if that approach is used it will be important to include a trip frequency elasticity at a greater strength than usual, since this will act as proxy for trips transferred to the car mode from other modes and vice versa.

M2.1 Table A.1 suggests elasticities in regard to traffic induction by modal switching. The M3 and the A34 both have clear rail alternatives and so must rank as having high modal competition.

Question WinFoE7 (to NH): Does the VDEM modelling include modal choice?

Question WinFoE8 (to NH): Does the VDEM modelling use the elasticities in M2.1 Table A.1 pertaining to high modal competition?

When I raised the question of how the decision to end the J9-14 SMART project would impact on the modelling, I believe Ms Tracey said that this decision had been factored into the modelling. Since whether or not the capacity of J9-14 is at dual-3 or dual-4 must be a material factor in the output of the model, it must be pertinent to ask how the model outputs changed with the SMART decision. Presumably the Applicant must have been doing this modelling before the decision was taken, so it must have both sets of results to compare.

Question WinFoE9 (to NH): What are the main differences between the pre-SMART decision modelling outputs and the post-SMART outputs?

- Does post-SMART modelling result in significant congestion south of J9 during the scheme lifetime?
- Does post-SMART modelling change the additional traffic predicted through Twyford?

