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# Highways Agency: Transport Minister opens England's second Hard Shoulder Running Scheme

\* Chris Mole also confirms launch of new scheme to maximise benefits of road improvements

England's newest hard shoulder running scheme was opened today by Transport Minister Chris Mole - cutting congestion and improving journey time reliability and safety for road users on the M6 in the West Midlands.

From today - a month earlier than planned - motorists travelling on a 7 mile stretch of one of England's busiest motorways will be able to use the hard shoulder as a traffic lane during busy periods.

The scheme on the M6 near Birmingham – delivered as part of a £150 million contract - comes following the successful M42 pilot, also in the West Midlands, which has delivered safer and more reliable journeys.

The Transport Minister also announced that the first 'through-junction running' scheme – to maximise the benefits of hard shoulder running – is expected to open on the M42 on Wednesday 9 December.

Opening the M6 J4-J5 scheme at the Highways Agency's West Midlands Regional Control Centre, Chris Mole said:

"The M6 is the first motorway after the successful M42 pilot to see the hard shoulder opened up as a running lane to ease congestion and make journey times more reliable. This crucial scheme will make an invaluable contribution to business and economy and I am delighted that the benefits are being brought to road users on this vital national transport spine a month ahead of schedule.

"By 2015, an investment of around £3bn - half of our planned spending on

the national roads programme – is expected to deliver 340 additional lane miles for road users through schemes like this, making extra capacity available when needed on some of the busiest stretches of England’s motorways.

“Our commitment to finding innovative solutions to tackle congestion does not stop there and I can confirm today that from next week the Highways Agency will launch a new scheme to enhance the benefits of the M42 managed motorway scheme.”

Motorists travelling southbound on the M42 at junction 5 near Solihull will be the first in the UK to be able to drive along the motorway hard shoulder between junction slip roads – ‘through-junction running’. This will provide a continuous four lane section of motorway on the M42 southbound from J6 to J4. Previously drivers were required to exit the hard shoulder when approaching junction 5.

Funded by the Government’s fiscal stimulus package, the £3m project on the M42 forms part of the Highways Agency’s work to kick-start the economy and help ‘Build Britain’s Future’.

Today’s opening marks the completion of the Managed Motorways scheme on the M6 between junctions 4 and 5. Managed Motorways use a range of innovative technology to actively control traffic. Features such as variable speed limits and opening up the hard shoulder to traffic at peak times are designed to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion, whilst delivering safer journeys.

Results from the M42 pilot showed more reliable journey times for drivers (a 22% improvement) and safer journeys – with a reduction in the number of accidents from an average 5.1 a month to 1.8 a month.

Tim Harbot, Highways Agency Regional Director, said:

“We are delighted to deliver these benefits a month early, providing additional capacity to the M6 in the run up to Christmas.

“These improvements will help road users make their journeys safely and more reliably by using variable speed limits to manage the flow of traffic and opening up the hard shoulder as a running lane to provide additional capacity when required.

“Work continues on the M6 between Junction 8 (Rayhall) and 10a (M54) to deliver hard shoulder running. We expect to open this scheme to traffic in spring 2011.”

Ian Austin, Regional Minister added:

“These improvements are vital in supporting the economy, especially in these challenging times. Businesses rely on the UK motorway network to transport their goods and need to be able to rely on the time it will take to make each journey. These improved transport links will support existing businesses within the West Midlands and attract new business to the area.”

On the M6, 96 lane specific signals, 24 driver information signs and 23 overhead lightweight gantries have been installed. The new signals show drivers when mandatory speed limits are in place, as well as showing which lanes are open to traffic. The driver information signs use text and internationally-recognised pictograms to give drivers information about the road ahead.

Emergency refuge areas (ERA), with emergency telephones directly connected to the Highways Agency control centre, are provided at frequent intervals so that vehicles that breakdown during the operation of hard shoulder running can stop safely.

### **Notes to editors**

For further information, to request an interview or for a copy of footage showing hard shoulder running in operation on the M6 please call Nathan Wallis, Highways Agency West Midlands Press & PR officer on 0121 4218852 or Kelly Logan on 0207 153 4824.

1. The Highways Agency is an executive agency of the Department for Transport. It manages, maintains and improves the network of trunk roads and motorways in England on behalf of the Secretary of State
2. Construction on the Birmingham Box Managed Motorways phase 1&2 (BBMM12) project began in August 2008. The entire Birmingham Box scheme will cost £150m.
3. The M6 J4-5 scheme has been delivered as part of this contract and has introduced hard shoulder running between junction 4 and 5 northbound and junction 5 to 4A southbound. On the M6 southbound between junction 4A and 4 a controlled motorway with no hard shoulder running is in operation. Work has included the installation of 23 new gantries, the removal of 9 old gantries and 96 new overhead speed limit indicator signs. It has introduced

CCTV camera coverage across the section and carriageway speed detection loops.

The BBMM 1&2 contract has also extended managed motorways on the M42 and will deliver hard shoulder running on the M6 between Junction 8 (Rayhall) and 10a (M54) early 2011. Phase 1 also included M40 J16-3A and M42 J7-9 which completed August 2009.

4. See "Britain's Transport Infrastructure - Motorways and Major Trunk Roads: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/network/policy/motorways/motorways.pdf> document published on 15 January 2009. It details the locations where, as part of the Government's up to £6bn national roads programme, the Highways Agency will be adding capacity to the motorway and major trunk road network, including through hard shoulder running.

5. The M42 Junction 3A to Junction 7 Active Traffic Management scheme (referred to as Managed Motorways in subsequent schemes) near Birmingham has shown that hard shoulder running can provide the benefits of motorway widening at significantly lower costs and without the need to acquire additional land.

6. About Hard Shoulder Running on the M42:

- \* Hard shoulder running on the M42 near Birmingham is proving popular with road users, with 60% of drivers questioned in the West Midlands wanting to see the scheme implemented elsewhere.

- \* The benefits of hard shoulder running on the M42 includes journey time reliability was increased by 22 per cent and personal injury accidents decreased from an average of 5.1 per month to 1.8.

- \* It has also been good news for the environment, with emissions reduced by between 4% and 10% due to traffic flowing more smoothly.

7. Where hard shoulders are opened up as running lanes this only happens following the implementation of significant safety features. Emergency refuge areas are provided at regular intervals; the network is intensively monitored by HA Control centre staff and speeds are controlled to ensure safety.

8. For more general information about the Highways Agency and its work, visit the highways agency website [www.highways.gov.uk](http://www.highways.gov.uk), or telephone the highways agency information line on 08457 50 40 30 at any time. (Calls to 0845 numbers cost no more than 3p/min from BT residential landlines. Call charges from other landlines and mobile networks may vary)

9. Real -time traffic information for England's motorways and major A roads is now available:

- \* From our traffic radio service, available on DAB digital radio and the internet at [www.trafficradio.org.uk](http://www.trafficradio.org.uk) To tune into the DAB service, simply press the "scan" button on your radio. The radio will tune into all available channels and you can select the new service by scrolling through the

channels until you reach "Traffic Radio".

\* On the internet at [www.highways.gov.uk/trafficinfo](http://www.highways.gov.uk/trafficinfo)

\* By phone from the Highways Agency 24-hour voice activated phone service on 08700 660 115. (Calls from BT landlines to 0870 numbers will cost no more than 8p per minute; mobile calls usually cost more).

\* Before using a mobile, find a safe place to park. Never stop on the hard shoulder of a motorway except in an emergency. Make sure it's safe and legal before you call.

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For out of hours media enquires, call the 24-7 National Press Office number on 0207 081 7443

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