

**Roads to Ruin:
The environmental impact of Labour's new roads programme**

A report on the possible shape of the Government's new roads programme and its environmental impact. Produced for the Roads to Ruin Alliance by Transport 2000, CPRE and Friends of the Earth.

Researched and written by Gerald Kells, Tony Bosworth, Denise Carlo, Lilli Matson and Lynn Sloman.

Special thanks go to the many environmental activists in each region who provided detailed local knowledge about the status of road schemes and their environmental implications.

Published by Transport 2000 Ltd, The Impact Centre, 12-18 Hoxton Street, London N1 6NG. Available from Transport 2000, price £10.

© Transport 2000 Ltd February 2001. All rights reserved.

ISBN: 0 907347 59 2

Contents

1 Introduction

2 The North-east

- 2.1 A1 Gateshead to England/Scotland border
- 2.2 A19 New Tyne crossing
- 2.3 South Stockton Link Road

3 The North-west

- 3.1 Heysham to M6 link: The Lancaster Western Bypass
- 3.2 A57/A628 Mottram, Hollingworth and Tintwistle Bypass and Glossop Spur
- 3.3 A66 across the Pennines
- 3.4 A590 High and Low Newton Bypass
- 3.5 Carlisle Northern Development Route

4 Yorkshire and Humberside

- 4.1 M1 widening
- 4.2 M18 widening
- 4.3 M62 widening
- 4.4 A1 widening
- 4.5 A650 Bingley Relief Road
- 4.6 East Leeds Link Road

5 The West Midlands

- 5.1 M6 widening
- 5.2 M42 Warwickshire J3A-J7
- 5.3 Birmingham Northern Relief Road
- 5.4 Birmingham Western Orbital Motorway

5.5 A53 Hodnet Bypass, Shropshire

6 The East Midlands

6.1 M1 J21-J30

6.2 A453 (M1 to Nottingham)

6.3 A6 upgrading

6.4 A46 upgrading

6.5 A628 upgrading

6.6 A617 Mansfield/Ashfield Regeneration Route (MARR)

7 Eastern Region

7.1 A11 upgrade

7.2 A120

7.3 A47

7.4 A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon

7.5 A428 upgrade (Caxton Common to Hardwick)

7.6 M1 J6A-J10

7.7 A1(M) J6-J8

7.8 A5 Dunstable Bypass

7.9 A130 upgrade

7.10 A131 Sudbury Western Bypass

7.11 A6 Clapham Bypass

7.12 Bedford Western Bypass

7.13 A505 Baldock Bypass

7.14 Gainsborough Link Road, Ipswich

8 The South-west

8.1 A303/A30 widening

8.2 A36 Salisbury: Brunel Link and Harnham Relief Road

8.3 A303 Stonehenge and Winterbourne Stoke Bypass

8.4 A30 Bodmin to Indian Queens improvement

8.5 Semington to Melkham diversion, Wiltshire

8.6 Dorchester to Weymouth Relief Road

9 The South-east

9.1 M25

9.2 A21

9.3 A27 South Coast 'Superhighway'

9.4 A259 Hastings schemes

9.5 A249 Iwade to Queenborough

9.6 A3 Hindhead

9.7A2 Lydden (B2060) to Dover improvement

9.8 A23 Handcross to Warninglid

10 London

10.1 Package of Thames river crossings

10.2 A406 North Circular

10.3 A23 Coulsdon Inner Relief Road

11 Conclusion

1 Introduction

A new government shows early promise

Many people might argue that in terms of transport, the Labour Government did not have a hard act to follow. For some, previous transport policy had seemed to leave the rails altogether. Indeed, in 1980s and the early part of the 90s decisions on transport seemed to revolve around roads and the car. The final years of the Conservative government were marked on the ground by massive road-building projects with serious impact on the environment. Local people joined environmentalists to protest against controversial road projects at Twyford Down, Newbury, Exeter and other places in what became a general upwelling of concern over the impact of new roads on people and the countryside.

Before it came to power, the Labour Party was unequivocal about its opposition to road-building. In *In Trust for Tomorrow*, its 1994 policy document on the environment, Labour said:

“The bulldozers are tearing the heart out of Twyford Down, one of the most precious areas of landscape we have.”

“Building new roads offers at best temporary relief from traffic congestion. It is now accepted by almost everyone apart from the DoT that new roads generate new traffic... Widening existing roads will have much the same effect.”

In July 1998 the new Labour Government published a White Paper on integrated transport. This confirmed a shift in transport policy, away from the road-building of the Conservative years and towards alternative solutions to traffic and transport problems. This shift reflected a broad view, among the public, politicians and transport planners, that road-building was often a damaging and self-defeating way to tackle transport problems. It followed reports from the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution and other official bodies outlining the environmental damage from growing road traffic.

In its Transport White Paper, Labour was emphatic about the need to protect environmentally important sites from road construction:

“For all environmentally sensitive areas or sites there will be a strong presumption against new or expanded transport infrastructure which would significantly adversely affect such sites or important species, habitats or landscapes.”

“We expect there to be few cases where it is judged that imperative reasons of over-riding public interest will allow development to proceed which will have an adverse impact on the integrity of internationally designated sites.”

Crucially the White Paper said that alternative options should be assessed *before* road schemes are approved. It and subsequent ‘daughter documents’ proposed a number of measures to manage demand for road transport: road user charging, parking controls, more bus priority and lower, better enforced speed limits, as well as improvements to public transport.

However, these proposals faced significant opposition from motoring groups and some newspapers. Labour, along with other political parties, took this opposition, and other events such as the fuel protests, as a sign that the public wanted large-scale road-building and that the Government's policies had to be reversed.

A change in direction

In July 2000 Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott announced a major programme of road investment as part of the Government's Ten Year Transport Plan. The plan included £60 billion spread over ten years for 360 miles of motorway and trunk road widening and 100 trunk and local road bypasses, with more money for local roads. The programme was presented as a way of dealing with localised congestion 'hotspots', but there was no actual list of schemes. The Government suggested that the planned investment would cut congestion on inter-urban trunk roads by 5 per cent over ten years.

The Ten Year Plan was followed by two further actions that suggested a major shift in Government policy away from the Transport White Paper's emphasis on managing demand. In autumn 2000, Ministers instructed Government Regional Offices to seek proposals from Regional Planning Bodies for new additions to the trunk roads programme. The proposed additions are being considered by Ministers and are expected to be announced as part of a mini-roads review in March 2001. In December 2000, Ministers announced funding for the first round of Local Transport Plans, and gave the green light to a large number of new local road schemes, including many that will be severely damaging environmentally.

This change in political emphasis has been picked up in the regions too, where local councils and business lobby groups have been quick to respond to an opportunity to revive road schemes that previously stood little chance of getting beyond the drawing board. Several multi-modal and roads-based studies commissioned by the Government following the 1998 Roads Review are nearing completion, and there is intense political and business pressure for these to recommend road-building. Many councillors, Regional Development Agencies and Chambers of Commerce are convinced that new roads will bring economic prosperity to their region, despite the lack of positive evidence for this.

Business and motorist pressure groups are lobbying hard for further expansion of the roads network. In November 2000 the CBI published a list of priority transport projects including road schemes in many of the multi-modal study areas. The AA went further, suggesting in November 2000 that 465 additional bypasses are required in England, including 95 in the Eastern region and 85 in the South-east, and that the whole of the primary route network should be developed to allow inter-urban traffic to travel uninterrupted by speed limits of less than 50mph (*Where You Live and What You Get: The Best and Worst for the Great British Motorist*). This would imply a scale of road-building unimagined even by the Conservatives when they launched their "biggest road-building programme since the Romans" in the 1980s. It is clear that the motoring lobby will not be content with limited treatment of congestion hotspots.

Broken promises ahead

Despite the Transport White Paper and its early promises, Labour now appears to be setting out to complete at least part of the Conservatives' roads programme. This report identifies just some of the road schemes that may figure in the Government's new roads programme. Many of the schemes highlighted were inherited from the previous government, and many

will damage environmentally sensitive sites and generate new traffic: exactly the things Labour promised it would avoid.

The list here is by no means complete. It concentrates on those schemes that environmental groups in each region (through the Transport Activists' Roundtables) have identified as the most damaging. It includes trunk road schemes already in the Targeted Programme of Improvements, schemes that could emerge from the multi-modal and roads-based studies, local schemes, developer-funded schemes, and schemes that Regional Planning Bodies are lobbying Ministers to add to the Targeted Programme.

The wrong direction

A new roads programme is not a long-term solution to increasing congestion. If traffic continues to grow, any relief provided by wider motorways or bypasses will inevitably be temporary. And many of the road schemes described in this report will actually exacerbate the problem, linked as they are with plans to open up new land for car-dependent housing and commercial development.

In the long term, the only effective policy is to manage demand for roadspace, allocate new development so as to reduce the need to travel, and transform the quality of public transport and cycling. This was the policy the Government committed itself to in its Transport White Paper, and it is the only one that will work.

Political pragmatism

It appears that a political calculation has been made. Policies that could tackle traffic growth, such as major public transport investment coupled with traffic restraint, are considered to be either practically or politically too hard to deliver. Ministers must be seen to be doing something for motorists, even if there is little chance it will work.

The price of this political pragmatism is severe damage to the environment, including nationally and internationally important landscapes, and a vicious spiral of more roads leading to more car-based development and more traffic.

In calculating that new road-building will be popular with the 'motorists' vote', Ministers have forgotten the lesson of the 1990s: that road-building is intensely unpopular with 'middle England' voters, a key target group for Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. All the opinion poll evidence suggests that the majority of people do not want lots of road-building. This report identifies a number of damaging road schemes passing through marginal constituencies, where any party that advocates road-building is likely to find itself losing the support of disillusioned 'green' voters. General Elections are rarely fought on the environment, but political parties cannot afford to ignore the green vote in marginal seats.

The road schemes highlighted in this report are not yet confirmed as the new Labour roads programme. Rather, they are a best guess at what such a programme could contain. We strongly urge the Government to make clear now that the policies it promised before and after being elected are the ones that it will hold to, and that it will not allow these damaging roads to be built.

Basis for analysis

Prices and lengths given for DETR schemes are 1997 figures based on the Roads Review (*A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England*) unless otherwise indicated. They are purely

illustrative and we acknowledge that they may change. We have also referred where appropriate to a leaked 1993 Department of the Environment assessment of the controversy of road proposals. Again it should be understood that where new proposals come forward they may be more or less controversial.

Abbreviations

AONB: Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

DBFO: Design, Build, Finance and Operate.

Ramsar: Wetland site of international importance for breeding bird populations.

SAC: Special Area for Conservation under European Habitats Directive.

SINC: Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.

SPA: Special Protection Area under European Birds Directive.

SSSI: Site of Special Scientific Interest.

2 The North-east

The North-east does not have the same pressure for road-building as other areas in the country. However, it carries one major route to Scotland, the A1, and the proposals to widen it clearly represent an attempt to encourage more traffic through one of the quieter regions of England. As elsewhere, there are development pressures, both in Newcastle and around Stockton, that are driving the roads programme.

The A66 passes through three regions, including the North-east, and is described in the North-west section of this report.

2.1 A1 Gateshead to England/Scotland border

The A1 in the North-east is the subject of two of the Government's multi-modal studies. The Tyneside Area Multi-modal Study is examining capacity problems on the A1 in Tyneside, covering in particular congestion on the Gateshead Western Bypass, and is expected to report by August 2001. The A1 North of Newcastle Multi-modal Study, which will deal with the road north to the border with Scotland, is part of the second tranche of multi-modal studies and therefore less advanced. The Government Office for the North-east was due to appoint consultants in January 2001.

One part of the A1 (between Willowburn and Denwick) was included in the Government's Targeted Programme of Improvements following the 1998 Roads Review, starting in 2000/01.

Environmental impact

There is intense political pressure for complete dualling of the A1 north of Newcastle. If this were to go ahead, it could have serious impacts on the Northumberland coast and Northumberland National Park.

An off-line scheme to increase capacity of the Gateshead Western Bypass would be highly controversial: a leaked memo from the Department of the Environment in 1993 commented that the level of controversy was "very high. Local authority and many residents favour on-line scheme. Will cause local outcry if off-line route chosen."

Alternatives

Small scale safety measures and on-line improvements could tackle safety problems. Better rail services for passengers and freight on the East Coast rail route, and re-opening of rail links from the main line to Alnwick, from Ashington to Tyneside, and into the Scottish border towns, would provide an alternative to the A1.

Political picture

All constituencies through which this section of the A1 passes are safe Labour seats, with the exception of Berwick-upon-Tweed which is held by the Liberal Democrats (Alan Beith, majority 8042).

Facts and figures

Gateshead Western Bypass

Length: 10.8 kilometres.

Cost: £47 million (DETR 1997).

Status: Subject of Tyneside Area Multi-modal Study (recommendation expected August 2001).

Likelihood: Too early to say.

Willowburn to Denwick

Length: 4.2 kilometres.

Cost: £6.9 million (DETR 1997).

Status: In Targeted Programme of Improvements.

Likelihood: Certain.

Dualling of the entire A1 north of Newcastle

Status: Likely to feature as an option in A1 (north of Newcastle) study.

Likelihood: Too early to say, but subject of intense political pressure.

2.2 A19 New Tyne crossing

The A19 through Newcastle (including the tunnel under the River Tyne) is also being examined as part of the Tyneside Area Multi-modal Study. The study is expected to report by August 2001. One option likely to be considered (and referred to in the brief for the study) is the dualling of the Tyne tunnel.

Environmental impact

Increased capacity on the A19 would encourage more car commuting into Newcastle, which in turn would increase noise, pollution and community severance. Dualling of the Tyne tunnel could involve demolition of 50 homes in Jarrow and St Peter's School.

Alternatives

Improve suburban and regional rail services.

Political picture

Affects only safe Labour seats.

Facts and figures

Cost: £100 million.

Status: Subject of Tyneside Area Multi-modal Study (recommendation expected August 2001).

Likelihood: Too early to say.

2.3 South Stockton Link Road

The South Stockton Link Road is a local developer-funded scheme associated with major new car-based housing development.

Environmental impact

The road will cross the Tees on a concrete flyover, entirely out of character with the unspoilt semi-rural river valley. The affected area includes the three 'holmes' (land enclosed by river meanders). The north and south holmes are nesting sites for skylarks. The middle holme, Horseshoe Bend, is a SINC and local nature reserve. The road is supposedly intended to reduce traffic congestion in Yarm and on Thornaby Road, but the associated major housing development (itself in a Special Landscape Area and 'green wedge') will cause increased traffic levels. The road is being paid for by the housing developer through a section 106 planning gain agreement.

Alternatives

New housing developments should be located close to good public transport, rather than being completely car-based. Traffic levels and speeds on Thornaby Road are being tackled already by speed cameras and traffic calming. A regular direct rail service for the 5-mile journey between Yarm and Stockton (there is no direct service at present) would reduce rush hour car commuting.

Political picture

A safe Labour seat (Dari Taylor, majority 11,585).

Facts and figures

Length: Approx. 3 kilometres.

Cost: £31 million (local press reports).

Status: Construction recently started. Developer funded.

Likelihood: Certain.

3 The North-west

The North-west is a region of contrasts. The Mersey Belt is dominated by the urban sprawl of Manchester, Liverpool and surrounding towns. Elsewhere, the region is predominantly rural in character with many high quality landscapes and wildlife habitats.

The road network is well developed, yet there is serious congestion at times. In addition, the need to attract investment to deprived parts of the region is often cited as a justification for improved transport links regardless of what the true impacts of such 'improvements' may be.

Many road-building proposals, particularly in Cumbria and north Lancashire, affect areas of national or international environmental importance such as National Parks, AONBs, SSSIs, World Heritage Sites, Ramsar sites and Special Areas of Conservation.

3.1 Heysham to M6 link: The Lancaster Western Bypass

Controversial plans to build a major bypass around Lancaster have been debated for many years. The road is planned to deliver a range of economic benefits for Lancaster and Morecambe, but these assumptions have been questioned at Structure and Local Plan public inquiries. The proposed route would cause significant environmental damage. Repeated attempts to add the route to the trunk road network have also been rejected, but a new impetus for the scheme now comes from claims of regional significance. However, Heysham Port handles less than 10 per cent of the region's port traffic.

Environmental impact

There are concerns that the nearby Lune Estuary SSSI and the Morecambe Bay SPA, Morecambe Bay SAC, and Morecambe Bay Ramsar site will be affected by the scheme. The route would cross the River Lune on a viaduct adjacent to the SSSI and run nearby for several kilometres. The scheme would destroy the sensitive and attractive landscape of the estuary and damage six County Biological Heritage Sites.

Alternatives

Most traffic in Lancaster is locally generated, yet alternative proposals to tackle this larger part of the problem have not been considered. The draft Regional Transport Strategy acknowledges the need and potential to improve rail access to Heysham, but this does not feature in the county council's strategy. The issue of access to Heysham has not been considered on a multi-modal basis.

Political picture

The scheme would affect two seats that Labour gained at the last election. Lancaster and Wyre was won by Hilton Dawson (Labour) with a majority of 1295. Morecambe and Lunesdale was won by Geraldine Smith (Labour) with a majority of 5965. In both seats the Conservatives were second. The Green Party is also an important player, with five local councillors along the line of the proposed road.

Facts and figures

Length: 9.7-kilometre single carriageway scheme, plus 1.5-kilometre single carriageway link to A6.

Cost: £55.6 million (Lancashire LTP, July 2000).

Status: The scheme is identified as a priority in draft regional planning guidance and is the main priority in Lancashire's LTP. It was rejected by a Local Plan inspector and Structure Plan EIP panel. The LTP settlement in December 2000 requested further work on the proposal before a final decision can be made.

Likelihood: Uncertain, but the local authority is pushing hard for the scheme.

3.2 A57/A628 Mottram, Hollingworth and Tintwistle Bypass and Glossop Spur

A bypass for the villages of Mottram, Hollingworth and Tintwistle has been discussed for several years. The route, which crosses the borders of the North-west and East Midlands regions, would affect the Peak District National Park. It is being promoted on safety grounds and to increase road capacity. The Glossop Spur will connect with the scheme and "offer benefits to car commuters between Manchester and Glossop" (LTP settlement 2000). See also proposals for the A628 across the Peak District (East Midlands).

Environmental impact

The scheme threatens a locally important nature reserve, Swallow's Wood, and cuts into the Peak District National Park for over a kilometre. Outside the park it would damage the rolling countryside that surrounds Glossop and its villages. The Glossop Spur will have "a substantial impact on the landscape character of an open river valley" (AST, LTP 2000).

Alternatives

Much of the traffic affecting the villages is local and would not be relieved by the bypass. Traffic calming, enforced lorry routes and possibly the Central Railway proposal, would help. In addition, the Ten Year Transport Plan indicated that new investment in upgrading the trans-Pennine line was planned that could relieve pressure from road freight. A tranche three inter-regional South Pennines multi-modal study has been proposed by the East Midlands Local Government Association. This should take place before the bypass is progressed any further. If the study comes to the conclusion that a bypass is the solution to the traffic problems of Mottram, Hollingworth and Tintwistle, then consideration should be given to tunnelling as much of the bypass as possible for environmental reasons.

Political picture

The scheme would affect one safe Labour seat (Stalybridge and Hyde) and one that Labour gained from the Conservatives at the last election (High Peak, Tom Levitt, majority 8791). Tom Levitt is strongly in favour of the scheme.

Facts and figures

Length: 6.1-kilometre dual carriageway.

Cost: £30.5 million (DETR 1997). In addition, the Glossop Spur, which received provisional approval in the December 2000 LTP settlement, will cost £7.2 million.

Status: Put on hold at the time of the Roads Review (as one of seven "schemes to be progressed pending final decisions"), but seems to be being treated as part of the Targeted Programme of Improvements.

Likelihood: Strong. The North-west Regional Assembly is lobbying for it to be added to an expanded Targeted Programme of Improvements.

3.3 A66 across the Pennines

Although the A66 passes through three regions, the largest section is in the North-west. There is very strong lobbying from councils, businesses and the A66 Completion Group for dualling from end to end, and the Association of North-east Councils has recently proposed dualling east of Scotch Corner, around Darlington and Teesside.

The A66 Safety Study is currently underway to investigate the poor safety record on the 79-kilometre stretch of the route between Scotch Corner and Penrith, and to identify options. It was due to report by the end of 2000, but has been delayed because of concerns raised by environmental groups about the poor quality of the study. The 1998 Roads Review identified three lengths of the A66 within the safety study area that are to be dualled regardless of the safety study conclusions. One of these schemes, the Temple Sowerby to Winderwath Improvement, is in the Targeted Programme of Improvements. The other two were described by the Roads Review as “smaller scale measures” but in fact are dualling schemes.

Environmental impact

If major dualling is proposed as a result of the study, it will affect a number of designated sites and areas of important countryside. For example, in Cumbria the A66 cuts through and bounds the North Pennines AONB and the proposed new bypass at Temple Sowerby would involve a new bridge, potentially affecting an SSSI and candidate SAC. In addition, the entire Cumbrian section goes through Cumbria County Council’s designated Landscape of County Importance, designed to complement the National Park (Eden Local Plan December 1996). In County Durham, the A66 also cuts through the North Pennines AONB.

A further worry is traffic increases as a result of dualling. This could lead to additional traffic through the North Pennines AONB and increasing pressure to dual the A66 through the Lake District National Park.

Alternatives

Variable speed limits enforced by cameras would help smooth out traffic flows and prevent speeding and inappropriate overtaking. Minor junction improvements at problem junctions and proven blackspots, increased hazard warning signs and an innovative package of traffic calming measures would reduce casualties.

The implementation of the Cumbria Rail Freight Study would include facilitating development of private sidings, connections and rail-freight terminals and increasing rail-freight via the alternative Workington to Teesport rail link. This would reduce heavy lorry traffic on the A66.

Political picture

Between Penrith and Scotch Corner (the section covered by the safety study), the A66 passes through two safe Conservative seats (including William Hague’s constituency) and one safe Labour seat.

Facts and figures

Length: The Penrith to Scotch Corner stretch of the A66 totals 79 kilometres.

Cost: The cost of dualling all the A66 between Penrith and Scotch Corner and adding crawler lanes in the Lake District, according to the A66 Completion Group (pro-road), was estimated

at £70 million. A more up to date estimate (an unofficial figure given at the A66 Safety Study Wider Reference Group) was a ballpark figure of £100 million.

Status: Examined in the A66 Penrith to Scotch Corner Safety Study, now expected to report in March 2001. Temple Sowerby to Winderwath Improvement is in the Targeted Programme of Improvements; two other dualling schemes are being progressed as “smaller scale measures”.

Likelihood: Uncertain, but there is strong local pressure for dualling.

3.4 A590 High and Low Newton Bypass

The A590 High and Low Newton Bypass would extend the existing dual carriageway that bypasses Lindale by a further 4 kilometres towards Newby Bridge, relieving the villages of Low and High Newton of through traffic. There has also been substantial, unsubstantiated, pressure for the scheme as a way of assisting economic growth in Barrow-in-Furness farther along the route and West Cumbria. In addition, it is said to be needed to cater “for predicted traffic growth” (Roads Review 1998).

Environmental impact

The scheme would lie entirely within the Lake District National Park and the impact on the park’s landscape is recognised as severe. In addition, there is a generally held belief that this scheme forms part of a larger plan to eventually dual the entire A590 from the M6 to Barrow-in-Furness, which has assisted area status. This suspicion was further confirmed recently when the A590 West of High Newton to Dalton-in-Furness Study was proposed as part of the Government’s mini-roads review.

Alternatives

The Highways Agency is currently consulting on various traffic calming measures along the existing stretch of road to address the safety issue. The Friends of the Lake District/CPRE Cumbria support these proposals which they feel address the issues more appropriately. The proposals would cost £90,000 as opposed to £14.8 million and are less environmentally damaging.

Political picture

The scheme is in Westmorland and Lonsdale, held by Tim Collins (Conservative) at the last election (majority 4521). The Liberal Democrats were in second place. Tim Collins supports the bypass proposal.

Facts and figures

Length: 3.8 kilometres (AST 1998).

Cost: £14.8 million (AST 1998).

Status: Cumbria County Council supports the scheme in its LTP. Cumbria Sub-Regional Assembly has given the proposal priority and it will be discussed further during the finalisation of Regional Planning Guidance for the North-west. The proposal is classed as a “Transport Proposal of Regional Significance that should be delivered by 2007 as a matter of priority” in the Draft Regional Planning Guidance for the North-west.

Likelihood: Uncertain, but it could get the go ahead as it is firmly embedded in the policy process.

3.5 Carlisle Northern Development Route

This scheme involves the construction of an 8.3-kilometre single carriageway between Newby West and the M6 J44 to maximise development opportunities at the Kingmoor strategic employment site. Opponents of the scheme have been granted leave to seek judicial review.

Environmental impact

The scheme would affect the historic landscape setting of the River Eden SSSI and SAC and the internationally designated River Eden Coastal Plain Zone (AST LTP 2000), and cut through the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. It would also destroy an otter colony and pass 200 metres from a tenth century Saxon church. It would open up countryside for a major housing development and a superstore.

Alternatives

Kingmoor can be connected to the M6 without the need to extend the new road over the river Eden to Newby West. This alternative is also less likely to encourage business to relocate from West Cumbria, where unemployment is already relatively high, to Kingmoor. Supporters of the scheme have claimed it would reduce traffic in Carlisle by 20 per cent, but independent research suggests the figure is nearer to 3 per cent. Traffic restraint, green transport plans and other small scale measures would be more effective.

Political picture

The road would cut through the safe Labour seat of Carlisle (Eric Martlew, majority 12,390).

Facts and figures

Length: 8.3-kilometre single carriageway.

Cost: £24.3 million (LTP settlement, December 2000) Private Finance Initiative scheme.

Status: Provisionally approved in December 2000 local transport settlement.

Likelihood: Strong.

4 Yorkshire and Humberside

The Yorkshire and Humberside region is characterised by pressure to widen parts of the dense motorway network as part of a strategy for economic regeneration, together with plans to upgrade the A1 to a three-lane motorway. Other schemes, such as the Bingley Relief Road and East Leeds Link Road, would encourage car commuting into Bradford and Leeds.

4.1 M1 widening

The South and West Yorkshire Multi-Modal Study (SWYMMS) is looking at the M1 between J30 and the junction with the A1 in West Yorkshire (including the new M1-A1 link). The study is due to be completed in autumn 2001 and it is too early to say what options it will recommend.

However, there is pressure to increase the capacity of the M1 as part of an economic regeneration strategy for Sheffield and Rotherham. A study by Babbie, commissioned by Sheffield City Council, estimates that 28,600 jobs could be created by development near J33 and J34, and on other sites accessed from J31 and J35-J38. The study concludes that the existing transportation system will not support the potential increase in traffic. Although it proposes public transport improvements, it also identifies a number of road schemes, including widening the M1 at J31 and J33, a new road (the Fixed Link) at J34 and a new link through green belt between the B6066 and the B6200/A57.

The schemes would be eligible for support from the EU Objective 1 funding programme, which is available for projects that “remove strategic transport bottlenecks” constraining economic growth. However, pressure to apply for Objective 1 funds may lead to decisions on these schemes before SWYMMS has been completed. The Government Office for Yorkshire and Humberside has recently appointed consultants to identify and prioritise road schemes in the region to encourage economic development. The report is due to be completed in February 2001, possibly in time for a ministerial decision as part of the mini-roads review which would effectively pre-empt the outcome of SWYMMS.

Environmental impact

Communities near the M1 at Brinsworth, Tinsley, Catcliffe and Handsworth already suffer from poor air quality and noise in excess of the World Health Organisation’s recommended levels. If the developments and road schemes go ahead, traffic flows will increase by up to 56 per cent on some roads near the motorway, and by around 24 per cent on the motorway itself.

Alternatives

The Babbie study recognises that major investment in public transport, traffic management and green travel plans is needed to provide access to the new developments. It recommends extending the Supertram network to the airport, Rotherham town centre and Waverley/Orgreave; new bus services including some guided buses on the busiest roads; and new rail services Worksop-Sheffield, Dore-Sheffield-Doncaster and Sheffield-Barnsley-Leeds.

Political picture

All constituencies through which this section of the M1 passes are safe Labour seats.

Facts and figures

Status: Subject of South and West Yorkshire Multi-modal Study, but decision may be pre-empted.

Likelihood: Too early to say.

4.2 M18 widening

The South and West Yorkshire Multi-modal Study (SWYMMS) is looking at the M18 between the M1 and the M62. The study is due to be completed in autumn 2001 and it is too early to say what options it will recommend.

However, as with the M1 (see above), another study of the M18 between J3 and J6 has been commissioned from Babtie. This will consider how development of the transport infrastructure within the M18 corridor Strategic Regeneration Zone can help economic regeneration. The study is intended to inform SWYMMS, but again it is possible that decisions will be made before SWYMMS is completed. Proposals being examined include widening the M18 and a new link road to serve Finningley airport.

Environmental impact

Any increase in the capacity of the M18 would be likely to attract extra traffic, especially if associated with new development. This would be likely to increase noise, air pollution and accidents.

Alternatives

Concentrate new development in locations that can be reached by existing or new public transport and make green transport plans a condition of planning permission.

Political picture

All constituencies through which this section of the M18 passes are safe Labour seats.

Facts and figures

Status: Subject of South and West Yorkshire Multi-modal Study, but a decision may be pre-empted by time pressures relating to Objective 1 funding.

Likelihood: Too early to say.

4.3 M62 widening

The Highways Agency is developing a route management strategy for the whole of the M62 from Liverpool to Hull. This has identified several options for the M62, two of which would involve widening the motorway to four lanes in each direction to provide either high occupancy vehicle lanes or lorry lanes. Widening would be between J10 and J28, excluding J12-J13 and J21-J24.

The South and West Yorkshire Multi-modal Study (SWYMMS) is also looking at the M62 between J24 and J35 with the M18. The study is due to be completed in autumn 2001. It is

too early yet to say what options it will recommend, although it is likely to take into account the Highways Agency's route management strategy.

Environmental impact

The effect of a new high-occupancy vehicle lane would be to increase the capacity of the motorway for all car-users, including single-occupancy vehicles. This would generate additional car traffic, which in turn would lead to increased noise, air pollution and accidents, and would have the knock-on effect of increasing traffic levels where traffic comes off the motorway.

Alternatives

The M62 is one of four east-west major routes across the Pennines (the others are the A628 to the south and the M65/A65 and A66 to the north). The other routes are both environmentally sensitive, so it is important that management of capacity on the M62 goes hand in hand with a strategy that avoids environmentally damaging 'improvements' of the other routes.

Alternatives that should be considered include trials of high occupancy vehicle lanes without widening (that is, using existing lanes), ramp metering to control access to the motorway at peak periods and speed control to regulate flow and reduce bunching of traffic. Ramp metering and speed control are both considered in the route management strategy. The route management strategy should be undertaken in parallel with investment in trans-Pennine rail services, to encourage a modal shift to rail for commuter journeys between Leeds and Manchester.

Political picture

The motorway crosses a large number of constituencies, of which the marginal ones are:

Rochdale: Held by Lorna Fitzsimons, Labour, majority 4545.

Oldham East and Saddleworth: Gained by Phil Woolas, Labour, majority 3389.

Colne Valley: Gained by Kali Mountford, Labour, majority 4840.

Calder Valley: Gained by Christine McCafferty, Labour, majority 6255.

Batley and Spen: Gained by Mike Wood, Labour, majority 6141.

Selby: Gained by John Grogan, Labour, majority 3836.

Brigg and Goole: Gained by Ian Cawsey, Labour, majority 6389.

Facts and figures

Length: 71 kilometres.

Cost: Unknown.

Status: Part of Highways Agency route management strategy. May be considered by SWYMMS.

Likelihood: Widening may not require additional land-take, so it is more likely to go ahead.

4.4 A1 widening

The Government commissioned a roads-based study (A1 Bramham to Barton) to look at the section of the A1 between Bramham Crossroads, east of Leeds, and Barton, south of Darlington (about 72 kilometres). The study has just been completed and has recommended interim low cost measures followed by full scale dualling to motorway standard for the entire length.

The South and West Yorkshire Multi-modal Study (SWYMMS) is looking at the A1 to the south of this (between the southern limit of the A1(M) Doncaster Bypass and Bramham Crossroads), a distance of about 45 kilometres. This study is due to be completed in autumn 2001. It is too early to say what the study will recommend, but it will inevitably be influenced by conclusions of the A1 Bramham to Barton study. SWYMMS includes consideration of the section of the A1(M) between Redhouse and Ferrybridge (14.5 kilometres, cost £71.1 million); upgrading of this section was put on hold by the 1998 Roads Review.

South of Bramham, the A1(M) is being upgraded between Ferrybridge and Hook Moor as part of the Targeted Programme of Improvements. This 16.3-kilometre scheme will cost £160 million (DETR 1997). There is also an upgrading planned in the programme between Wetherby and Walshford (5.9 kilometres; cost £50 million). The contracts for both these DBFO schemes will be let in 2002/03.

Environmental impact

Increasing the capacity of the A1 will encourage extra traffic, which will have a knock-on effect on nearby communities where it leaves the motorway. Widening this section of the A1 will increase pressure for widening of the A1 further north, which could affect the Northumberland coast and Northumberland National Park.

Alternatives

Speed management to ensure steady flow would reduce road accidents. Improving the East Coast Main Line and re-instating the Harrogate to Northallerton rail line would provide better public transport alternatives.

Political picture

Most constituencies are safe seats, with the exception of Selby (John Grogan, majority 3836), which switched to Labour at the last election.

Facts and figures

Length: 117 kilometres.

Cost: Total cost unknown, but dualling from Bramham to Barton would cost £193 million (1994).

Status: Under review. A1 Bramham to Barton Roads-based Study has just reported and will now be considered by the Regional Assembly. The SWYMMS recommendation is due in autumn 2001.

Likelihood: There is a high risk of widening of some or all of the A1.

4.5 A650 Bingley Relief Road

The Bingley Relief Road is included in the Targeted Programme of Improvements, with work planned to start in 2001/02. There has been no environmental impact assessment of the road, and Bingley Environmental Transport Association has complained to the European Commission that this is a breach of EU and UK law. The EC is now investigating the complaint. This is the second complaint about lack of an EIA for the Bingley Relief Road: an earlier complaint was upheld by the EU but not acted upon by the Highways Agency.

Environmental impact

The proposed road is not a genuine bypass but cuts through the centre of town 50 metres from the existing main A650. Highways Agency figures show the existing A650 and the relief road will result in a 64 per cent increase in traffic through Bingley, with heavy traffic (15,000 vehicles per day) remaining on the existing road. Noise will be increased for 515 properties. Air pollution will also increase, with 9 per cent more nitrogen dioxide near the town centre and 92 per cent more near the canal, towpath and many properties. The deep and narrow Aire Valley is subject to temperature inversions that trap air pollution and has a reputation for respiratory diseases.

The road will destroy Bingley South Bog SSSI, crossing it on piles driven deep into the wetland. Bingley South Bog is home to 55 specialist wetland species including hybridising Southern Marsh Orchid (of which this is the northern limit). Six of the plant species are rare in West Yorkshire and for two of these this is the largest colony in Yorkshire. There are nine rare sedges, as well as butterflies and insects. The road will run immediately alongside Bingley North Bog. An archaeological evaluation of the North Bog found the site to be of regional and possibly national importance for its near complete vegetation history from the most recent Ice Age to the mediaeval period.

The road will also pollute a sensitive watercourse and groundwater. It will seriously damage the heritage sites of Three and Five Rise Locks on the Leeds/Liverpool canal, which is an SEGI.

Bradford's Unitary Development Plan identifies numerous housing developments in Upper Airedale, mostly on green field sites, which are contingent on the Bingley Relief Road. The new developments would mean more than 2000 new houses, which would inevitably lead to traffic growth in Bingley.

Alternatives

Green travel plans and safe routes to school would discourage car commuting and the school run. A park and ride site at Bingley Station would reduce peak hour car commuting into Bradford and Leeds. Safety problems on the road could be tackled by straightening bends, enforcing speed limits and co-ordinating traffic light phasing through the town. Reliability of buses could be improved by bus lanes along some of the route.

Political picture

The road is in a marginal constituency which switched to Labour at the last election (Chris Leslie, Shipley, majority 2996). It is vulnerable to a switch back to the Conservatives.

Facts and figures

Length: 5 kilometres.

Cost: £59 million (DETR).

Status: In the Targeted Programme of Improvements.

Likelihood: In the balance; the Government has been asked to hold letting the contract pending the outcome of the EC complaint.

4.6 East Leeds Link Road

The East Leeds Link Road will connect the Leeds Inner Ring Road to the M1. It is a local road scheme, and was accepted for funding by the Government in the December 2000 local transport settlement.

Environmental impact

The road will encourage long-distance car commuting (86 per cent of traffic on the link is forecast to be commuters) and generate a major increase in traffic on the ELL/A63/A64 corridor. This will have a knock-on effect in the rest of the city. It will also encourage out-of-town development of over 250 hectares, undermining opportunities for redevelopment of edge-of-centre sites such as the Cross Green Industrial Estate. It will damage the setting of the listed Temple Newsam House and park, which is already damaged by the nearby M1/A1 link, and add to existing noise and air pollution. The initial scheme appraisal suggested the benefits of the scheme were outweighed by its costs (with a negative net present value of minus £300 million). This was subsequently changed to an NPV of plus £40 million by excluding traffic generation impacts of some of the later development and possibly double-counting economic benefits.

Alternatives

This road and the associated development will encourage overheating of the local economy and excessive car-based commuting. Instead, development should be focused on sites that are accessible by public transport.

Political picture

This is a safe Labour seat.

Facts and figures

Length: 3.8 kilometres.

Cost: £20.7 million (West Yorkshire LTP 2000).

Status: Local scheme, approved for funding in December 2000 local transport settlement.

Likelihood: Certain.

5 West Midlands

Although the West Midlands road programme is not as extensive as those in some regions, many of the schemes it includes are very significant. The privately funded Birmingham Northern Relief Road, coupled with plans to widen the M6, would represent a major capacity increase through the region to Manchester. There are also worries that such schemes would result in associated development pressures, especially in green belt areas.

5.1 M6 widening

The M6 is currently the subject of a multi-modal study that is considering options for tackling congestion along the route and the potential for modal shift. As part of the study, options for major widening of the route are being considered.

Environmental impact

Following the 1998 Roads Review, three schemes along the M6 were remitted to the West Midlands to North-west Conurbations Multi-modal Study (MIDMAN). They are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: M6 widening.

| Road scheme | Length (kilometres) | Cost (£million) |
|---|------------------------|--------------------|
| J11A-J16 widening (West Midlands) | 55 | 415.3 |
| J16-J19 (North-west region) | 26.1 | 207.6 |
| A556(M) M6 to M52 improvement (North-west region) | 10.5 | 93.4 |

(Cost estimates DETR 1997.)

If given the go ahead, these schemes would form part of a major highway corridor improvement from London to the North-west. They would encourage commuting into the conurbations, already a major source of traffic problems, from Staffordshire in particular.

Threatened nature sites could include Doxey and Tillington Marshes, Derrington and Oakhanger Moss, and possibly ancient woodland if widening was outside the existing boundaries of the motorway. In addition, both M6 schemes involve the risk of polluting watercourses and potential flood risk. The A556(M) scheme would involve loss of green belt and high quality agricultural land.

Alternatives

Alternatives include major upgrading of the West Coast Main Line, introduction of dedicated coach/bus corridors on the M6, and small scale engineering works to improve junctions. Road pricing could also play a role in managing demand.

Political picture

Any widening scheme would affect at least seven parliamentary constituencies. The marginal seats are Stone (William Cash, Conservative, majority 3818), Stafford (a

Labour gain at the last election, David Kidney, majority 4314) and Congleton (AnnWinterton, Conservative, majority 6130).

Facts and figures

Length: In total over 90 kilometres of motorway could be widened.

Cost: The total cost of the three schemes is £716 million (DETR 1997).

Status: Currently being considered as part of the West Midlands to North-west (MIDMAN) Multi-modal Study. Due to report autumn 2001.

Likelihood: Strong likelihood of at least some widening.

5.2 M42 Warwickshire J3A-J7

This scheme is proposed as a way of providing additional capacity to meet future traffic growth and reduce congestion in the Birmingham area. It is also meant to improve access to Birmingham International Airport, the railway station and National Exhibition Centre. It is being considered in the West Midlands Area Study along with alternative public transport options.

Environmental impact

Schemes proposed in the past would have threatened SSSIs, but this threat could be avoided if the road was widened within current boundaries. However, noise is an issue and would be likely to increase unless considerably enhanced mitigation measures were provided. A widened M42 would encourage increased car-based development. In particular, Blythe Valley Business Park might expand farther into the green belt. Increased motorway capacity would facilitate expansion at Birmingham International Airport, in turn generating further traffic and congestion.

Alternatives

Access restrictions at some junctions would help reduce traffic congestion. Road pricing and public transport improvements could also help.

Political picture

The road passes through three constituencies. Marginal seats are Warwick and Leamington, which Labour took from the Conservatives at the last election (James Plaskitt, majority 3398), and Meriden (Caroline Spelman, Conservative, majority 582).

Facts and figures

Length: 16.5 kilometres.

Cost: £201.3 million (DETR 1997).

Status: Currently being considered as part of the West Midlands Area Study. Due to report autumn 2001.

Likelihood: Uncertain.

5.3 Birmingham Northern Relief Road

This major route has been a cause celebre for many years, involving as it does, construction of a completely new road almost entirely within green belt land. It was finally given the green light in 1997 to be built as a toll road funded by private finance.

Environmental impact

This scheme will seriously damage the environment. Threatened natural sites include Chasewater SSSI and Blythe Valley SSSI. All of the route will be through green belt, leading to significant pressures for new development adjacent to the route.

Alternatives

Controlling traffic growth in the conurbation is the only way to address the problem of congestion on the M6. Consideration should be given to limited junction restrictions and road pricing. There is scope to reopen orbital railway lines such as Walsall-Sutton Coldfield-Birmingham.

Political picture

The road will pass through three constituencies held by Labour MPs, all of whom oppose the scheme, and three held by Tories. Mike O'Brien's apparently safe North Warwickshire seat (Labour, majority 14,767) could suffer a much diminished majority or even change hands: in 1997 many natural Tory supporters in North Warwickshire switched to Labour because of their opposition to the road. They may now switch back to the Conservatives.

Facts and figures

Length: 48 kilometres.

Cost: £500 million fixed price contract agreed, but could rise to £750 million.

Status: Final go-ahead given for scheme to progress as privately funded toll road.

Main construction beginning spring 2001.

Likelihood: Certain.

5.4 Birmingham Western Orbital Motorway

The Birmingham Western Orbital Motorway would be the controversial 'sister' project to the Birmingham Northern Relief Road and if completed would ring the city with a major motorway akin to the M25. As with the BNR, much of the scheme would run through green belt.

Environmental impact

This would involve major construction through open countryside and green belt land. It is likely to encourage significant adjacent development, especially if the spin-off Kidderminster-Blakedown-Hagley Bypass was reintroduced on the back on the orbital. The latter road would threaten SSSIs.

Alternatives

The western parts of the West Midlands conurbation would be better served by major public transport improvements and measures to manage demand inside the

conurbation, rather than a green belt motorway attracting industry out of the urban centres.

Political picture

The road passes through two Conservative and three Labour constituencies. Julie Kirkbride (Conservative, majority 4895) and Sir Patrick Cormack (Conservative, majority 7821) are both strongly against the scheme. David Lock (Labour, majority 6946) is ambivalent.

Facts and figures

Length: 60 kilometres (DETR 1994).

Cost: Estimated at £307 million at 1987 prices, now could be well in excess of £500 million.

Status: Withdrawn from the roads programme in 1996 after no private sector bidder could be found for it as a toll road. However, now being considered as part of the West Midlands Area Study.

Likelihood: Hard to judge.

5.5 A53 Hodnet Bypass, Shropshire

This local scheme was accepted for funding in the December 1999 local transport settlement.

Environmental impact

The bypass will cause major damage in the Tern Valley. The valley is a peat bog: in order to construct the road the peat will have to be removed. The road will be built on an embankment to avoid the flood plain.

Alternatives

Traffic from Telford heading north could be fed either west onto the M54 and A5 to the A49, or east on the M54 to the A41 and then north.

Facts and figures

Length: 6.5 kilometres.

Cost: £13.4 million.

Status: Funded in 1999 local transport settlement.

Likelihood: Strong.

6 East Midlands

The north-south M1 motorway dominates the road network and spatial planning in the East Midlands. There is pressure to widen the M1, enlarge existing junctions and build new junctions to open up countryside for economic development. Large amounts of development continue to be permitted in green field locations that are mainly or wholly accessible by car and lorry.

All major links to M1 junctions are gradually being brought up to dual-carriageway standard, with bypasses around settlements on their routes. There are also plans and aspirations to dual roads that provide diversion routes onto motorways, for example, the A46 between the M1 and A1, and the A43 between the M1 and M40.

All other trunk roads in the region are being progressively improved through a succession of either dual or single-carriageway bypasses, notably the A6. There are also aspirations to upgrade cross-regional links such as the A628 through the Peak District National Park.

6.1 M1 between J21 and J30

The North-South Movements in the East Midlands Multi-modal Study is considering the total transport needs of the M1 corridor between J21 near Leicester and J30 north of Chesterfield and is due to report in December 2001. Different packages of integrated solutions will be assessed which will most likely include widening and junction improvements, for example building a fourth lane between J24 and J27 (15 miles).

Environmental impact

Impacts would depend on the precise widening/junction improvement schemes. In broad terms, the section between J24 and J25 is mostly in the Trent floodplain area, whilst the area of green belt most under threat is also around J24 and J25. Several ancient woodlands lie near the M1 corridor, including Charnwood Forest, Sherwood Forest and the Dukeries area of Nottinghamshire, as do several SSSIs, notably the historical Bradgate Park/Swithland Woods area. Three Scheduled Ancient Monuments lie near J21, with a further SAM near J27.

The M1 spine and junctions act as magnets for major car-based developments that in turn add to traffic growth on the M1 and the wider road network. Growth at and around East Midlands Airport is adding to traffic pressures around J24, and a planning inquiry will shortly consider five separate planning applications for distribution centres nearby. Over 90 per cent of commuter journeys to the airport and J24 are by car and lorry. There are further proposals for a 50-hectare business park near J26 and a 120-hectare Markham Employment Growth Zone (MEGZ) between J29 and J30. Traffic generated by MEGZ alone would result in a 2 per cent increase in traffic on the M1. Of the estimated 8600 new jobs that MEGZ would bring to the area, 5200 would be transferred from other locations within the area.

Alternatives

Local employment needs could be better met by re-development of smaller brown field sites that are more accessible by public transport.

Only 7 per cent of all traffic on the M1 travels long distance between London and Leeds. Most traffic is making local trips, for example commuting between Mansfield and Nottingham. Long distance alternatives include upgrading the Midland Mainline and better connecting services to the East and West Coast Main Lines. The proposed Central Railway freight route would offer opportunities for shifting freight onto rail. Public transport could also make a much bigger contribution locally, for example the reintroduction of passenger trains between Leicester, Ashby and Burton (Ivanhoe scheme). Demand management measures are also needed: for example, closure of certain junction exits to discourage short distance commuter traffic, maximum car parking standards and workplace parking charges throughout the region (83 per cent of employees in the multi-modal study area have free parking at their workplace).

Political picture

This section of the M1 passes through more than a dozen constituencies. Marginal seats include Bosworth (David Tredinnick, Conservative, majority 1027), Charnwood (Stephen Dorrell, Conservative, majority 5900), Loughborough (Andrew Reed, Labour, majority 5712), Broxtowe (Nick Palmer, Labour, majority 5575) and Chesterfield (Tony Benn, Labour, majority 5775).

Facts and figures

Length: Approx. 85 kilometres.

Cost: Depends on scale, but would run into millions. For example, widening the M1 J23A-J25 (15.5 kilometres) to four lanes in each direction was costed at £142.2 million in 1997.

Status: Under consideration by North to South Movements in East Midlands Multi-modal Study. A separate roads-based study is also taking place on the M1 J19.

Likelihood: Depends on the extent to which public opinion is willing to see enormous sums committed to road-building.

6.2 A453 (M1 to Nottingham)

The Government has commissioned the A453 (M1 to Nottingham) Multi-modal Study to consider solutions to safety and congestion problems. It is due to report in September 2001. The single carriageway enters Nottingham from the south through the residential suburb of Clifton. It is connected to J24 of the M1, serving East Midlands Airport. Dualling of the A453 between the M1 and Nottingham has been the subject of several studies. Controversial schemes have included the sinking of a dualled A453 into an underpass through Clifton.

Environmental impact

Dualling of the A453 Clifton to M1 section through the open, rolling landscape of the wolds within the Nottingham green belt would be visually intrusive. The junction between a dualled A453 and the motorway would involve a lot of land-take. On-line

widening of A453 Clifton Lane through residential areas would result in loss of some buildings, trees and open space.

Alternatives

Bus frequency between Derby and Nottingham has improved and planned bus lanes along much of the A52, linking the two cities, will boost reliability. Frequency of rail services between Mansfield and Nottingham should also be increased. Tough restrictions on green field development are vital to reduce the need to travel. These should be backed up by a strong regional parking strategy that includes workplace charging in conjunction with green travel plans. Safety on the A453-M1 link should be improved through a 50mph speed limit enforced by speed cameras. In Clifton, there is scope for upgrading local bus services, developing safe walking and cycling networks, including safe routes to school and traffic calming.

Political picture

Alan Simpson (Nottingham South, Labour, majority 13,364) favours a bypass around Clifton. This would also cause environmental damage. Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe, Conservative, majority 5055) supports dualling throughout.

Facts and figures

Length: 12.3 kilometres.

Cost: A453 Clifton to M1: £19.9 million. A453 Clifton Lane Improvement: £45.4 million (1997).

Status: Under consideration in the A453 (M1 to Nottingham) Multi-modal Study.

Likelihood: Opinion is highly polarised. There is strong pressure from the Chamber of Commerce for Nottingham to be linked to the M1 via a dual carriageway, but also strong opposition from Clifton residents against dualling.

6.3 A6 upgrading

The A6 threads its way from Luton to the North-west via the Peak District. It strings together a number of medium size cities and towns (Luton, Bedford, Leicester, Derby) and smaller towns. In between, the A6 largely passes through open countryside, with villages in the main lying off its route.

At either end it is intended to de-trunk the A6, north of Derby and between Luton and Bedford. However, there are plans to upgrade the central section through Northamptonshire and Leicestershire. Extensive improvements to the A6 in the East Midlands are scheduled in the Targeted Programme of Improvements (see Table 2). If all plans came to fruition, the A6 could eventually form a continuous dual carriageway between Derby and Kettering. Southwards, pressure is likely for dualling the A6 between Kettering and the A14 at Higham Ferrers.

The need for an A6 Kegworth Bypass (off the M1 in Leicestershire) will be examined by the Multi-modal Study on North-South Movements in the East Midlands. The latest traffic survey demonstrates that most traffic in Kegworth is local (many residents work at the airport) and would not divert onto a bypass.

See also A6 Clapham Bypass in Eastern Region.

Table 2: A6 upgrading.

| A6 schemes in the Targeted Programme of Improvements | Length (kilometres) | Cost (£million) |
|---|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| A6 Alvaston, Derby | 2.3 | 12.7 |
| A6 Great Glen Bypass, Leicestershire | 5.6 | 14.9 |
| A6 Rothwell to Desborough Bypass, Northamptonshire | 6 | 10.5 |
| A6 Rushden to Higham Ferrers Bypass, Northamptonshire | 5.5 | 9.4 |

(Cost estimates DETR 1997.)

Environmental impact

Dualling at Alvaston will affect Elvaston Castle and its Grade 2* Park. The Great Glen scheme could risk polluting a sensitive watercourse and increase risk of flooding as the scheme bridges several rivers. The Rothwell to Desborough Bypass will also increase risk of flooding as the scheme is within a floodplain, bridging the River Ise at Rothwell and Slade Brook. This scheme will open up land for more than 560 houses and other development. The Rushden to Higham Ferrers Bypass could risk polluting sensitive groundwater and affect local drainage, and again will open up land for development (1780 houses and 59 hectares for employment).

Alternatives

Long distance traffic on the A6 could be encouraged to switch to rail by increasing the number of stopping services on the Midland Mainline. An east-west rail service linking Norwich, Cambridge, Bedford and Oxford is also needed. Alternatives for shorter journeys include improved bus services and traffic calming. Land allocated for development should be reviewed as some developments are likely to increase car-dependency.

Political picture

Marginal seats affected by schemes in the Targeted Programme of Improvements include Harborough (Edward Garnier, Conservative, majority 6524), Kettering (Philip Sawford, Labour, majority 189) and Wellingborough (Paul Stinchcombe, Labour, majority 187).

Facts and figures

Length: Total 19.4 kilometres.

Cost: Total £47.5 million (DETR 1997).

Status: In the Targeted Programme of Improvements.

Likelihood: Certain.

6.4 A46 upgrading

The A46 links Leicester with Lincolnshire. Between Leicester and Newark it follows the Roman Foss Way through sparsely populated countryside with few buildings.

Dualling of the section between Lincoln and Newark was included in the roads programme in 1998, but Ministers withdrew a proposed scheme from Newark to Widmerpool. However, the East Midlands Regional Assembly has recently called for reinstatement of the Newark to Widmerpool scheme. If accepted by Ministers, this would mean the complete dualling of the A46 between the M1 near Leicester and Lincoln.

Environmental impact

Between Lincoln and Newark on-line dualling and a bypass of Brough will harm local conservation sites, with loss of ancient woodland and hedgerows. The new road will bridge several rivers and will create a significant risk of polluting watercourses and flooding. Between Newark and Widmerpool the road passes through attractive, rolling countryside, following the Roman Foss Way. Widening would be visually intrusive.

Alternatives

Safety problems could be addressed by speed reduction and enforcement, additional lay-bys for farm vehicles and rationalisation of access points, together with a single carriageway bypass of Brough. There are opportunities for improving train services. A parallel railway line operates between Newark and Lincoln, feeding into the East Coast Main Line. Railtrack proposes building a viaduct east of Newark Castle Station to take the Nottingham to Newark line over the East Coast Main Line, improving safety and capacity. Improved signalling along the line would also increase capacity.

Political picture

Constituencies affected by the Lincoln to Newark scheme are Newark (Fiona Jones, Labour, majority 3016) and Sleaford and North Hykeham (Douglas Hogg, Conservative, majority 5123). The Newark to Widmerpool scheme would also affect Rushcliffe (Kenneth Clarke, Conservative, majority 5055).

Facts and figures

Lincoln to Newark

Length: 12.9 kilometres.

Cost: £28.8 million (1996).

Status: Targeted Programme of Improvements.

Likelihood: Contract award is planned for 2001/02.

Newark to Widmerpool

Length: 27.7 kilometres.

Cost: £57.6 million (1996).

Status: East Midlands Regional Assembly seeks reinstatement of this road in the mini-roads review.

Likelihood: Will depend on the Government's political calculations in the run-up to the election and priorities vis-à-vis other proposals.

6.5 A628 upgrading

The A628 single-carriageway trunk road runs from the M67 in Manchester to the M1 near Barnsley. It passes through the Peak District National Park for over half its length. In 1992, the Minister announced that the A628 would not be upgraded to dual carriageway through the National Park. Several schemes were withdrawn or scaled down. The 1998 Roads Review placed one scheme in limbo (A57/A628 Mottram to Tintwistle Bypass), saying it should be progressed pending a final decision (see North-west region).

Nevertheless, local authorities and the business community continue to press for upgrading of the A628. A consortium of local authorities and agencies, led by the Peak District National Park, commissioned the South Pennine Integrated Transport Strategy which considered the role of the A616/A628 within the hierarchy of roads in the area. SPITS proposed that the A628 should be widened, with a new crawler lane for lorries and a bored or cut-and-cover tunnel for part of the route. This proposal was noted but not unequivocally supported by the panel inspectors at the Examinations in Public for the East Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Planning Guidance.

Environmental impact

SPITS recognised that the infrastructure associated with its upgrading proposal, and the resulting additional traffic, would have a significant adverse environmental impact on the Peak District National Park. It would cut through an area that is both a Special Protection Area for birds (the Woodhead Valley) and an SSSI (Dark Peak).

Alternatives

Some local authorities support the road on the grounds that it should become the main route across the National Park, taking three times as much traffic as now, with east-west traffic on other routes (the A52 to the south and the A635 to the north) being restrained. However, there are doubts whether such traffic restraint would be effective.

A multi-modal study of all routes across the Pennines is needed. This could investigate options for shifting freight from road to rail or water, such as re-opening the disused rail line that runs parallel to the A628.

Political picture

The scheme would affect several constituencies, including High Peak which switched to Labour at the 1997 election (Tom Levitt, majority 8791).

Facts and figures

Status: Identified as preferred option in SPITS; noted as an option in panel report for East Midlands Examination in Public of RPG. East Midlands RPG is expected to be published in February/March 2001.

Likelihood: Too early to say.

6.6 A617 Mansfield/Ashfield Regeneration Route (MARR)

This is a planned dual carriageway to the south and west of Mansfield, forming the backbone of new east-west communications from Newark in the east to the M1 in the west. Its main purpose would be to promote economic regeneration by opening up as many as 17 green field sites for development covering over 370 hectares, with 720,000 square metres of industrial and commercial buildings.

Environmental impact

The proposed road would be built through open countryside. A prominent bridge over Kingsmill Reservoir SINC would result in loss of reed beds and would adversely affect birds that visit the reservoir in great numbers. Downstream of the SINC, the road would cross Cauldwell Brook, where there are water voles and possibly white clawed crayfish. Both are priorities for Biodiversity Action Plans. Downstream, Rainworth Water SSSI could be affected by run-off from the road. A 28-hectare employment allocation at Penniment Farm on the western edge would significantly reduce the narrow neck of countryside between Mansfield and Ashfield. In this location, arable land provides an important winter roost for up to 2500 golden plover and also lapwing.

Alternatives

The road is development-led and is intended to address the collapse of the coal and textile industries. The number of jobs anticipated (9000) greatly exceeds the amount of local unemployment. Planning for sustainable development would cater for local needs and protect the local environment. Most traffic entering Mansfield is local and local traffic solutions could include traffic management measures, pedestrian and cycling networks, traffic calming, improved bus services, improvements to railway services (Mansfield to Nottingham to Newark and Erewash valley line). There is scope for re-opening former rail-freight lines.

Political picture

All affected seats are held by Labour MPs with large majorities.

Facts and figures

Length: Approximately 15.3 kilometres.

Cost: £38 million.

Status: Local authority scheme partly funded by private development.

Likelihood: Has been given planning permission, although construction depends on the go-ahead for the associated employment schemes and financial contributions from these.

Eastern Region

The Eastern Region has the largest programme of new roads in the country. This reflects the local authorities' preoccupation with road-building as a solution to the region's proximity to London, intense development pressures, the demands of economic development including the connection of the east coast ports to the motorway network and a belief that the more remote rural areas will only flourish if road links are upgraded.

7.1 A11 upgrade

The A11 is the main route between Norwich and London, feeding into the M11 south of Cambridge. Much of it has already been dualled, but there are three single-carriageway sections where dualling is now proposed (see Table 3). All three are included in the Targeted Programme of Improvements. Roudham Heath to Attleborough was included in the TPI following the 1998 Roads Review. The Attleborough Bypass and Fiveways to Thetford were added to the TPI in November 2000.

Table 3: A11 upgrade.

| A11 schemes in the Targeted Programme of Improvements | Length (kilometres) | Cost (£million) |
|--|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| A11 Fiveways to Thetford | 9.9 | 24.1 |
| A11 Roudham Heath to Attleborough | 9.9 | 27 |
| A11 Attleborough Bypass | 4.8 | 12.7 |

(Cost estimates DETR 1997.)

Environmental impact

The route between Fiveways and Thetford passes through a highly sensitive area, alongside Rex Graham Reserve (an SSSI and SAC) and separating Weather Heath and Horn Heath, a single SSSI that is part of the Breckland SAC. These sites would form part of the Breckland SPA, which if confirmed would be extensive in area. A nesting area for stone curlews could be affected if the road becomes noisier and busier. A habitat for adders may be lost along the grass verges, and local woodlands will be lost. This scheme was identified as "highly controversial" by a leaked memo from the Department of the Environment in 1993 and is strongly opposed by Transport 2000 and Friends of the Earth. At the time of the scheme being added to the Targeted Programme of Improvements in November 2000, the environmental consultants appointed by the Highways Agency had not completed their initial environmental survey of the area and no route options had been identified for public consultation.

Between Roudham Heath and Attleborough the A11 passes through open and unpopulated countryside. Off-line dualling will result in a new bridge across the River Thet which supports otters, and loss of an area of fen classified as a County C site of local and regional conservation value.

At Attleborough the existing single-carriageway bypass through a network of small grazing meadows is to be dualled.

The schemes are likely to encourage new car-based development, which will generate extra traffic. This has already happened at Attleborough, where a travel lodge has been built on the existing bypass.

Alternatives

Rail services between Norwich and London have improved considerably with half hourly services in operation. However, improvements to track capacity and signalling are essential in order to increase reliability. Reinstatement of the East-West rail link between Norwich and Oxford would free up capacity for additional passenger services on lines into London

Along its route through Norfolk, the A11 links together a number of small towns that are also served by the parallel Norwich to Ely to Peterborough railway line, with connections to Cambridge from Ely. There is considerable potential for improving capacity, service frequency, number of stopping trains and standards of rolling stock.

Further small scale safety measures could be introduced along the A11 such as tractor crawler lanes. For example, the Highways Agency has recently implemented measures to reduce vehicle speed and overtaking through the village of Elveden and traffic lights at the junction with the B1106.

Political picture

The scheme will affect two constituencies, both marginal: West Suffolk (Richard Spring, Conservative, majority 1867) and South-west Norfolk (Gillian Shepherd, Conservative, majority 2464).

Facts and figures

Length: Total 24.6 kilometres.

Cost: Total £63.8 million (DETR 1997).

Status: In the Targeted Programme of Improvements.

Likelihood: Highly likely.

7.2 A120

A scheme between Stansted and Braintree was included in the Targeted Programme of Improvements following the 1998 Roads Review. It is intended to provide additional capacity for traffic generated by planned housing and other development in the A120 corridor. It is part of a Trans-European Network (TEN) road from Cork to Moscow via Harwich and Stansted.

The Regional Planning Panel on the East of England Local Government Conference has recently proposed further work to design a construction scheme between Braintree and Harwich.

Environmental impact

Off-line dualling would carve up tranquil open countryside. The Stansted to Braintree scheme will destroy part of High Wood SSSI, where the flyover will form a significant and intrusive feature in the landscape, 18 metres high including lighting, which will be visible for 2 kilometres to the east. It will also destroy 36 archaeological sites and damage a Special Landscape Area and Grade 2 agricultural land. River Chelmer south of Great Dunmow will be re-routed. Increased road capacity will facilitate new development, including expansion of Stansted Airport and a large housing development at Great Dunmow, in turn generating traffic on both the old and new A120 routes. Off-line dualling between Braintree and Harwich would also be environmentally damaging.

Alternatives

Reinstatement of the Braintree to Stansted rail link would provide airport workers and travellers with a fast alternative rail service from Essex and Suffolk as well as a vital intercounty regional rail link via Stansted Airport from Essex to Harlow, Cambridge, Peterborough and the North. It would relieve rail routes into London, allow more freight on rail and relieve traffic on the road network.

A short bypass from Stansted round Takeley village, cycle/pedestrian routes and on-line improvements would resolve safety problems on the present A120.

Political picture

The road passes through two constituencies, including Braintree which Labour narrowly gained at the 1997 election (Alan Hurst, majority 1451).

Facts and figures

Stansted to Braintree

Length: 24 kilometres.

Cost: £92 million (DETR 1997).

Status: Targeted Programme of Improvements.

Likelihood: Contract to be let in 2001/02.

7.3 A47

Plans for dualling the entire A47 between the port of Great Yarmouth and the Midlands were gradually withdrawn in the 1990s, but schemes are creeping back as a result of local authority pressure.

The Roads Review in 1998 remitted two schemes (A47 Blofield to Acle and A47 Acle to Great Yarmouth) to the Norwich to Great Yarmouth Roads-based Study, which is due to report in spring 2001. The A47 to the West of Norwich will be the subject of a further (tranche 3) multi-modal study. However, the Regional Planning Panel is looking to lift two of the schemes out of the studies and fast-track them (A47 Blofield to Acle Dualling and the A47 Middleton to East Winch Bypass). In addition, the Roads Review remitted the A47 Thorney Bypass to the Regional Planning Conference and, unsurprisingly, the conference has decided in favour of a bypass solution. Finally, the review resulted in the replacement of the A47 Hardwick

Roundabout Flyover by a scaled down solution. This is now being taken forward as a single-carriageway flyover. By far the most environmentally damaging scheme would be dualling of the A47 Acle Straight across the Broads area. Upgrading of other parts of the A47 would increase pressure to dual this most sensitive part of the corridor.

Environmental impact

Between Acle and Great Yarmouth, the A47 crosses the Halvergate Marshes that lie at the heart of the flat, open landscape of the Norfolk Broads, an environmentally sensitive area with National Park status. Halvergate Marshes is also a Conservation Area. Damgate Marshes lie immediately to the south. The classification of this site has recently been upgraded from SSSI to Ramsar. It is also an SAC. Rare species of water plants and snail inhabit the water-filled dykes.

There would be major visual intrusion as the marshland landscape is open with little tree cover. Pollution run-off into the adjoining dykes would be a concern, as would the increased threat from road deaths to otters that feed in the dykes.

Dualling the A47 Acle Straight would facilitate the construction of the A47/A149 link road across the Bure Loop to the north of Great Yarmouth, a local authority scheme associated with the proposed development of an industrial park in the Bure loop. The latter is intended to provide storage space and lorry parking for the port, some distance away. The A47/A149 link road would affect the setting of the Norfolk Broads and run close to Breydon Water SSSI. It passes through an area prone to saltwater incursions so would either be vulnerable to flooding or would have to be elevated, which would make it highly intrusive. This scheme is included in the Norfolk Local Transport Plan but appraisal was not sufficiently advanced for a decision to be made by Ministers in the December 2000 local transport settlement.

Alternatives

There are major opportunities for modal shift of passengers and freight onto rail. Rail passenger services operate on two routes between Norwich and Great Yarmouth, parallel to the A47 via Acle and south via Reedham. Improvements to rail and bus/coach options in combination with demand management measures provide considerable scope for switching mode on local and long distance journeys. Implementation of small scale safety measures, such as a reduction in the speed limit to 50mph and its enforcement, would improve safety.

Political picture

The road schemes would affect two constituencies: Great Yarmouth, which switched to Labour at the 1997 election (Tony Wright, majority 8668); and Mid-Norfolk, a marginal seat held by the Conservatives (Keith Simpson, majority 1336).

Facts and figures

Length: 11 kilometres.

Cost: Unknown.

Status: Under review. Being considered by the Norwich to Great Yarmouth Roads-based Study. Recommendation due late spring 2001.

Likelihood: There is a high risk that this scheme could get the go-ahead.

7.4 A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon

The A14 is the subject of the Government's Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-modal Study (CHUMMS), which is due to report in March 2001. Options being considered for the corridor include:

- Widening from two to three lanes each way to three to four each way between Fen Drayton and Fen Ditton, with a parallel local road between Fen Drayton and Girton Interchange.
- A southern bypass around Huntingdon and Fenstanton.
- An eastern bypass around Huntingdon (from the A14 to A141).
- A southern route from A14 west of the A1 to near Cambridge, incorporating an upgraded A428.
- A completely new northern route.

Environmental impact

Any of the roads being considered would be intrusive in the flat landscape of the Ouse Valley. The northern route would destroy Mare Fen local nature reserve and sever a large wildlife and recreational area being created along the Great Ouse. It would destroy the amenity value of the Ouse Valley Way long-distance path.

The southern route would severely affect green belt countryside that contributes to the setting of Cambridge, and would have a major impact on the Wimpole Way recreational path. The southern route and Huntingdon Southern Bypass would pass very close to Brampton Wood, ancient woodland saved by the Woodland Trust after a vigorous local campaign.

New construction on the A14 was identified as being "highly controversial" by the Department of the Environment in a 1993 leaked memo.

Alternatives

Options include a light or heavy rail scheme parallel to the A14, running along the disused railway line between Cambridge and St Ives. This could be coupled with cycleways and footpaths to help residents of nearby villages gain access to public transport.

Political picture

The schemes would affect two safe Conservative seats: South Cambridgeshire (Andrew Lansley, majority 8712) and Huntingdon (John Major, majority 18,140).

Facts and figures

Length: Depends on scheme.

Cost: Not yet known.

Status: Under review. Being considered by Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-modal Study (CHUMMS). Recommendation due March 2001.

Likelihood: Too early to say, but this will be one of the earlier multi-modal studies to report.

7.5 A428 upgrade (Caxton Common to Hardwick)

This scheme is associated with the development of a new settlement at Cambourne, and the section closest to the settlement will be developer-funded. It was originally intended to be a dual carriageway with two lanes each way, largely on a new alignment quite close to the existing road, but could be three lanes each way if the southern upgrade option is chosen in CHUMMS (see above).

Environmental impact

Most of the route is in an Area of Best Landscape. If the scheme mooted by CHUMMS is chosen, link roads will create noise and pollution for residential communities and have a severe visual impact on a scarp slope near Coton. Any widening will exacerbate existing problems caused by congested road traffic in Cambridge. Indeed, CHUMMS predicts up to a 30 per cent increase in traffic entering Cambridge if the A428 option is chosen.

Alternatives

The new settlement should have included a light rapid transit link to Cambridge. In this area, good cycling facilities could also have a significant impact.

Political picture

There was political support for the original scheme, but mixed feelings about the CHUMMS option. Andrew Lansley MP (South Cambridgeshire) is opposed to this, preferring on-line improvement to the existing A14.

Facts and figures

Length: 8.4 kilometres.

Cost: £20.5 million for original scheme (DETR 1997).

Status: In Targeted Programme of Improvements (part developer-funded) but further upgrade as a new A14 is under review as part of the CHUMMS process.

Likelihood: A dual carriageway is certain, but the width depends on CHUMMS.

7.6 M1 J6A–J10

The Government has commissioned the London to South Midlands Multi-modal Study to consider the arguments for and against widening the M1 between J6A (with the M25) and J10 (south of Luton). The study started in November 2000 and has yet to identify and assess alternative options. However, the Government indicated in July 2000 that the M1 is one of several motorways that might be widened.

Environmental impact

Environmental impact would depend on the precise scheme. The motorway may only be widened within the current boundaries, leading to habitat loss along the verges. However, increased capacity would be likely to lead to generation of extra traffic and more emissions.

In the long term, widening this section of the M1 would fit with a major motorway upgrade from London to Manchester including the Birmingham Northern Relief Road and the widening of the M6 through Staffordshire and Cheshire.

Alternatives

Traffic could be restricted from gaining access to the motorway at peak times through ramp metering. Variable speed limits would regulate flow and decrease bunching of traffic. Better rail services could take passengers and lorries off the motorway.

Political picture

This section of the M1 passes through four constituencies, of which two are marginal: St Albans (Kerry Pollard, Labour, majority 4459) and Hemel Hempstead (Tony McWalter, Labour, majority 3636).

Facts and figures

Length: 47.6 kilometres.

Cost: £334.4 million (DETR 1997).

Status: Under consideration by the London to South Midlands Multi-modal Study, which is due to report in November 2002.

Likelihood: Too early to predict. A Ministerial decision will depend on the political climate and on how other Government road-building announcements are received.

7.7 A1(M) J6-J8

The Government has commissioned the London to South Midlands Multi-modal Study to consider the arguments for and against widening the A1(M) between north of Welwyn and north of Stevenage, with improvements to junctions. The study started in November 2000 and has yet to identify and assess alternative options. However, the Government indicated in July 2000 that the A1(M) is one of several motorways that might be widened, and the scheme was one of seven proposed additions to the roads programme put forward by the Regional Planning Body in January 2001.

Environmental impact

An increase in road capacity from a total of four to six lanes would generate additional traffic, leading to more air pollution and congestion where traffic came off the motorway. Noise levels would be worse for residential areas near the motorway at Fishers Green, Symonds Green, Norton Green and Todds Green. Widening would damage ancient woodland at Knebworth Woods SSSI, which has breeding nightingales.

Alternatives

Much of the traffic problem is caused by cars arriving at or leaving a business park near J7 during peak hours. Green commuter plans involving the main businesses on the site could cut rush hour traffic. Some traffic could be shifted to an improved and upgraded East Coast Main Line, which runs parallel to the road.

Political picture

The scheme affects two constituencies, both of which switched to Labour at the last election: Welwyn Hatfield (Melanie Johnson, majority 5595) and Stevenage (Barbara Follett, majority 11,582).

Facts and figures

Length: 14.4 kilometres.

Cost: £78.4 million (DETR 1997).

Status: Under consideration by the London to South Midlands Multi-modal Study. The consultants' final report is due in November 2002.

Likelihood: Will depend on political climate and how other Government road-building announcements are received.

7.8 A5 Dunstable Bypass

The Dunstable Eastern Bypass is in effect a relief road (or 'throughpass') for the A5 and a congested section of the M1. First proposed in 1988, it originally included a 13-metre high elevated section across Blows Downs. Since 1996 the route of the bypass has been protected, but the idea of an elevated section has been dropped. The bypass is being considered by the London to South Midlands Multi-modal Study.

Environmental impact

The bypass would destroy the best parts of Blows Downs, a chalk downland SSSI where orchids grow and which is popular with birdwatchers. It would also go directly through Houghton Quarry SSSI. Traffic models suggest that although it would reduce north-south traffic through Dunstable, it would actually increase east-west traffic flows. The original line of the bypass ran within 50 metres of the playground of a small junior school. The road would rejoin the A5 close to another school complex, which would effectively be sandwiched between the A5 and the bypass. In 1993 the Department of the Environment identified the Dunstable bypass in a leaked memo as "highly controversial".

Alternatives

Detrunking the A5 would reduce the number of HGVs using the road through Dunstable as a short cut. Traffic through Dunstable could be controlled by a combination of phased traffic lights on the A5 north and south of the town, demand management, traffic calming on rat runs, green travel plans and park and ride. Some of this is already being implemented. The disused railway line between Luton and Dunstable could be re-opened for heavy rail or trams and later extended to Leighton Buzzard and Milton Keynes to relieve east-west traffic through the town.

Political picture

Sir David Madel (Conservative) held the seat with a much reduced majority of just 132 at the 1997 general election. He is standing down at the next election. The Conservatives are generally in favour of the bypass.

Facts and figures

Length: 9 kilometres.

Cost: £53.7 million (DETR 1997).

Status: Under review. Being considered by the London to South Midlands Multi-modal Study. Recommendation is due November 2002.

Likelihood: Too early yet to say. Will depend on political climate and how other Government road-building announcements are received.

7.9 A130 upgrade

The A130 was the first local authority road scheme to secure approval and revenue support under the Private Finance Initiative. The new A130 runs from the A12 near Chelmsford to join the present A130 at a new roundabout near Benfleet. Essex County Council maintains that the new road will provide a strategic link between north and south Essex and support regeneration in south-east Essex. The scheme is in two sections: the northern 8 kilometres is under construction and expected to open in autumn 2001; the southern 4 kilometres has recently received planning permission and opening is anticipated in 2004.

Environmental impact

The off-line dual carriageway scheme is being constructed through open tranquil countryside. It passes through green belt and will damage two County Wildlife Sites including ancient woodland at Rettendon Shaw and Gorse Wood. An 11-metre cutting has been gouged through the intimate landscape ridge at Curry Hill, Rettendon. Environmental protesters occupied a network of tunnels for a record length of time (40 days underground). Ironically, following their eviction and tree felling, the alignment of the road had to be moved with the discovery of a badger sett.

The scheme is likely to encourage infill development. There is also concern that the road was designed to link the new A120 to a new Lower Thames Crossing, connecting Essex and Kent, as part of an outer M25 orbital motorway. This is likely to be connected to the proposal for a major new port on the Thames at Shellhaven.

Alternatives

The new A130 will not relieve the present A130 of the majority of the traffic which is making local and east-west journeys. Existing traffic problems on the A130 could be solved by a combination of a short bypass for Howe Green, safety measures, demand management and on-line road improvements including dualling of the Battlesbridge Bypass, improved rail connections on existing lines between Southend and Chelmsford via a 'loop' at Shenfield, bus improvements and purpose-built cycle routes.

Political picture

The road mainly passes through safe seats.

Facts and figures

Length: 12 kilometres.

Cost: The Government awarded Essex County Council £92 million borrowing approval to help fund construction of the A130 (DETR 1999). However, the pay-back sum to the private consortium will be vastly higher.

Status: Local authority road scheme funded under the Private Finance Initiative.

Likelihood: Certain, with northern section already under construction.

7.10 A131 Sudbury Western Bypass

Sudbury, on the Suffolk-Essex border, already has a major A134 Eastern Bypass. Suffolk County Council is pressing for an A131 Western Bypass to remove heavy lorries from the town centre and implement traffic management measures for cutting vehicle speeds. Over the border, Essex County Council is improving the A131 and allocating development in the A131 corridor with the effect of attracting more traffic through Sudbury.

Environmental impact

Transport 2000 and Friends of the Earth are very concerned about the environmental effects of this scheme. On the western side of the town there are extensive water meadows, providing a unique setting for the historical town. The proposed route would impact on the Special Landscape Area. Loss of ancient woodland and hedgerows would be accompanied by extensive earthworks at the southern end. The route bisects the trackbed of the former Cambridge to Sudbury railway, which local people are campaigning to re-open.

Alternatives

Roundabout improvements and signing on the A134 would encourage more lorries to stay on the Eastern Bypass. Pedestrian/cyclist priority measures, small safety schemes, traffic calming and traffic management measures, including car parking controls, would discourage unnecessary traffic and improve the town centre environment. More frequent and faster services are needed on the railway between Sudbury and Colchester where passengers change for services into London.

Political picture

The proposed route crosses the Suffolk-Essex border in several places and hence it affects a number of constituencies, of which the marginal ones are South Suffolk (Tim Yeo, Conservative, majority 4175) and Braintree (Alan Hurst, Labour, majority 1451).

Facts and figures

Cost: £15.5 million.

Status: Local authority road with third priority in the Suffolk Local Transport Plan.

Likelihood: The scheme was not accepted in the local transport settlement in December 2000 on grounds of deliverability. However, central government will reconsider a re-submission once the two accepted major bids – the Lowestoft Southern Relief Road and the B1115 Stowmarket Relief Road - have been built.

7.11 A6 Clapham Bypass

This dual-carriageway bypass around the village of Clapham immediately to the north of Bedford was included in the Targeted Programme of Improvements following the 1998 Roads Review.

Environmental impact

The scheme lies partially within a local area of Great Landscape Value. It crosses the River Ouse twice and will result in loss of meadows in the river valley. The Oakley Hill County Wildlife Site will be affected. According to the DETR Appraisal Summary Table: "Even with mitigation, there may still be a significant risk of polluting a sensitive watercourse and an aquifer used for public water supply during both construction and operation, and an impact on flood risk as the scheme is within a floodplain and bridges a river."

Alternatives

Around Bedford, the A6 is being de-trunked and therefore the construction of a bypass round Clapham to dual carriageway standard is unnecessary.

Facts and figures

Length: 5 kilometres.

Cost: £27.4 million.

Status: Targeted Programme of Improvements.

Likelihood: Contract to be let in 2000/01.

7.12 Bedford Western Bypass

This scheme is intended to relieve north-south through traffic in the urban areas of Bedford and Kempston, but also provide an access road for major housing development at Biddenham Loop (1800 houses) and west of Kempston (700 houses), near the floodplain of the River Ouse.

Environmental impact

A massive concrete flyover across the River Ouse flood plain will be visually devastating and have a dramatic effect on amenity and outdoor leisure activities. The flood plain supports a great variety of wildlife, some on the list of endangered species, including otters, kingfishers, bats, barn owls and water voles. The road will go through the middle of an ancient pond at The Bury which supports a large colony of great crested newts, an endangered species. The Environment Agency has grave reservations over the impact of the proposed road on hydrology and flood risk.

Alternatives

Traffic reduction in the urban area could be achieved by park and ride schemes at key entry points and associated parking controls, safe routes to school and effective school bus services, green commuter plans and improved rail services on the Midland Main Line. Fast-tracking the restoration of the Bedford-Sandy rail link would complete the east-west rail route.

Facts and figures

Length: 5.3 kilometres.

Cost: £18 million.

Status: Received Government funding in the 2000/2001 local transport settlement.

Likelihood: Start is imminent.

7.13 A505 Baldock Bypass

This dual-carriageway road would link the A1(M) at Letchworth Gate to the A505 to the east of Baldock following a route to the south-east of the town. It is intended to provide a high quality road link from the radial network to East Anglia as an alternative to the M25 and the M11, by relieving the major bottleneck on the A505.

Environmental impact

The bypass would be built through the Weston Hills Landscape Conservation Area, a picturesque area on the outskirts of Baldock, partly in a cut-and-cover tunnel, partly in a 20-metre deep cutting. It would destroy part of a Local Nature Reserve, comprising chalk grassland.

Alternatives

Traffic reduction could be achieved through better targeted public transport. The Cambridge to Hitchin railway line runs parallel to the A505. Transfer of freight onto rail would reduce problems caused by heavy lorry traffic.

Facts and figures

Length: 6.5 kilometres.

Cost: £33.8 million.

Status: A local authority scheme. A decision on whether to fund through the Local Transport Plan or the Private Finance Initiative has yet to be finalised by DETR.

Likelihood: Improvements to the A505 between Baldock and Royston are due to start in February 2001. This would form part of the preparations enabling full construction of the bypass to start in 2002.

7.14 Gainsborough Link Road, Ipswich

The draft Suffolk Structure Plan proposes improving access to Ipswich Port with an East Bank Link Road from the A14. Improved port access is also being promoted by commercial developers, who are seeking planning permission for a new link road (the Gainsborough link) along the same route as the East Bank Link Road, together with a new retail park development on brown field land on the East Bank.

Environmental impact

The route proposed for the link road would have a highly damaging impact upon a dense concentration of County Wildlife Sites and wildlife corridors along the River Orwell. Braziers Wood, Pond Hall Carr and Elm Hill Open Space would be directly

affected. Local Nature Reserves at Bridge Wood and Piper's Vale lie adjacent to the proposed route, which would also affect the Orwell Estuary SPA and Ramsar site.

8 The South-west

The South-west has a rich array of landscapes and natural areas, many of which are protected by national designations. A number of controversial road schemes are being considered in the region. Often the justification for new road-building is to relieve summer congestion caused by tourist traffic, or to boost economic growth by reducing the 'peripherality' of the South-west. In almost all cases, the end result will be to fuel traffic growth and further development and to risk changing the character of the region forever.

8.1 A303/A30 widening

Almost the entire South-west is covered by a multi-modal study. Six road schemes were referred to this study following the 1998 Roads Review and many of these would affect important landscapes and natural areas. In addition, there is a worry that if the study recommends upgrading the A303/A30 along its entire length, this will create a new strategic route to the South-west with associated development pressures following in its wake.

The schemes included within the study are set out in Table 4.

Table 4: A303/A30 widening.

| Road scheme | Length (kilometres) | Cost (£million) |
|--|---------------------|-----------------|
| A30/A303 Marsh to Honiton and A35 Honiton Eastern Bypass | 13 | 44.9 |
| A303 Ilminster to Marsh improvement | 10.1 | 25.3 |
| A303 Chicklade Bottom to Mere improvement | 12.8 | 17 |
| A303 Ilminster Bypass improvement | 10.3 | 20 |
| A303 Sparkford to Ilchester improvement | 5.5 | 10 |
| A303 Wyllye to Stockton Wood improvement | 3.7 | 5 |

(Cost estimates DETR 1997.)

Environmental impact

Most of the A303/A30 runs through attractive, undeveloped countryside, some of it designated as Special Landscape Areas and much of it very tranquil. In addition, however, there would be direct damage to the Blackdown Hills AONB and impact on nature sites like the Long Lye SSSI as well as other wildlife sites. There is also concern that the upgrading of this route will generate additional traffic and strategic changes to the pattern of development in the region, leading to new pressure for housing, business and commercial development along the route.

Alternatives

There are strong arguments in favour of undertaking a strategic environmental assessment of the whole route before any scheme is given the go ahead. This should be done as part of the multi-modal study.

In order to improve transport links in this part of the region, attention should be given to improving the Waterloo to Exeter railway line. As far as Salisbury it is currently

dual tracks. Thereafter, though formerly dualled, it is now single track?????????. The potential for transferring traffic from the A303/A30 to the railway is significant. If the right junction was constructed at Yeovil, there could be through rail traffic between Southampton and Exeter.

In addition, selected on-line improvements to the road could help address safety issues and localised bottlenecks. The seasonal problems of tourist congestion do not merit the scale of road-building represented by these schemes.

Political picture

The schemes on the A303/A30 corridor pass through several marginal constituencies:

Tiverton and Honiton: held by Angela Browning, Conservative, majority 1653.

Salisbury: held by Robert Key, Conservative, majority 6276.

Westbury: held by David Faber, Conservative, majority 6068.

Somerton and Frome: gained by David Heath, Liberal Democrat, majority 130.

Facts and figures

Length: In total over 55 kilometres is affected by proposed schemes.

Cost: The total cost of six schemes is £122 million (DETR 1997).

Status: Included in the South-west Multi-modal Study.

Likelihood: Some road-building likely, but controversial.

8.2 A36 Salisbury: Brunel Link and Harnham Relief Road

The Salisbury transport study was set up in the wake of the cancellation of A36 Salisbury bypass to investigate non-road-building options. Despite that remit, it recommended the bulk of expenditure to be on new roads and park and ride, including bypasses on the A36 north of Salisbury and two link roads around Salisbury that bear a dangerous resemblance to sections of the abandoned A36 Salisbury bypass.

Environmental impact

These routes will impact on chalk grassland and the River Avon, which is a possible European-designated SAC. It is also a key location in efforts to bring otters back to the river system and an artificial holt has been built nearby. The route lies within the designated Landscape Setting of Historic City. A 40-foot cutting will sever Harnham and the city as a whole from an important landscape and recreational area. In addition, these schemes are likely to be associated with pressure for further house building in the area. In the longer term, there is likely to be pressure for completion of the bypass by construction of a 'missing link' between Harnham and Petersfinger. This would threaten the Avon water meadows at Britford.

Alternatives

It is worth re-examining a 'do nothing' option here. Most commercial vehicles do not pass through the city. Access is possible for all but the few car transporters that serve the estate each week. An alternative would be to relocate the industrial estate.

Political picture

Salisbury was held by Robert Key (Conservative) at the last election with a majority of 6276. The Liberal Democrats were in second place.

Facts and figures

Length: Brunel Link approximately 2 kilometres, includes long single-span bridge over the River Nadder. Harnham Relief Road 4 kilometres following route of previously cancelled bypass.

Cost: £13 million (LTP settlement December 2000).

Status: The schemes are in Wiltshire's LTP and received funding in the most recent LTP settlement pending further work.

Likelihood: Fairly certain.

3. A303 Stonehenge and Winterbourne Stoke Bypass

There has been discussion about what to do to improve the road layout and traffic flows at Stonehenge for many years. Several controversial road proposals have been proposed and then dropped, leading to a stalemate. In 1995 a Round Table Conference of all interested parties was convened and it concluded that the best option would be to construct a long bored tunnel. This would allow the road to be hidden underground and involve minimal surface disruption.

In the 1998 Roads Review it was announced that a short tunnel would be built involving 'cut-and-cover' construction techniques. This falls short of what many environmentalists and archaeologists had hoped for.

Environmental impact

The current proposal would damage the World Heritage Site through construction of 2 kilometres of cut-and-cover tunnel and 2.5 kilometres of above-ground road widening. In addition, the plan to dual the road along this stretch would create pressure for widening further down the route.

Alternatives

The 1995 Round Table Conference concluded there should be a 3-kilometre bored tunnel, which would avoid much of the direct damage to the Stonehenge site. In addition, construction of a single-carriageway route with traffic management measures and a lower speed limit would reduce the potential for traffic generation. There is potential for modal shift through the upgrading of the Waterloo to Exeter rail corridor, including reinstating double track from Salisbury to Exeter, signalling and service improvements.

Political picture

Salisbury was held by Robert Key (Conservative) at the last election with a majority of 6276. The Liberal Democrats were in second place.

Facts and figures

Length: 10.8 kilometres.

Cost: £130 million (Highways Agency 1999).

Status: Included in Targeted Programme of Improvements and the preferred route was announced in June 1999.

Likelihood: Strong likelihood of some road improvement eventually (which may be supported by environmental groups depending on its design).

8.4 A30 Bodmin to Indian Queens Improvement

There is strong pressure for improving road conditions in the West Country, particularly in Cornwall, on the basis that it will help reduce the peripherality of the county and boost economic development. The A30 Bodmin to Indian Queens improvement, which involves dualling a 10-kilometre stretch of the route, aims to remove a bottleneck on the route and boost development in this way.

Environmental impact

The original route proposed ran across the sensitive Goss and Tregoss Moors possible SAC. The new route proposed by the Highways Agency would run mainly to the north of the moors although it would still damage 1.6 ha adjacent to Castle-an-Dinas road and near Roche Cross. It would also impact on county wildlife sites near Royalton and Innis Downs and prehistoric remains in this area. Upgrading the road to dual standard will create further pressure for dualling along the route.

Alternatives

Other route options and on-line improvements have been rejected by the Highways Agency despite the fact that it acknowledges that the latter would have the least environmental impact overall.

Political picture

The scheme passes through two safe seats and one that is somewhat marginal: Cornwall South-east, gained by Colin Breed (Liberal Democrat) at the last election, majority 6480. The Conservatives were in second place.

Facts and figures

Length: Approximately 10 kilometres.

Cost: £43.6 million (Highways Agency 2001).

Status: Included in the Targeted Programme of Improvement and the Highways Agency is consulting on a single line option.

Likelihood: Fairly strong.

8.5 Semington to Melksham Diversion, Wiltshire

The Semington to Melksham Diversion is a 4-kilometre off-line bypass. It aims to improve journey time reliability to the southern end of the west Wiltshire corridor.

Environmental impact

The route would impact on Semington Brook and meadowland which form a habitat for a variety of bird and animal life, including cuckoos, barn owls and bull-finches. The appraisal acknowledges the loss of rural tranquillity.

Alternatives

More serious attention needs to be given to freight movements through the county. In particular, there is potential for mini-rail-freight terminals in Wiltshire along the A350/A36 corridor. A rail-freight terminal at Westbury is planned, but this is some distance from proposed route of bypass. The parallel rail line (Westbury-Melksham-Chippenham-Swindon) has only one train per day in each direction but the service is due to be improved.

Political picture

The scheme would affect one slightly marginal seat, Westbury, which was held by David Faber (Conservative) at the last election with a majority of 6068. The Liberal Democrats were in second place.

Facts and figures

Length: 4 kilometres.

Cost: £12 million (LTP settlement, December 2000).

Status: Included in the Wiltshire County Council LTP and has planning permission to go forward.

Likelihood: Strong.

8.6 Dorchester to Weymouth A354 Relief Road

This scheme is planned to improve road access to and from Weymouth and to boost economic development, despite the fact that Weymouth has unemployment rates below the national average. It would pass through a number of environmentally sensitive sites.

Environmental impact

Much of the route passes through the Dorset Downs, Heaths and Coast AONB. It would give rise to significantly increased noise levels and significant visual intrusion. It would also affect Lodmoor SSSI, a wetland site and an RSPB reserve. Part would be lost and the remainder damaged because of the close proximity to the road. The grossly contaminated Lodmoor Tip would require sealing at greater cost than estimated to prevent pollution.

Alternatives

An alternative route (the Orange Route) would avoid the environmentally sensitive sites affected by the Brown Route, but would still damage others. There is potential for reducing car traffic through the introduction of improved bus and rail services,

green travel plans and safe routes for walking and cycling to school. In addition, the economic justification of the scheme needs to be questioned more closely.

Political picture

The Weymouth Relief Road passes through two marginal constituencies which were only narrowly held by the Conservatives at the last election: South Dorset (Ian Bruce, majority 77, Labour in second place) and West Dorset (Oliver Letwin, majority 1840, Liberal Democrats in second place).

Facts and figures

Length: 7.5 kilometres.

Cost: £28.7 million (LTP settlement, December 2000).

Status: The route is in Dorset's LTP and received provisional approval of funding in December 2000. Planning permission is still required.

Likelihood: Fairly likely, but a controversial public inquiry lies ahead.

9 The South-east

The pressure on the South-east for development seems set to continue over the next few years. How to control traffic in the region is a major issue. The current road-building programme is not as extensive as it used to be and there have been significant cuts in strategic road plans including some on the proposed South Coast 'Superhighway'. However, there are still major proposals left in the programme, some with huge environmental consequences. Plans to widen stretches of the M25 link into the expansion of Heathrow Airport. As in other areas of the country, expansion of airports is putting pressure on the surface access. Although many South-east local authorities want greater road provision, few want the huge numbers of houses that would follow.

9.1 M25

The London Orbital Multi-modal Study (ORBIT) is looking at travel patterns around the whole of the M25 and is due to report by the end of 2001. It is too early yet to say what options it will recommend. However, the 1998 Roads Review added a scheme to widen the M25 between J12 and J15 to the Targeted Programme of Improvements (despite Labour opposing it before the general election). The contract is due to be let in 2002/03.

Environmental impact

Although widening between J12 and J15 will take place within existing highway boundaries, it will still have a negative impact on Staines Moor, which borders the motorway and is an important wildlife habitat.

The main reason (officially denied) for widening between J12 and J15 is the possibility of a new Terminal 5 at Heathrow Airport. The widened 10-12 lane motorway will encourage new car-based development, leading to traffic generation and additional air pollution. Any congestion relief it provides will be short-lived: Highways Agency figures show the widening scheme will reduce congestion on the M25 for only ten years. This is likely to be an over-estimate as it makes no allowance for extra traffic generated by new development (including Heathrow Terminal 5).

Completion of the J12-J15 widening will result in bottlenecks at either end, especially at J15 with the M4 where the M25 will narrow down from 12 lanes to eight. This will increase pressure for further widening and could lead to the revival of widening plans for J15-J16 and J16-J19, and perhaps also to widening between J12 and J10 with the M3.

Alternatives

Traffic management options for the M25 (for example tolling or access controls) should be coupled with much better orbital public transport.

Political picture

Widening between J12 and J15 will affect three constituencies, of which one is marginal: Spelthorne (David Wilshire, Conservative, majority 3473).

Facts and figures

M25 J12-J15

Length: Approximately 11 kilometres.

Cost: Approximately £100 million.

Status: In the Targeted Programme of Improvements.

Likelihood: Certain.

9.2 A21

Several road schemes are planned for the A21 between Tonbridge and Hastings. The A21 Lamberhurst Bypass is in the Targeted Programme of Improvements, with the contract due to be awarded in 2001/02. An on-line dualling scheme between Tonbridge and Pembury was proposed by the Access to Hastings Multi-modal Study, and the South-east England Regional Assembly (SEERA) has recently recommended to Ministers that it should be approved. SEERA is also recommending a feasibility study of further upgrading between Pembury and Hastings.

Environmental impact

Both the Lamberhurst Bypass and the dual-carriageway scheme between Tonbridge and Pembury would run within or close to the High Weald AONB. The Lamberhurst Bypass cuts through beautiful countryside, including the grounds of Scotney Castle, which is an SSSI owned by the National Trust (and which is its South-east headquarters). It will also threaten a mediaeval moated farmhouse.

As well as affecting the High Weald AONB, the Tonbridge to Pembury scheme would damage woodland (some ancient woodland) and affect the habitat of great crested newts and nightingales. It would also affect a scheduled hill fort. It is associated with major new development including Knights Park multi-screen cinema and sports complex, and a planned out-of-town hospital. Traffic generated by the scheme and associated development would go through residential areas such as the Sherwood Estate.

Alternatives

These include lower speed limits and a crawler lane on the existing route, improving rail services between Hastings and Tunbridge Wells, restoring the rail line from Tunbridge Wells to Lewes, widening the Tunbridge Wells Central Railway Station south-east tunnel for dual working and creating freight sidings to carry waste from the Industrial Estate at Longfield Road.

Political picture

Tunbridge Wells was held by Archie Norman for the Conservatives at the last election, with a majority of 7506. The Liberal Democrats were in second place.

Facts and figures

A21 Tonbridge to Pembury

Length: 3.9 kilometres.

Cost: Unknown.

Status: Considered by the Access to Hastings Multi-modal Study, which recommended approval. Supported by South-east England Regional Assembly. Government decision expected spring 2001.

Likelihood: Almost certain.

A21 Lamberhurst Bypass

Length: 3 kilometres.

Cost: Unknown.

Status: In Targeted Programme of Improvements.

Likelihood: Certain.

9.3 A27 South Coast ‘Superhighway’

Some businesses and road hauliers have long wished to see a ‘superhighway’ all the way from Folkestone in Kent to Honiton in Devon. This would provide an alternative route for freight westwards from the channel ports along the A259 and A27 (traffic currently uses the M2/A2, M25 and M4).

Opposition to a new strategic route forced the division of the original proposals into bite-sized chunks. Following the 1998 Roads Review, the Government decided to remit three A27 schemes to a South Coast Multi-modal Study (see Table 5). The remitted schemes were the Arundel Bypass, Selmeston Bypass and Wilmington Bypass. The study is in the second tranche of multi-modal studies and has not yet got underway. The contract for another scheme, the A27 Polegate Bypass, was awarded in May 2000. There are fears that two other schemes dropped by the previous government could re-emerge. These are the A27 Lancing to Worthing Improvement and the A27 Southerham to Beddingham Bypass. Two schemes on the A259, the Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass and Hastings Eastern Bypass, are described separately.

Table 5: A27 South Coast ‘Superhighway’.

| Road scheme | Length (kilometres) | Cost (£million) |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| A27 Arundel Bypass | 4 | 25 |
| A27 Selmeston Bypass | 2.8 | 9.1 |
| A27 Wilmington Bypass | 5.8 | 27 |
| A27 Polegate Bypass | 3.5 | 24 |

Environmental impact

The overall effect of upgrading the south coast route would be an increase in long-distance traffic, especially freight. The A27 fringes the boundary of the South Downs AONB, which the Government is proposing to designate a National Park.

The Arundel Bypass would be highly intrusive where it crossed the River Arun and surrounding water meadows, which are noted as a historical landscape in the Local Plan. It would also damage ancient woodland (Binsted Woods), Tortington Common, Scotland Barn and many Roman remains. Arundel already has a bypass.

New road schemes would increase pressure for development, including new housing, for example around Polegate, which is identified as an area for housing expansion, and south of Arundel. Housing allocations in the South-east are predicated on transport infrastructure. Local authorities want the road schemes but not the new housing that will assuredly follow.

Alternatives

Alternatives include improving the south coast rail service with high quality, high speed connections between main centres of employment and shopping and to Ashford, increasing the amount of freight transported by rail (sidings are available but unused at many stations along the south coast), reintroducing the X27 fast south coast bus route, tackling peak hour traffic congestion with safe routes to school programmes, developing green leisure travel plans with local tourist attractions and carrying out on-line safety improvements to the existing A27 with speed reductions at key points.

Political picture

The A27 schemes affect one marginal constituency: Lewes, which was gained by Norman Baker for the Liberal Democrats at the last election with a majority of 1300. The Conservatives were in second place.

Facts and figures

Length: Total for schemes in table is 16.1 kilometres.

Cost: Total for schemes in table is £85.1 million.

Status: To be examined as part of the South Coast Multi-modal Study. Polegate Bypass in Targeted Programme of Improvements, contract awarded May 2000.

Likelihood: Too early to say: will depend on the political climate when the south coast study is completed.

9.4 A259 Hastings schemes

The Government commissioned the Access to Hastings Multi-modal Study to examine the case for new road schemes on the A259 around Hastings. The study was completed in December 2000 and considered by the South-east England Regional Assembly in February 2001. Although the multi-modal study raised a number of concerns about the Hastings Bypasses, SEERA recommended that the A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass and A259 Hastings Eastern Bypass should go ahead. The local business lobby argues that the roads would bring economic benefits, but the Access to Hastings study suggests this is not proven, and the bypasses may even damage the local economy. A decision from the Government on whether to accept the SEERA recommendation is expected soon.

Environmental impact

The bypasses would have a severe impact on landscape and biodiversity. They threaten Pevensey Levels Ramsar and SSSI, Combe Haven SSSI and Local Nature Reserve, the High Weald AONB, Battle Abbey and ancient woodland at Brede Valley. They would result in the loss of almost 9 kilometres of watercourses,

including a spawning ground for sea trout. Related commercial and housing development (including 1500 houses north of Bexhill) would exacerbate environmental impact. The Access to Hastings study comments that the scale of environmental impact would be so great that the bypasses should not be built unless for reasons of over-riding national importance.

Traffic problems are likely to spill over into the residential area of St Leonards where cars leave or join the western bypass.

Alternatives

Traffic congestion and safety problems could be tackled by a combination of on-line traffic management measures on the A259, an Ore to Bexhill metro rail service, a quality bus partnership and improvements to the Hastings to Ashford rail line. A high proportion of rush hour traffic is caused by the school run and could be tackled through safe routes to school programmes.

The depressed Hastings economy could be helped by training to tackle skills shortages amongst unemployed people. It is doubtful whether many unemployed people already living in Hastings will benefit from new jobs created by commercial development alongside the new roads.

Political picture

Hastings and Rye is a marginal seat that Michael Foster gained for Labour at the last election with a majority of 2560. The Conservatives were in second place.

Facts and figures

Length: Approximately 32 kilometres.

Cost: £180 million (multi-modal study newsletter).

Status: Subject of Access to Hastings Multi-modal Study, completed December 2000. South-east England Regional Assembly recommended roads should be built.

Likelihood: High probability these roads could be given the go-ahead

9.5 A249 Iwade to Queenborough

This road from the Isle of Sheppey to Iwade near the A2 was included in the Targeted Programme of Improvements following the 1998 Roads Review. It is associated with widening of the A2 between Bean and Cobham, and the A2/A282 Dartford Improvement. While the other schemes will increase road capacity, the Iwade to Queenborough scheme is particularly controversial because of its environmental impact.

Environmental impact

The scheme will affect Swale SSSI, Ramsar and SPA, an area of grazing marshland and intertidal mudflats of international importance for birds. A 1993 leaked memo from the Department of the Environment identified the scheme as “highly controversial”. The scheme involves a bridge that will cause severe visual intrusion.

Political picture

Sittingbourne and Sheppey is a marginal seat gained by Derek Wyatt for Labour at the last election, with a majority of 1929. The Conservatives were in second place.

Facts and figures

Length: 5.3 kilometres.

Cost: £96.4 million (DETR 1997).

Status: In Targeted Programme of Improvements.

Likelihood: Certain.

9.6 A3 Hindhead

The Government has commissioned the A3 Hindhead Roads-based Study to investigate a new bored tunnel at Hindhead. The study brief assumed that a tunnel would be constructed, and focussed on whether to fund it through tolls. The study consultants have recommended against mechanical tolling for the time being, although they suggest electronic tolling may be appropriate in the future. It is expected that Ministers will announce their decision in March.

Environmental impact

A bored tunnel will allow the Devil's Punchbowl SSSI and SPA currently bisected by the road to be reunited as a single site and is welcomed by local environmental groups. However, it will still have environmental implications at either end, with the tunnel portals affecting woodland and heathland (Boundless Copse and Tyndalls Wood).

Alternatives

Although the tunnel will increase journey reliability at Hindhead, it may exacerbate the existing serious traffic congestion problems in Guildford, the next bottleneck after Hindhead. Ultimately, this can only be resolved by reducing traffic. While a bored tunnel is welcomed as a short-term solution, in the longer term greater consideration should be given to bus and rail improvements and demand management.

Facts and figures

Cost: £79 million.

Status: Hindhead study completed; decision by Ministers expected soon.

Likelihood: Certain.

9.7 A2 Lydden (B2060) to Dover improvement

The South-east England Regional Assembly has proposed dualling the last remaining single-carriageway section of the A2 from Dover to London. There is already a motorway connection between the Channel ports and London (the M20). A decision on this scheme is expected in March 2001 as part of the mini-roads review.

Environmental impact

The scheme would affect the Kent Downs AONB.

9.8 A23 Handcross to Warninglid

The South-east England Regional Assembly has proposed widening and realignment of this section of the A23 south of Crawley. A decision on this scheme is expected in March 2001 as part of the mini-roads review.

Environmental impact

The scheme is entirely within the High Weald AONB. On one side is the National Trust's Nymans Estate and on the other there is ancient woodland. The scheme is not new: it was dropped by the last government in 1996.

10 London

Although London no longer faces the wholesale inner city widenings it once did, some schemes hang on. The threatened return of the East London River Crossing in one form or another, so bitterly fought against in the past, will give little comfort to those seeking alternatives. Although the M25 is dealt with in the South-east section of this report, it also is a key generator of new traffic around the capital.

The Mayor now has an important role in the capital's transport provision and decisions about trunk road schemes in London will be made after Transport for London has completed a review.

10.1 Package of Thames River Crossings

Plans for three new crossings of the Thames (two road and one rail) are being developed. Business groups are lobbying hard for a package of all three schemes and are supported by the London Development Agency. The schemes are:

- Blackwall to Silvertown Link: A two-lane road crossing between Greenwich Peninsula and Silvertown/Royal Docks.
- Thames Gateway Bridge: A new four-lane road plus two lanes dedicated to public transport, crossing between Beckton and Thamesmead.
- Woolwich Rail Crossing: Either heavy rail linking the North Kent line to the North London line, or an extension to the Docklands Light Railway from City Airport to Woolwich Arsenal.

The package is likely to be taken forward as a public-private partnership, with tolls introduced on the existing Blackwall Tunnel crossing to fund new construction.

Environmental impact

Local traffic impact at Silvertown, Canning Town and Thamesmead could be substantial. Local groups fear that the Thames Gateway Bridge may be the first step towards reviving the East London River Crossing (defeated in the 1990s) which would have destroyed ancient woodland at Oxleas Woods. Business groups see the package as a major stimulus for economic regeneration of the Thames Gateway, but there has been no convincing demonstration that it will deliver the promised economic benefits.

Alternatives

The three crossings should not be considered a package. The rail crossing should be explored but not as a Trojan horse for the other two, road-based, crossings. More environmentally sustainable regeneration of the Thames Gateway should be explored.

Facts and figures

Cost: At least £600 million.

Status: Being considered by the Mayor.

Likelihood: There is a high risk this package will get Mayoral backing.

10.2 A406 North Circular

Three schemes to widen parts of the North Circular are awaiting a decision by the Mayor. The most damaging of these would widen the road to six lanes between Bounds Green and Green Lanes.

Environmental impact

The Bounds Green to Green Lanes reconstruction would involve the loss of 312 properties, including 250 homes. Eleven hundred homes would suffer increased noise. Six hundred mature trees would be felled.

Upgrading the North Circular may attract orbital traffic from the M25 and result in the decline of local shopping centres including Wood Green as shoppers travel further to Brent Cross shopping centre at the junction of the North Circular and the M1. Stretches of the A406 are already the second, third, 11th and 31st most polluted roads in Britain, and there are fears that widening the North Circular would attract more traffic and make pollution worse.

Alternatives

A package of safety measures and other small scale measures would address most local concerns.

Political picture

Enfield Southgate was gained by Stephen Twigg for Labour at the last election, with a majority of 1433. The Conservatives were in second place.

Facts and figures

Length: 3.5 kilometres.

Cost: £252 million.

Status: Under review by the Mayor.

Likelihood: Too early to say. Will depend partly on the funding priorities of the Mayor.

10.3 A23 Coulsdon Inner Relief Road

This scheme provides a bypass for Coulsdon town centre. The original design was an unnecessarily damaging dual carriageway. This is now under review by the Mayor.

Environmental impact

The road threatens 3.5 hectares of green belt land. It may facilitate several major car-based developments, including Cane Hill Science Park and three big developments in Croydon town centre: Park Place, Centrale and Arena. These would increase the number of central Croydon car parking spaces from 12,000 to 15,000.

Alternatives

Croydon Council says it wants a 10 per cent reduction in traffic. This would suggest alternative traffic management and public transport investment should be pursued.

Facts and figures

Length: 1.7 kilometres.

Cost: £40 million.

Status: Under review by the Mayor.

Likelihood: The Mayor is likely to support a scaled-down single-carriageway scheme.

11 Conclusion

This report has highlighted some key road schemes following the Ten Year Plan and the serious threat they pose to the environment. We believe they should continue to be strongly opposed. The Government should not imagine that the emerging new roads programme is in any way different to the one that caused the last government so much political trouble.

We strongly urge that the Government should send signals to Regional Planning Bodies, local councils, and businesses that the rules remain the same as when the Transport White Paper was published. Road schemes should be thoroughly tested against the full range of alternative solutions through multi-modal studies. These alternative solutions, in particular demand management, may represent far better value for money. Schemes that generate traffic or cause serious environmental damage should not be contemplated, unless for imperative reasons of over-riding public interest. Where road-building is pursued it should not simply be to provide extra capacity for more cars.

And, while this Government has put some money into promoting alternatives, we believe the failure to invest heavily enough in alternative modes has led to the current sense of atrophy which has resulted in renewed pressure for a road-building programme. The continuing growth of traffic, fuelled partly by new roads and car-dependent development, means that sooner or later the Government will have to intervene to control traffic levels, investing in alternatives and using fiscal measures to discourage car use.