

## **THE A14 WIDER STUDY, THE “A14 CHALLENGE” AND THE SHORT TERM MEASURES - BRIEFING NOTE FOR LOCAL MEMBERS AND PARISH COUNCILS**

This is an information note about the Government’s A14 Wider Study and about the Budget Statement of £20m of ring fenced money to assist key congested points and measures to help reduce congestion caused by accidents and other incidents on the A14 between Ellington and Fen Ditton.

### The A14 Wider Study

Following the withdrawal of the A14 Ellington to Fen Ditton scheme, the Government announced that it would lead a study which examined the congestion problems of the A14, taking account of the needs of strategic freight as well as the needs of locally based development traffic within Cambridgeshire.

To this end, the Department for Transport (DfT) has established and is chairing a steering group to oversee the study which will examine these issues, draw conclusions and make recommendations as how to address these problems. Apart from senior DfT civil servants, the Steering Group comprises representatives of the Highways Agency, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, and Suffolk County Councils, Huntingdonshire, South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City Councils, the Greater Cambridge, Greater Peterborough, New Anglia and Northamptonshire Local Enterprise Partnerships, and the Haven Ports.

The study work is being undertaken in three phases. The first has been very quickly undertaken by consultants Steer Davies Gleave and has identified the main issues that any improvement schemes need to address. The report can be viewed as the “A14” PDF report on the Department for Transport website at <http://bit.ly/vCv1lc>

The next two phases of the study will see consultants, in this case Atkins, examining and evaluating alternative ways of addressing those issues. This will lead to a programme of deliverable and fundable schemes which address the corridor’s problems. The Wider Study is scheduled to finish in June 2012.

### The “A14 Challenge”

To coincide with the recent Chancellor’s statement, DfT launched its “A14 Challenge”. This document, “A14 Challenge –finding solutions together” can also be viewed as a further PDF at the above website and reaffirms the Government’s commitment to long term improvements for A14 travellers. The challenge is seeking ideas that are deliverable and can be shaped into comparable options.

An area where ideas are especially sought is that of the finance of improvement measures, and at this stage, not ruling out the tolling of new or enhanced infrastructure. The Challenge is open to suggestions of shared funding. Whatever, the Government expects the price of new schemes to be considerably less than that of the withdrawn scheme, priced at some £1.2bn.

The timescale for Challenge indicates that it will conclude by the end of January and feed into the Wider Study.

#### The Ring Fenced £20m to Provide Short Term Measures

This money is intended to provide the Highways Agency and the County Council with funding to introduce measures which should give some assistance to the current congestion on the A14. The schemes being developed are:

*1. Cambridgeshire County Council.* The expansion of St. Ives' Park and Ride site to the full size of 1,000 spaces included in the original Guide Busway orders. The current usage of this site and experience of demand for parking at other sites, suggests that demand may exceed supply on frequent occasions in the near future. The use of the Guided Busway instead of driving to Cambridge benefits traffic conditions on the A14.

An amount of money is also being provided for a small number of Variable Message Signs (VMS) on roads leading to the A14. These can give real time information on traffic congestion and incidents causing delay. The messages themselves will be co-ordinated with those of the Highways Agency, (see below).

*2. Highways Agency.* A list of potential measures is to be examined for deliverability. These measures include alterations at the Spittals Interchange to smooth traffic flow both in a west and east bound direction. Between Bar Hill and Girton, measures to improve the east bound traffic flow, especially in the morning peak period. These could involve provision of a "Tiger Tail"\* between the centre and near side lane to separate Huntingdon Road traffic travelling into Cambridge from A14 traffic. Additionally, measures to confine A428 east bound traffic to one lane as it approaches the Girton Interchange to enable a free flow lane onto the A14 Northern bypass, with the provision of an extra east bound lane to Histon Interchange will be investigated.

The Agency is also planning a "Minute Man" service to assist with the swift removal of breakdowns and series of mobile VMS signs to be co-ordinated with its existing signs elsewhere along the A14

#### Options For The Financing of Major Road Works

The Government has made it clear that all options for funding of major improvements to the A14 are within the scope of the "A14 Challenge" and the A14 Wider Study. These could include a variety of Public / Private Partnerships arrangements and is brought about because of the scale of the problems, the likely cost of the solutions and the very limited amount of public finance available.

\*An example of a "Tiger Tail" on the M6 Motorway. Check out <http://bit.ly/yAXcEK>