

PE1503/B

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CÒMHDHAIL
ALBA



Andrew Howlett
Assistant Clerk
Public Petitions Committee
T3.40, Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

Your ref:
PE1503

Our ref:
A7843410

Date:
25 February 2014

Dear Andrew,

PUBLIC PETITION PE1503 – A9 AVERAGE SPEED CAMERAS

Thank you for your letters of 5 and 6 February seeking responses in connection with Public Petition PE1503. I have set out Transport Scotland's position on the Petition below as a single response. We welcome this opportunity to present the facts about the A9 Safety Group and its work and explain why, after careful consideration of evidence such as accident analysis and vehicle speeds, it strongly believes that an average speed camera system will improve safety on the route.

The A9 Safety Group was set up by Transport Scotland in July 2012 as a multi-agency group to work closely together with partners to reduce road casualties on the route. The main aim of the A9 Safety Group before and during the A9 dualling programme is to work together to explore any measures which could be introduced on the route using engineering, enforcement, education and encouragement to positively influence driver behaviour in a way that helps reduce road casualties. This work will not delay the dualling programme nor does it represent an alternative to dualling. The measures incorporated in the Interim Safety Plan are intended to maximise the safety for all users of the A9 until the dualling programme is complete.

The A9 Safety Group instructed the operating companies, who manage and maintain the route, to carry out an evidence based review. The review included analysis of accidents, vehicle speeds, traffic flows and existing speed enforcement statistics.

Following the evidence based review the A9 Safety Group agreed a package of measures to improve safety. MSPs were invited to a meeting in Parliament on 10 October 2013, where representatives from the A9 Safety Group presented on the work of the group. Details of the accident analysis were provided as was the case for average speed cameras and members of the group were available to answer questions on these initiatives.

Safety has consistently improved where average speed cameras have been installed in Scotland, the UK and across the world on a variety of road types. The development of the average speed camera system for the A9 reflects the realities of the route, in particular the excessive speed recorded for many vehicles and the high accident severities recorded. On the A77, the number of fatal casualties fell by 46% and serious injury casualties by 35% after the installation of average speed cameras.

It has been suggested that speed is not the cause of accidents on the A9, however accidents are typically multi-factor events, where several circumstances combine to create an incident. Analysis of the facts shows that between Perth and Tore, the most common accident causations include loss of control, failing to judge speed, swerving, sudden braking and travelling too fast for the conditions, in addition to the specific recording of speed alone. Each of these causations has a clear link to speed. Regardless of the underlying contributory factors, where an accident does occur, higher speed increases the risk of death or serious injury.

The analysis of vehicle speeds from 26 traffic counters on the route show 1 in 3 cars on single carriageway sections of the route between Perth and Inverness are exceeding the posted speed limit. Furthermore, the mean speeds for cars at the sites at Glen Garry, Dalnaspidal, Nuide Farm, Kinraig and Slochd were all found to be above the posted speed limit at these single carriageway locations. This data is set out in the Vehicle Speeds and Speed Enforcement Summary Report in the publications section of the A9 Safety Group website.

Between 1 July and 30 September 2013, over 4000 traffic offences were reported and 3869 were related to speeding. Average speed cameras achieve better speed limit compliance than traditional camera enforcement and as such, it is seen as a fairer system and more effective at casualty reduction. Analysis of the postcodes of those caught speeding on the route indicates that the vast majority have home postcodes in the central belt of Scotland, Aberdeen and Inverness. Information to this effect was again published on the A9 website last year.

The design for the average speed camera system divides the road into two separate sections to take into account the distinct characteristics of the A9 and to make sure that each camera zone is tailored to the specific needs of that part of the route.

North of Perth, it is anticipated that there will be seven distinct average speed camera system zones, all of which are single carriageway sections. The cameras are generally five to seven kilometres apart. South of Perth, there are expected to be 14 camera locations in each carriageway spaced every 5 to 7 kilometres apart. The strategy north of Perth focusses on the single carriageway locations as that is where most people are being killed or seriously injured. The single carriageway sections between Perth and Inverness have a high accident severity ratio. 37 of the 43 people killed on the A9 between Perth and Inverness in the last 5 years have been on the single carriageways. South of Perth the cameras will address the high severity turning accidents being experienced at the cross-over junctions where the high speed through traffic is in conflict the slower turning traffic.

The longest single enforceable section on the A9 will be approximately 31 miles long, which is shorter than the overall length of the average speed cameras on the A77. It is misleading to suggest that the length of the A9 is a material consideration in the deployment or use of average speed cameras.

An industry standard micro-simulation traffic model which uses extensive and diverse observed datasets, exceeding the standard modelling requirements was used to model the predicted effects of introducing an average speed camera system. The model has been audited for use in the application of average speed cameras and the A9 dualling programme. The model simulates weekday and weekend conditions in a neutral month, as per guidance set out in the *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges*. Data collected and used in the model includes data from the tourist season and covers a period of two years. The model has been developed to replicate the road layout, including gradients, carriageway cross sections, vehicle type composition and traffic volumes. The model was calibrated and validated using survey data including junction turning count data, journey time and speeds. Speed distributions, overtaking and platooning

have also been used to validate the model results. All key junctions along the A9 have been surveyed for turning counts and journey times were collected via Bluetooth detectors northbound and southbound. Both the performance of other average speed camera systems and the traffic model show that safety will improve and nothing indicates there will be an increase in accidents before a reduction.

A total of £137 million has been spent on safety and maintenance improvements on the route since 2007, including work to improve junctions (e.g. £15 million spent on grade separation at Ballinluig) as well as overtaking opportunities (e.g. £10 million spent on dualling extension at Crubenmore). Over the next two years we expect to spend more than £18 million, with the focus on engineering, education and enforcement initiatives.

The education initiatives are starting with a Safe Overtaking Campaign, which will launch on 28 February. The overtaking campaign is intended to improve driver awareness of the risks of overtaking on the A9 and to improve knowledge of safe overtaking techniques and the choices to be made before any overtaking manoeuvre is attempted. The campaign will be supported by radio advertisements, posters and adverts on buses, HGVs and displays at various locations along the A9.

A series of public information exhibitions are being held in February and March this year for communities along the A9 to give them more information about our safety plans for the route. The events, which are being organised by the A9 Safety Group, will be held in Inverness, Perth, Pitlochry and Aviemore. We are urging as many people as possible to come along to hear about the continued work that is going into making the route safer ahead of dualling and to hear more road user views on how the route operates. A9 roadside user surveys are being undertaken before the installation of the average speed cameras to gauge drivers' experience of using the route. We will repeat the surveys after the system has been in operation to understand how users' perception of the A9 has changed.

As part of the Interim Safety Plan, our operating company BEAR Scotland has been on site for several weeks, undertaking £120,000 of roadside vegetation removal and landscaping to improve forward visibility on the route. This work is being undertaken in addition to routine landscaping works.

Plans for a 50 mph HGV speed limit pilot on single carriageways of the A9, to be introduced at the same time as average speed cameras, were announced in December. This is intended to reduce speed differentials between the various types of vehicles using the route and frustration that may result from the presence of slower moving vehicles. It is reliant on an average speed camera system being in place and the trial will be supported by a safe driving campaign run by the haulage industry. The average speed cameras will bring safety improvements to the route and the pilot will bring operational benefits and could further improve driver behaviour by reducing frustration.

The A9 Safety Group has met on 9 occasions. Minutes from all meetings (except the meeting of 18 February 2014) are approved by the group and published on the website. The constitution of the group includes representation from 14 organisations covering a wide spectrum of interests related to the economic importance of the A9 as well as the safety performance. The Petitioner, Mr Mike Burns, indicated in his submission that the group did not take account of the interests of the motorist in its deliberations. I would be keen to emphasise that as well as having considerable demonstrable experience of everyday driver issues from within the road safety specialists and policing representatives on the group, a balance to these views is also provided through the involvement of the Institute of Advanced Motorists, arguably the biggest independent motorists group in the UK and a leading road safety charity.

The A9 Safety Group has not identified any other organisations to be invited to the group but would be happy to consider any organisations willing to work together to explore measures that will positively influence driver behaviour in a way that helps reduce road casualties. As chair of the A9 Safety Group I have made a number of invitations to meet with Mr Burns, however these were not accepted.

The A9 Safety Group does not claim that average speed cameras are the only solution and is in fact delivering a comprehensive package of measures through the Interim Safety Plan which consists of a variety of improvements across the themes of engineering, enforcement and education. Through this approach, the A9 Safety Group has recognised the need to deliver a complimentary package of measures to address the complex safety issues on the route. The measures taken forward are backed by an evidence base that has been carefully considered by the wealth of road safety experience within the group and is publicly available on the group's website A9road.info. Moreover, the commitment of key partners including Police Scotland, the Safety Camera Partnerships and the trunk road operating companies will ensure the average speed camera initiative will be closely monitored and information on its performance will be published and reported widely to the A9 road users.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Stewart Leggett
Strategic Impacts Manager (Chair of A9 Safety Group), Transport Scotland