A4146 Proposed Reclassification and Weight Restriction

Briefing Note, Sept 2015
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A working group consisting of representatives of TfB and TVP, together with senior officers from Central Bedfordshire and HCC has been formed to review changes post the A5-M1 link road opening and also proposals from the EDaN group to reclassify the A4146 and introduce weight restrictions.

This is being considered in the context of:

- **A5-M1 Junction 11a**: Highways England project currently under construction with expected completion in early 2017 although it is possible that small sections may be open to traffic late 2016. The new link road will become the A5

- **A5 De-trunking**: The A5 to the south of the link road through Dunstable to M1 Junction 9 will be de-trunked immediately the link road is open to traffic. The A5 will no longer be part of the strategic route network and will be re-numbered as A5183. The Secretary of State has already made The A5 Trunk Road (A5-M1 Link Dunstable Northern Bypass) (De-trunking) Order 2014 that came into force on 24th July 2014.

- **A5183 (old A5) Dunstable High Street**: part of the changes include a 7.5 Tonne weight limit to ban HGVs. For HGV’s from the south including the major truck stop at M1 junction 9, Dunstable will become a no through-route. To get to destinations north of Dunstable, HGV’s will be directed to M1 at junctions 9 & 10 then back off again at the new 11A. Bucks concerned over vehicles that get as far as the High Street with nowhere to go, either break the restriction or use local roads including B489, B488 and A4146 to get round. HGV’s once in Dunstable and wish to go further west will be directed to the Woodside Link that will be open to traffic at the same timeline as A5-M1 Link.

- **CBC proposals for HGV restrictions post A5-M1 with Eaton Bray/Totternhoe advanced HGV restriction. TfB recommendation is for advanced signing from the A4146 to the restricted area to give advance warning to drivers.**

In terms of the specific benefits and issues surrounding reclassifying the A4146 and introducing a weight restriction:

- A large number of waste vehicles currently use the A4146 to the Newton Longville waste station from civic amenity sites in north London Boroughs. Discussions by TfB are taking place with Waste colleagues to discuss the implications of this in the context of future waste strategies with a view to encourage drivers to use the strategic network especially with Greatmoor EFW opening in spring 2016. Bucks need to engage with FCC regarding operations at Bletchley Waste Management (Newton Longville) site. Plans for an incinerator near St Albans have now been abandoned and an alternative proposal is being considered. It was generally felt that the A4146 had become a favoured route for HGV’s to avoid congestion on the M1 during the widening between Junctions 6 and 10.

- In principle all agreed that the route could be downgraded to a “B” road and Herts will lead on this as well as a weight restriction in Herts to sever the route and prevent HGV’s travelling along its length.
• General agreement that there is now an agreed process for a proposed comprehensive package of restrictions across the three Local Authority administrative boundaries to encourage HGV’s to use the strategic network returning a better quality of life to residents along the route. It should be recognised that delivery vehicles will also be subject to the weight restrictions.

• Whilst the principle has been agreed for both measures, the introduction of a weight restriction is subject to a successful consultation process. Herts will be looking at its feasibility and impact on nearby residents on and away from A4146, plus its impact on freight. In prohibiting HGVs from A4146 there has to be a suitable, signed alternative route. The outcome of this initial feasibility work will be completed in early 2016. Provided an acceptable scheme is identified, there will be consultation with a wider audience during next year.

• There is an additional consideration regarding Leighton Buzzard (LB) with any signage strategy. It is a growth town and traffic has to go through Dunstable when travelling from the south. With a High Street weight limit and maybe one on A4146, the alternative route for HGVs will be onto the M1, however LB is not a primary destination and so technically can’t be included on motorway signs. This may pose a substantial challenge for the introduction of a weight limit on A4146 ‘Leighton Buzzard Road’. The question has now been asked of Highways England Consultants AECOM.

• Provided a scheme is identified and successfully goes through the Traffic Regulation Order process, there will then need to be a weight ahead restriction signs and changes to direction signs along roads in all three LA areas. It was agreed that each LA would be responsible for arranging and funding changes in their own area. It was accepted that HCC have a large number of signs around Hemel Hempstead that will require changing. Bucks have yet to undertake a survey and identify potential cost implications.

• It would not be possible to reclassify to B4146 as a route already exists in Birmingham. A new route number will need to be sourced. The group has proposed renaming to B440.

• A further option to rename the northern part of the A4146 as a continuation of the A505 was raised, but this is not likely to be practical as the longer term strategic view is for the A505 to be the Oxford to Cambridge trunk road.

• Discussion with BCC Local Member, Avril Davies, confirms that she is broadly supportive of the proposals. The potential impact on the B488 would also need to be considered, and Councillor Davies favoured an additional point weight restriction at Brownlow Bridge. The impact on access for local HGV traffic would need to be considered. TfB have submitted capital bid for funds to upgrade signals at Brownlow Bridge (BC150) in 2016/17. Scope of work could be increased to investigate this if scheme bid is approved.