

SEVENOAKS JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD – 14TH DECEMBER 2010

30MPH SPEED INDICATOR DEVICE (SID), SEAL HOLLOW ROAD, SEVENOAKS

Report of the: Director of Kent Highway Services

Status: For Consideration

Chairman Mr David Brazier

Head of Service Head of Transportation & Development (KHS) – Behdad Haratbar

Recommendation:

- (a) That Members note receipt of the petition.
 - (a) The lead petitioner is informed of this Board's decision.
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Introduction

1. A petition has been received from residents of Seal Hollow Road requesting that the 30 mph speed indicator device (SID) becomes a permanent feature at the current location of the intermittent SID. A copy of the list of signatories and supporting letter is included in Appendix A.
2. At present, officers install the SID 3 times a year on Seal Hollow Road on a rotational basis for a period of 4 weeks. The sign detects an approaching vehicle's speed, displays the vehicle's speed with a "thank you" if the speed is below the speed limit and a "slow down" message if the speed is above. The installation of a SID on Seal Hollow Road has shown to have positive impact in lowering the speeds and residents would like the sign to be sited as a permanent feature on highway.

Background

3. Kent Highway Services (KHS) has for a number of years been installing permanent interactive vehicle speed limit reminder signs, generally as a reminder once a vehicle has entered a lower speed limit. The Kent County Council (KCC) criteria for the use of interactive signs and the siting limitations mean that these signs are only suitable for use within 100 – 200m of the change in speed limit.

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4. To enhance KHS methods of speed management, speed indicator device (SID) signs have been trialled across the County at various sites, with the locations selected using similar criteria as that used for interactive speed signs. However to date these signs differ from the permanent interactive signs, in that they are of a portable nature and are often solar-powered signs that can detect and display an approaching vehicle's speed, together with a message as mentioned above and are generally sited well inside of the speed limit, as opposed to at the start of a change to a lower speed limit.
5. A trial project was started in late 2008 and which was programmed to end in March 2010. It initially involved the installation of 6 SID signs at 24 locations around Kent which met specific criteria (described below), with the signs being located on a monthly rotational basis. However, recognizing that these initial 24 sites were being at predominately urban town centre locations, the project was expanded to include a further 6 SID units for further 24 sites, a number of which included 30mph rural locations. The criteria for site selection are as follows:
 - The road is subject to a 30mph speed limit.
 - Recorded 85th percentile speeds are high, typically 36mph and above (that is, 15% of drivers exceed 36mph).
 - There is a crash record of at least 6 personal injury crashes within approximately 500m of the proposed sign, over the most recent three year period.
 - Not to be used on roads currently covered by speed cameras or permanent interactive speed signs.
 - There should be a straight section of road to allow the radar system to work.
 - High levels of vegetation should be avoided to allow the solar panel to function correctly and also to avoid unnecessary vegetation clearance.
 - There should be sufficient footway or verge width (ideally a minimum of 1.4m) to avoid the sign being hit by passing traffic.

Discussion

6. Seal Hollow Road has undergone several investigations with regards to speeding in the past. In 2009, KHS carried out signing and lining improvements to highlight the sections of the road at the 'Hole in the wall', and at the school near the junction of A25 Seal Road. The section of road in between the junctions with The Crescent and The Paddocks falls within a 30mph mobile speed camera zone. The temporary SID that is installed 3 times a year at the south end of Seal Hollow Road has shown a reduction in the overall speeds of vehicles.
7. The findings of the trial project are in a report produced by Jacobs, "An Assessment of the SID Signs Effectiveness & Their Future Use Through out Kent".

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8. The installation of a speed indicator device (SID) sign has reduced the average and 85th percentile vehicle speeds. In addition to reducing vehicle speeds, a reduction in speed-related vehicle crashes could also be expected, however it is not possible in this stage of the trial to provide quantitative data.
- In light of this success, petitioners' desire to see the intermittent SID made permanent is understandable. However, because SID signs are currently not included in the Department for Transport's "Traffic Signs and General Regulations 2002", they cannot be used permanently at a single location without the Secretary of State's consent.
 - Should the signs be left at a particular site for any length of time even with the larger more powerful batteries fitted it is likely that the sign could fail, (a regular change of the batteries is required or alternatively a permanent live feed).
 - Were this SID to be made permanent, an additional unit would need to be purchased and maintained for which no financial provision has been made.
9. Future funding to continue rotating the 12 SID signs at the existing 48 sites beyond this current financial year (2010/11) has not been secured but this is currently being investigated, the outcome of which will be reported to the next meeting of this Board.

Appendix

- A Supporting letter from the lead petitioner with list of signatories.

Sources of Information: An Assessment of the SID Signs Effectiveness & Their Future Use Throughout Kent

Contact Officer(s): Aziz Jiwaji, Kent Highway Services – 08458 247 800

DIRECTOR OF KENT HIGHWAY SERVICES John Burr

