A consultants report setting out a long term strategy for the M25 and transport corridor around London has been published today.

The report, produced by consultants Kellogg Brown & Root (KBR) and commissioned by the Government Office for the South East, is the main output of the Orbit-Transport solutions around London study. It makes recommendations to tackle congestion and unreliable journeys on the M25.

The recommended strategy sets out to improve the performance of the M25 without delay, coupled with measures to manage traffic growth. Short to medium term measures include action on incident management and M25 widening. Analytical work showed that public transport measures would have little direct impact on M25 traffic, but the consultants have recommended that development work should be taken forward on an orbital coach network and various rail proposals in concert with a major study towards implementing a road user charging system in 2011.

The consultant’s key recommendations are:

- On-line M25 widening to dual four lanes, in conjunction with measures to control induced traffic (initially ramp metering) between:
  - Junction 5 to 7 (M26 – Redhill/M23)
  - Junction 16 to 23 (M40 – A1(M))
  - Junction 27 to 31 (M11 – Dartford Crossing)
  - Junction 1b to 3 (Dartford to A20/M20)
- **M25 Incident Management. Changes to liability** for vehicle damage during clearance operations, *consideration of wider safety risks, better data collection processes.*
- **Area Wide Road User Charging** as a longer-term measure to control extra traffic. To be implemented in 2011, in conjunction with improvements to the public transport system. Work to start as soon as possible on a wide ranging road user charging feasibility study together with *work on* public transport improvements such as a *high quality orbital coach system* around London.
- **Land-use controls.** Review of current controls on land use adjacent to the trunk road and motorway network.
- **Monitoring** the *effectiveness of Mobility Management measures* such as action on travel planning and parking, *and* adjusting the timetable of other measures accordingly.

**Measures recommended for further work include:**

- **Highways Agency to investigate in more detail:**
  - The need for and form of further capacity between Junction 23 and 27.
  - Improvements to M25 junctions consistent with the above widening strategy.
  - Design and appraisal of ramp metering and/or mainline flow metering on widened sections.
  - Reallocation of M25 capacity through the provision of priority lanes.
- **Lower Thames Crossing.** Further consideration to be given to a new multi-modal Lower Thames Crossing with associated infrastructure.

David Hardcastle from Consultants KBR Ltd said:

“Our research has shown that road building alone will not solve the problem of congestion on the M25. Our recommendation is for some limited widening of the M25 but this should only be implemented in conjunction with some means of controlling induced traffic. Widening alone is likely to encourage extra traffic that in turn would increase motorway flows and lead to further congestion, repeating the call for widening. We consider that area-wide road user charging is the only approach that would substantially reduce both the volume of car commuting and the average length of car trips on the M25, with benefits to environment and economy.”
KBR’s report indicates that the implementation of the Study’s recommendations will bring a number of significant benefits to the study area including:

- time taken to travel right round the M25 in 2011 would be about 17 minutes less than in 1997, about 12 minutes less in 2021.
- reliability in travel times on the M25 in 2011 would be at least 20% better than in 1997.
- substantial economic and environmental benefits
- nearly 4200 fewer personal injury accidents over 30 years from 2011;

The consultants recognise that Government currently has no plans to introduce road user charging on the inter-urban road network. The strategy to 2011 is therefore designed to improve journey time reliability on the M25 and be justified with or without area wide road user charging. To avoid over provision of road capacity the chosen standard of M25 widening is consistent with the standard which would be appropriate if area-wide road user charging were to be introduced. Fourteen of the thirty three M25 sections are recommended for widening on-line to dual four standard in association with measures to control induced traffic (initially ramp metering).

Notes to Editors

1. The consultants’ recommendations will now be submitted to the regional planning bodies that cover the study area (the South East England Regional Assembly, the East of England Local Government Conference and the Mayor for London) for their consideration. Each body will in turn submit their comments to the Secretary of State for Transport for decision.

2. The recommended changes to the road system would cost around £850 million at current 2002 prices. The revenues from a road user charging system would more than exceed the cost of implementing the system.

3. The Orbit Multi-Modal Study, (Orbit – Transport solutions around London) was announced in March 1999 and consultants, Kellogg Brown and Root Limited (KBR), were appointed in February 2000.

4. A steering group chaired by the Regional Director of the Government Office for the East of England and managed Government Office for the South East has overseen the consultant’s work. Membership is from; Government Office for the South East (GOSE), Government Office for the East of England (GO-East), South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA), East of England Local Government Conference (EELGC), Greater London Authority (GLA), South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), East of England Development Agency (EEDA), London Development Agency (LDA), Highways Agency (HA), Strategic Rail Authority (SRA), Transport for London (TfL), South East Forum for Sustainability (SEFS), Eastern Forum for Sustainability (EFS), and London Forum for Sustainability (LFS).
5. The consultants report and executive summary can be viewed at www.orbitproject.com

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Study website: www.orbitproject.com
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