

LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
HIGHWAYS FORUM FOR BLABY

9TH JANUARY 2013

REINSTATEMENT OF ROAD CENTRE LINE MARKINGS FOLLOWING
SURFACE DRESSING TREATMENT

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Members of criteria under which consideration may be given to not replacing road centre lines following surface dressing treatment.

Background

2. Each time a road is surface dressed, an exercise is undertaken to record the length, type and location of all the road markings on the section prior to the treatment. Following treatment, these lines then have to be re-laid in the correct location. This can be a time-consuming exercise.
3. If, under certain controlled circumstances, the road centre lines are not replaced following surface dressing, there would be a small saving in time and the cost of materials on those roads, and further small savings each time the road is subsequently surface dressed.
4. In addition to saving money, there is a positive effect on the character of the location, especially in rural areas or areas of historic importance.

Safety Considerations

5. Without a centre line, a road appears narrower. If drivers have no defined area of carriageway that is 'their half', studies show that they will slow down to reduce their perceived risk of a collision.
6. In 2003, Wiltshire County Council commissioned the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) and the Civil Engineering and Environmental Management Associates (CEEMA) to investigate the effects of removing centre white lines. This followed the removal of lines from a number of roads in Wiltshire, and concerns being raised subsequently about the potential safety implications.
7. The commission examined all evidence available, and resulted in the production of a document entitled "An evaluation of the effect of removing centre white lines".

8. The document reached the conclusion that, in the absence of a white centre line, uncertainty is created which encourages drivers to reduce their speed. Specifically, the evidence showed that drivers
 - Travel closer to the kerb-line
 - Adopt a more stable lateral position on the road
 - Have a 40% increase in lateral separation from oncoming traffic
 - Reduce their speed when they are close to oncoming vehicles
 - Travel marginally slower when they are close to oncoming vehicles compared to drivers on a road with a centre line
9. Significantly, the Wiltshire experiments also produced a 35% reduction in accident rate.

Criteria

10. Before the non-replacement of any section of centre line is considered, the road must meet a set of criteria that assess its suitability. The road must:
 - not be an A or B classification
(A and B roads form the strategic road network of Leicestershire, so the removal of centre lines would not normally be appropriate)
 - be in a village or village-like setting
(this provides the greatest benefit in terms of speed reduction and improvement of the rural environment)
11. Other factors that must be considered on a site-by-site basis are:
 - Road width – if a road is, or appears to be, very wide, the removal of lines may have an adverse effect as speeds may increase
 - Carriageway construction – if the carriageway is ‘un-restrained’, i.e. it has no kerbs, consideration must be given to the potential adverse effect of extra wear on the haunches and subsequent increased maintenance which would negate the cost savings of not replacing a centre line. In some instances, it may prove cost effective to replace (or add) just edge markings in order to reduce speeds and protect the haunches.
 - Street lighting – if street lighting is present, whether it will cause a significant difference to the evaluation of the site if it is subsequently switched off. If street lighting is not present whether removing the centre lines may cause a hazard
 - Fog – if the proposed location is in a known fog-prone area then lining could be essential to safe movement of vehicles
12. Lines will not be removed in the vicinity of a hazard, such as a bend or junction.

Procedure

13. Once a location is considered suitable using the above criteria, the following will be undertaken:
 - the collection of all relevant information prior to any work (speed of traffic, location of all existing road markings etc.).

- the gathering of accident data over an area extending several hundred metres beyond the boundary of the proposed removal. If there have been any accidents in the area, they will be analysed by the accident investigation team in order to ascertain whether the removal of the centre line may have a positive or negative effect.
 - the consideration of pedestrian and vehicle safety, environmental and cost benefits of changing the markings and the possible need for further signing
14. Once a site is confirmed as suitable, notifications will be sent to the parish and district councils (as appropriate), the local County Councillor, the police and any other stakeholders.
 15. Following completion of the work, the road will be monitored to assess any changes to vehicle speed and accident rates.

Financial Appraisal

16. If a road is to be considered for the non-reinstatement of its centre lines, there will be initial work required to assess the potential site and carry out the necessary notifications. This may cost more than the work normally required to ensure the reinstatement of the lining 'as is'. However, there would be a subsequent reduction in costs each time the road is surface dressed and also a reduction in maintenance costs due to there being less lining.
17. There is therefore not a significant financial saving to be made by not replacing road centre lines following surface dressing.

Environmental Appraisal

18. By not replacing centre lines following surface dressing, there is a positive effect on the character of the location, especially in rural areas or areas of historic importance.
19. Whilst not affecting the physical landscape, the removal of centre lines contributes to the spirit of the Government's request to remove unnecessary 'street clutter'.

Legal Implications

20. All lines on the highway must conform to the traffic signs regulations and general directions, but this states the standard to be adopted only if the highway authority decides that markings are appropriate for that location.
21. Road centre lines, even where used, are not subject to a traffic regulation order. Therefore, there are no legal implications of a decision to consider the removal of road centre lines at carefully selected locations.

Other Implications

22. As the initial work involved at each potential site is over and above the normal workload of traffic management and accident investigation staff, it is not possible to commit to a significant program of work. It is proposed that sites are tackled on the

basis of a limited number per year so the extra work can fit in with other commitments.

Current Position in Leicestershire

23. Centre lines have already been removed in a few locations in Leicestershire. This has normally been as a result of an improvement scheme or accident investigation, rather than for a saving in maintenance costs.
24. There are currently 10 recorded locations in the County which previously had centre lines but now do not. These locations vary in length between 100 and 1000 metres. Eight have a 30mph speed limit and two have a 20mph limit. The sites are listed below:

Village	Road	Route number	Length (m)	Speed limit	Lines removed
Kilby	Main Street	C4502	550	20	2001
Oadby	Knighton Grange Road	Unclassified	550	30	2006
Queniborough	Main Street	C4303	230	30	2007
Sharnford	Leicester Road	B4114	100	30	2009
Sileby	Cossington Road	C5213	800	30	2006
Sileby	Seagrave Road	C5208	1000	30	May 2008
Sileby	Ratcliffe Road	C5216	500	30	Jun 2009
Stoughton	Gaulby Lane	C3403 and C3401	300	20	2003
Syston	Barkby Lane	C3301	300	30	May 2008
Thruxington	Rearsby Road	C5302	200	30	May 2009

25. As can be seen, the centre lines have been removed at various times, with one removal dating back almost 10 years. All these sites have had their recent accident records inspected. Since the removal of the centre lines, there have been no injury accidents recorded on any of the stretches listed that could in any way be attributable to the removal of centre lines.
26. Leicestershire Constabulary has confirmed that its officers are not aware of any incidents relating to the removal of the lines.

Recommendation

27. Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

Officer to Contact

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Background Papers

None.