

Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No. 01/24

Date: 14 February 2024

Briefing note to: All Members of the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Purpose: To provide Members of the Committee with further information on the metrics and five routes used for the 'Getting around Medway' performance indicators, requested at meetings held in June and August 2023

1 Background

- 1.1 In 2008 the Council introduced a new target for vehicle journey times across Medway, based on National Indicator 167 (NI-167):
 - No increase in the average journey time across a combination of strategic transport routes into the centre of Medway (Chatham town centre) between 8am and 9am Monday to Friday, above a baseline of four minutes per mile.
- 1.2 The four minutes per mile target was set following a survey of morning peak traffic flows and an examination of national guidance on rush hour journey times. Eleven key routes were identified and measured using journey time data gathered from Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras maintained by Kent Police.
- 1.3 NI-167 was reviewed in October 2013, and in March 2014 a Member Advisory Group concluded that the measure should be adjusted, reducing the number of routes measured to five:

Wainscott bypass (6.7km)
 Main Road Hoo to Medway Tunnel (6.69km)
 Medway Tunnel to Will Adams Way roundabout (5km)
 A2 corridor from Rainham to New Road near Star Hill (7.75km)
 A2 corridor from Strood to New Road near Star Hill (4.39km)

These five routes would incorporate some of the ‘congestion hotspots’ identified in Medway’s Local Transport Plan and include areas subject to Local Growth Fund transport projects: Strood Town Centre, Medway City Estate and the corridor between the Medway Tunnel and Main Road Hoo (later incorporated into the Highway Infrastructure Fund project). Journey time data, along with an average journey time across the five routes, was reported quarterly.

2 Current Position

- 2.1 In March 2016 officers noted a deterioration in the quality of data from the ANPR cameras. Despite efforts to address the problem, it persisted. Due to the cost of procuring and maintaining a camera system on the network, officers recommended using data provided by the Department for Transport (DfT). This is issued free of charge and provides journey time data across every road in Medway. Whilst there is no cost for receiving the data, it is only issued once per year and therefore the reporting of the NI-167 performance indicator moved from quarterly to annually.
- 2.2 The four minutes per mile target is now fifteen years old and national data indicates that morning peak traffic flows in urban and suburban areas across the country would result in longer journey times. Notwithstanding this, journey times on the five routes in Medway have, in the main, reduced since 2016.

Route	AM peak average journey time Q3 2016/17 (minutes per mile)	AM peak average journey time Q3 2022/23 (minutes per mile)
Wainscott bypass	3.43	3.37
Main Road Hoo to Medway Tunnel	3.20	2.65
Medway Tunnel to Will Adams Way roundabout	3.02	2.09

A2 corridor from Rainham to New Road near Star Hill	5.58	4.50
A2 corridor from Strood to New Road near Star Hill	5.23	3.76

- 2.3 Measures to improve traffic management in and around Medway’s town centres (Urban Traffic Management Controls) may have contributed to this downward trend in journey times, alongside schemes to improve traffic flow around Strood Town Centre and in the vicinity of the Medway City Estate. Changes to commuting patterns and an increase in home working may also have affected journey times, with lower levels of traffic during the morning peak period.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 Scrutiny of vehicle journey time data has some value in terms of monitoring the impacts of changes to the highway and provides some evidence to support proposed improvements to infrastructure capacity. This is only one objective included in the Council’s Local Transport Plan, however, and the reporting of journey times for vehicles does not provide insight into travel by other modes or assist in monitoring the development and implementation of sustainable transport strategies and infrastructure plans. A new Council Plan will be adopted in 2024. This provides an opportunity to consider new performance indicators that align directly with priorities for clean, green, safe, and connected communities, with a clear focus on the importance of public transport and active travel.

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