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The Viscount Goschen,
House of Lords,
London,
SW1A 0PW

26 February 2026

Dear Viscount Goschen,

During the oral question on smart motorways on 11 February, you asked about the safety performance of the section of the M3 between junction 2 and junction 4a. I hope you find the following information helpful.

Post Opening Project Evaluation (POPE) reports evaluate impacts of a scheme typically one and five years after opening. They assess whether the scheme is on track to deliver the anticipated impacts, including on safety, customer journeys, environmental outcomes, and value for money over the next 60 years - allowing National Highways to consider actions to further improve benefits.

The yearly average number of killed and seriously injured (KSI) casualties on the M3 J2-4a increased from 7.9 before construction to 10.3 after opening, an increase of 2.4. When accounting for the amount of traffic on the road, this metric increased from 1.3 to 1.8 KSIs per hundred million vehicle miles. This increase is driven by a small increase in the number of serious casualties in the after period, as well as an unusually lower number in the second year before construction started. These combined resulted in an increase in serious casualties from before to after. However, the total number of fatal casualties decreased from 4 before to 3 after. Due to the reduction in slight casualties as well, which are not included in the KSI metric, the fatal and weighted injuries (FWI)¹ metric also decreased.

Overall safety on the M3 J2-4a can be seen as positive. The yearly average number of personal injury collisions decreased by 22 from 61 before to 39 after, and the rate at which those collisions occurred also decreased by 3 per hundred million vehicle miles. Although the number of serious collisions did increase by 1, the number of fatal and slight collisions decreased.

¹ **Fatal and Weighted Injuries (FWI)** is a road safety metric used to measure, compare, and monitor the safety performance of road networks by combining different casualty severities into a single, comprehensive figure.

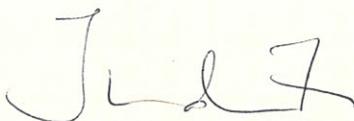
The M3 J2-4a smart motorway was expected to deliver 'high' value for money, and the analysis in this five-year evaluation shows it is on track to achieve this, over its 60-year lifespan. This includes £309million in journey time and £28million in safety benefits, both higher than forecast.

More generally in comparison to all our roads, smart motorways remain the safest road type in terms of deaths or serious injuries. National Highways has delivered £900m on safety improvements across existing smart motorways, including rolling out stopped vehicle detection technology and building over 150 additional emergency areas.

Road safety is National Highways number one priority and have an ambition that no one should be harmed while travelling on the network. Every serious injury is a life changed and we take that seriously. We will continue to work with National Highways to monitor the safety performance of M3 J2-4a and the whole network.

Thank you for your engagement in this important matter. I will place a copy of this letter in the House library.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Julia', written in a cursive style.

BARONESS BLAKE OF LEEDS, CBE