

M56

New Junction 11a

Summary of the
consultation report





The scheme

The M56 New Junction 11a scheme is part of our continued programme of investment in the motorway and trunk road network.

The M56 provides a key motorway link between Manchester, Liverpool and North Wales. The New Junction 11a will be situated between junctions 11 and 12 to provide a new link to the Mersey Gateway Bridge and offer the south Runcorn area a more direct route to the M56.

The new junction will support the Mersey Gateway Scheme - helping economic growth and reducing journey times for local residents. It will improve the quality of life for residents of Preston Brook by reducing the volume of cars and lorries passing through the village to access the M56 at junction 11. The scheme will also ease congestion by

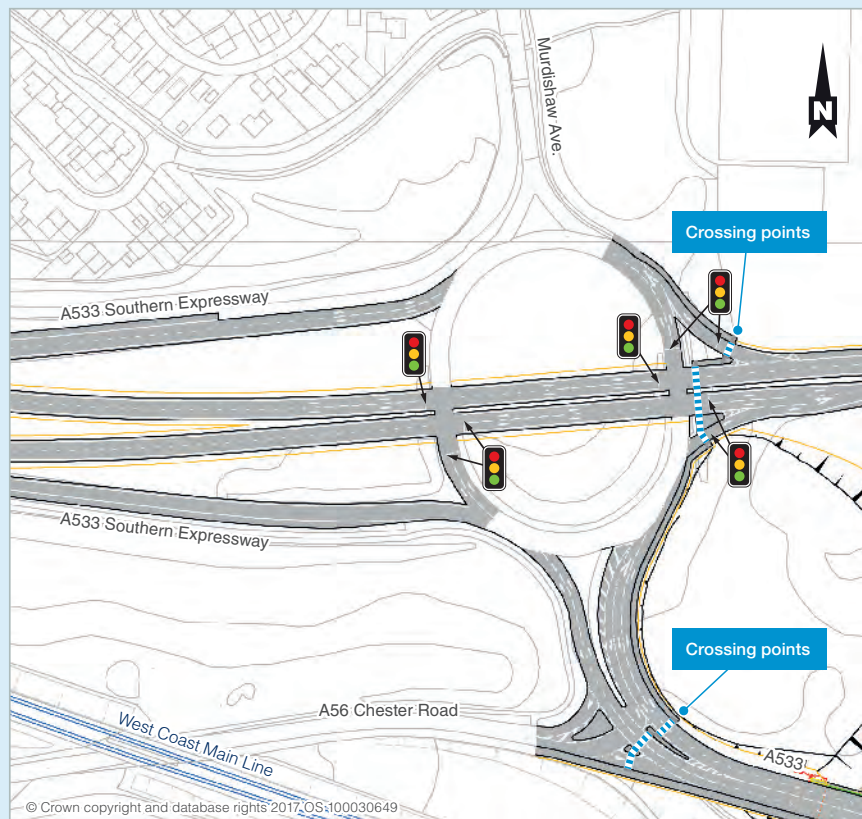
providing an additional route to the M56 when traffic begins to queue at junctions 11 or 12.

Creating the new junction will involve modifying the existing Murdishaw roundabout to accommodate the eastbound on and off-slip roads from the new junction. A new junction will also be added to the south of the M56. This will connect the A533 to the westbound M56 on and off slip roads. The scheme will also replace the old A533 Expressway Bridge which currently spans the M56 and is at the end of its serviceable life.

We developed two design options for the scheme and we presented both during consultation to seek the views of local people:

Option A: Through-about layout

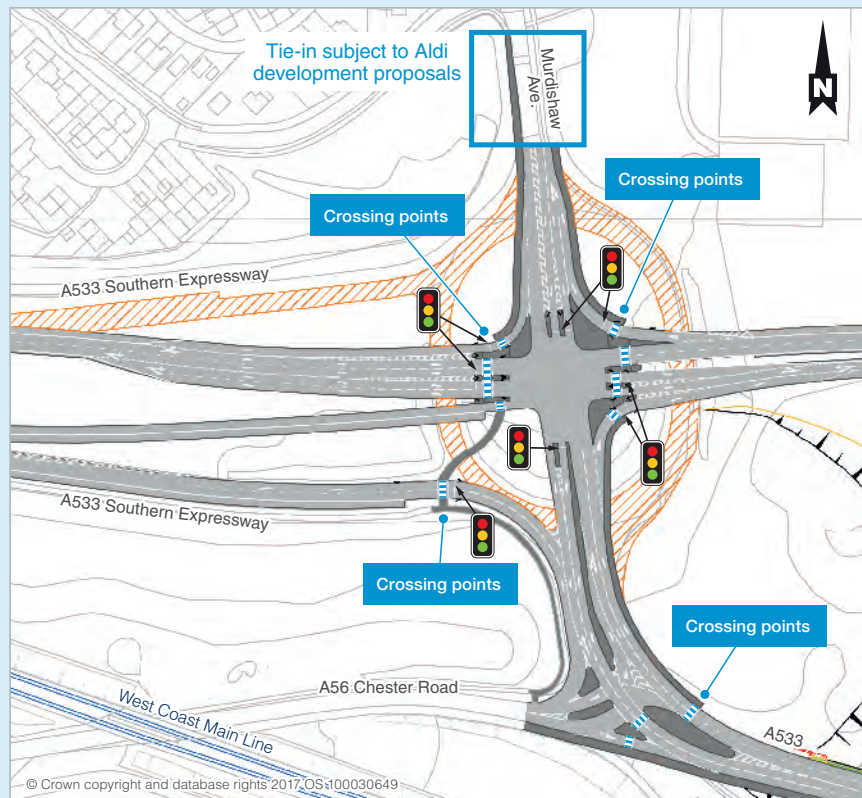
This option involves upgrading the existing Murdishaw roundabout into a through-about* as part of the overall junction layout. The existing A533 Southern Expressway will be re-aligned to run through the middle of the Murdishaw roundabout and connect onto the eastbound M56 slip roads. Local traffic will use the existing roundabout in a similar way to the current arrangement, but we will install traffic lights at the intersection of each roundabout arm.



**A through-about is a roundabout design in which the major road runs through the middle of the roundabout, with signal controls at the intersection of each roundabout arm.*

Option B: Signalised crossroads layout

This option will replace the existing Murdishaw roundabout with a 4-way crossroads junction with traffic lights. The A533 Southern Expressway will be realigned to connect to the junction and the M56 slip roads. The southbound approach from Murdishaw Avenue will be widened to 3 lanes. This will create a right-turn lane for the A533 Southern Expressway, a straight-ahead lane to Chester Road/A533 and a left lane to the motorway.



The junction where the A56 intersects the A533 just south of the Murdishaw roundabout will need to be changed as Option B will not support the current left turn only arrangement from the A56. The new design will allow drivers to turn either left or right.

As part of the design for both options, a new junction is proposed to connect the M56 westbound off and on slips to the A56/A533. We originally presented this aspect of the design in the form of a roundabout during public consultation. However, after further operational assessments we have adopted a T-junction arrangement as this will allow the traffic to flow more easily. To provide greater capacity to the new southern junction, the westbound approach from the existing Northwich Road / Chester Road (Whitehouse) roundabout will be widened to 2 lanes.

The public consultation

We held a public consultation between 16 January and 10 April 2017. We placed information about the proposed options and questionnaires at deposit points in various locations close to the scheme. These were also made available on our website and were posted directly to residents and stakeholders affected by the scheme.

We organised consultation events for the scheme which were held on 23, 28 and 31 January and one event on 1 February 2017. A range of materials were produced for the events, setting out the two options and their benefits. The project team hosted a questions and answers session. During the events, members of public were encouraged to discuss the design proposals with the team, who then addressed any queries. Over 200 people attended the exhibitions, and, of these, 136 also submitted questionnaires.

We advertised the public exhibitions in the local newspapers: the Warrington Guardian Series, Midweek Guardian and the World Group

(Runcorn and Widnes World). We also issued a press release describing the scheme, announcing the consultation and providing details of the information available.

Responses to the consultation were accepted through a number of channels:

- online using the questionnaire at: roads.highways.gov.uk/projects/m56-new-junction-11a/
- at public consultation events by completing a paper questionnaire
- by post using the freepost address printed on the paper questionnaires
- by email to the dedicated scheme email address: M56NewJunction11A@highwaysengland.co.uk

A total of 469 completed questionnaires were received.

Consultation findings

The majority (87%) of the respondents consider themselves to use the M56 on a regular basis and the most common way to travel is by car. 27% of those who responded use the route on a daily basis or more frequently and the most common reasons for using this route were leisure (86%) and commute (29%). Currently, 54% of respondents

use junction 11 most frequently and 43% use junction 12. If the new junction was available, 58% of respondents stated that they will anticipate using it rather than junctions 11 or 12 to access the M56.

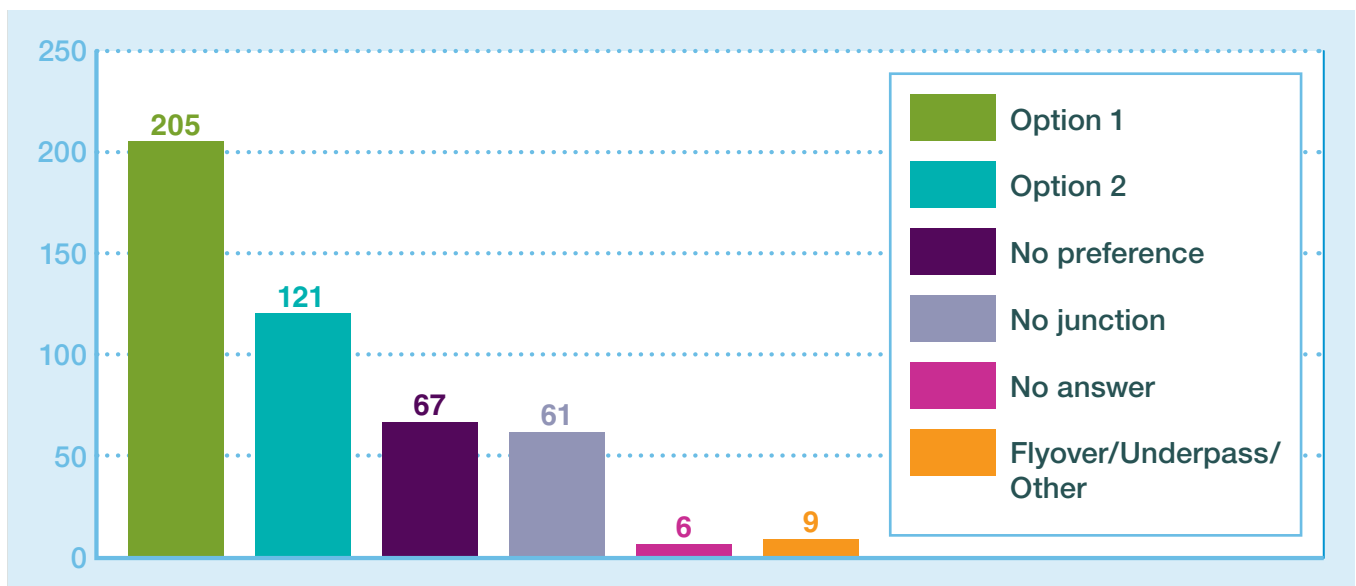
When asked which of the junction options was preferable, 44% of respondents expressed a preference for Option A, 26% preferred Option B, 14% had no preference and 13% preferred no junction.

Respondents indicated that they felt Option A was best for keeping traffic flowing and reducing congestion. Of the participants who stated a preference for Option B, the most commonly given reason for their choice was that it seemed safer.

61% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the scheme provides better access to the Mersey Gateway Bridge.

We received written consultation responses from 51 members of the public. The comments were generally similar to those raised in the questionnaires. A summary of the most common topics is included in the Report on Public Consultation.

Various alternative suggestions for the scheme were proposed by members of public. We have considered these and their suitability is discussed in the consultation report.



Conclusion

Although some respondents were opposed to the scheme or felt it was unnecessary, the majority of respondents favoured the introduction of a new junction. While Option A was preferred by respondents, mainly because it appeared to reduce congestion more effectively, further operational and safety assessments have shown Option B to perform better. In response to comments about the southern roundabout, we have changed the design to a T-Junction.

Next steps

We have considered the results of the consultation throughout the selection process, along with other factors such as safety, meeting the scheme's objectives and value for money. We will announce the preferred option in August 2017.

The full consultation report is available on our website or alternatively call **0300 470 2733** to request a printed copy.

Additionally the Scheme Assessment Report, containing further technical information about the scheme, is also available upon request.



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