

M621

Junctions 1 to 7 Improvement Scheme

Preferred Route Announcement – March 2018

Investing in your roads

At Highways England we believe in a connected country and our network makes these connections happen. We strive to improve our major roads and motorways – engineering the future to keep people moving today and moving better tomorrow. We want to make sure all our major roads are more dependable, durable and, most importantly, safe. That's why we're delivering £15 billion of investment on our network – the largest investment in a generation.

The M621 Junctions 1 to 7 Improvement Scheme is a critical part of this investment and will improve journeys between Leeds city centre and the surrounding road network, which is great news for the local and regional economy.

In this brochure we explain how we have assessed the options, carried out public consultation and the preferred route for the M621 Junctions 1 to 7 Improvement Scheme. We also give details of what will happen next.

Why is the scheme needed?

The M621 is an urban motorway which runs from junction 27 of the M62 to junction 43 of the M1 and is a vital link between Leeds city centre and the surrounding road network. It's very congested, especially at peak times, which results in poor journey time reliability.

With congestion expected to get worse with the economic growth expected in the region, in 2014 the government announced proposals to provide more reliable and improved journey times for people using the M621 between junctions 1 and 7 as part of their Road Investment Strategy.

The scheme therefore aims to meet the following objectives:

- Increase capacity and improve journey time reliability
- Improve the safety on the route for road users
- Provide better and real time information to road users
- Avoid potential environmental impacts of the scheme and enhance, where possible, the natural environment
- Support Leeds City Council's development plans to improve the transport network in Leeds

Benefits

Improving the M621 between junctions 1 and 7 aims to:

- **Improve journey times:** Our improvements will increase how many vehicles can use the M621 and smooth the flow of traffic. This will reduce congestion, resulting in improved journey times and reliability
- **Improve safety and provide better information to drivers:** The introduction of technology on the M621 will enable drivers to be better informed and receive advance warning of incidents or congestion
- **Support economic growth:** Improvements to the M621 are vital to keep Leeds connected to the surrounding road network and support travel around the region as the city continues to grow



Selection of the preferred route

We selected a preferred route after carefully assessing how well each option meets the objectives for this scheme. We have taken into account feedback from members of the public and stakeholders including the important feedback received as part of our public consultation, which we held in the local area between 04 September and 15 October 2017.

Our assessment of the options has involved consideration of:

- Potential costs
- Supporting local transport proposals and economic growth
- Meeting the scheme objectives

The options taken to consultation

We have carefully considered various options for improving the M621 between junctions 1 and 7 and engaged with key stakeholders and the public while we were developing the options available to us, taking into account their views where appropriate.

Between September and October 2017 we presented our initial scheme proposals to the public to get more feedback. **Options presented at our public consultation are included below.**

Our improvements

Option A	Benefit to you
1 The introduction of free flowing connections between the M621 and the A643 at junction 2	These will improve the connection between the M621 and the A643 for eastbound traffic, so these vehicles won't need to stop at the junction
2 Adding an additional lane to the roundabout at junction 2	This will increase capacity, allowing more vehicles to use the junction
3 Providing two lanes through junction 3 westbound, instead of the one lane at present	This will increase the capacity of the junction and ease congestion
4 Changing junction 3 westbound to give priority to the main M621 traffic and reducing the on-slip to one lane. This creates a junction where traffic merges from the on-slip road on the right-hand side of the carriageway	Presently, the westbound on-slip road at junction 3 has priority over the main M621 traffic. We will change the priority to allow main M621 traffic to flow more freely
5 Adding a third lane between junction 2 and 3 westbound by converting the existing hard shoulder and auxiliary lanes	This will create more capacity and smooth the flow of traffic
6 Closure of junction 2a westbound to enable the improvements at junction 3	This closure reduces the risk of collisions resulting from the short distance between junction 3 and 2a.
7 Providing improved motorway technology between junctions 1 and 7	This helps safely manage traffic in the event of incidents and to keep drivers better informed

Option B

Included all the improvements of Option A plus adding a third lane in each direction between junctions 1 and 2 by converting the hard shoulder into a lane for traffic.

Option C

Included all the elements of Option A and Option B plus adding a third lane between junctions 2 and 4 eastbound by converting the existing hard shoulder into a lane for traffic. This included changing junction 2a on-slip and junction 3 off-slip to a standard junction, to enable the existing auxiliary lane to form part of the additional third lane.

Consultation feedback

From our public consultation we received 123 responses in the form of questionnaires or comments received by letter or email from members of the public.

The feedback we received showed there is strong acknowledgement that there are currently issues on the M621, with over 80% of people agreeing that something should be done to reduce congestion. Option C was the most popular option with 46% of people choosing Option C as their preferred option. 13% of people chose Option A as their preferred

option, and only 8% of people showed a preference for Option B. 33% of people who responded had no option preference or did not support any of the options presented to them.

All options included the proposal to close the junction 2a exit slip road in the westbound (anti-clockwise) direction. Of the responses received the majority of people either supported the closure of junction 2a westbound or had no preference if it was closed. However, 30% of people do not support the closure of junction 2a westbound.

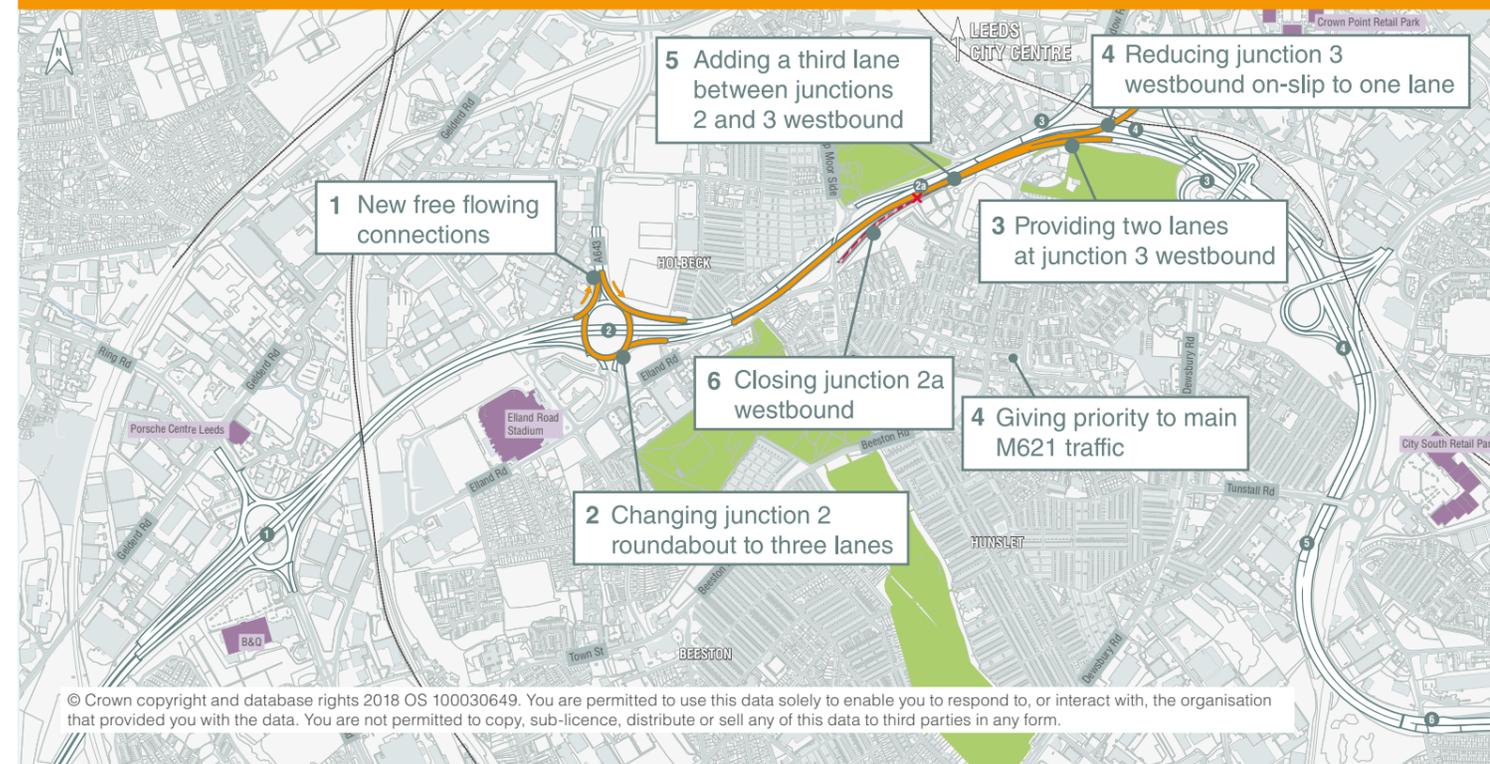
The preferred route

We carefully considered a number of factors when selecting our preferred route. Although Option C was identified as the most popular public option following analysis of our consultation feedback, our latest assessments show that Option A will provide the best value for money overall when considered with the planned improvements to the wider transport network across the city.

We have therefore chosen Option A as our preferred route as it:

- Meets all of the scheme objectives
- Delivers the required benefits by improving journey times, safety and provides better information to drivers
- Is likely to be delivered within the available funding, subject to approval, whilst Options B and C are likely to exceed the available funding
- Supports Leeds City Councils transport proposals and economic growth

Option A



Next steps

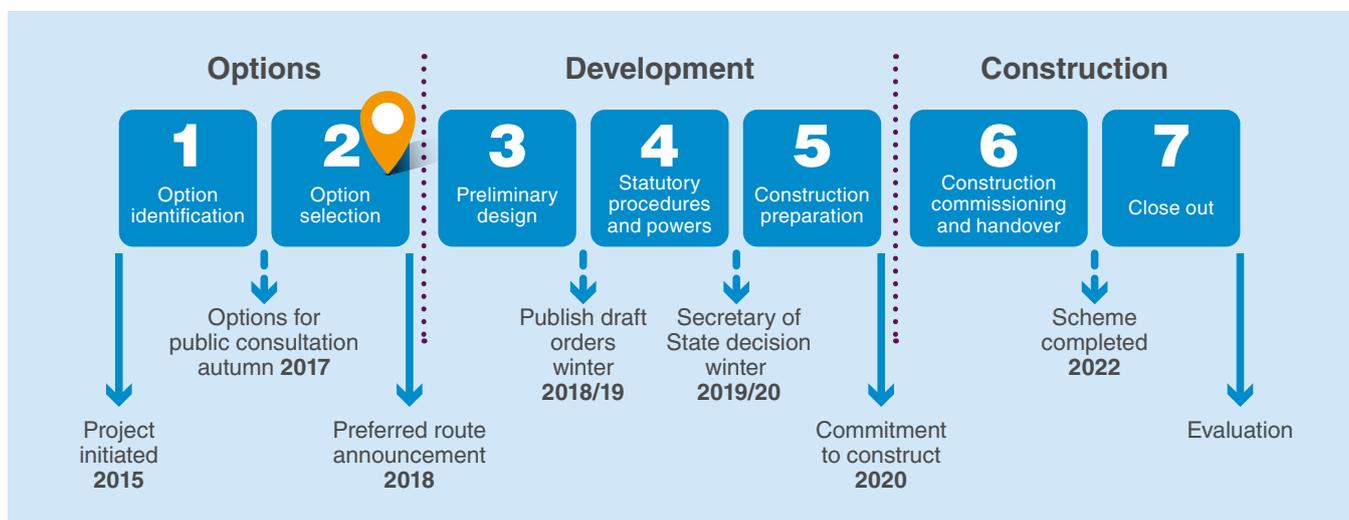
The timeline below shows what will happen at each stage of the scheme. We are currently at the end of option selection (as indicated by the arrow). Now we've announced our preferred route, we will carry out surveys and investigations to allow us to design the scheme in more detail.

We will then publish our proposals under the Highways Act 1980, this is known as publishing our draft orders. This is the start of the statutory planning process and another public consultation will be held after our draft orders are published.

Our proposals will be assessed by an independent inspector who will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport for a final decision to be made.

Subject to successfully completing all of the necessary statutory processes, the scheme remaining value for money and it having no detrimental effect on the proposed Leeds Clean Air Zone, we expect construction work to start in 2020. As we are in the very early stages of designing our proposals we are still developing our construction plan however we expect construction to be completed by 2022.

We recognise the importance of ensuring the scheme proposals are supported by local communities and will work with stakeholders to develop the design further and communicate any changes to the scheme proposals.



Further information

For more information or to subscribe to scheme update alerts please visit our website at www.highways.gov.uk/m621j1-7

If you have any queries about this scheme please contact us at:

 **In writing:** M621 Junction 1-7 Project Team, 3rd Floor South, Highways England, Lateral, 8 City Walk, Leeds, LS11 9AT

 **By email:** M621J1to7@highwaysengland.co.uk

 **By phone:** 0300 470 2476

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