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Subject

Network Rail Anglia Level Crossings – Census Data Collection

Introduction

Mott MacDonald is working on behalf of Network Rail to progress the Anglia Level Crossing Reduction Strategy. The initial phase of the Strategy has selected level crossings where new grade separation is not required and which are considered deliverable and affordable within Network Rail Control Period 5 (to April 2019). During late 2015 and early 2016 existing level crossing census information held by Network Rail was reviewed and this helped inform the initial (GRIP1 stage) review. However it was recommended that new census data be obtained at most of the level crossings as well as some locations in the vicinity of the level crossings to help provide a robust evidence base for the decision making.

The data collection exercise for level crossings within Cambridgeshire is currently programmed to occur in late June/early July 2016, with data capture being undertaken to the following specifications:

- Nine days data capture to include two weekends, and will include an initial 3 days data analysis;
- 24 hour video capture;
- Classification of pedestrians and vehicles;
- To be undertaken outside of school holiday periods.

In addition to surveys at level crossings, a number of Automatic Traffic Count (ATC) surveys are being commissioned at non-level crossing sites to record vehicle usage and associated speed data. These surveys will take place for a period of nine days (including two weekends) for full 24 hour periods.

Survey specifications have been defined in line with relevant guidance and best practice as follows: **Network Rail GRD007 – Appendix B Level Crossing Census Requirements.**

Survey duration has been defined using the Network Rail Guidance Reference Document, GRD007. Appendix B of this document outlines Network Rail's standard requirements for Level Crossing Census surveys and includes the following specifications which have been adopted for this data collection exercise:

- The census will record the period on each specified day from 06:00 hours continuously until 24:00 hours for non-speed related surveys
- The census is to be undertaken on consecutive days for example;
 - A nine-day census shall include two weekends.
 - A five-day census shall commence on a Thursday and conclude on Monday.
 - A three-day census shall commence on a Friday and conclude on Sunday.
- The census is to be undertaken during local school term periods, unless otherwise specified."

For the purposes of this data collection exercise and in order to better understand potential overnight usage, it has been specified that data should be collected for the full 24 hour periods for both footpath and highway level crossings. It is considered that a nine-day census will provide a sufficient amount of data, allowing a comparison of week day and weekend usage trends to be established.

Guidelines for Providing for Journeys on Foot, 2000 – The Institute of Highways and Transportation

Guidance provided by the Institute of Highway and Transportation as to when it is most appropriate to undertake pedestrian surveys states that “*the best time for monitoring walking activity is when flows are highest – in June*” (8.55). Reasons given for this include good weather and the longer hours of daylight.

It is noted within this guidance that school holidays will influence walking patterns; generally however, as most walking journeys are for utility reasons (such as walking to school and work) the number of walk journeys per month does not vary greatly. If we assume that in a particular area the predominant walking/ cycle/ equestrian use is by locals for everyday use, then it is expected that the highest use would be outside of the school holiday period as many local people would not be present in the locality during the school holidays. Therefore June/ July have been selected as being likely to reflect the highest usage. It is recognised that for a minority of level crossings the predominant use might not be local activity, for example long distance footpaths and that highest usage may occur during the school holidays. We would want to review with the local authority which crossings might fall into this category and consider supplementary census surveys at them during the school holidays.

Given that the majority of level crossings to be surveyed do involve pedestrian usage, the commissioning of surveys in June/early July will capture data from what is considered to be the month of highest walking related activity.

Summary

A summary of the key points is as follows:

- Nine days of data capture is being undertaken which will include two weekends.
- The identification of a standard data collection period and process provides a consistent approach and assists in the comparison of data between sites.
- Data is being captured for a full 24 hour period
- The decision to undertake surveys in June / early July has been taken due to:
 - Longer daylight hours;
 - Outside of school holiday period meaning any utility usage will be captured; and
 - Warmer weather leading to higher recreational use.

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