

News story: New government proposals to cut congestion on our busiest roads

Delays to motorists caused by utility companies digging up busy roads could be halved under new proposals announced by Transport Secretary Chris Grayling.

The proposals would allow local authorities to charge utility companies by the hour to carry out works on selected routes, encouraging them to avoid busy roads and peak times, and incentivising them to join together when they do need to dig up congested routes.

The 2.5 million roadworks currently carried out each year cost the economy £4 billion because people are unable to get to work on time or deliveries are delayed, resulting in higher costs for business. The proposals outlined today could improve journey-times for drivers at the same time as delivering a boost to the economy.

Successful trials in London and Kent have already seen severe congestion caused by utility works fall by more than half.

Firms could avoid the charges by carrying out works during evenings and weekends or coordinating their plans. In London, utility companies have worked together more than 600 times since the trials began, up from just 100 beforehand.

The schemes also act as an incentive for companies to avoid congested routes and peak times where possible.

Giving councils more options in how they can manage roadworks will help support the delivery of national infrastructure projects such as the rollout of broadband fibre.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Delays caused by roadworks can be the bane of drivers' lives – especially when they take place at rush hour on busy routes.

These proposals would give councils greater powers to ensure utility companies avoid carrying out works at the busiest times and on the most popular routes. This would not only improve journeys and cut congestion but also save businesses from the increased costs they incur as a result of traffic on our roads.

The Department for Transport are consulting on a series of options to minimise the disruption of works for road users and businesses, and to make schemes more efficient for utility companies carrying out necessary works.

Currently, most local authorities use permit schemes to monitor roadworks, but lane rental would give them additional powers to manage works on the busiest roads at the busiest times.

Leon Daniels, Managing Director of Surface Transport for Transport for London, said:

We're delighted about these plans to extend the lane rental scheme nationally. It has been a resounding success in the capital, with the amount of severe disruption caused by badly-managed or poorly-timed roadworks more than halved. This has helped improve journey times for bus passengers, drivers and cyclists, while also helping to tackle emissions.

We are [consulting on options for such schemes and this consultation closes in 8 weeks](#). We could introduce changes by 2019.