

Press release: Giant 40-metre-wide structure to help improve journeys on M6

The huge 20-tonne gantry will span the width of the motorway, hold 10 large electronic signs and is the biggest single structure being installed as part of a £274 million upgrade of a 20-mile stretch of the M6 to a smart motorway.

The Highways England scheme between junction 16 at Crewe and junction 19 at Knutsford involves converting the hard shoulder to a permanent extra lane and introducing new variable speed limits to help tackle congestion and keep traffic flowing.

A similar smart motorway scheme on a stretch of the M62 in West Yorkshire, which was completed in 2013, has resulted in commuters saving an average 30 minutes each week.

Arun Sahni, Project Manager at Highways England, said:

This is a major milestone for the project and a lot of planning and preparation work has been carried out to make sure the gantry can be lifted into place as quickly and safely as possible.

The superspan gantry is one of a series of structures we're installing along the smart motorway route to hold over 250 electronic signs that will provide drivers with live information about their journeys, and help to improve journey times by tackling stop-start conditions caused by sudden braking.

We'd like to thank drivers for their patience while this work takes place. We're on schedule to complete the smart motorway upgrade by spring next year and are doing everything we can to minimise disruption, including keeping all of the lanes open in both directions during the day.

Superspan gantries are constructed off-site using a series of symmetrical steel bars, and are becoming a familiar sight on motorways across England.

The gantry on the M6 between junctions 18 and 19 will be lifted into place overnight on Wednesday 27 June, with a crane lowering it onto two pillars which have already been installed on either side of the motorway. Electronic signs will then be fitted to the structure at a later date.

The southbound carriageway on the M6 will be closed between junctions 19 and 18 on Wednesday 27 June from 10pm to 6am to bring the crane onto the motorway for the gantry lift.

Police will hold traffic on the northbound carriageway for several minutes during the lift so that drivers can then continue their journeys once the gantry is in place without needing to come off the motorway to follow a diversion.

Stretches of the route will also be closed overnight, Monday to Saturday, later in the summer to install similar, smaller gantries on each carriageway. Drivers will be able to follow diversion routes when parts of the motorway are closed and details on closure dates will be publicised nearer the time once they have been finalised.

Around 500 people are currently working on the project to upgrade the M6 to a smart motorway through Cheshire. When the scheme is complete, 258 electronic signs will be used to alert drivers to changes in the speed limit, lane closures and incidents ahead.

A total of 70 CCTV cameras will also be installed to provide 100% coverage of the route and allow Highways England's traffic officers and the emergency services to respond quickly to incidents. And 18 emergency areas will be built to provide drivers with a safer place to stop if they break down.

More details are available on the [scheme website](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.