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Web site: www.dft.gov.uk

12 June 2012

Dear XXXXXXXX,

Request for Information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 – F0008906

Thank you for your information request of 14 May 2012. You requested the following information:

1. How many extra road traffic a) fatalities, b) serious injuries, c) minor injuries, and d) crashes does the Department for Transport anticipate occurring per year as a result of the proposed increase in the motorway speed limit to 80mph?
2. What financial value does the Department for Transport place on the 'cost' of a human life with regards to any analysis of the economic impact of the roads infrastructure?

Your request has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I am writing to confirm that the Department for Transport does hold the information you requested but has decided that some of this information cannot be disclosed for the reasons given below. The information that can be released is:

The Department has published the information about the value of preventing a fatality it uses in its appraisals of roads projects and policies. The latest material is available at: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/webtag/documents/expert/unit3.4.1d.php>

The information being withheld falls under the exemptions in sections 22(1) and 35(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

In applying these exemptions we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure.

There is a clear public interest in the proposals to raise the motorway speed limit from 70mph to 80mph in some areas under certain conditions. The Department should be open, honest and transparent about all the costs and benefits of any proposals, including the economic, safety and environmental impacts. Disclosure of this information will

ensure that the public better understand any decisions that are made and allow them to contribute to the decision making process.

However, the Department is currently preparing proposals for consultation and a supporting impact assessment, which will include all the analysis of the impacts that we have undertaken, including any implications for enforcement and potential implementation costs. We consider that publishing in this way, once we have fully considered all of the relevant information, is in the public interest as it will provide a balanced and fully considered analysis of the issues and impacts of proposals for increasing the motorway speed limit from 70mph to 80mph.

In addition good government depends on good decision-making and this needs to be based on the best advice available and a full consideration of all the options without fear of premature disclosure.

Therefore the Department considers that, on balance, the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information at this time.

The consultation paper and the impact assessment are due to be published on our website in the next few months and I would be happy to send you a link at that time if you would find it helpful.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. A copy of this response and the information provided may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

If you are unhappy with the way the Department has handled your request or with the decisions made in relation to your request you may complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter by writing to the Department's Information Rights Unit at:

Zone D/01
Ashdown House
Sedlescombe Road North
Hastings
East Sussex TN37 7GA
E-mail: FOI-Advice-Team-DFT@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Please see attached details of DfT's complaints procedure and your right to complain to the Information Commissioner.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

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Your right to complain to [DfT/Agency] and the Information Commissioner

You have the right to complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter about the way in which your request for information was handled and/or about the decision not to disclose all or part of the information requested. In addition a complaint can be made that DfT has not complied with its FOI publication scheme.

Your complaint will be acknowledged and you will be advised of a target date by which to expect a response. Initially your complaint will be re-considered by the official who dealt with your request for information. If, after careful consideration, that official decides that his/her decision was correct, your complaint will automatically be referred to a senior independent official who will conduct a further review. You will be advised of the outcome of your complaint and if a decision is taken to disclose information originally withheld this will be done as soon as possible.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF