



Environment and Transport Select Committee
19 April 2012

Surrey's Reported Road Casualties, and Pedal Cycling Safety

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of Services and Performance

The purpose of this report is to set out recent trends in reported road casualties on Surrey's roads. It shows some positive trends in terms of road casualties, but with specific challenges, notably in relation to cycling casualties.

The report sets out the current work underway and proposed future plans to address this issue.

Introduction

1. The statutory duty of local authorities with regard to road safety is described in Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. In Surrey, it is the duty of the County Council as the Local Highways Authority to prepare and carry out a programme of measures designed to promote road safety and to carry out studies into accidents arising out of the use of vehicles on roads. In light of those studies, the County Council will undertake such measures as appear to the authority to be appropriate to prevent such accidents. This could include the provision of information, advice and training as well as the construction, improvement, maintenance and repair of roads.
2. There are two main organisations responsible for road safety in Surrey: Surrey County Council (including Surrey Fire and Rescue) and Surrey Police. In addition the Highways Agency is responsible for trunk roads and motorways.
3. In order to ensure the effective delivery and coordination of road safety activities in the county, Surrey County Council and Surrey Police created the "Drive SMART" partnership. The partnership is governed by a Board chaired by the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and includes a senior police officer, a member of the Surrey Police Authority and a representative of the Local Committee Chairmen Group. The Drive SMART partnership also has a remit to tackle antisocial road user behaviours.

4. This report describes the trends in reported road casualties in Surrey, and more detailed analysis of the trends and causes of pedal cyclist casualties. The report also describes the work being undertaken by the county council and partners to improve cycling safety within Surrey.

Trends in Reported Road Casualties in Surrey

5. Recent years have seen a large drop in fatal casualties. There were 28 fatal casualties in 2011 whereas the annual total during the period from 1994 to 2007 was typically between 50 and 75. This general trend is mirrored across the southeast of England and the UK.
6. However, this pattern has not been repeated with serious injuries, where there has been no overall decrease in levels since 2003. Surrey County Council has recently commissioned TRL Ltd to undertake more detailed research into the possible reasons for this.
7. The report "Reported Road Casualties in Surrey 2011" provides further detail of the casualty figures including breakdown by age and road user type and is provided in Annexe A.
8. In comparing Surrey with other local authority areas, Surrey's performance is mixed:
 - Surrey's position on the percentage reduction in killed or seriously injured (KSI) casualties has been less favourable than most other local authorities; Surrey is in the bottom (worst performing) quartile of all local authorities for this indicator in 2009 and 2010.
 - However when taking into account the level of traffic flow (the number of KSIs per billion vehicle miles travelled), Surrey is in the top performing quartile of all local authorities. However recent performance in Surrey using this indicator is reduced compared to previous years despite still being in the top quartile – see Figure 3.2 within Annexe A for further details.
9. Increases in the number of casualties aged 40 or above appears to account for the biggest increases in KSI casualties overall when comparing 2011 with the average for 2005 to 2009.
10. In particular, Surrey has seen a large increase in pedal cyclist KSI casualties in recent years. (The total of 107 pedal cyclist KSIs in 2011 was an increase of 73 per cent compared to the average for 2005 to 2009).
11. There has also been disappointing performance in reducing KSI casualties for other vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and motorcyclists when comparing 2011 with the average for 2005 to 2009. There was an increase of 14 per cent for pedestrians and only a small reduction of 2 per cent for motorcyclists.

12. The Drive SMART partnership is in the process of setting its priorities for 2012/13, in light of the casualty analysis. In advance of this, however, an urgent need for action to address cycling casualty was identified and further work is set out below.

Cycling Casualty Analysis

13. In response to the observed significant increase in serious injuries amongst cyclists in Surrey, the Drive SMART board commissioned research into the causes of cycling casualties. The full report is attached in Annexe B to this report.
14. The period 2008 – 11 has seen a national increase in the level of cycling casualties. Cycling casualty figures showed a general downward trend from 1996 to 2003, but since then the trend has been upwards to casualty levels last seen in 1994/1995.
15. Department for Transport (DfT) figures suggest that cycling participation rates tend to increase during a recession. Both the DfT and Surrey County Council have a number of cycle counters around the county, but the quality of cycle participation data is not currently consistent or comprehensive. This is because, in order to be robust, the data needs to be collected from the counters on a regular basis to cover long enough periods and seasonal differences. This does not currently happen in a systematic way.
16. Further analysis of the Surrey cycling statistics demonstrates that, while the incidents of fatal casualties have remained low, the level of serious and slight casualties have increased since 2008.
17. However, it is important to note that in Woking, which has seen investment of over £4 million in cycling infrastructure and promotion as a Cycling Demonstration Town, an overall 27% increase in cycling participation rates has not translated into any increase in cycling casualties.
18. In Surrey there appear to be two main types of collision causing cycling KSI casualties. These two types also accounted for a significant proportion of the increase in cycling KSI casualties:
 - No other road user involved or collided with cycling companion (38 per cent of all cycling KSIs)
 - Vehicle emerges from 'give way' junction or private access into path of cyclist (19 per cent of all cycling KSIs).
19. Taking police force data for 2010, Surrey appears to have the largest proportion of crashes that were cycle only. Further analysis is required to understand the reasons behind this, which may be in part due to different reporting procedures in different police force areas. The Drive SMART board have asked that Surrey Police compare their procedures with neighbouring forces to investigate this.

20. It appears that the first category “no other road user involved or collided with cycling companion” is more associated with rural areas (43% of these crash types compared to 30% overall), and at weekends (50% of these crash types, compared with 27% overall), perhaps indicating a greater association with leisure cycling. The second category “vehicle emerges from ‘give way’ junction or private access into path of cyclist” appears to have a more urban bias.
21. Evidence suggests that, taking cycling casualties as a whole, there is no specific day of the week where casualties are more likely to occur. However, for the category ‘*no other road user involved or collided with a cycling companion*’, there is a marked increase in casualties on Saturdays and particularly Sundays as compared to weekdays. Furthermore, there appears to be a spike in casualties during the second quarter of each year reviewed, again in particular for the category ‘*no other road user involved or collided with a cycling companion*’.
22. In terms of age groups, the peak years for cyclist casualties appear to be 15 – 19 and 30 - 44 where rates have remained steady over the 4 years studied. The age group 45 – 49 has seen some increase whilst the age group 10-14 has fallen over the period studied.

Promoting Cycling in Surrey

23. As part of the development of Local Transport Plan 3, The County Council will be producing a Surrey Cycling Strategy in 2012. In developing the strategy, there will be a programme of consultation with stakeholders on the policies within the strategy. The principles underpinning the development of this strategy are:
 - Increased participation in cycling as a means of transport and leisure activity will deliver economic, health and environmental benefits to Surrey
 - Tackling the level of cycling casualties is a priority for the county council and will continue to be addressed through training and awareness, infrastructure improvement and enforcement
 - Cyclists, as with all users of the public highway, have a responsibility for their own safety and for behaving considerately towards other road users.

The Drive SMART Safe Cycling Action Plan

24. In light of the Olympic cycling events, and in advance of the Surrey Cycling Strategy, a Drive SMART cycling safety working group have developed and are implementing a set of early interventions to promote safe cycling.
25. This combines countywide actions to raise awareness and promote safety, and actions targeted specifically on the Olympic Route, and in particular the Box Hill loop working closely with the National Trust, local members, residents and cyclist groups. A media and publicity campaign

was launched in April 2012 with messages to both cyclists and motorists to share the road, to be visible and to look out for cyclists. The Action Plan is set out in Annexe C.

26. The activities within the action plan supplement the work already being undertaken by the County Council to improve cycling safety. This includes the provision of Bikeability cycling training in Surrey's schools. In the last full academic year 2010/11 a total of 874 courses were completed, resulting in 11,240 cyclists being trained. A small fee, combined with central government grant, ensures that the cost of providing this training is fully recovered at no cost to the County Council.
27. The Bikeability courses are currently being developed with the aim of encouraging more adults to take up cycle training, including through promoting courses for families and at point of purchase of a new bicycle.
28. Improvements to cycling infrastructure can also be considered following contributions to highway improvements from developers. This supplements the investment in cycling infrastructure from Local Committees and from the government's Local Sustainable Transport Fund.

Conclusions

29. Overall there are some positive trends in road casualty reduction within Surrey, but with specific areas of concern, notably cycling and other vulnerable road users including pedestrians and motorcyclists.
30. The Drive SMART board has a critical role to play in analysing the road safety data and ensuring that road safety activity is evidence led. The work on cycling casualties provides a strong basis for development of the Surrey Cycling Strategy.

Financial and value for money implications

31. An increase in cycling take up can have positive economic benefits. A recent report by the London School of Economics¹ calculated that the cycling economy makes a £2.9bn contribution to the UK economy through sales of cycles and accessories, cycle maintenance, wages and taxes of those employed in bicycle sales, distribution and maintenance of cycle infrastructure. The economy also benefits from reduced traffic congestion if cycling replaces motor vehicles.
32. Increased cycling participation can reduce costs of travel for the individual and provide health and productivity benefits.
33. The County Council carries out its road safety activities through two main teams:
 - The Road Safety Team (engineering and enforcement)

¹ Grous, Dr Alexander (2011) *The British cycling economy: 'gross cycling product' report*. Sky and British Cycling.

- The Sustainability Group (education)
34. The Road Safety PVR identified a cumulative saving of £3,692,700 over a four year financial plan period, of which a large proportion is dependent on cost recovery from speed awareness courses. Additional savings are derived through staff savings and through the introduction of charging for elements of road safety education, and full recovery of the cost of cycle training through grants and charges.

Equalities Implications

35. A full equalities impact assessment was completed on the County Council's road safety activities as part of the road safety public value review reported to cabinet on 1 March 2011. With regard to cycle training a number of main actions were identified:
- Ensure cycle training could accommodate trainee cyclists with disabilities upon request;
 - Ensure the provision of female cycling trainers if requested due to cultural reasons;
 - To avoid booking courses with schools at times that would prevent participation due to religious festivals especially where the school has a large faith group population that would be affected.

Risk Management Implications

36. This report covers road safety and cycling risks.

Implications for the Council's Priorities or Community Strategy

37. The County Council has a 2012/13 corporate priority to support a successful and safe 2012 Olympics, maximising the long-term benefits for the county and an ambition for the county to be low-carbon with a sustainable infrastructure that conserves our rich environment by 2017.
38. The Environment and Infrastructure Directorate has a priority to reduce the number of cyclist KSIs on Surrey roads.

Recommendations

39. That Members review and comment on the casualty data analysis.
40. That Members review and comment on the current and proposed measures to promote safe cycling.

Next steps

41. The activities described within the action plan in Annexe C will be completed and progress will be reported to the Drive SMART Board.

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Sources/background papers:

Annexe A: Surrey's Reported Road Casualties 2011

Annexe B: Pedal Cycling Casualties

Annexe C: Drive SMART Safer Cycling Action Plan