

The impact of the smart motorway strategy on roads policing and reducing road death and serious collisions

A critical analysis of the smart motorway strategy and how it impacts officers attending road traffic collisions (RTCs) and reducing road death and serious collisions, across Thames Valley Police and Hampshire Constabulary.

Key details

Lead institution	Staffordshire University
Principal researcher(s)	Jennifer Gale
Police region	West Midlands
Level of research	Masters
Project start date	June 2023
Date due for completion	September 2024

Research context

Current research on smart motorways focuses on road safety and their implementation across the United Kingdom rather than their impact on roads policing departments. Road death and serious collision data provided by police forces (a legal requirement for all death and injury-related collisions through the STATS19 form sent to the Department of Transport) is used to monitor safety and effectiveness. Thames Valley Police (TVP) and Hampshire Constabulary operate a Joint Operations Unit (JOU) whereby resources and finance are pooled, including a joint roads policing unit. This project examines how the national strategy on smart motorways impacts the JOU and its response to these incidents.

The research will draw upon surveys across the JOU and interviews with police officers of various ranks. Data from the JOU and government will be analysed to evaluate death and serious collisions, comparing smart motorways and conventional motorways.

Research objectives

This research will assess:

- the impact of the smart motorway strategy on officer attendance to smart motorway collisions
- the strategy's impact on police resources in attending road traffic collisions (RTCs)
- the impact of the smart motorway strategy on JOU's own strategy to reduce road death and serious collisions within the Hampshire Constabulary and TVP force areas.

Research methodology

This research will draw upon both qualitative and quantitative research data. The research will analyse reports, strategies, plans, statistics, government findings, officer surveys and interviews with police officers and individuals in leadership roles. The population of interest consists of police officers across the JOU at various levels of rank from police constable to superintendent.

During the scoping review, several online databases were reviewed, including the government library, Department for Transport recorded road traffic data, and road specialists such as the RAC. STATS19 data were also reviewed alongside stakeholder strategies, both current and those implemented during the time of smart motorway project expansion. These government-approved reports and data sources will be used during the research to ensure data accuracy.