EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

The Motorways Traffic (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025

S.R. 2025 No. 134

1. Introduction

1.1. This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department for Infrastructure to accompany the Statutory Rule (details above) which is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.

1.2. The Statutory Rule is made under Article 20(3) of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 and is subject to the negative resolution procedure.

2. Purpose

2.1. The rule amends The Motorways Traffic Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 ("the Motorway Regulations").

2.2. The purpose of the rule is to change the operational hours of bus lanes which use the hard shoulder on motorways so that the bus lanes may be used at any time as directed by signage. It will also amend the description of some of these bus lanes to better reflect the existing road markings.

2.3. The proposal aims to provide flexibility when managing the motorway asset and maintain bus progression times to Belfast at all times, including during special events.

3. Background

3.1. Bus lanes have been provided on the hard shoulder of motorways in the UK for a number of years. The first such bus lane in Northern Ireland was created in 1999 with further lengths of hard shoulder bus lanes added in 2004, 2006, 2007 and 2019. They are available for use by buses and coaches constructed or adapted to carry more than 28 seated passengers (exclusive of the driver).

4. Consultation

4.1. The Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 does not include any requirement to consult on Regulations of this kind, nevertheless the Department advised a number of key stakeholders on the proposed amendment. The PSNI was notified as it is responsible for the enforcement of the bus lanes and has approved the proposals. Belfast City Council, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council were notified as the relevant local authorities in those areas in which the bus lanes affected by the proposed changes are located. In addition, Translink and Bus and Coach NI were notified as representatives of the coach and bus operators expected to make most use of the lanes.

5. Equality Impact

5.1. Consideration has been given to compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. No equality issues have been identified by the Department.

6. Regulatory Impact

6.1. A Regulatory Impact Assessment was not considered necessary as the proposal does not result in any costs or savings to business, charities or the voluntary bodies.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. The costs relating to the provision of motorway regulations mainly relate to staff costs. There will also be a small amount of capital spend required for signage/lining which will be funded from the 2024-2025 LTSM funding allocations.

8. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

8.1. Consideration has been given to compliance with Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. No human rights issues have been identified by the Department.

9. EU Implications

9.1. Not applicable.

10. Parity or Replicatory Measure

10.1. Not applicable.

11. Additional Information

11.1. Not applicable.