GOVERNMENT REVIEW OF ROAD FINANCE & OWNERSHIP
MUST MAKE SAFETY ITS CENTREPIECE:
ROAD SAFETY FOUNDATION TRACKING DATA 2012

- Report measures safety levels across 27,000 miles of motorway and A road where majority of UK road deaths occur
- Findings of huge economic rewards from low-cost safety engineering
- UK’s busiest higher-risk roads are named, along with each region’s highest-risk road
- New average speed cameras and interactive speed signs feature strongly on most improved roads
- Single carriageways now six times more risky than motorways

Simple attention to safety engineering detail has resulted in extraordinary cuts in road deaths and serious injuries, according to the latest tracking survey* by the Road Safety Foundation. Fatal and serious injury crashes on just 10 stretches of treated road fell by nearly two thirds from 541 to 209 (2001-2005 and 2006-2010) – and a boost to the economy worth £35m every year.

The Prime Minister has set this autumn as the deadline for a radical review of the finance and ownership of the major road network. The Foundation has analysed the safety of Britain’s entire motorway and A road network and is calling on government to make safety central to any reform. It argues in the report that minimum safety levels should be set which make sense to the public, to investors and to new operators of Britain’s major road infrastructure.

For the first time, this year’s report has named Britain’s busy higher-risk roads, with the A21 (A229 to Hastings) topping the league, and two further roads in the south-east in the list. The combination of having risks well above average with many road users exposed to these risks makes them prime candidates for action both in potential to save life and economic cost.
Typically, the “highest risk” and “persistently high risk” roads (tables 3 & 2) – narrow, twisting, hilly - are in the rural areas of the north. Although apparently clear candidates for priority action, their lower traffic flows may not justify the spend on improvements.

The 10 busy higher-risk roads (table 4) have higher than average traffic flows, a high crash density and an above-average risk rating.

Commenting on this new listing, Dr Joanne Marden, director of the Road Safety Foundation says: “Even a modest ambition to improve these sections of road - so they simply get an ‘average’ risk rating and became six times more risky than motorways - would save many lives and cost savings to the economy of £20m annually.

“The planned reforms in road financing means a new focus on measuring safety performance and the high returns quickly available from safety engineering. Where there is clear evidence of higher risk and heavy traffic flows, the economic case for intervention is compelling. With 2% of GDP lost in road crashes as well as lives, we can get quick, guaranteed returns by raising safety levels.”

For the first time, the study is sponsored by Ageas UK, whose Chief Executive, Barry Smith says: “You cannot manage what you do not measure. As taxpayers, we spend around £10bn each year on roads. Insurers pay out £10bn more to meet the cost of crash claims. We support the Foundation’s annual publication as the key measure of the safety of Britain’s roads, demonstrating both the need for action on high risk roads and the positive results this can have.”

The UK’s most improved roads (table 1)
This year’s most improved road is a rural 20km (13 mile) single carriageway section of the A605 in Cambridgeshire, from just outside Peterborough, through Whittlesey and out to the busy junction of the A141. Speeds through villages are 30 or 40mph, with the rest of the route at 60mph.

Over the two survey periods, fatal and serious crashes fell by 74% from 34 to 9, and its risk rating improved from medium in 2001-2005 to low-medium in 2006-2010.

In the first survey period (2001-2005) crashes at junctions, involving vulnerable road users and vehicles running off the road were prominent, each accounting for 30% of the total. Between 2006-2010 these proportions fell to 11% for each category.

Collisions were concentrated near the lower-speed limit areas, so visual clues of built up areas – such as village gateways and “dragon’s teeth” road markings – now warn drivers of hazards ahead, and speed cameras, combined with this traffic calming, contributed to the improvements.
The most significant improvement along the whole route is a 9km section between Whittlesey and Coates, with a 74% drop in the number of fatal and serious crashes over time, from 23 to 6, represents a saving of £1.4m per year.

The overall two-thirds drop in fatal and serious crashes on the top ten most improved roads from 541 to 209 represents a saving of £35million a year – or £120,000 per kilometre.

The use of speed enforcement with fixed and mobile cameras is on all but two of the most improved roads. Changes to the layout and traffic management at junctions are common features, and other measures include new traffic signals to control traffic flow; restricting turning movements onto roads with high traffic levels or poor visibility; widening entry and exit lanes with changes to the lining and signing; advanced warning signs; and installing high friction and coloured surfacing.

“These are practical, relatively inexpensive solutions which will pay back the costs of investment in a matter of weeks – with high rates of return in the first year alone – and go on saving lives and saving money for the nation for many years to come. Much of this remedial work can be done as part of routine maintenance,” says Dr Marden.

“Other leading countries are investing to upgrade safety on major roads. Dutch Ministers have announced a minimum 3-star safety rating for their national network by 2020 following an assessment of costs, benefits and practicality. The British public should not be driving 5-star cars on 1- and 2-star roads. The government must make minimum safety levels the centrepiece of any reform.”

AROUND THE UK**
The average risk rating has fallen in all regions, at 31 fatal and serious crashes per billion vehicle kilometres travelled. Higher than average risk was seen in Scotland, Yorkshire & the Humber, East Midlands, Wales and East of England; while lower than average risk was evident in the South-East, North-West, South-West, North-East and the West Midlands.

South East
- Despite accounting for just 13% of the total road network by length, 1 in 5 fatal and serious crashes on motorways and A roads occurred in the South-East
- The South-East carried over one-fifth of traffic using the British motorway and A road network, significantly more than the remaining regions
- The region’s highest-risk road is the A269 between the A271 and Bexhill, and it has three of the 10 busiest high-risk roads: A21; A271 and A264
South West
- The highest-risk road here is the A371 between Wincanton and Shepton Mallet
- Most improved road in the region is the A435, Cheltenham to the A46, where measures include widening, signing and lining at junctions, interactive signs, resurfacing, traffic calming, speed limit changes, and toucan crossing

East of England
- While average risk rating has fallen across the UK, this is most pronounced in the East of England, which has seen a 30% drop in the five years 2006-2010 compared to 2001-2005. In this region the number of fatal and serious crashes has fallen by 28%. The greatest improvement in this region has come from single carriageways
- Highest-risk: A4012 near Leighton Buzzard
- The region has the UK’s most improved road – the A605, as well as further roads in the top ten “most improved”: the A120 Puckeridge to Braintree; and A1066 Thetford to Diss
- The A113 Chigwell to Chipping Ongar is the region’s busiest higher-risk road

Yorkshire and the Humber
- The region’s highest-risk road is the A1077 Immingham/Barton-on-Humber
- Another section of the A1077 between M181 and Barton-upon-Humber features as one of the busiest high-risk roads
- A further three busy high-risk roads are highlighted: the A642 Wakefield to Huddersfield, the A646 Burnley to Halifax and the A65 Long Preston to M6 J36
- It has higher than average risk roads, including the A169 Pickering to Whitby, which is one of the top 10 high risk roads where motorcycle crashes are included

North East
- Just 3% of crashes occurred in the North-East, the region with the shortest network length overall. Traffic flow is lowest in the North-East carrying 3%.
- The region’s highest-risk road is the A1086 between Hartlepool and Easlington

North West
- This region has the UK’s most-persistent, highest-risk road section – nearly 12km of the A537 Macclesfield to Buxton, scene of 53 fatal and serious crashes between 2006-2010
- On this section motorcyclists make up just 1% of traffic, but 70% of all crashes resulting in death or serious injury
- Two busy high-risk roads are highlighted: the A65 Long Preston to the M6; and the A646 Burnley to Halifax

East Midlands
- Three of the 10 most improved roads are in the East Midlands: A52 Nottingham ring road to Bingham; A612 Nottingham to Newark; A52 Boston to Skegness
- The highest-risk road in the region is the A5012 Pikehall to Matlock

West Midlands
- Motorways and A roads in the West Midlands have traditionally been some of the lowest risk in the country. More than half of all travel is on lower-risk motorways or dual carriageways; the safety of single-carriageway roads is well above average.
- The highest risk road in the region is the A451 Kidderminster to Stourbridge

Wales
- The UK’s second-lowest traffic flow is in Wales, carrying just 6%
- Wales’ highest-risk road is the A4076 from Havertonwest to Milford Haven
Scotland
- Scotland accounted for the greatest proportion of the motorway and A road network surveyed
- Covering one-quarter of the total length (9,929km), this is equivalent to the South-East and South-West combined
- Despite the overall size of the network, just 12% of all fatal and serious crashes occurred in Scotland
- The vast majority of this network (87%) is single carriageway.
- Highest-risk road in Scotland is the A809 between Milngavie and Croftamie

Some key facts:
- 70 people are killed or seriously injured on Britain’s roads every day
- Fatal and serious crashes on Britain’s roads have reduced by 36% over the last decade
- 4 in 10 fatal and serious crashes occur on rural roads
- The risk of death and serious injury on Britain’s motorways and A roads is highest in Scotland and lowest in West Midlands
- 1% of the network surveyed rated as high risk; 5% medium-high; 21% medium; 56% low-medium; 16% low
- One in five km travelled on Britain’s motorways and A roads is in the South-East
- Average risk on Britain’s motorways and A roads has fallen by 25% in the last five years
- Motorcyclists account for just 1% of traffic but 18% of all fatal crashes
- £15.6bn is lost annually in crashes on Britain’s roads

Notes to editors
**“Engineering a Safer Future: Performance managing busy high risk routes to minimum safety levels”**.


Regional summaries are also available on this link, along with a breakdown of road risk nationally and by parliamentary constituency. The Foundation is unable to provide more detailed regional breakdowns than in the report.

Dr Joanne Marden will be available for embargoed interviews Friday 12 to Monday 15 October – please contact the numbers below.

About Risk Mapping:
In countries where detailed crash and traffic data are available, EuroRAP risk maps give an objective view of where people are being killed or seriously injured on a road network and where their crash risk is greatest. By showing the number of fatal and serious crashes per kilometre travelled the results demonstrate the risk arising from the interaction of road users, vehicles and the road environment.

The emphasis of Risk Mapping is on identifying high risk routes rather than ‘blackspots’ or ‘cluster sites’. The costs of proactively treating known areas of high risks by upgrading the safety detailing along a length of road are often far lower than piecemeal change once a crash has occurred. Risk maps help to create awareness and understanding of road safety risk as users move around a network. They are being increasingly adopted by road authorities and Governments across Europe as a way of prioritising network improvements and leveraging the funds required to take action.

The Risk Mapping shown in this year’s report uses the most up-to-date crash and traffic data available. Crash data are from the national road injury and accidents (STATS19) database provided by the Department for Transport (DTF), and include all crashes resulting in fatal or serious injuries during the data periods 2001-2005 and 2006-2010 inclusive. Traffic flows are from the DTF database based on automatic and manual vehicle counts, the latter carried out at three-yearly intervals. Values used for individual road sections are the
average for the data periods 2001-2005 and 2006-2010 (inclusive) weighted by section length.

**About the Road Safety Foundation**
The Road Safety Foundation is a UK charity advocating road casualty reduction through simultaneous action on all three components of the safe road system: roads, vehicles and behaviour. Several of its published reports have provided the basis of new legislation or government policy. For more information visit www.roadsafetyfoundation.org.

**About Ageas UK**
Ageas UK is a leading provider of award-winning Personal, Commercial and Protection insurance solutions in the UK. Ageas UK distributes both its Non-Life and Life products through a range of channels including brokers, IFAs, intermediaries, affinity partners and the Internet, as well as through its retail strategy via its wholly or partially-owned companies (Ageas Insurance Solutions, Castle Cover, Kwik Fit Financial Services, RIAS and Tesco Underwriting).

Insuring around eight million customers and working with a range of partners, Ageas is recognised for delivering consistent and high-quality customer experiences. It employs over 5,400 people with a head office based in Eastleigh and others based in Belfast, Bournemouth, Glasgow, Gloucester, London, Reigate and Stoke-on-Trent.

www.ageas.co.uk

**Media contacts**

**Road Safety Foundation**
To arrange interviews, for regional data and other detailed media enquiry, please contact:
Caroline Moore, 07787 228166
Dr Joanne Marden, 07776 147262

**Ageas UK**
Paul Lynes, 023 8031 3152/paul.lynes@ageas.co.uk
Natalie Shale, 023 8035 2754/natalie.shale@ageas.co.uk
Louisa Barnard, 023 8031 3147/louisa.barnard@ageas.co.uk

**Hadstrong**
David Armstrong/Becky Hadley 020 7808 7997