

## **COMPLETION OF THE CORE INDICATOR PRO-FORMA FOR BEST VALUE ROAD CONDITION INDICATORS**

Road condition indicators have undergone considerable change in the past few years as better measurement and analysis techniques have been introduced. These, and forthcoming changes, have made projections of future condition difficult. But the changes were necessary to ensure that surveys were more accurate, repeatable, and comparable.

Authorities are required to complete the Core Indicator pro-forma as part of their LTP return. They are required to enter actual, trajectory and target data for their Best Value road condition indicators, BV96, BV97a and BV97b.

These requirements have caused authorities some concern because survey requirements for Best Value road condition indicators are currently being revised.

The changes for BV96 (condition of principal roads) have already taken place. For this indicator, TTS surveys were introduced as an option in 2003/04 but are the only permitted survey method for 2004/05.

On the pro-forma, authorities are required to enter actual BV96 results for years 2000/01 to 2003/04, and (using actual results from a baseline year agreed with the Government Office) to enter a trajectory of figures for each year until an agreed target year.

We are aware of authorities' concerns about the following issues:

### **BV96**

1. Introduction of TTS - the figure for the baseline year will be based on an actual deflectograph or visual result. Trajectory figures for years after 2003/04, based on a projection of an actual deflectograph or visual survey

result from the baseline year, will probably not correspond with actual data for those years, which will be derived from TTS surveys.

2. Changes in visual survey methodology between 2002/03 and 2003/04

- this may mean that the actual result for 2003/04 (calculated under the new methodology) may not be consistent with the trajectory figure for that year.

3. A future need to base trajectory data on a TTS-derived baseline -

concerns have been expressed that future TTS survey specifications may change frequently, with the result that projected TTS data will not correspond with actual TTS results.

Our advice on these concerns is as follows:

**Point 1** - We agree that it is desirable for authorities to establish a link between TTS and earlier surveys, so that trajectories can be compared with actual results. At present, no methodology exists to link TTS to earlier deflectograph or CVI/DVI surveys.

However, as TTS measures surface condition, its closest relative is the CVI survey. If authorities have carried out CVI surveys, they are advised to enter these values in the actual boxes up to 2003/04.

Trajectory data should be based on a CVI baseline if the authority has a CVI result for the baseline year. This will not produce figures which are directly comparable to actual TTS results, but they are the closest comparison available at present. Authorities who have used deflectograph surveys for BV96 will not be able to establish a link between deflectograph and TTS.

Authorities who have used only TTS surveys for BV96 in 2003/04 should enter the TTS actual result on their pro-forma for that year. Authorities who

have used TTS in addition to visual surveys in 2003/04 should enter the TTS actual result for that year.

**Point 2** - For BV96, the differences between "actual" and "trajectory" visual survey results (due to methodology changes) will apply only in 2003/04. Authorities will be permitted to submit an adjusted trajectory figure for that year and subsequent years - although subsequent years' figures will be compared with TTS results.

**Point 3** - TTS requirements for BV96 may change in future years, but by the time most authorities need to base their trajectory on a TTS baseline (i.e. when they need to set a new baseline after the currently agreed target year), most issues requiring changes to the TTS specification should have been resolved. We will endeavour to keep subsequent changes to a minimum.

### **BV97a**

In 2004/05 this indicator is continuing to be based on visual surveys (CVI, or DVI converted to CVI equivalent). The Best Value consultation paper for the 2005/06 indicators contains the proposal that the existing survey methods for BV97a should be replaced with a TTS survey.

The same issues relating to BV96 will apply. All authorities should have actual results derived from CVI (or DVI converted to CVI equivalent) for the years up to and including 2004/05. A visual survey result will therefore also be used as the baseline from which the trajectory figures are produced. As with BV96, the similarity between TTS and CVI will allow some measure of comparison between the trajectory figures and TTS results produced from 2005/06 onwards.

For 2003/04 onwards authorities will be permitted to submit adjusted trajectory figures to take into account the changes in visual survey

methodology outlined above - although figures from 2005/06 will be compared with TTS results.

### **BV97b**

This indicator is currently based on visual surveys (CVI, or DVI converted to CVI equivalent). Our intention is that the indicator should continue in this form until at least 2005/06 (possibly 2007/08) before visual surveys are replaced by TTS surveys.

Authorities are currently required to survey a minimum of 25% of the unclassified network by visual survey each year (the intention is to cover the whole network every four years). This annual survey coverage is intended as a sample of the entire unclassified network. Authorities are advised to ensure that their annual sample is as representative as possible (this should minimise fluctuations in the actual results).

After TTS is introduced, comparisons will be able to be made between TTS and previous visual survey results - with the same caveats as for BV96 and BV97a. The proposed survey coverage for TTS on BV97b has not yet been decided but, as with the present BV97b, the annual coverage is intended to be representative of the whole network.

For 2003/04 onwards authorities will be permitted to submit adjusted trajectory figures to take into account the changes in visual survey methodology outlined above.

### **BV187**

No changes in footway condition indicators are planned at present.

### **Audit Commission requirements**

Authorities should note that the Audit Commission does not require authorities to set targets for BV96 in their 2004 Best Value Performance Plan. This is because of the changes in BV96 survey requirements outlined above. (See Audit Commission Newsletter 24 (England), February 2004.

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