80mph on Motorways - Time for Change?

Over the last decade or so, many arguments - for and against - have been put forward in relation to increasing the speed limit from 70mph to 80mph on Britain’s motorways. Motorways have the lowest crash rates per mile travelled than other road types and even though motorways are regarded to be the safest roads worldwide, when a crash occurs it can be catastrophic with multiple vehicles involved. There are specific rules for motorway driving including: You must not stop except in an emergency, if your vehicle breaks down, if signalled to do so by the police or by an emergency traffic sign or by flashing red light signals. Many drivers exceed the national speed limit on a daily basis because they feel they won’t be caught and prosecuted. The 70mph was brought in in 1967 and has remained so for the past 51 years. However, it is argued that with improved technology and improved vehicle design, cars are quite capable of higher speeds. But is the average driver capable of handling his potentially ‘lethal projectile’ on fast heavily trafficked motorways and at higher speeds? Even though travel times may be shorter, the proposed increase to 80mph on motorways is criticised by environmental groups who say that higher speeds mean higher greenhouse gas emissions. Also, inappropriate speed contributes to around 11% of all injury collisions reported to UK police. Also legalising the motorway limit to 80mph could become tomorrow’s unofficial 90mph speed limit.
80mph on Motorways – Time for Change?

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Introduction

United Kingdom speed limits are a bone of contention with many drivers, but they are a vital part of the road network. They are the front line of road safety, as they dictate the speed of all traffic, and by setting maximum speeds for different types of roads, it means consistent regulation across the country. It also means it’s easier to prosecute those who exceed the speed limit, whether it’s by police enforcement, or via the use of technology. In Great Britain, the 70mph speed limit was introduced as a temporary measure in December 1965. It was often attributed to Barbara Castle, but at the time the Minister of Transport was Tom Fraser. The reason given for the 70mph speed limit was a spate of serious accidents in foggy conditions and it was also claimed the Ministry of Transport had been alarmed by A/C Cars testing their latest Cobra Coupe on the M1 motorway at speeds of up to 185mph. ¹ It was confirmed as a permanent limit in 1967, by which time Barbara Castle (a non-driver) had become Minister of Transport. Perhaps, the fact the average family car at the time could only just exceed 70mph had something to do with this. It should be noted that this limit applied to all previously “derestricted” roads, not only motorways.² Motorways are basically dual-carriageway roads which must not be used by certain groups’ of road user and it’s an offence to pick up or set down a passenger or hitch-hiker on any part of a motorway including a slip road. Traffic travels faster on motorways than on ordinary roads and you need to look well ahead and sum up developing traffic situations more quickly and have time to react correctly to hazards. It’s also important that your vehicle is fit to cruise at speed, have sufficient fuel and coolant to take you at least to the next service area. There are those who claim that increasing the speed limit to 80mph would bring economic benefits and GB was some way behind other European countries. On the other hand, environmental groups claim that the 90mph limit uses more fuel with a resultant effect on carbon emissions. However, one other issue that needs to be considered is: is the average driver equipped to deal safely with the increased speed when his vehicle is travelling at approximately 120 feet per second? In Ireland and the UK you must not drive faster than the posted speed limit for the type of road and your type of vehicle. The speed limit is the absolute maximum (not a target to be reached) and doesn’t mean it’s safe to drive at this speed in all conditions.

¹ A/C Motor Holdings, Thames Ditton, Surrey. In the early hours of 11 June 1964, A/C took a 4.8 litre car on to the M1 motorway to do a high-speed test run before the 24 hour Le Mans. https://autocar.co.uk
² www.speedlimit.org.uk
Vehicle technology is changing rapidly, as crash avoidance systems and autonomous technology are developed. Modern cars provide a smooth quiet drive, even at very high speeds, and therefore drivers are often insulated from any real sensation of the speed of which they are travelling. The vehicle power means that it is very easy to creep above the speed limit. Indeed, drivers often cite this as a reason for speeding. In 2013, 3,064 people were killed or seriously injured in the UK in crashes where speed was a contributing factor. 3 While more and more cars are incorporating automatic braking technology and most have anti-lock brakes, we can’t avoid 100pc human error and in the event of a collision, humans are the squishy filling in a steel sandwich.

**First Motorways – No Speed Limit**

The first motorway constructed was the Preston Bypass, opened by Harold McMillan in 1958. It provided tourists with a faster road route to the Lake District and Blackpool. The Bypass is now part of the M6. The first full-length motorway in the UK was the M1. The initial stretch of road opened in December 1959. It gave motorists the chance to drive 50 miles from St. Alban’s to Rugby as fast as they could manage – there was no speed limit for motorways at the time. The M1 had three lanes each way. The design team anticipated that it would cope with about 14,000 vehicles each day. More than 50 years later, the motorway carries around 140,000 vehicles daily. 4 In 2016, the total road length in GB was estimated to be 245,500 miles, an increase of 600 miles (0.3%) compared to 2015. Of this, there were 2,300 miles of motorway.

Almost 6,000 British drivers are caught speeding every day – up 30pc on five years ago, therefore, is it time for a higher 80mph motorway speed limit? Road safety experts have admitted that upping the national speed limit on motorways could actually help reduce these numbers – without risking safety. Holland has already increased the limit and previous studies have found the majority of British drivers would back a UK trial. That’s mainly because the majority of British drivers already drive at 80mph because they believe they won’t be prosecuted. Department for Transport (DfT) figures show that as many as 49pc of drivers currently flout the current 70mph limit. With increased speeding fines, breaking the speed limit is no trifling matter. But is the current speed set at the right limit in the first instance?

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4 Grace’s Guide to British Industrial History https://www.gracesguide.co.uk
But over 50 years on, is the 70mph speed limit still the right speed for motorways. Some parties argue that safety features and modern technology has made driving easier and safer so is it now time to raise the speed limit. Equally, there is talk of reducing speed limits on certain sections of motorway to deal with air pollution.  

**Unrestricted**

Some countries around the world have adopted different speed restrictions – and some none at all. The 70mph wasn’t Britain’s first speed limit. But in 1930, the Road Traffic Act abolished speed limits for cars altogether. The decision was made because the current limits were flouted so openly that it brought the law into contempt. The Act also introduced the driving offences of dangerous, reckless driving and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. An increase in road deaths forced the Government to think again. In 1935, a 30mph limit was introduced for cars in built-up areas, a limit that mainly remains to this day. But away from these areas, drivers were still free to go at whatever speed they choose. When the first motorways were built in December 1958, they were unrestricted. But today they are still governed by the 70mph speed limit. *(Motorways in Ireland are 120 km/h-75mph) and even though less trafficked than UK motorways, there is no appreciable increase in RTAs)*. Some countries world-wide have adopted different speed restrictions – or some none at all. The speed limit on the AutoRoute in France, akin to a large part of Europe is 130kmh (80mph). For a faster ride, head to Poland where the limit is 140kmh (85 mph). But true speedsters should try driving on German Autobahns, where large sections have no speed limit at all. Just over half of German Autobahns have only an advisory speed limit. *(German Richtgeschwindigkeit)*.  

Measurements from the German state of Brandenburg in 2006 showed average speeds of 142kmh (88mph) on a six-lane section of Autobahn in free flowing conditions. Also, the Indian states of Andhra, Prachand, Maharashtra and Telangana also lack speed limits.

**Horse Power to Horsepower**

Probably the first act in the motorway story in the UK came in 1896, with Locomotives and Highways Act, was the need for a person to walk in front of any car in order to warn horse drawn traffic (and horse riders) of the approaching danger was repealed.

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5 Talking Point: Should UK speed limit be changed from 70 to mph? 22 Feb.2017 https://uknews.yahoo.com
6 Even if you can go faster, you are recommended not to drive faster than 130km/h
7 https://ipfs.10
8 “The table of maximum speed limits at a glance”.
9 https://www.mahatranscom.in/faq.aspx
10 https://www.transport.telengana.gov.in
In addition to that, it also changed the national speed limit from 4mph to a whopping 12 mph, with the ability of local authorities to vary the limit up to a maximum of 16mph at their discretion. Thus legislation shifted the balance away from horse power to horsepower. The law does not relieve the driver of an authorised emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all other road users, nor shall it protect the driver of any emergency vehicle from the consequences of a reckless disregard for others. While emergency service drivers are not exempt from the offences of dangerous or careless driving, the current legislation allows drivers in some circumstances to break speed limits legally as well as exempting them from certain traffic regulations. S87 of the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 (RTRA) provides that vehicles used for emergency service purposes (i.e. police, fire, ambulance and Serious Organised Crime Agency) are exempt from speed limits, if staying within these limits will compromise emergency response times.

**10mph Increase?**

In October 2011, the British Government announced that it would consider a 10mph increase in motorways. Former Transport Secretary Philip Hammond suggested an increase in the speed limit to 80mph on motorways. Reported in the Times he said:

“I take the view that we live in a democracy of policing by consent. If 50pc of the population are routinely breaking the law, it’s actually the law that needs looking at. Britain’s roads should be arteries of a healthy economy and cars are a vital lifeline for many”.

He blamed Labours short-sightedness and misguided war on the motorist for penalising drivers and added:

“Now is the time to put Britain back in the fast lane of global economics and look again at the motorway speed limit which is nearly 50 years old and out of date, thanks to the advances in safety and motoring technology”.

Hammond deemed the change would bring economic benefits through faster journey times and that safety worries were mostly alleviated by improvements in vehicle technology since 1965 when the 70mph speed limit was set.  

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11 [https://www.heritagecarinsurance.co.uk](https://www.heritagecarinsurance.co.uk)
Mr Hammond wanted to put Britain into the fast lane of global economies and taking a look at European motorway limits, it seemed that we were some way behind. The highest speed limits are in France, Italy and Germany’s speed limit is recommended at 130kmh. Even Ireland at 120kmh equates to 75mph. As anyone who’s ever driven on a motorway will know, many drivers are happy to exceed the UK national speed limit on these expressways (and also dual-carriageways). But doing so could be costing you thousands in fuel – and pumping harmful gases into the environment. That’s according to researchers at Click Mechanic, who have done the sums and worked out the average motorist travelling at 80mph, will spend an extra £3,066 in fuel over a lifetime compared to those travelling at a modest 60mph. However, the increase to 80mph on the motorway was criticised by environmental groups who said that higher speeds mean higher greenhouse gas emissions. Motoring organisations in Germany question the value of speed limits on improving safety standards and point to the fact that Germanys road casualty figures are on a par with neighbouring France. In the Isle of Man, in the Irish Sea between England and Ireland, 30pc of the national roads are unrestricted making it a big draw for thrill seekers. Meanwhile in Australia’s Northern Territory, several sections of the epic Stuart Highway, which runs through the Red Centre of the country has no speed limits. In certain circumstances, roads that aren’t congested and having a higher speed limit results in drivers getting to their destination faster and this can improve productivity. In fact, an Otago University study estimated that if speed limits were increased to 110kp/h on motorways (not the whole road network), there would be a net gain to the New Zealand economy of $22 million per annum. However, would the reduction in journey times be worth the increase in costs? In the wider world, the increased speed will be linked to greater environmental damage from emissions and noise, and potentially higher accident and casualty rates. The Transport Research Laboratory (GB) warns that the rise could cause 18 lost lives, 64 serious injuries and 363 slight injuries a year.

Reduced Travelling Time
When fleet managers were surveyed by pollsters a few years ago, they said a rise in the speed limit to 80mph would be beneficial for the business. But is that still correct? The obvious advantage for professional drivers is the ability to reduce journey times by travelling faster. For example – a 200 mile journey takes two hours and fifty one minutes at 70mph, at 80mph it would take two hours and thirty minutes – a saving of 21 minutes.

12 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news.uk-politics-15116064
13 “No all-island speed limit”. Isle of Man Guide 6 November 2004. Retrieved 2009-09-17
14 Should the new Zealand speed limit be raised? https://www.drivingtests.co.nz
15 All Star: Raising the Limit. https://www.allstarcard.co.uk
Over 20,000 motorway miles, a possible annual motorway total for a busy working driver that means saving around 35 hours or almost a week’s work. However, that saving has to be balanced against increased fuel costs. These are different across vehicles but all demonstrated a marked jump from 70 to 80mph. It’s not a simple proportional rise; your engine is normally most fuel efficient at 56mph. And above that, consumption rises sharply. If you drive the 400 mile distance from London to Edinburgh, you would save three quarters of an hour, and that assumes you maintain a constant speed of 80mph the entire time, neither accelerating nor decelerating.

Are Motorways Safe?
Motorways lack many of the features that keep your mind alert. The view is monotonous, the roads tend to be straight, and the scenery is often shut out by embankments or fences. You also have less work to do controlling your car – steering, gear changing, accelerating and braking – on a motorway. It is all too easy for the mind to wander, especially when traffic is light and you’re travelling at speeds of 70mph or more. There is some evidence to suggest many drivers are more alert and more prepared to cope with situations if they drive faster. However, this is not conclusive and by no means sufficient to compensate for the effect of the speed. Rune Elvik, Chief Research Officer and Norwegian Centre for Transport Research 16 said: “They are not able to override or repeal the laws of physics”. His model which estimates the effects of the increase from 70mph to 80mph is likely to be a conservative estimate which poses the question: is increasing the speed limit, increasing the death rate by at least 20pc? Even this is likely to be a conservative estimate. However, motorways have the lowest crash rates per mile travelled than other road types according to the Department for Transport (DfT), 2014. This is due to fewer unexpected hazards and the way motorways are designed. However, crashes on 70mph roads are more than twice as likely to result in death as crashes on roads with lower speed limits. 17

Increased Stopping Distances
At 80mph, stopping distances rise to 122 metres compared to 96 metres at 70mph – this is an increase of 27pc. From a survey taken by Direct Line and Brake on Safe Driving 18 it showed that 60pc of UK drivers break the speed limit by 10 miles or more. The survey also revealed that 57pc of drivers admitted leaving less than the recommended two second gap between themselves and the vehicle in front when driving on motorways.

16 https://toi.no/staff/elvik-rune-article17618-27.html
18 http://www.brake.org.uk
According to IAM RoadSmart,\(^{19}\) speed surveys showed that on uncongested motorways, 57pc of car drivers exceed the 70mph and 20pc exceed the 80mph limit. The concern is that increasing the speed limit to 80mph could create tomorrow’s unofficial 90mph. If you need to stop quickly while driving at 70mph, you will travel 21 metres thinking distance before you hit the brake. The braking distance is 75 metres. The distance travelled is less than one second, resulting in a total stopping distance of 96 metres – this equates to 21 car lengths.

**Adding ‘Fuel to Fire’**
Looking at the increased fuel consumption and carbon emissions resulting from 70mph to 80mph to the driver the saved time versus the cost could be a big question. Vehicles travelling at 80mph uses 10-20pc more than those travelling at 70mph. Adding fuel to fire here, and the 20pc increase in emissions is worth pointing out as the UK (and Ireland) continually works to meet global objectives. Taking into account the braking distance from 70mph to 80mph, which increases by 27pc, the risks could be considered too high. Research conducted by the Department for Transport (DfT)\(^{20}\) predicted that increasing the limit would cause at least 20pc more deaths and more serious injuries annually.

**Opposing Views**
Greenpeace’s senior transport campaigner Emma Gibson said:

> “The Saudi oil minister will rub his hands with glee when he learns of Phillip Hammond’s decision. At a time when the North Sea oil production is going down and we are ever more reliant upon unstable regimes and fragile environments to fuel our cars, the Transport Secretary decision will raise oil consumption and carbon emissions when we need to cut both”.\(^{21}\)

It was little surprise to see environmentalists and road safety groups react angrily to the planned 80mph motorway limit. Environmental groups make the same similarly straightforward point that driving at 80mph uses more fuel by anything up to 25pc – than at 70mph, with a resultant effect on emissions. According to Friends of the Earth:

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\(^{19}\) The motorway speed limit – 70, 80 – or? https://www.iamroadsmart.com

\(^{20}\) http://www.theguardian.com

\(^{21}\) The Telegraph 13 October 2011. https://telegraph.co.uk
"If instead you cut the speed limit to 60mph, you could save as much as seven megatonnes of carbon a year. Even enforcing the existing speed limit would save up to a megaton”,

Perhaps less predictable was the distinctly qualified welcome the news received from motoring organisations. The RAC said the group was “comfortable in principle” but with some caveats. Their concern was: how it would be enforced? If people now routinely travel at 80mph, will they now drive at 90mph? The RAC felt that 80mph was reasonably safe, but if it crept up much more, then it could be a concern. Edmond King President of the AA agreed the 80mph was welcome, as polls had shown that almost two-thirds of AA members support a higher motorway limit but only if there was police enforcement. He said:

"Currently, the de facto speed limit on motorways is 80mph. You will rarely, if ever get stopped by a police officer if you’re driving at 80mph … if people feel they can interpret speed limits in their own little fashion like that then, I believe they give themselves more leeway in urban areas and at lower speeds and I don’t think that’s right”.

The Association of Chief Police Officers said that no one knows as yet how the new proposed speed limit would be policed: and it was up to individual forces, with the most common formula giving leeway of “10pc plus 2mph” – 79mph to avoid points on their licence. Brake the road safety charity said they didn’t think it was right to put forward a policy where there’s a sound evidence base that suggests that, as a result, more people will die and added that it was really important to reiterate the point that behind these kinds of statistics there are families whose lives have been absolutely taken apart.

The motoring lobby arguments in favour of a higher motoring maximum generally hinge on three interconnected facts:

- That cars have become more sophisticated and safer in the 50 odd years since the current limit was set
- That UK road deaths are less than 25pc of the 1960 level
- That motorways are statistically by far the safest roads to use
- But an opposite safety argument is boosted by the Governments own research, indicating that higher speeds lead to more casualties.
Tomorrow’s 90mph?
IAM RoadSmart and Professor Stephen Glastier, director of the RAC Foundation, both share concerns that police enforcement could be an issue. 22 With the recent surveys carried out by Brake and Direct Line finding that six in ten UK drivers breaking the speed limit by 10 mph or more, the more serious concern is that legalising 80mph could create tomorrow’s unofficial 90mph speed limit. Closely monitored smart motorways which set the speed limit according to traffic flows and density do however offer the ability to increase speed limits and enforce them. If the speed limit can be lowered below 70mph in congested conditions, it could just as easily be increased to 80mph when traffic flows are much lighter and conditions are good. British motorways are the most congested in Europe, so few drivers actually achieve 70mph consistently on every journey. Any change in the limit is therefore unlikely to affect most drivers on their daily commute. 23

Stopping Distances
The kinetic energy of a vehicle is what makes it dangerous; transferring that kinetic energy to an object – a pedestrian or another car – is what causes damage. Kinetic energy depends on the square of the speed; if you double the speed of an object you quadruple its kinetic energy. An increase in speed from 70mph to 80mph is a 14pc increase in speed, but this results in a 31pc in kinetic energy, making the car – in a sense – 31pc more dangerous to other road users. Increasing kinetic energy also increases stopping distance. Increasing the speed limit to 80mph would increase the average stopping distance on motorways to 120 metres or 30 car lengths. That was a 25pc increase on the 96 metre stopping distance found at 70mph. In the USA, a report carried out by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found that in states where they raised limits from 65mph to 75mph, the death rates rose by 38pc on these roads. In Germany, where the infamous autobahns lie, the death rates are 75pc higher than in comparable roads in the UK, according to research carried out by the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS). 24

Zero Tolerance in Bedford?
Since April 2016, when Heritage Insurance became involved in this debate, Bedfordshire police indicated that it was planning to run a zero-tolerance attitude towards motorway speeders. This would affect the busiest sections of the M1 and encourage other police forces to follow.

23 The motorway speed limit – 70, 80 – or? https://www.iamroadsmart.com
24 PACTS. Its charitable objective is: “To protect human life through the promotion of transport safety for the public benefit”. www.pacts.org.uk
The idea came from Olly Martins, Bedford’s Police and Crime Commissioner who admitted to the Telegraph newspaper\(^25\) that the motivation was financial. He said:

> “If motorists do not like it then they can always stick to the speed limit”. With jobs on the line and having “lobbied the Home Office” for fair funding, but come up with nothing, it is not unreasonable to consider alternative ways of raising revenue”.

Also, he spoke about the possibility of sponsorship being placed on police uniforms and police cars and he urged people to sign a petition calling on the Government to provide more funding for Bedford’s police. Mr Martins said he had been forced into the scheme as his force was at financial breaking point and through fining drivers, twenty five officers could be kept. Also, strict enforcement of the speed limit could gain Bedford police a windfall of £1m. The plan was to keep all speed cameras on motorways across Bedfordshire on permanently. Motorists would then be forced to pay a £100 fine as well as having points added to their licence, or could opt instead to attend a speed awareness course which would cost £90. Under the current system, police forces have the discretion to apply leeway around speed limits, meaning drivers in a 70mph zone are able to travel up to 79mph before being at the risk of a fine. The guidelines suggest that the motorist is given 10pc + 2mph tolerance for speed errors and equipment errors.\(^26\)

**What Would You Do?**

Consider the following scenario: You’re driving along the motorway at 70mph when the lorry you’re overtaking begins to indicate as if moving into your lane. Should you brake and let it pull out or consider the traffic behind you? Perhaps you’ll stick to 70mph and hope the truck driver has seen you. The latter is arguably the safer option, and one put into practice by millions of motorists on Britain’s roads every single day. Are those people breaking the law, or merely improving the chances of everybody getting to their destination safely. Or, do you accelerate in order to get ahead of the lorry, knowing that it will mean briefly exceeding the speed limit.\(^27\) *(Having carefully observed and anticipated the ‘body language’ of the truck, it’s unlikely if a good driver and especially an ADI would find himself in this situation).* Taking the above example, shared by Chris Knapman, contributory editor for the Telegraph, it would be decidedly better to break the speed limit.

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\(^25\) [http://www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk)

\(^26\) [https://www.cambs-police.co.uk](https://www.cambs-police.co.uk)

\(^27\) [http://www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk)
However, the cost of this to a driver could be a £100 fine and points on their licence. The idealism of everyone adhering to the 70mph is a wonderful suggestion however; it is argued it is impractical and has potential risk of increasing accidents.

**Conclusion**

Motorways are dual-carriageway roads which must not be used by certain groups of road user. Traffic travels faster on motorways than on ordinary roads and you will need to sum up traffic situations early. Your vehicle must be fit to cruise at speed for long periods of time and you must understand motorway regulations and what action to take if your vehicle breaks down. You must understand overhead signals and especially the red X over your lane. Much debate has taken place over whether the existing 70mph speed limit should be increased to 80mph on today’s motorways, especially smart motorways. For anyone who has regularly driven on motorways, it is abundantly clear that a significant number of drivers exceed the existing speed limit and some even travel at 80mph plus. One aspect of the debate fails to address the competence of drivers to deal with the proposed new limit. First, is the driver adequately trained to drive on motorways? Does he possess the requisite skills to handle a ‘projectile’ travelling at 80mph? Is he scanning the horizon and anticipating developing hazards? What is his reaction time and does he know how to stop his vehicle in an emergency? What of the newly qualified driver who ventures on the motorway for the first time unaccompanied? These are only some of the questions that need to be answered. Also, not only must you be skilled in motorway driving but you must also make *comme il faut* allowances for the actions of the sometimes fast, reckless and inconsiderate drivers who by their altruistic tendencies fail to abide by motorway rules. Motorways have the lowest crash rates per mile travelled than other road types and even though motorways are regarded to be the safest roads worldwide, when a crash occurs it can be catastrophic with multiple vehicles involved. Driving on a featureless motorway – a long ribbon of asphalt or concrete – can be monotonous. There is very little work to do especially when on cruise-control. The view is monotonous, roads tend to be straight, and the scenery is often shut out by embankments or fences. You also have less work to do controlling your car – steering, gear changing, accelerating and braking – on a motorway. It is all too easy for the mind to wander, especially when traffic is light and you’re travelling at speeds of 70mph or more. This is where fatigue can become a problem. Regular service area stops are recommended. Closely monitored smart motorways which set the speed limit according to traffic flows and density do however offer the ability to increase limits and enforce them.
If the speed limit can be lowered below 70mph in congested conditions, it could just as easily be increased to 80mph when traffic flows are much lighter and driving conditions are favourable. However, by increasing your speed from 70mph to 80mph you won’t save much time. Finally, if the 80mph speed limit ever gets the ‘green light’, then, will people start driving up to 90mph and over? And with rapidly developing technological advances in vehicle design, and the impending introduction of autonomous cars, one wonders whether it’s only a matter of time before the magical ‘ton-up’ will be given serious consideration for future motorway driving, which are our fastest roads?