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**VOLUME 5 ASSESSMENT AND  
PREPARATION OF ROAD  
SCHEMES**

**SECTION 1 PREPARATION AND  
IMPLEMENTATION**

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**PART 3**

**TA 79/99 AMENDMENT NO 1**

**TRAFFIC CAPACITY OF URBAN ROADS**

**SUMMARY**

Advice Note TA 79/99, published February 1999, was wrongly placed in Section 2 of DMRB Volume 5. All users should arrange for the document TA 79/99 to be inserted in Volume 5, Section 1, Part 3 of DMRB.

References within the document to Section 2, Part 2 should also be corrected accordingly.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE**

1. Remove Advice Note TA 79/99 from Volume 3 of the DMRB.
2. Amend the volume references on all pages of TA 79/99 to read Volume 5, Section 1, Part 3 of DMRB.
3. Remove existing title page and insert amended title page and Note to Users in front of Contents sheet of TA 79/99.
4. Enter the details of the amendment on the Registration of Amendment sheet, sign and date to confirm that the amendment has been incorporated.

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THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR  
NORTHERN IRELAND

# Traffic Capacity of Urban Roads

Summary: Advice Note TA 79/99, published February 1999, was wrongly placed in  
Section 2 of DMRB Volume 5.

## Note to Users

1. Advice Note TA 79/99 published by the Highways Agency in February 1999 was placed erroneously in DMRB 5.2.2.
2. All users should arrange for the document TA 79/99 to be inserted in Volume 5, Section 1, Part 3 of DMRB. References within the document to Section 2, Part 2 should also be corrected accordingly.

WITHDRAWN

REGISTRATION OF AMENDMENTS

Amend No	Page No	Signature & Date of incorporation of amendments	Amend No	Page No	Signature & Date of incorporation of amendments

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**VOLUME 5 ASSESSMENT AND  
PREPARATION OF ROAD  
SCHEMES**

**SECTION 2 PREPARATION AND  
IMPLEMENTATION**

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**PART 2**

**TA 79/99**

**TRAFFIC CAPACITY OF URBAN ROADS**

**Contents**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## General

1.1 Traffic flows on urban trunk roads in Greater and Outer London has been analysed to assess the capacities that can be achieved for different road types and widths. From this information the main features that affect capacity have been defined and the results presented in tabular form.

1.2 This document supersedes section 5 and Appendix 2 of TD 20/85 "Traffic Flows and Carriageway Width Assessment". TD 20/85 is now entirely superseded by both this document and TA 46/97. TD 20/85 is hereby withdrawn.

1.3 For **rural** roads reference should be made to TA 46/97 "Traffic Flow Ranges for Use in the Assessment of New Rural Roads".

## Scope

1.4 This Advice Note gives the maximum hourly vehicle capacity for various types of Urban Trunk Road. All capacities quoted are for traffic compositions including up to 15% heavy vehicles; corrections are provided for higher proportions.

1.5 The capacities may be used as starting points in the design and assessment of new urban trunk road links. They may also be used as a guide to the capacity of existing urban roads, and for assessing the likely effect on capacity of proposed changes to specific road features including carriageway width.

1.6 It should be borne in mind that the assessment of carriageway width is not based solely on peak hour travel demand. Cost and environmental impact should also be taken into account. A judgement may therefore have to be made between adopting reduced width of carriageway, weighed against any adverse effects incurred by providing for a higher level of demand.

## Implementation

1.7 This Advice Note should be used forthwith for all schemes for the construction of urban trunk roads including improvements, with the approval of the Overseeing Organisation. The exceptions are schemes currently being prepared where this would result in significant additional expense or delay progress.

## Definitions

1.8 **Urban Motorway**  
A motorway with a speed limit of 60 mph or less within a built up area.

1.9 **Urban All-Purpose Road (UAP)**  
An all-purpose road within a built up area, either a single carriageway with a speed limit of 40 mph or less or a dual carriageway with a speed limit of 60 mph or less.

1.10 **Capacity**  
For the purposes of this Advice Note, capacity is defined as the maximum sustainable flow of traffic passing in 1 hour, under favourable road and traffic conditions.

## 2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

### Application of Capacity values

2.1 The guidance in this document should be used flexibly. In some circumstances, the use of a reduced width of carriageway will result in significant savings or environmental benefits, which outweigh the disbenefits of congestion during peak periods.

2.2 The capacity of urban roads can be affected by a wide range of factors that may not always be accurately predicted by the road features identified. For this reason capacity flows may be up to 10% more or less than the values given in this document.

### Features Affecting Capacity

2.3 The potential capacity of a link will not be reached if either the capacity of junctions along the link or the capacity of the adjoining network is lower than the link in question. The flow on an urban road may also be affected by turning movements restricting the mainline capacity. Such constraints should be identified at an early stage.

2.4 Urban roads normally have higher flows in the morning and evening peaks than at other times of day. Improving features that affect the capacity would help prevent congestion during these periods.

2.5 The flows given in the tables are the maximum that typical urban roads can carry consistently in an hour. The principal factors that may affect flow levels on urban roads are given in Table 1.

For motorways the prime determinant is the carriageway width, but for all-purpose roads flow is also affected by the speed limit, the frequency of side roads, the degree of parking and loading, the frequency of at grade pedestrian crossings, bus stops, and accesses.

2.6 The capacity of the lower width roads will be significantly reduced by parking and temporary width restrictions caused by such activities as maintenance and Statutory Undertakers' Works. The lowest widths are unlikely to be suitable for bus routes or for significant volumes of heavy goods vehicles.

2.7 Roads in Category UAP3 and UAP4 may carry high proportions of local traffic, resulting in an increase in turning movements at junctions and accesses.

2.8 Capacity will also be affected by prevailing weather and night conditions. The capacities shown are for "favourable" daylight conditions.



Feature	ROAD TYPE				
	Urban Motorway	Urban All-purpose			
	UM	UAP1	UAP2	UAP3	UAP4
<b>General Description</b>	Through route with grade separated junctions, hardshoulders or hardstrips, and motorway restrictions.	High standard single/dual carriageway road carrying predominantly through traffic with limited access.	Good standard single/dual carriageway road with frontage access and more than two side roads per km.	Variable standard road carrying mixed traffic with frontage access, side roads, bus stops and at-grade pedestrian crossings.	Busy high street carrying predominantly local traffic with frontage activity including loading and unloading.
<b>Speed Limit</b>	60mph or less	40 to 60 mph for dual, & generally 40mph for single carriageway	Generally 40 mph	30 mph to 40 mph	30mph
<b>Side Roads</b>	None	0 to 2 per km	more than 2 per km	more than 2 per km	more than 2 per km
<b>Access to roadside development</b>	None. Grade separated for major only.	limited access	access to residential properties	frontage access	unlimited access to houses, shops & businesses
<b>Parking and loading</b>	none	restricted	restricted	unrestricted	unrestricted
<b>Pedestrian crossings</b>	grade separated	mostly grade separated	some at-grade	some at-grade	frequent at-grade
<b>Bus stops</b>	none	in lay-bys	at kerbside	at kerbside	at kerbside

**Table 1 Types of Urban roads and the features that distinguish them**

### 3. DETERMINATION OF URBAN ROAD CAPACITY

3.1 Table 1 sets out the types of Urban Roads and the features that distinguish between them and affect their traffic capacity. Tables 2 & 3 give the flow capacity for each road type described in Table 1.

3.2 Table 4 gives the adjustments when the proportion of heavy vehicles in a one way flow exceeds 15%. A heavy vehicle is defined in this context as OGV1, OGV2 or Buses and Coaches as given in the COBA Manual (DMRB 13.1 Part 4, Chapter 8).

3.3 The flows for road type UM in Table 2 apply to urban motorways where junctions are closely spaced giving weaving lengths of less than 1 kilometre. Urban motorways with layout and junction spacing similar to rural motorways can carry higher flows and TA46/97 "Traffic Flow Ranges for Use in the Assessment of New Rural Roads" will be more applicable.

3.4 Flows for single carriageways are based upon a 60/40 directional split in the flow. The one-way flows shown in Table 2 represent the busiest flow 60% figure.

3.5 The capacities shown apply to gradients of up to 5-6%. Special consideration should be made for steeper gradients, which would reduce capacity.

3.6 On-road parking reduces the effective road width and disrupts flow, e.g. where parking restrictions are not applied on road type UAP2 the flows are likely to be similar to UAP3 where unrestricted parking applies, see Table 1, Similarly effective parking restrictions can lead to higher flows.

		Two-way Single Carriageway- Busiest direction flow (Assumes a 60/40 directional split)								Dual Carriageway				
		Total number of Lanes								Number of Lanes in each direction				
		2				2-3	3	3-4	4	4+	2	3	4	
Carriageway width		6.1m	6.75m	7.3m	9.0m	10.0m	12.3m	13.5m	14.6m	18.0m	6.75m	7.3m	11.0m	14.6m
Road type	UM	Not applicable										4000	5600	7200
	UAP1	1020	1320	1590	1860	2010	2550	2800	3050	3300	3350	3600	5200	*
	UAP2	1020	1260	1470	1550	1650	1700	1900	2100	2700	2950	3200	4800	*
	UAP3	900	1110	1300	1530	1620	*	*	*	*	2300	2600	3300	*
	UAP4	750	900	1140	1320	1410	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

**Table 2 Capacities of Urban Roads**  
**One-way hourly flows in each direction**

Notes

- Capacities are in vehicles per hour.
- HGV ≤ 15%
- (\*) Capacities are excluded where the road width is not appropriate for the road type and where there are too few examples to give reliable figures.

Carriageway width		6.1m	6.75m	7.3m	9.0m	10.0m	11.0m
		2 lanes			2-3 lanes		3 lanes
Road type	UAP1		2950	3250	3950	4450	4800
	UAP2	1800	2000	2200	2850	3250	3550

**Table 3 Capacities of Urban One-Way roads, hourly flows**

Notes

- Capacities are in vehicles per hour.
- Capacities for one way road types UAP1 at 6.1m width, UAP3 and UAP4 are not shown as there are too few examples to give reliable capacities.
- Capacities for one-way roads (e.g. UAP2 at 7.3m and 11.0m carriageway widths) are generally less than capacities of dual carriageways in one direction shown in Table 2. The reason is that one-way roads are often of short lengths and form part of a gyratory system between junctions, necessitating high proportion of vehicle weaving and stopping, thereby decreasing the capacities.

Heavy Vehicle Content	Total reduction in flow level (vehs/hr)		
	UM and UAP dual carriageway road	Single carriageway UAP road having width of 10m or wider	Single carriageway UAP road having width less than 10m
	per lane	per carriageway	per carriageway
15 - 20%	100	100	150
20 - 25%	150	150	225

**Table 4 Reduction in flow due to Heavy Vehicle Content**

## 4. ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

4.1 The capacities given in Tables 2 - 4 provide a guide for the assessment of an appropriate carriageway width and standard. They may be applied to both the design of new urban roads and to the improvement of existing roads. The capacities are intended to help designers make a judgement as to which carriageway standard is likely to provide an acceptable level of service within an urban context when operating close to capacity. The capacities apply to links and take no account of the effects of junctions.

4.2 For improvement options to existing roads the designer should make an appraisal of each of the road features and thereby determine the most appropriate road type given in Table 1. An assessment may then be made of the expected capacity using Tables 2 – 4. It should be calibrated with observed traffic flows to validate the appraisal, taking account of any network constraints that may limit a desirable flow. The effect of link capacity on changes to specific features should then be examined.

4.3 Observations of existing traffic flows should be undertaken by manual classified counts and account taken of hourly, daily and seasonal variations. Reference to continuous automatic traffic count data if available would assist in identifying periods of maximum flow levels and whether traffic levels are operating close to capacity.

4.4 For the design of new urban roads, the carriageway standard options presented herein provide a guide to the desirable standard of carriageway provision given the features of the road and expected traffic levels. They should not be used alone as a design tool, because factors other than peak hour flows should also be considered. They should be regarded as a starting point for more detailed analysis of traffic, economic and environmental aspects.

4.5 For the estimation of future traffic demand levels for urban roads where changes to travel patterns over a wide area are likely to occur, reference should be made to “Traffic Appraisal in Urban Areas” (DMRB Volume 12 Section 2 Part 1).

## 5. ENQUIRIES

All technical enquiries or comments on this document should be sent in writing as appropriate to:

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