

Road Test

Austin fanciers, especially those of the old school not yet sold on automatic transmission, will be pleased with the Mark Two "Freeway".

Power and performance are sufficiently improved to make the car nimble enough for today's traffic and touring conditions yet the makers have not bought into the "horsepower race" by overstepping the currently high levels opposition options have set. Engine output is almost midway between that of Holden's 138 c.i. (EJ) and 149 c.i. (EH) powerplants.

The Freeway's extra speed and accelerative ability are more than balanced by better braking, the outcome of installing P.B.R. vacuum servo assistance to the Girling equipment.



Only changes at the rear are the addition of a small Mk II badge. Otherwise it is unchanged.

Power Brakes with Power up on Mark 2 Austin Freeways

SOFTER REAR SUSPENSION

Rear suspension modifications have enhanced ride and stability: further evidence of the British Motor Corporation's tendency to step forward with comfort, safety and speed in something like equal proportions—a worthy move which the industry as a whole would do well to emulate. In the case of the automatic Freeway the power boost is less significant.

Automatic models already enjoyed a slight advantage over manual Freeways—80 b.h.p. versus 82 b.h.p.—and the new 85 b.h.p. version of the "Blue Streak" engine is common to both.

The test car, an automatic saloon, had done relatively few miles. It gave a rather disappointing performance with regard to acceleration and fuel consumption but these could be expected to improve when the car is fully run in.

LOWER REAR SEAT

Interior trim is changed and rear seat shape re-designed to allow greater headroom. Externally the new Freeway is only identifiable from the original when one is close enough to see the small Mark II badge on the boot-lid.

A full six passenger unit, the car is unitarily constructed using robust components. It is processed in B.M.C.'s patented Roto-dip system which ensures rust protection and a high quality finish. The unchanged form and styling are not of the latest low, wide look but are reasonably attractive.

High rear fender fins, no longer considered beauty aids, at least serve as

guides for parking. In the event of error hefty wrap-around bumper bars save the panels from damage. There is plenty of head, leg and knee room inside and the bench seats are very comfortable. The transmission hump is not over large and the knee room in the rear is 13 inches with the front seat rearmost on its 4-inch travel.

Fit and finish was very good though covers inside the windscreen posts did not merge smoothly with the headlining. The glove-box is of medium size but little more comprehensive than one usually finds in vehicles of this category, there being gauges for coolant temperature and oil pressure as well as fuel contents. Warning lights signal battery discharge, blinker operation and high beam. The speedometer, a round clock-face type, is clearly marked to 100 m.p.h. and includes a tenths column in the odometer. A high position gives the driver a commanding view of his surroundings and the location of instruments and controls is generally convenient.

The spare wheel is carried in a hinged tray beneath the rear of the body where it can be reached without interference to luggage. Furthermore a wheel change in bad weather does not result in a muddy tyre being mixed with personal effects. The luggage boot has a flat floor and self supporting lid.

Lowest underbody items are a solid front cross member-cum-axle beam, exhaust line and rear spring u-bolts. The exhaust muffler is $\frac{5}{8}$ " higher than before and the car negotiates back-tracks

with little bother from normal ridges and rocks.

The Freeway's engine compartment allows reasonable access for servicing, though the distributor could be in a more easily reached position. The bonnet, unlocked from inside the car, is automatically held open but must be manually released for lowering. In general specifications and particularly bore, stroke and capacity, the four-main bearing 2.4 litre (148 c.i.) "Blue Streak" six cylinder motor remains as originally



"I'll wash and you dry!"

B.M.C. in action with Mark 2 Freeway

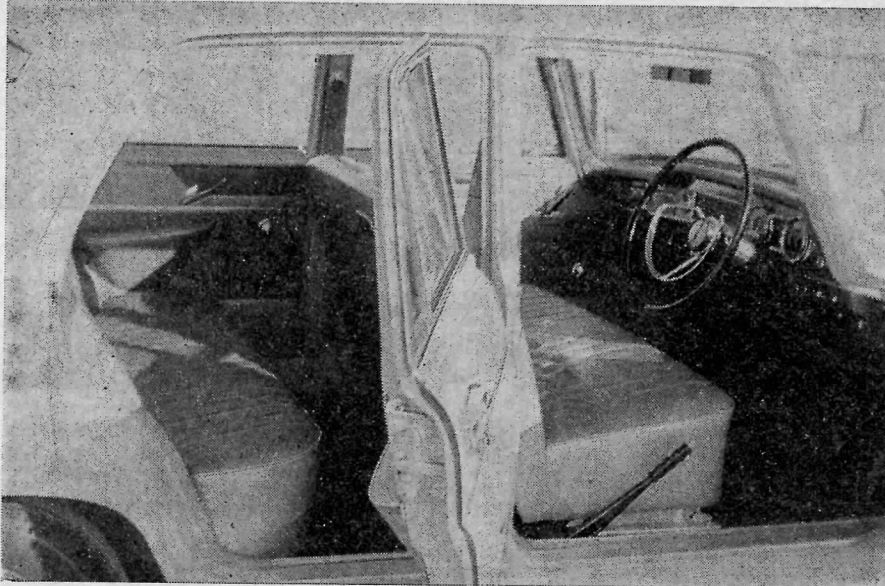
developed from B.M.C.'s "B" series 1622 c.c. four.

However, to power the Mark II Austin Freeway it has undergone its second minor modification. The first change, a rise in compression ratio from 7.7 to 8.2:1 applied to engines mated with automatic transmission and increased horsepower from 80 at 4350 r.p.m. to 82 at 4300 r.p.m. On this occasion torque rose from 123 lb. ft. at 1650 r.p.m. to 129 lb.ft. at 1750 r.p.m.

quired to invoke kick-down changes.

Under full acceleration in Drive range change points of the Borg Warner transmission were: Low to Intermediate, 31 m.p.h.; Intermediate to High, 52 m.p.h. Minimum throttle openings resulted in a Low to High change at 8 m.p.h. Below 23 m.p.h. Low gear could be obtained by "kickdown" and similarly Intermediate could be involved between 23 and 42 m.p.h.

Initial ratio selection is by lever at



Included in the equipment are rear armrests, courtesy light switches, twin sun visors, cigarette lighter, full width parcels tray, wind-screen washers and a heater/demister. The fascia top and parcels tray are padded. The test vehicle did not have front armrests though these are listed in information released by the manufacturer. Floor coverings are rubber mat over thick sound absorbing material.

MAX. TORQUE AT LOWER SPEEDS

The present alteration comprising redesign of the cylinder head to incorporate larger valves and ports brings a further increase in horsepower but more importantly, for few owners use peak revolutions other than momentarily, a reduction in the point of maximum torque.

Top-gear lugging power is considerably better than before. However the automatic controls on the test car tended to place too much reliance on this with the result that anywhere above 8 m.p.h. the transmission was likely to sneak into direct drive. The effect on performance in suburban traffic was most frustrating and the ensuing wide throttle openings as one endeavoured to select Intermediate by "kick-down" played havoc with the fuel bill.

No small part of this was due to the heavy accelerator pedal pressure re-

quired to invoke kick-down changes. the left of the steering column. Quadrant sequence is L.D.N.R.P. Beyond the range of Low gear but below 60 m.p.h. selection of "L" engages Intermediate. Low can be held indefinitely when engine braking is desired. Maximum speed is 40 m.p.h. Automatic down changes were smooth but under strong acceleration up-changes were accompanied by a sudden surge.

Provided there is nothing amiss with the automatic transmission the Freeway can be push-started or towed to a repair station in neutral.

Apart from normal power drain of automatic transmission there is a large difference in the overall ratios of Low and Intermediate as shown in the following table.

	Auto	Manual
High	3.91	3.91
Intermediate	4.67	6.32
Low	9.34	12.08

Longer rear springs and altered shock absorber valve settings have given the Freeway better riding qualities and reduced rear axle chatter on corrugations and bumpy corners. Minor ripples on city streets are not ironed out, the suspension tends to be too firm at low speeds for that, but large potholes are easily absorbed.

Only on severe bumps is there any "bottoming" at the front. No additional stabilising medium is employed thus body roll is evident on tight turns. The Freeway has good road manners and is easily corrected if involved in a slide. Steering is too heavy to be called pleasant but has quick self-centring.

The brakes are very good. Some familiarity is necessary before one adjusts to the prompt action of the power assistance but subsequently rear wheel locking occurs rarely. Placed conveniently at the end of the driver's seat the handbrake is also useful in emergencies.

A comfortable ride and powerful brakes are perhaps the most outstanding features of the Freeway Mk 2. Crisp toggle switches, good headlights which clearly illuminate the left verge on dip and sound construction are among its many other good points. The automatic's performance had disappointing aspects as detailed herein, however, adjustment, or better still, manual transmission would seem the answer to these. Apart from a rise associated with the new sales tax rate, the Freeway's price has been increased slightly to cover the cost of additional equipment.

Prices, including sales tax, are:

	Manual	Automatic
Saloon	£1165	£1280
Station Wagon ..	£1260	£1375

PERFORMANCE

Instruments: Speedometer at 30 m.p.h. and 60 m.p.h., 3 m.p.h. fast. Odometer: 1/4% fast.

Maximum Speeds in Gears: Low, 31 m.p.h.; Intermediate, 52 m.p.h.; High, 79 m.p.h.

Acceleration Times from Rest: 0-20 m.p.h., 3.3 secs; 0-30 m.p.h., 5.9 secs.; 0-40 m.p.h., 8.6 secs; 0-50 m.p.h., 12.8 secs.; 0-60 m.p.h., 20.6 secs.; 0-70 m.p.h., 30.4 secs.

Standing quarter mile: 23.2 secs.

Acceleration from constant speeds ("D" range): 10-30 m.p.h., 4.3 secs.; 20-40 m.p.h., 5.4 secs.; 30-50 m.p.h., 7.3 secs.; 40-60 m.p.h., 10.8 secs; 50-70 m.p.h., 16.7 secs.

Braking: 60 m.p.h.-0, 4.4 secs. Hand-brake, 30-0 m.p.h., 3.9 secs.

Overall fuel consumption: 16.5 m.p.g. **Touring range:** 165 miles.

	Freeway Mk 2
Cubic capacity	2433 c.c.
Comp. ratio	8.2
b.h.p. at r.p.m.	85/4400
Torque at r.p.m.	130/1600
Top gear	
m.p.h./1000 r.p.m.	18.6
Max. speed	79
Accel. 0-50 m.p.h.	12.8
Fuel consumption	16.5 (see text)

	Holden EJ	Holden EH 149
Cubic capacity	2262 c.c.	2442 c.c.
Comp. ratio	7.25	8.8
b.h.p. at r.p.m.	75/4200	100/4400
Torque at r.p.m.	120/1400	145/2000
Top gear		
m.p.h./1000 r.p.m.	18.3	21.0
Max. speed	80	85
Accel. 0-50 m.p.h.	14.6	11.5
Fuel consumption	20	23

	Falcon XL 144	Falcon XM 144
Cubic capacity	2366 c.c.	2366 c.c.
Comp. ratio	8.7	8.7
b.h.p. at r.p.m.	90/4200	96/4200
Torque at r.p.m.	138/2000	138/2000
Top gear		
m.p.h./1000 r.p.m.	19.1	19.7
Max. speed	82	84
Accel. 0-50 m.p.h.	13.8	12.5
Fuel consumption	24	23



Powered by a new smooth and flexible six cylinder, 84 b.h.p. engine, the Austin Freeway now has ample power, while still retaining the slightly modified Farina-styled body.



The Austin Freeway station wagon features all the standard equipment of the saloon. Body is wider and longer than the saloon.