

**Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills,
Executive Director for Environment and Economy**

Report to:	Highways & Transport Scrutiny Committee
Date:	12 March 2018
Subject:	DfT 'Proposals for the Creation of a Major Road Network' Consultation

Summary:

This paper outlines Department for Transport (DfT's) proposal to create a Major Road Network (MRN) comprising the most economically important local authority A Roads to complement the national motorway and strategic trunk roads. The MRN will be eligible for funding support for major improvements via the new National Roads Fund due to commence in 2020/21.

Actions Required:

Members of the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee are invited to consider the report and comment on the proposed approach for responding to DfT's consultation on the creation of a Major Road Network.

1. Background

- 1.1 As part of the Government's Transport Investment Strategy published in July 2017, it committed to creating a Major Road Network (MRN) across England. The MRN will comprise economically important local authority A roads and complement Highways England's Strategic Road Network (SRN – all motorways and trunk roads). It will be eligible for support from the new National Road Fund which will see all Vehicle Road Tax ring-fenced for road improvement on the SRN and MRN from 2020/21 onwards.
- 1.2 Initial work on identifying a Major Road Network was carried out through the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund and published in late 2016. Building on this work, the Department of Transport (DfT) have now published for consultation their proposals for the creation of the MRN. This covers three broad issues:
 - defining the MRN
 - investment planning (how funding decision will be made)
 - eligible schemes and assessment criteria

Defining the Network

- 1.3 DfT is proposing a combination of quantitative and qualitative criteria to define the MRN as follows:
- Quantitative based upon existing 24 Hr Annual Average Daily Flows (AADF) using the criteria used in the initial Rees Jeffreys (RJ) Report i.e.
 - AADF greater than 20,000 vpd, or
 - AADF greater than 10,000 vpd and either:
 - % HGVs greater than 5%, or
 - % LCV (Light Commercials) greater than 15%
 - Qualitative based upon:
 - Ensuring a coherent network alongside the Strategic Road Network e.g. to ensure continuous routes or remove isolated links
 - Linking economic centres including town/cities over 50,000 population and major airports and ports. In specific circumstances, consideration will also be given to centres with a smaller population e.g. *'towns that contribute substantially to the economy in peripheral areas'*
- 1.4 DfT is also proposing to include those roads de-trunked between 2001 and 2009 on the basis that they have historically been deemed of national interest. For Lincolnshire, this covers the A15 north of Lincoln, A16, A17, A57 and A46 (between A57 and A15).
- 1.5 As part of the consultation, DfT has published an indicative MRN based on the above criteria. The proposed MRN for England is attached at Appendix A and that for Lincolnshire is shown in more detail at Appendix B. DfT stress that this is not the final proposal and further work will be required following the consultation, along with further engagement with regional bodies (Midlands Connect in our case). They also state that they *'propose to create a MRN of approximately the same mileage as the network for which Highways England is responsible'*. It is clear from this that they are not expecting to see large-scale inclusion of local A roads within the MRN. Any roads which are put forward by local authorities will need to have a strong supporting case.
- 1.6 At the same time, working on defining a possible MRN across the whole of the West and East Midlands has been progressing through Midlands Connect. The latest proposal across the Midlands Connect area is shown in Appendix C, with the proposal for Lincolnshire shown in more detail in Appendix D. Lincolnshire roads being put forward for inclusion over and those proposed by DfT are:
- **A158 Lincoln – Skegness** due to the importance of the 'Coastal Highway' route to the tourism economy on the Lincolnshire coast and the high traffic flows during holiday periods

- **A52 Boston – Grantham** due to the importance of the route to the key agri-food industries in south Lincolnshire as identified by the Greater Lincolnshire LEP.
- **A15 Sleaford – Peterborough** since the A17- A52 stretch is a signed diversion route for when the A1 is affected by works or incidents and the flows south of Bourne meet the lower of the criteria set out in paragraph 1.3 above (greater than 10,000 vpd and more than 5% HGVs).

1.7 It is proposed that Lincolnshire's response reflects the above proposals.

Investment Planning

1.8 DfT is seeking to ensure that the MRN supports the long-term strategic needs to make best use of the targeted funding being made available from the National Roads Fund. To this end, they are proposing that there is a strong regional focus for investment planning within a consistent national network.

1.9 To achieve this, DfT is suggesting that the Sub-National Transport Bodies (STBs) are best placed to carry out this role. Where STBs have yet to be formed, then they are proposing that LAs and LEPS should form agreed regional groups to manage this work. Key steps in the process will be:

- Development of Regional Evidence Base by STBs (or similar) to form the basis for the development of a national MRN Investment Program. DfT will issue further guidance on Regional Evidence Bases to ensure a consistent approach nationally.
- Initial scheme proposals for investment put forward by Local Authorities to STBs for possible inclusion. These would be assessed and prioritised into a coherent regional package before submission to DfT.
- DfT, in consultation with the regions, would undertake analysis and national prioritisation to create a nationwide MRN Investment Programme.
- Once in the MRN Investment Programme, Local Authorities would be responsible for continued scheme development, with DfT responsible for scheme approval at Outline Business case stage and beyond.
- The MRN Investment Programme and Regional Evidence Bases will be updated every two years to allow for evidence to be refreshed and new schemes to enter the programme.

Eligible Schemes and Assessment Criteria

- 1.10 DfT wish to see the funding targeted towards '*significant interventions that will transform important stretches of the network.*'
- 1.11 Proposal will need to seek funding contributions of £20m or over, with most funding requests not exceeding £50m. Where there is a strong case, a contribution of up to £100m may be considered. Third party contributions and local contributions should be secured to get the best value for money.
- 1.12 Types of schemes eligible for funding are:
- Bypasses
 - Missing Links (e.g. '*final quadrant of a ring road that already circles three quarters of a town or city*')
 - Widening of existing MRN roads (e.g. '*This could include dualling and could be on or off line*')
 - Major structural renewals (e.g. '*on roads, bridges, tunnels and viaducts*')
 - Major Junction Improvements (e.g. '*such as grade separation*')
 - Variable Message Signs, Traffic Management and the Use of Smart Technology and Data
 - Packages of Improvements (where the package as a whole has a coherent and compelling case)
- 1.14 A clear set of criteria against which to assess schemes will be developed by DfT which support the Government's overarching objectives of:
- Reducing congestion
 - Supporting economic growth and rebalancing
 - Supporting housing delivery
 - Supporting all road users
 - Supporting the SRN

Next steps

- 1.15 The closing date for responses to DfT's consultation is Monday 19th March 2018. A formal DfT consultation response will be published during summer 2018.

2. Conclusion

- 2.1 Members are invited to comment on DfT's proposals for the creation of a Major Road Network.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

No

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	National DfT Indicative Major Road Network
Appendix B	DfT Indicative Major Road Network for Lincolnshire
Appendix C	Proposed Midlands Connect Major Road Network
Appendix D	Proposed Lincolnshire Major Road Network

5. Background Papers

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Proposals for the Creation of a Major Road Network - DfT December 2017	https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposals-for-the-creation-of-a-major-road-network

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