



LEP – Sub Committee

LEP - Transport for Lancashire Committee

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Department for Transport Consultation: Shaping the Future of England's Strategic Roads

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Executive Summary

The Government will shortly be taking decisions about priorities for investment in the next Road Investment Strategy period (RIS2) covering the financial years 2020/21 to 2024/25. The Department for Transport is now consulting stakeholders on Highways England's Strategic Road Network Initial Report and the process through which it will determine whether the Initial Report is sufficiently robust. A complementary consultation on proposals to establish a Major Road Network in England is also due to commence shortly.

Recommendation

The Transport for Lancashire Committee is asked to note the update provided in report.

Background and Advice

From April 2020, the Government will fund investment in the Strategic Road Network (SRN) from the National Roads Fund, resources by the Vehicle Excise Duty paid by motorists in England. The Government will shortly be taking decisions about priorities for investment in the next Road Investment Strategy period (RIS2) covering the financial years 2020/21 to 2024/25. The Department for Transport is now consulting stakeholders on Highways England's Strategic Road Network Initial Report and the process through which it will determine whether the Initial Report is sufficiently robust. The closing date for responses is Wednesday 7th February 2018 and full details are available on the Department for Transport's website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/shaping-the-future-of-englands-strategic-roads-ris2>



A complementary consultation on proposals to establish a Major Road Network in England is also due to commence shortly¹.

The SRN comprises nationally significant routes including most motorways and the most important 'A' class roads. Highways England operates, maintains and improves the SRN on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport. The SRN is 4,300 miles long, accounting for only 2.4% of all roads in England by length but carrying a third of all traffic and two thirds of all heavy goods vehicle traffic. Roads comprising the SRN generally exhibit some of the following characteristics:

- Link the main centres of population;
- Facilitate access to major ports, airports and rail terminals;
- Enable access to peripheral regions; or
- Provide key cross-border routes to Scotland and Wales.

In Lancashire, the size of the SRN has reduced progressively since the late 1990s with the responsibility for many former trunk roads transferred to the local highway authorities (Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Council and Blackpool Council). The SRN currently comprises the following:

- **M6** Greater Manchester Boundary to Cumbria Boundary
- **M55** M6 Junction 32 (Broughton) to Junction 4 (Peel Hill)
- **M58** M6 Junction 26 (Orrell) to Merseyside Boundary
- **M61** M6 Junction 30 (Bamber Bridge) to Greater Manchester Boundary
- **M65** M6 Junction 29 (M6) to Junction 10 (Burnley)
- **M66** A56 (Edenfield) to Greater Manchester Boundary
- **A56** M66 (Edenfield) to M65 Junction 8 (Hapton)
- **A585** M55 Junction 3 (Kirkham) to Fleetwood

RIS2 will cover investment in the operation, maintenance and renewal of the existing SRN as well as new enhancements. It will also include completion of any outstanding schemes from the first Road Investment Strategy period and a number of other schemes already announced such as the Lower Thames Crossing. These schemes are likely to require all of the funding available for SRN enhancements in the first half of the RIS2 period; hence, any new schemes agreed in RIS2 would be for construction later in that period and beyond. Furthermore, as part of RIS2 the Government will consider funding improvements on the local road network or an alternative mode of transport where there is clear evidence that such investment will be of benefit to the SRN.

The Government has five key aims for RIS2:

- **Economy** – providing investment that yields increased productivity and economic output;
- **Network Capability** – providing a network that can meet future demands and support growth for the long term;

¹ At the time of writing (21/12/17), details of this consultation were not yet available.



- **Safety** – although England has some of the safest roads in the world the Government remains committed to reducing deaths and injuries on the road network;
- **Integration** – very few journeys start or end on the SRN; almost all will use other transport networks, so the Government will seek new opportunities for linking the SRN with local roads, major roads and other modes of transport; and
- **Environment** – the Government will continue to drive the transition to a decarbonised network that is environmentally and locally sensitive and will continue to tackle the negative external impacts of the SRN, with RIS2 to make a positive contribution to the environment and air quality.

Highways England's Initial Report comprises an informative statement of its priorities (safety, customer service and delivery) and the progress it has made to date. The report also sets out how the company has thought about future investment needs following extensive consultation with customers, stakeholders and the Secretary of State for Transport as shareholder, as well as improving its understanding of SRN infrastructure, performance and future challenges. Highways England is proposing that investment in the SRN over the next 20 years should focus on achieving consistency around four categories of road:

- Smart motorways (routes with the highest demand, evolving with technology);
- Conventional motorways (in their current form);
- Expressways (a new concept for the busiest 'A' class roads in the SRN, with better design, technology and on-road response and alternative roads for non-motorised users and slow vehicles);
- All-purpose trunk roads (the remaining 'A' class roads in the SRN).

As part of the consultation, the DfT is seeking views on the proposed four categories and the development of Expressways. The new 'Expressway' concept essentially comprises the upgrading of a number of existing 'A' class roads in the SRN to provide motorway performance and enhanced technology similar to that already being introduced as part of current 'Smart' motorway upgrades. Expressways will be dual carriageways with grade-separated junctions; non-motorised users and slow moving vehicles will not be permitted.

There are ten consultation questions in all, most of which will require careful consideration in order to answer effectively. Of particular interest to LEPs will be the questions relating to the current size of the SRN, specifically whether there are local roads the DfT should consider including in the SRN and conversely, whether there are roads currently in the SRN that should be removed. Responses to these particular questions would be best prepared alongside any response to the complementary consultation on proposals to establish a Major Road Network.