



## **LEP – Sub Committee**

### **LEP - Transport for Lancashire Committee**

**Private and Confidential: No**

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### **Key Route Network for Lancashire** (Appendix 'A' refers)

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#### **Executive Summary**

As part of the development of a Strategic Transport Plan for the North, Transport for the North (TfN) has recently commenced work on defining a strategically important Key Route Network (KRN) for the North of England. This network will extend beyond Highways England's Strategic Road Network (SRN) to include the most important local highway authority roads considered to perform a 'strategic' role.

Lancashire does not currently have a defined Key Route Network. It is therefore proposed that Transport for Lancashire progresses with defining a draft Lancashire Key Route Network within TfN's timescale, ie by early 2017. Agreement on an approach and selection criteria at the outset is critical; proposals for both are set out in this report.

#### **Recommendation**

The Transport for Lancashire Committee is asked to approve the approach and selection criteria for defining a Lancashire Key Route Network as set out in this report.

## **Background and Advice**

As part of the development of a Strategic Transport Plan for the North, Transport for the North (TfN) has recently commenced work on defining a strategically important Key Route Network (KRN) for the North of England. This network will extend beyond Highways England's Strategic Road Network (SRN) to include the most important local highway authority roads considered to perform a 'strategic' role. TfN contends that the establishment of such a network will enable it to articulate a compelling argument to Government for funding to support inter-connectivity and economic growth across local authority boundaries, and intends to include a Northern Key Route Network in its Integrated Roads Report, due to be finalised early in 2017.



In his July 2015 Budget, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the creation of a new Roads Fund to be in place from April 2020, and through which all revenue raised from Vehicle Excise Duty in England will be allocated and invested directly back into the SRN. The fund can also be used to support improvements on the local road network where it can be clearly demonstrated that such investment would benefit the SRN. TfN considers that with an agreed KRN for the North in place, it will be in a stronger position to secure funding through the Government's next Road Investment Strategy (RIS2, which will cover the five year period from 2020 to 2025) to invest in the KRN to improve journey time reliability, connectivity, capacity and condition.

The SRN does not function in isolation, with the vast majority of traffic movements using local road networks to access and egress the SRN. Furthermore, with a high proportion of freight continuing to move by road, freight and logistics operations are critically reliant on the efficient operation of both the SRN and local road networks.

In the North of England, the local road network comprises some 52,000 route miles, 5,000 of which are 'A' class roads. There are now 50 local highway authorities responsible for this network, ranging in size from Lancashire and Cumbria County Councils to much smaller unitary authorities such as Blackpool and Halton. This fragmentation has led to calls for a new approach by representatives of network users, particularly with regard to those routes considered to perform a 'strategic' as opposed to a 'local' role.

In autumn 2014, the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund commissioned a substantial, high profile two year study 'Major Roads for the Future' in England, with the objective of developing a long term (to 2040) vision for such a network to inform and influence policy making during the current Parliament and for the longer term. An early task for the study included the definition of a 'network of interest' that extends beyond the SRN to include the most important local highway authority roads considered to have a 'strategic' role. The study reported in October 2016 and includes a proposal that the Government's new Roads Fund should be used to finance improvement schemes across this 'Major Road Network' in support of economic growth and quality of life. The authors have also informed TfN that they would support the use of the Roads Fund to finance improvements on the North's KRN.

Alongside the Rees Jeffreys commission, 'Key Route Networks' (KRN) are emerging through various devolution deals, particularly in areas such as Greater Manchester, Merseyside and West Yorkshire where the abolition of County Councils in 1986 created a plethora of smaller local highway authorities, fragmenting network management, maintenance and improvement.

The establishment of a KRN for the North would not involve any changes to the existing functions and responsibilities of local highway authorities for the local road network. TfN intends to follow its principle of subsidiarity, working with partners to identify and agree the KRN. TfN would undertake an annual 'light touch' review of the KRN to ensure that it evolves and is amended to take account of new



developments, changing circumstances and new highway improvements. A major review would then take place every five years.

### A Key Route Network for Lancashire

Lancashire does not currently have a defined Key Route Network. Given that TfN has commenced work on defining a KRN for the North, it is proposed that Transport for Lancashire progresses with defining a Lancashire Key Route Network within TfN's timescale. To not do so risks TfN's consultants defining a network in Lancashire as part of their current commission that may not necessarily take local requirements into account.

It will be important to agree selection criteria at the outset to ensure that the KRN:

- Has a clear and understandable structure;
- Complements the SRN and the rail and bus networks;
- Is consistent with the KRN's of Transport for the North and adjacent Combined Authority and Local Authority areas;
- Is consistent with established motorway diversion routes;
- Is consistent with resilient networks established following the 2014 Transport Resilience Review; and
- Is of a size that can be managed effectively as a single entity.

Lancashire's KRN should therefore:

- Include all roads that comprise the Primary Route Network (PRN);
- Provide access to city and town centres and to existing and future strategic housing and employment, logistics and distribution sites, including Enterprise Zones and major ports that are not already served by the PRN;
- Generally exclude roads within city and town centres other than inner ring roads and city/town centre bypasses;
- Connect to all motorway junctions;
- Include roads that are important for the movement of freight; and
- Include high frequency bus routes, for example, routes carrying 6 or more buses per hour in either direction that are outwith city and town centres.

The Primary Route Network will need reviewing as part of this process to ensure it remains fit for purpose. The last full review was in 1985, although a small number of revisions have been made as new roads have been built. Inclusion of other 'A' class roads in Lancashire's KRN will require an evidenced justification in terms of satisfying one or more of the above selection criteria. Consideration should also be given to the inclusion of 'B' class roads and classified unnumbered roads on the same basis, but the inclusion of any such roads in the KRN will require reclassification.



### Timetable for identifying a Key Route Network

The following timetable for this work is proposed:

- 1) Transport for Lancashire to approve the approach and criteria set out in this report at its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016;
- 2) The shadow Lancashire Combined Authority is briefed on the approach and timescale for defining a Lancashire Key Route Network at its next meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2016;
- 3) Transport for Lancashire considers a draft Key Route Network at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2017, at which approval would be sought to share with Transport for the North, Highways England and district councils in their capacity as local planning authorities, and to begin discussions with other interested parties including adjacent Combined Authority and Local Authority areas;
- 4) The shadow Lancashire Combined Authority is briefed on the draft Key Route Network at its first meeting post 11<sup>th</sup> January 2017;
- 5) An agreed final Key Route Network is included in the next Lancashire Local Transport Plan (LTP4).



## Appendix A – The Road Network in England

The road network in England is currently organised through three tiers:

- The **Strategic Road Network (SRN)**, comprising nationally significant routes including most motorways and the most important 'A' class roads. It is managed on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport by Highways England, a Government company charged with operating, maintaining and improving the SRN. 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; and
- 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 M6, M55, M58, M61 and M65 (to Junction 10) together with the all-purpose A56 linking the M66 with the M65 in East Lancashire and the A585 linking Fleetwood with the M55.

- The **Primary Route Network (PRN)**, comprising non-motorway trunk roads and the more important local authority 'A' class roads. In conjunction with motorways, the PRN provides a national network for medium / longer distance traffic serving places of traffic importance throughout Great Britain. The PRN is identifiable by direction signs with a green background; these show a limited number of forward 'primary destinations', which can include key nodes on the PRN even though the location may not be a significant traffic generator.

Although not a road classification as such, primary routes are required to be open to all classes of traffic without restriction and must not have permanent or environmental weight restrictions upon any part of them. The Department for Transport expects local authorities to maintain primary routes in good order.

- The **Local Road Network**, comprising the remaining local authority 'A' class roads, all 'B' class roads and those 'minor' roads maintainable at the public expense that are classified unnumbered or unclassified. The vast majority of roads (some 60%) fall within the unclassified category.