



Department
for Transport

Proposals for the Creation of a Major Road Network Consultation

Moving Britain Ahead



Décember 2017



Department
for Transport

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ISBN: 978-1-84864-198-3

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1. Foreword

**The Rt Hon
Chris Grayling MP**
Secretary of State for Transport



Our industrial strategy sets out how we are building a Britain fit for the future, creating a stronger, fairer and more productive economy that will allow us to prosper in the world. A central foundation of that productivity is infrastructure, the essential underpinning of our lives and work. Delivering our industrial strategy needs transport investment to connect people and businesses, and to move goods efficiently to their market. This will raise productivity and improve quality of life across our regions.

The Government is already acting on this – allocating over £61 billion in capital investment for transport infrastructure up to 2020/21. A large proportion of this spending will be on the rail and strategic road networks – routes which carry the highest volumes of traffic and where any delays impose high costs. Highways England and Network Rail are completing vital schemes which improve journeys for rail passengers, road users and freight operators, such as the construction of the new A556 dual carriageway that bypasses the communities of Tabley, Mere and Bucklow Hill which opened in March of this year.

To give our economy an even stronger boost, to unlock housing and to relieve communities overwhelmed with traffic we see a strong case for increasing investment on the most important roads currently managed by local authorities. We have built on the work of the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund report, *A Major Road Network for England*.¹ This consultation

document now puts forward proposals for creating a network of England's most important routes which complement our motorways and strategic trunk roads.

We propose to create a Major Road Network, of approximately the same mileage as the network for which Highways England is responsible. We propose to create a specific new funding stream which will be dedicated to investing in this network and raising the performance standards which motorists experience on it. The Government cannot deliver this programme in isolation; involving local and regional interests will ensure that the improvements are of most value to the economy. This consultation document seeks views on our plans for defining the major road network, investment planning and the criteria for eligibility and assessment.

Improving the roads in this network will enable more reliable travel for road users, more certainty over freight deliveries and more capacity for the journeys which are the lifeblood of our economy. This investment can improve quality of life by opening up land to allow much-needed housing and the development of bypasses to relieve communities of intrusive traffic.

Your responses will help identify how, through this initiative, we can seize this opportunity to deliver the best outcomes for road users and unlock wider benefits for our economy.

1 <http://www.reesjeffreys.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/A-Major-Road-Network-for-England-David-Quarmby-and-Phil-Carey-Rees-Jeffreys-Road-Fund-October-2016.pdf>

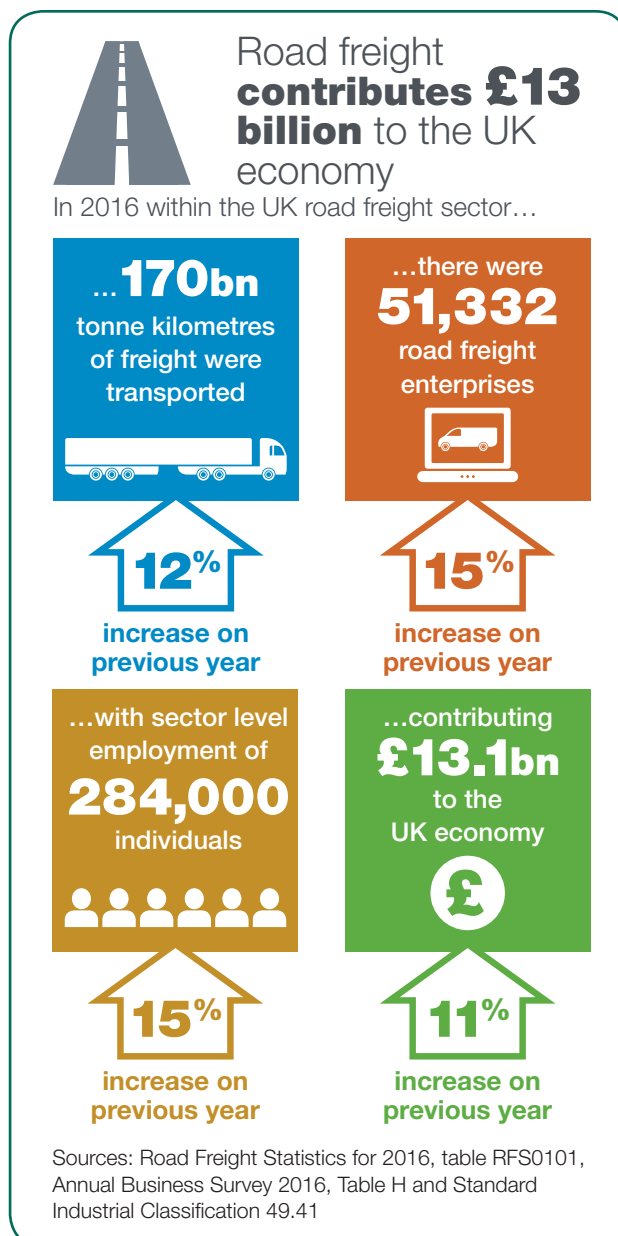
2. Executive Summary

Earlier this year, the Transport Investment Strategy was published. This set out how the Government is responding to today's transport challenges through transport investment, delivering the Industrial Strategy, while putting the travelling public at the heart of transport decision-making.

As part of the Strategy, the Government committed to creating a Major Road Network (MRN) across England. This consultation outlines the Government's proposals for this network and seeks views on its core principles, the definition of the network, investment planning, and eligibility and investment assessment.

In creating this network, the Government has five central policy objectives. These are:

- **Reduce congestion** – alleviating local and regional congestion, reducing traffic jams and bottlenecks.
- **Support economic growth and rebalancing** – supporting the delivery of the Industrial Strategy, contributing to a positive economic impact that is felt across the regions.
- **Support housing delivery** – unlocking land for new housing developments.
- **Support all road users** – recognising the needs of all users, including cyclists, pedestrians and disabled people.
- **Support the Strategic Road Network (SRN)** – complementing and supporting the existing SRN by creating a more resilient road network in England.



Consultation Focus

This consultation seeks views on three major themes: how to define the network; the investment planning process; and a set of eligibility and investment assessment criteria. In putting forward our proposals, we set out that the MRN will:

- Form a consistent, coherent network, alongside the SRN, to allow better coordination of road investment.
 - Provide funding certainty to roads in the network through use of the National Roads Fund, and raise standards and performance across the new network.
 - Provide clear roles for local and regional partners, who will support the Government to develop and deliver MRN schemes.
- To review the MRN every five years in line with the existing Road Investment Strategy cycle.

Defining the Network

The Government is proposing to shape the MRN using both an objective analytical basis, and local knowledge and requirements. To help respondents in providing their views, a map of an indicative MRN has been published as part of this consultation.

The consultation seeks views on the criteria being used to define the network. We propose:

- To use current traffic data as the starting point by which to identify those roads that should be considered for inclusion in the MRN.
- To use qualitative criteria in order to create a coherent and consistent network.
- To take into account evidence from local and regional partners concerning regional variations.
- To include, where appropriate, previously de-trunked roads.

Spinnaker Tower, Portsmouth



Investment Planning

The Government is proposing roles for local, regional and national bodies to support long-term strategic thinking about the investment needs of the MRN. While Ministers will be the ultimate decision-makers for the MRN Programme, the Government will look to local and regional bodies to work together to develop and prioritise packages of interventions for consideration.

This consultation seeks views on the nature and scope of these roles and how the Investment Programme for the MRN is developed and refreshed. We propose that:

- Local authorities and Sub-national Transport Bodies (STBs), or regional groups will develop Regional Evidence Bases that will include an assessment of the network and identification of priority corridors.
- Regional Evidence Bases will inform the development of the MRN Investment Programme.
- The Investment Programme will be reported on periodically, with both the Investment Programme and Regional Evidence Bases updated every two years.
- There will be a role for Highways England to support local, regional and national bodies involved in the MRN Programme.

Eligibility & Investment Assessment Criteria

MRN funding should target significant interventions which offer transformative solutions to the most economically important local authority 'A' roads, as well as providing value for money for the taxpayer. These solutions will include, but are not limited to, bypasses, major renewal work, major junction improvements, use of technology and the widening of existing MRN roads.

This consultation seeks views on the following proposals:

- MRN schemes will only be considered if they seek funding in excess of £20 million, up to a maximum ceiling of £100 million, and are supported by a local contribution.
- The investment assessment criteria used to assess MRN schemes will be based on the MRN objectives:
 - Reduce congestion
 - Support economic growth and regional rebalancing
 - Support housing delivery
 - Support all road users
 - Support the SRN



3. How Our Roads Are Currently Managed

England's existing road network consists of the Strategic Road Network and the Local Road Network (LRN). The SRN and LRN are funded and managed differently. However, users do not distinguish between the two networks when making journeys, and rightly expect a seamless experience.

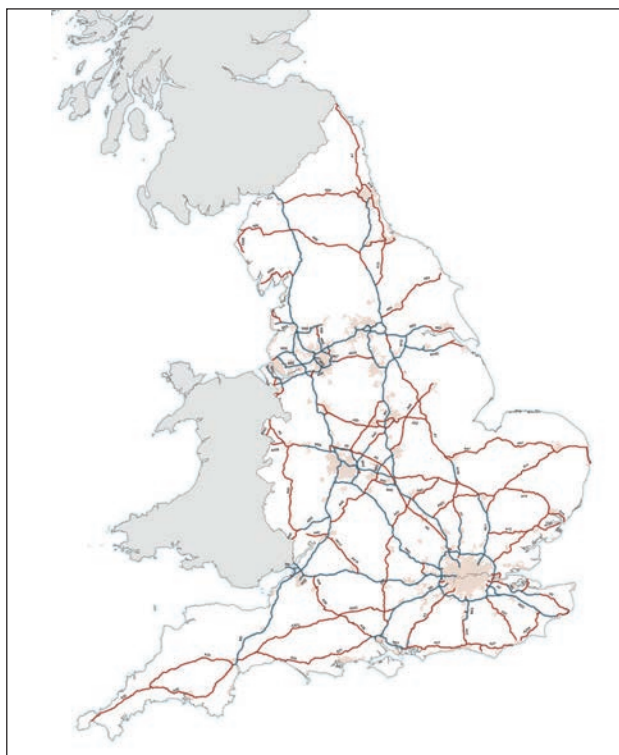
The Strategic Road Network

- Comprises nationally significant roads which connect the main centres of population. These roads provide access to major ports, airports and inter-modal freight terminals and the main cross-border routes to Scotland and Wales.
- Is the busiest part of the road network consisting of 4,400 miles (2% of our road network), but carrying a third of traffic and two thirds of HGV traffic.

The Local Road Network

- Consists of 184,100 miles of road, 98% of the entire road network.
- Responsibility is split between 153 local authorities (LAs).

Strategic Road Network Map



● Key Route Networks:

- Are being developed by combined authorities for their area – in order to improve the management of local roads.
- Will be a network of local roads identified as strategically important to the growth of the economy.
- Provide a city region-wide approach to managing strategically important roads, which allows for more efficient maintenance and action to reduce congestion.

Funding

The Local Road Network

LAs are funded to maintain their local road networks with sustained grant funding and other incentive-driven competitive schemes totalling £6.2 billion between 2015 and 2021. This is chiefly made up of the **Highways Maintenance Fund** and the **Pothole Action Fund**. £1.55 billion has also been allocated over the same period for small local roads schemes from the **Integrated Transport Block**.

Additional funding streams have been created to provide support to the local road network:

- The Department for Transport contributed £7 billion to the **Local Growth Fund** (LGF), to meet priorities set by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).
- The **Large Local Majors Fund** was launched in 2016 and provides funding for capital schemes that are too large to be funded from the regular LGF allocations to LEPs. It supports road and non-road schemes, such as tram extensions.
- £244 million has been awarded to LAs from the **National Productivity Investment Fund** to deliver small projects.
- At Autumn Budget 2017 a £1.7 billion **Transforming Cities Fund** was created to boost intra-urban connectivity in the largest English cities.

The Strategic Road Network

- The SRN is managed by Highways England and its funding is determined by Government through the statutory Road Investment Strategy (RIS) cycle.
- We are now mid-way through the first £15.2 billion RIS and have started planning for the second period beyond 2020.
- The RIS effectively provides long-term funding certainty to facilitate delivery, increase efficiencies and enhance capacity for the SRN, while supporting wider Government objectives including growth and productivity.
- Analysis from the Government's first RIS indicates that there can be significant value for money from investments in major road schemes.
- Through boosting the productivity of local economies and improving journey times for businesses and commuters major road schemes produce an average benefit of over £4 for every £1 spent.²



4. Opportunities to Improve

The SRN carries one third of England's traffic, despite only accounting for 2% of all roads by length. It was in recognition of the critical importance of the SRN that the Government moved to put funding for the SRN on a stable, long-term footing through the Highways England reforms. Building on this, the Rees Jeffreys (RJ) Road Fund Report highlighted a further set of economically important roads that deserve a similar level of attention to the SRN.

The RJ Report recognised the success of the 'roads reform' of the SRN, drawing links between the effective regime for delivering successive five-year programmes of investment on the SRN and the opportunities a similar approach could bring for LA 'A' roads.

The RJ Report highlighted that:

- These roads need to cater for an even broader mix of users than the SRN, including small businesses, commuters, manufacturers, freight, leisure and tourism.
- Many of these regionally important roads cross numerous LA boundaries. Their management can be inconsistent as different LAs take different approaches to different stretches of the same road. They require more consistent and coordinated management than the rest of the LRN.
- As part of the LRN, these significant LA 'A' roads do not receive the benefits of long-term funding certainty and efficiencies provided by RIS. There would be benefits in considering an investment planning pipeline across this network of LA 'A' roads.

- The entire road network would work more effectively if a portion of the National Roads Fund (NRF) were to be dedicated for LA major roads as well as the SRN. This would help close the funding gap between the two sets of roads.

These findings were central to the Government's decision, announced as part of its Transport Investment Strategy, to develop proposals for the MRN. This work is discussed in more detail in the following sections of this document.



5. A National Major Road Network

Introduction

In July 2017 the Department published the Transport Investment Strategy. This set out the Department's priorities and approach for future transport investment decisions. It described:

- Our investment in transport infrastructure.
- The priorities that will guide future investment decisions.
- The institutional frameworks within which those decisions will be taken.
- The actions we are taking to help us meet our ambitions.

This included how transport investment can deliver a stronger, fairer Britain – with priority for projects which cut congestion, support growth, boost Britain's global competitiveness, help rebalance the economy and unlock new housing. The creation of a MRN across England is a key step in the delivery of the strategy.



Objectives

The priorities identified by the Transport Investment Strategy are central to delivering a stronger, fairer Britain. These priorities form the backbone of the five MRN objectives:

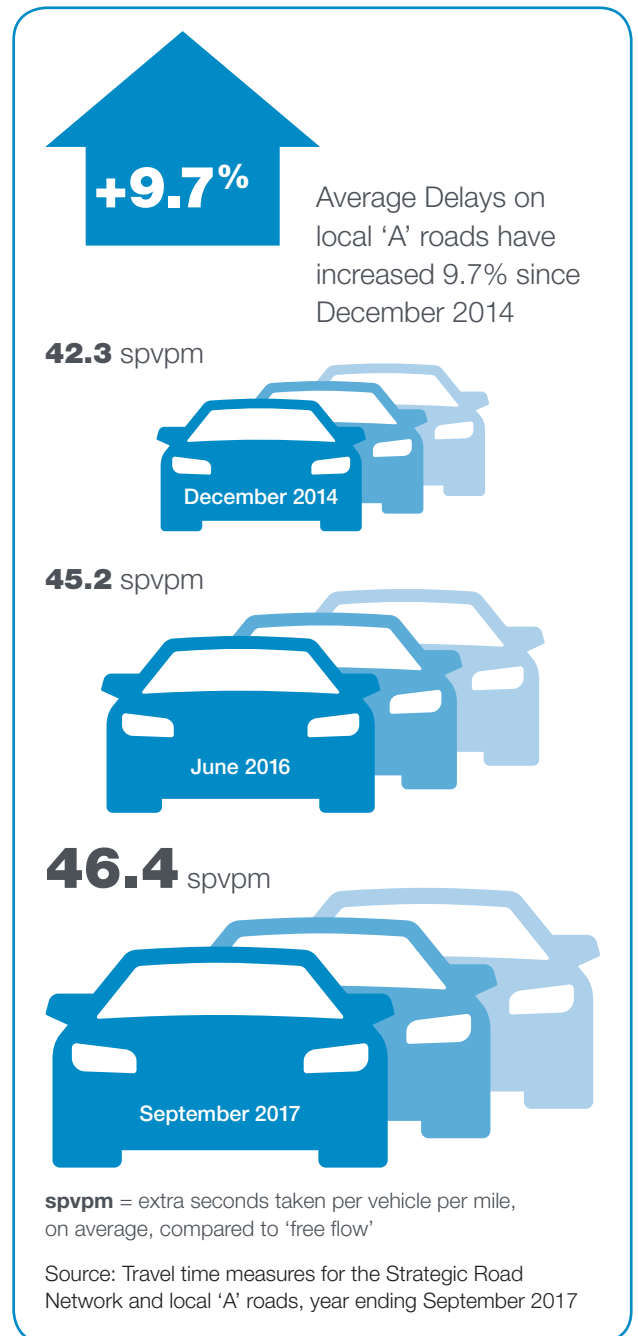
Reduce Congestion

Congestion creates delays and bottlenecks on heavily-used routes, and has a far-reaching economic impact.

- The RIS estimated that the year 2040 could see congestion on the SRN costing the freight industry £37 billion, and each household spending an average of 16 hours stuck in traffic a year.³
- Delays on local A-roads are significantly longer than on SRN roads.⁴

We need to upgrade and enhance the local road network, making it better able to cope with demand by adding capacity to reduce congestion and crowding. MRN investments will make journeys more comfortable and reliable for users, and make possible new trips that were previously impractical due to frequent or unpredictable delays.

Tackling congestion can also bring about environmental and safety improvements. Managing congestion needs to be environmentally sustainable, and solutions are not limited to adding extra miles of tarmac, but can also include making road layouts more efficient, or investing in the way the network is managed.



3 Road Investment Strategy: 2015-2020.

4 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/travel-time-measures-for-the-strategic-road-network-and-local-a-roads-october-2016-to-september-2017>

Support Economic Growth & Rebalancing

Investment in our road network can better connect people and businesses to markets, boosting economic activity and productivity. This makes places more attractive to businesses and people, encouraging further investment. By improving the capacity, reliability, safety and connectivity of the network, road investment facilitates journeys for people and businesses and improves economic performance.

The Transport Investment Strategy set out our objectives and priorities for ensuring that regional rebalancing is taken into account as a part of transport investment decisions. This included making sure investments reflect the needs and priorities of different areas, taking into account the balance of spending between different regions and assessing investments for their contribution to rebalancing. We have recently published a new Rebalancing Toolkit and associated business case guidance which together are



designed to improve the focus, quality and transparency of 'rebalancing' evidence in investment decision-making and ensure that evidence is applied more consistently. We will consider how this new guidance will apply to the MRN programme as it is developed.

Over 16 billion miles were driven on local authority 'A' roads by vans and lorries in England in 2016



12.9bn van miles



3.5bn lorry miles

Source: Road Traffic Estimates for 2016, table TRA4205

Support Housing Development

We face an immense challenge to provide the houses that will support communities to grow sustainably. The Government's housing white paper recognises that transport infrastructure is key to unlocking development and delivering places people want to live. Road schemes can create new links between communities and workplaces to deepen local labour markets, connect housing developments to the network, provide new routes on city and commuter networks or contribute to creating places that promote wellbeing through the management of congestion or provision for public transport. MRN investment decisions will include consideration of how proposed schemes will unlock land for housing developments, and help to improve how transport is planned for new developments from the outset.



Support All Users

The MRN offers us the opportunity to support the needs of all road users. Proposals to improve the MRN, particularly through town and village centres, should consider the needs of both motorised and non-motorised users. In bringing forward proposals for improvements to the MRN, we will expect the needs of all users, including cyclists, pedestrians and disabled people, to be considered and benefits for them delivered as part of the solutions proposed.



Support the SRN

In practice the LRN and SRN appear as one network, with users passing seamlessly from one to the other. To support users' journeys and ensure a seamless transition between the two networks, MRN investments will also focus on improving flows between the SRN and the MRN and providing resilience to the SRN via the MRN during disruption or planned closures.



Case Study: Norwich Northern Distributor Road

The Department is providing £77.5m towards the cost of a 14 km dual carriageway route from the A47 Postwick Junction around the east and north of Norwich to a junction with the A140. Norfolk County Council is separately funding its extension to the A1067 (making a total route length of 20km). The road is due to open in spring 2018.

The existing transport network inhibits current and future housing and employment growth in Norwich. There is no northern bypass and no satisfactory routes for traffic to bypass this part of the city. Traffic therefore has to come into the city on radial routes and use the congested Inner Ring Road to reach the A47. The central road network is not designed (being medieval) to provide for significant car traffic.

The Norwich Northern Distributor Road is expected to reduce congestion on radial routes and the Norwich Outer Ring Road and prevent rat-running on inappropriate routes to the north of Norwich which have caused environmental problems. This scheme will help unlock the delivery of up to 10,000 new houses and 95 hectares of employment land, (largely for office employment) leading to the creation of around 12,200 jobs. Schemes similar to the Norwich Northern Distributor Road could be funded from the MRN in the future.



6. Our Proposals

This consultation and the questions it asks focus on the key decisions that will form the basis for the creation of a MRN in England. This includes the core principles that have guided our work to date and the three major areas of the MRN Programme around which this consultation is based:

- Defining the Network
- Investment Planning
- Eligibility & Investment Assessment Criteria

The detail of our proposals and the questions posed are set out in the following pages.



MRN Core Principles

In order to deliver the objectives previously described, we believe there are a number of fundamental principles that must be at the heart of our plans for the MRN and its programme of investment.

Increased Certainty of Funding

The creation of the MRN, and use of the National Roads Fund, needs to provide a long-term funding stream, secured across a number of years. This will enable investment planning and the creation of a MRN pipeline of investments, which over time will raise the standard and performance of the network.

A Consistent Network

The MRN must be consistent across England. To achieve this, it must be defined via a set of criteria and centrally agreed, with the final decision on inclusions resting with the Secretary of State. Its size must also ensure that an improvement in performance can be achieved across its entirety. Local and regional bodies will play a key part in developing and applying the criteria in their areas. This consultation, and the indicative network it sets out, is the first step in the engagement required to agree the MRN.

A Coordinated Investment Programme

Many of the regionally important roads that will form the MRN cross numerous LA boundaries. This means that their management and prioritisation can vary across their length. MRN roads, whilst remaining the responsibility of LAs, should benefit from a more coordinated programme of investments.

Clear Local, Regional & National Roles

LAs will remain responsible for the roads included in the MRN. However, to bring more joined-up focus on investment planning to these important roads we are setting out proposals as part of this consultation for how local, regional and national bodies will work together to deliver the MRN Programme.

A Focus on Enhancement & Major Renewals

MRN funding needs to bring about improvements in standards and performance across the network. Investments will therefore focus on enhancements or major renewal schemes. The day-to-day maintenance of the MRN will remain the responsibility of individual highways authorities with separate funding through existing arrangements. It is a guiding principle of the MRN that local highways maintenance funding should not be adversely affected by the creation of the MRN.

Strengthening Links with the Strategic Road Network

The RIS and MRN Programmes should not act in isolation. Both networks will play a key role in users' journeys and users should expect a seamless transition between the two. In developing the MRN, we will need to recognise its links with the SRN and ensure that the two programmes of investment are complementary. We expect regional bodies such as STBs to play a crucial part in ensuring that the two programmes are aligned.

Do you agree with the proposed core principles for the MRN outlined in this document?

1



Defining the Network

The extent of the network must strike a balance between capturing the most economically important regional roads and ensuring that its size is appropriate, enabling investments that can drive an improvement in performance across its entirety.

The definition of the MRN has already been the subject of detailed work by the RJ Report. Prospective STBs have also been developing proposals for networks within their areas. In developing proposals for the MRN, we have considered these pieces of work and the approach they took. It was clear that, as set out in our core principles, a consistent approach must be taken to defining the MRN across England.

Any definition must make the best use of local and regional knowledge to ensure that the most economically important roads are captured. To strike this balance appropriately, we are proposing the use of both quantitative and qualitative criteria to define the MRN. This approach ensures two things:

- The network is coherent, i.e. more than just a set of fragmented sections of road.
- The network has a sound, objective analytical basis, yet also has the flexibility to factor in local knowledge and requirements.

Our proposed use of quantitative and qualitative criteria to define the MRN is set out in more detail here.

Quantitative Criteria

Following analysis and quality assurance, we have concluded that the quantitative criteria used by the RJ Report are appropriate for defining the MRN. We therefore propose that traffic flow levels be used to identify an initial set of roads to be considered for inclusion in the network.

We propose that two criteria should be used:

- Roads where traffic flow is greater than a defined level.
- Roads where traffic flow is greater than a defined level (but lower than in criteria 1), and in addition, the proportion of HGV/LCVs⁵ on that section of road is also greater than a defined level.

In both cases traffic flow is measured by the Average Annual Daily Flow (AADF).⁶

The first criterion factors in particularly heavily trafficked roads, while the second factors in roads that are of particular economic importance for transporting goods. As discussed further on page 24, this stage only identifies a set of individual road sections as candidates for inclusion. These then require further work to create a coherent network.

⁵ Light Commercial Vehicles.

⁶ For more information on AADF please see here: <https://www.dft.gov.uk/traffic-counts/about.php>

We believe that the use of traffic data is the most robust way of identifying candidate roads for inclusion in the MRN. We have considered other possible criteria, such as congestion data. However, our analysis showed that the use of this data was not consistent with our wider objectives for the MRN, for example by failing to capture the full range of regional roads that play a vital role in supporting the country's economy.

Using the latest data to define a network

The network in the RJ Report was based on the road network and traffic levels in 2014. The Department intends to update this in the final network following consultation, to ensure that it is based on the latest available data.

Current vs. projected traffic levels

We do not propose to use projected traffic levels in an attempt to 'future-proof' the network. This is because there are numerous projection scenarios, insufficient certainty to choose between them, and the choice of scenario used will influence the final network. Published traffic projections present averages for particular regions and road types but they do not relate to individual roads. Using these averages to project traffic changes on specific sections of road adds further uncertainty. We therefore propose to use 'current' traffic levels to define the final network. We also recognise the need to ensure that the network remains relevant and up to date, and reflects changes to local economies such as new housing developments, business parks and transport hubs. Our plans for refreshing the network periodically are laid out on page 26.



De-trunked Roads

Between 2001 and 2009 Government took the decision to de-trunk a number of roads, removing them from the SRN and the management of Highways England's predecessor. This was done so that LAs could fully integrate the management and improvement of these roads with land use planning and local transport plans. Given these roads have historically been deemed of national interest we propose to include them, where appropriate, within the MRN.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the quantitative criteria outlined and their proposed application?

Qualitative Criteria

The MRN cannot be defined by quantitative criteria alone. This would fail to recognise local and regional characteristics and would produce a series of fragmented road links across the country. In order to define a coherent network, a series of qualitative criteria also needs to be applied.

This was an approach that the RJ Report also used to define their network. As with the quantitative approach outlined above, we propose to adopt the qualitative criteria used by the RJ Report, with some additions to better reflect the national objectives that we have already set out. These proposed qualitative criteria are:

Ensuring a Coherent Network: The MRN must be consistent and coherent across the country when considered alongside the SRN. In order to achieve this we propose the following:

- Adding links to join up stretches of road that meet the traffic thresholds to form continuous sections of road.
- Removing isolated links and those that form part of a corridor where most links did not reach the traffic thresholds.

Linking Economic Centres: Ensuring that major conurbations, airports, ports and other significant economic centres are connected via the MRN. This includes:

- Connecting all towns/cities with a population greater than 50,000.

- In specific circumstances we will consider using the MRN to connect economic centres with a population below this threshold. For example, towns that contribute substantially to the economy in peripheral areas.
- Connecting all major ports, airports and key transport hubs not already linked by the SRN.

Access to/Resilience for the SRN: As per our objectives, a key consideration in defining the MRN should be its interplays with the SRN, both in terms of access between the two and improving resilience if one should experience disruption or require long-term works.

Whilst the MRN will interact with locally defined Key Route Networks, we do not believe that this should be a factor in defining the MRN as a result of the different roles performed. As a regional network the MRN will principally connect different economic centres, whilst KRN support connections within single economic centres.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the qualitative criteria outlined and their application?

3





M60 intersection with the A580

Indicative MRN

To support responses to this consultation we have developed and published, alongside this consultation document, an indicative map.⁷ This is largely derived from our work on the RJ Report, with some refinements and the addition, where appropriate, of those roads de-trunked between 2001 and 2009. Whilst this map is representative of how we would expect a future MRN to look, it is important to stress that it is not the final proposal. Further work will be required following consultation to refine the criteria based on the responses received and apply them to the latest traffic data. As part of this process we intend to undertake further engagement with local and regional bodies on the emerging network before publishing a final, agreed network.

Refreshing the MRN

It will be important for the MRN to remain relevant and reflect the latest data and changes to economic centres and road use. However, this must be balanced against the need to provide a stable platform on which the MRN Investment Programme can be delivered.

Through the RIS cycle the Department considers, at regular intervals, proposals for changing the extent of the SRN by trunking or de-trunking roads. We will make decisions about the appropriate shape of the SRN and MRN in a joined-up way to ensure that both networks are consistent, coherent and complementary.

We propose to review the MRN every five years to coincide with the existing RIS timetable. This will involve updating and

reviewing the data that are used and engagement with all bodies involved in the delivery of the MRN programme.

Have both the quantitative and qualitative criteria proposed in the consultation document identified all sections of road you feel should be included in the MRN?

4

Have the quantitative or qualitative criteria proposed in the consultation identified sections of road you feel should not be included in the MRN?

5

Do you agree with the proposal for how the MRN should be reviewed in future years?

6

⁷ The indicative map produced to support this consultation can be found at maps.dft.gov.uk/major-road-network-consultation

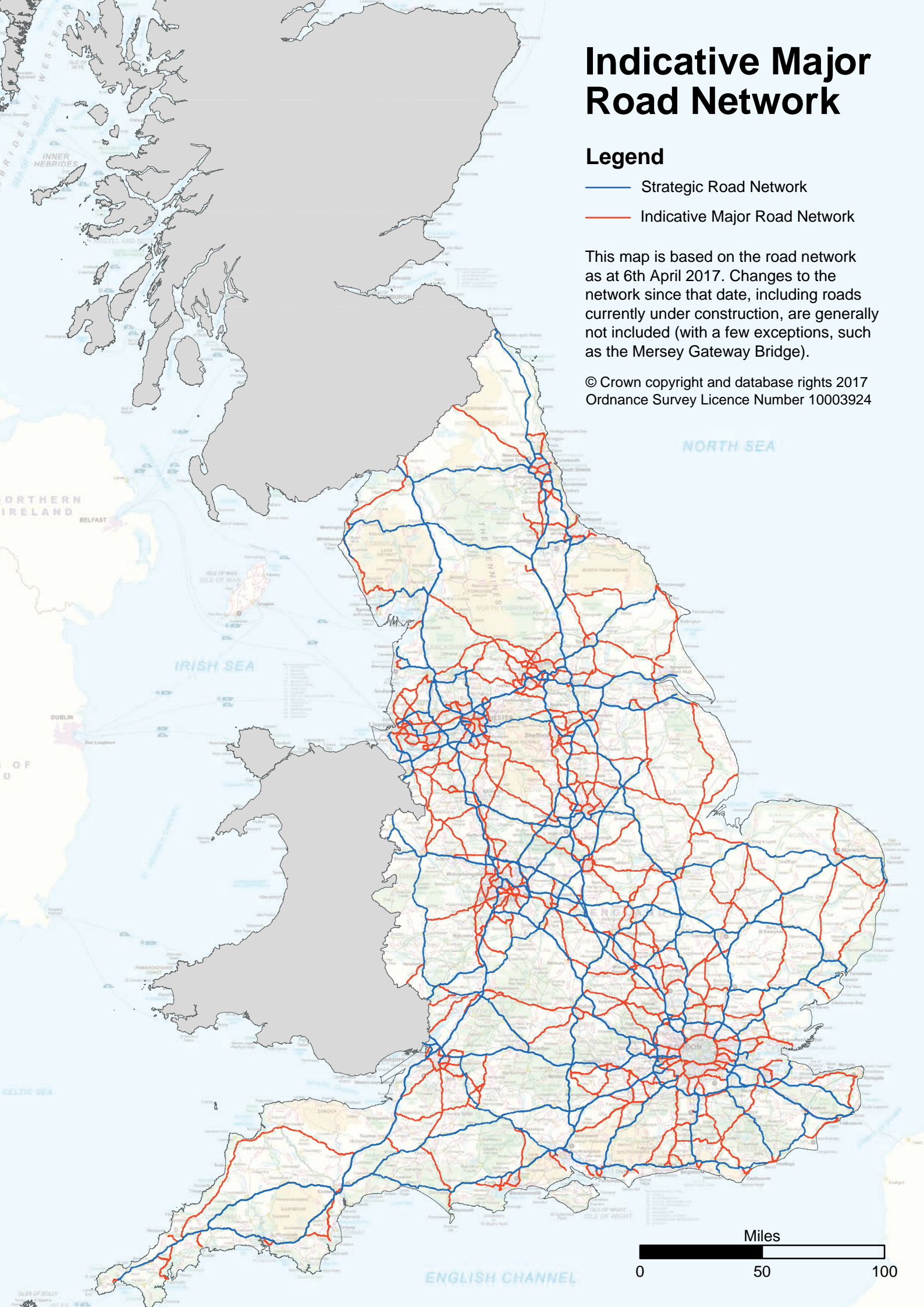
Indicative Major Road Network

Legend

- Strategic Road Network
- Indicative Major Road Network

This map is based on the road network as at 6th April 2017. Changes to the network since that date, including roads currently under construction, are generally not included (with a few exceptions, such as the Mersey Gateway Bridge).

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Investment Planning

The creation of the MRN should support long-term strategic consideration of investment needs in order to make best use of the targeted funding that will be made available from the National Roads Fund and deliver the best possible result for the user.

The important national and regional role played by roads included in the MRN means that individual LAs cannot plan investments in isolation, nor can decisions be completely centralised at either a regional or national level. As set out in the core principles section of this document we propose that, alongside the local role of highways authorities, there needs to be a strong regional focus for investment planning within a consistent national network. This is not only about LAs working more closely together, many already do, it is also about looking at these roads and the network they form from a regional and national perspective. This is something that at present individual LAs are not necessarily incentivised to do.

The creation of the MRN does not mean that its roads need to become the responsibility of a single organisation, and we are not proposing any changes to current LA responsibilities. Our objectives for the MRN can be achieved through an increased focus on these roads at all levels, local, regional and national. This will avoid unnecessary upheaval and retain local accountability. By working together on investment planning for the MRN in their region, areas can develop a long-term strategic approach to the improvement and enhancement of the MRN.

A Regional Evidence Base

STBs, where they exist, are best placed to carry out this important strategic role for the MRN. They are bodies designed to enable regions to speak with one voice on strategic transport planning and the skills and expertise that they are developing will be vital in delivering our objectives for the MRN. Where STBs have yet to be formed, such as in the East and South West of England we propose that LAs and LEPs should, in consultation with the Department, form agreed regional groups to manage this work, ideally using existing mechanisms. In London we envisage that TfL would take on this role.

We propose that STBs or regional groups would be responsible for developing a Regional Evidence Base which would be the basis for the development of a national MRN Investment Programme. Where STBs exist we expect that the Regional Evidence Base would be developed from the existing Statutory Transport Strategies for which STBs are responsible.

The Regional Evidence Base would be evidence based and should not be limited to performing a mechanical sifting exercise. As a minimum, the Department would expect them to comprise the following:

- An assessment of the overall condition of the existing network and its performance.
- The identification of network-wide issues and priority corridors.

- Analysis of potential region-wide solutions and the development of specific interventions to tackle the issues identified over at least a 5 year period, although we expect and encourage STBs or regions to look beyond this in their strategic planning.
- An assessment of the potential sequencing of the schemes identified.

First and foremost, the role of a Regional Evidence Base is to provide the data on which future investment decisions can be made. The documents should therefore be data led and underpinned by rigorous analysis. Guidance will be issued by the Department to support STBs and regions in the development of their evidence base and we would expect STBs and regions to work together and with the Department to ensure that, as far as possible, there is a consistent approach across the MRN Programme.

The Regional Evidence Bases would be assessed and prioritised across England by the Department and, in consultation with the regions, developed into an Investment Programme which would be approved by Ministers.

Our aspiration is for LAs and LEPs to work together within their regions, and with the Department at a national level, to better understand the needs of the MRN and plan investments accordingly. The aim is to develop the best possible evidence base to enable investments that will deliver an improved network and better outcomes for users.

The MRN Programme

The proposed process for the MRN programme is:

- The Department will issue guidance to regions on the development of Regional Evidence Bases. As well as supporting regions this will ensure that nationally important policies are reflected and that there is a consistent approach across England.
- Engagement at a regional level would allow the Department and bodies such as Highways England to provide support to both LAs and STBs / regional groups in the development of the Regional Evidence Bases.
- Based on the analysis of evidence, initial scheme proposals for investment would be put forward by LAs for inclusion in the Regional Evidence Base. These would be assessed and prioritised at a regional level, and developed into a coherent regional package before being submitted to the Department. We would propose to give regions flexibility on how they design and manage this part of the process.
- The Department, in consultation with the regions, would undertake analysis and national prioritisation based on the evidence provided to allow a nationwide MRN Investment Programme to be created.
- Once schemes are in the MRN Investment Programme LAs, in consultation with their region, would be responsible for their continued development. The Department will be responsible for individual scheme approval at Outline Business Case (OBC) stage and beyond.

- The Department will report on the MRN Investment Programme to reflect the progress made by individual schemes and the latest decision making.
- The MRN Investment Programme, and the Regional Evidence Bases from which it is formed, will also be updated every two years to allow for evidence to be refreshed and for new schemes to enter the programme.

We are proposing that the inclusion of schemes in Regional Evidence Bases is done when schemes are at an early stage, (broadly Strategic Outline Business Case). We do not believe that it would be a good use of money to develop OBCs for all schemes that might be submitted for consideration. In developing and agreeing the MRN Investment Programme, the Department will consider a moderate degree of over-programming to allow for schemes that either fail to demonstrate value for money or to progress to OBC stage as quickly as expected.

Following the launch of the MRN Programme during 2018, we will consider whether there is a need to identify schemes for early entry to the MRN Investment Programme.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the roles outlined for local, regional and national bodies?

7

What additional responsibilities, if any, should be included? Please state at which level these roles should be allocated.

8

Do you agree with our proposals to agree regional groupings to support the investment planning of the MRN in areas where no sub-national transport bodies (STBs) exist?

9

Are there any other factors, or evidence, that should be included within the scope of the Regional Evidence Bases?

10

Case Study: Morpeth Northern Bypass

£21m of DfT funding helped deliver the last section in the A1 - South East Northumberland link road, the Morpeth Northern Bypass. The 2.4 mile single carriageway bypass will relieve congestion in Morpeth as well as improve links to development sites in the town and in the surrounding area, including Blyth and Ashington.

In the future, the MRN could support schemes similar to this £32m bypass which opened in 2017. The Morpeth Northern Bypass improves highway capacity and will reduce traffic congestion in and around Morpeth and provide access to allocated development sites. It will help create over 5,300 jobs across South East Northumberland and between 1,700 and 3,000 jobs in Morpeth and open up large areas north of Morpeth for development of housing and employment land.

Funding

MRN funding will principally be focused on the development and delivery of schemes accepted for development to OBC as part of the MRN Investment Programme. The Department recognises that the development of Regional Evidence Bases will require additional work on the part of regions and their constituent local authorities, especially where there is no existing structure in place. We intend to work with regions and local authorities post consultation to understand better the potential requirements.

In the case of successful schemes, the Department's funding for their delivery would be fixed with the relevant local authority responsible for its effective delivery. As with other Government investment programmes where works are delivered by local authorities, we propose that there should be a requirement for local contributions towards the final cost of the scheme. This will act as an important incentive to ensure that the agreed scheme is delivered to programme and budget.

The Role of Highways England

A core principle of the MRN Programme is to bring more coordinated planning to these important roads. Given Highways England's experience in road investment planning and the need to ensure a seamless transition between the SRN and MRN we propose that Highways England, the body responsible for running the SRN, should also have a role in the MRN Programme.

Highways England, as the manager of the SRN, has a good track record on scheme development and delivery as well as the ongoing management of its network. They already have existing relationships with LAs on the development and delivery of road

schemes as well as on interactions between the local and strategic networks. In some cases this has seen LAs deliver schemes funded by Highways England, whilst in other cases the company has provided support to authorities in the delivery of schemes on their networks. The creation of the MRN offers the opportunity to build on and where necessary improve these existing relationships and take advantage of the skills and expertise Highways England have to support the delivery of the MRN Programme, while recognising that delivery of the RIS is their primary focus.

This role could include:

- **Programme Support:** Highways England could have a role in the governance of the MRN Investment Programme advising the Department on the development of the MRN pipeline and its interactions with the SRN, and providing wider support as needed.
- **Analytical Support:** Highways England could support the Department in analysing the Regional Evidence Bases in order to prepare advice to Ministers on the MRN Investment Programme.
- **Cost Estimate Support:** Highways England could support the Department in assessing scheme cost estimates.
- **Delivery Support:** Highways England could support, if required, LAs in the delivery of agreed MRN schemes. This could include advising LAs on design and development as well as supporting access to the supply chain to enable LAs to take advantage of economies of scale that may be available.

Do you agree with the role that has been outlined for Highways England?

Eligibility & Investment Assessment Criteria

Eligibility

The Department does not intend to replace existing funding streams such as formula funding for Highway Maintenance or Integrated Transport Block funding which may be directed to any LA roads including the MRN network.

For that reason, we propose that funding to improve and enhance the MRN should be targeted towards significant interventions that will transform important stretches of the network.

We propose that only proposals for contributions of £20 million or over will be considered for MRN funding.

As we want this fund to benefit all areas of the country and produce an improvement for users across the network we would expect that most funding requests would not exceed £50 million. Where there is a strong case we would be willing to consider scheme proposals requiring higher contributions, up to a maximum of £100 million.

To get the best value for money, regions and local authority promoters should work to minimise scheme costs through scheme optimisation and the securing of third party contributions, alongside local contributions.

Types of scheme that will be eligible for funding

- **Bypasses** or other new alignments to alleviate congestion in villages and towns and make through journeys quicker, safer and more reliable. In these cases MRN status would normally transfer from the old through route to the new bypass once complete. (Schemes for bypasses could also include measures to revive the old routes through town and village centres to benefit communities, for example through traffic calming and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists).
- **Missing Links** – new roads that link existing stretches of the MRN or SRN, for example a link between two radial routes on the edge of a town, or the final quadrant of a ring road that already circles three quarters of a town or city.
- **Widening of Existing MRN roads** where there is a known congestion pinch point or safety risk. This could include dualling and could be on or offline.
- **Major Structural Renewals** on roads, bridges, tunnels and viaducts on the MRN, where significant work needs to be done to renew the carriageway or to prevent closure or punitive weight restrictions. Such schemes will play a big part in raising the standard of the MRN.
- **Major Junction Improvements** such as grade separation that would improve the performance, flow or safety of the MRN. These could be junctions that link the MRN to the SRN or to other local roads.

Do you agree with the cost thresholds outlined?

- **Variable Message Signs, Traffic Management and the Use of Smart Technology and Data** to raise the performance of defined stretches of the network across a region for the benefit of users will also be considered for funding through the MRN Programme.
- **Packages of Improvements** along a stretch of road, or corridor where a known issue has been identified. Such a package may include elements of safety, widening, junction improvements and new alignment. In these cases, although the scheme may be composed of physically distinct elements, the package as a whole must have a coherent and compelling strategic case that is greater than the sum of its parts. As with renewals, these packages would play a crucial part in raising the standard of the MRN.

Case Study: A13 Widening

This £79m scheme will widen the 3.5km A13 Stanford-le-Hope Bypass from two to three running lanes in each direction.

The A13 corridor in Thurrock links the nationally significant port infrastructure of Tilbury and the new London Gateway Port with the M25 and London. The main objective of the scheme is to increase highway capacity on the A13 in order to reduce congestion and remove constraints to development. This will help unlock the full potential of the corridor to deliver some 4,400 jobs and 700 homes.

The project is scheduled to be complete by spring 2020. Once established, the MRN may support similar road widening schemes.



Exclusions

MRN funding will be focused on interventions that improve the roads defined as part of the MRN. We would not propose to provide funding for the following categories of scheme:

- Schemes on roads which are not on the MRN but simply have a single physical connection to the MRN would not automatically be eligible for funding. Such schemes would only be considered if a compelling case is made that the scheme would have a significant positive impact on the MRN or, in the case of a new road, that it would meet the criteria for being considered part of the MRN once complete.
- Schemes that are wholly on the SRN will not be considered for MRN funding unless there is a compelling case that the benefit is of a distinct local sub-national nature that would not warrant consideration through the Roads Investment Strategy process.
- Public transport enhancements, except where these are included as part of a wider intervention and their inclusion can be shown to support MRN objectives.
- Bids for non-specific LA wide packages or funding pots to cover general improvement of all MRN roads in an area will not be considered.

Do you agree with the eligibility criteria outlined?

Liverpool, Merseyside



MRN Investment Assessment

To support the development of Regional Evidence Bases and a national Investment Programme we are proposing that a clear set of criteria be developed. These support the Government’s overarching objectives for the MRN Programme whilst providing local and regional bodies the flexibility to develop proposals that support the delivery of local and regional objectives.

We propose that these criteria should be as follows:

Objective	Criteria
Reduce Congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alleviate Congestion ● Environmental Impacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improve air quality and biodiversity – Reduce noise and risk of flooding – Protect water quality, landscape and cultural heritage sites
Support Economic Growth & Rebalancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Industrial Strategy: Support regional strategic goals to boost economic growth ● Economic Impact: Improve ability to access new or existing employment sites ● Trade & Gateways Impact: Improve international connectivity, e.g. access to ports & airports
Support Housing Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support the creation of new housing developments by improving access to future development sites and boosting suitable land capacity
Support All Road Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deliver benefits for non-motorised users, including cyclists, pedestrians and disabled people ● Safety Benefits: Reduce the risk of deaths/serious injuries for all users of the MRN
Support the SRN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve end to end journey times across both networks ● Improve journey time reliability ● Improve SRN resilience

Do you agree with the investment assessment criteria outlined?

14

In addition to the eligibility and investment assessment criteria described what, if any, additional criteria should be included in the proposal? Please be as detailed as possible.

15



Interaction with the Road Investment Strategy

Investment in the Strategic Road Network is managed through the RIS. In 2016, the Government set out the aims and processes of the next strategy (RIS2), and in December 2017 the Government opened a consultation on the evidence gathered to support the next RIS.

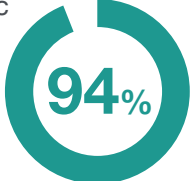
The MRN and RIS are designed to complement one another, and decisions about investment will be made in an integrated way. Highways England already plays an important role in setting RIS2, and will take on a significant role in shaping the MRN programme as well.

The RIS allows for investment away from the SRN in locations where this has a substantial effect on the quality of journey that this network provides. This means that in some cases it is possible that the RIS may invest in the MRN or wider local road network (just as the MRN fund may invest in the SRN in cases where there is a strong sub-regional benefit that would not play as decisive a role in the RIS). However, for the most part, the Government expects investment on the MRN to be funded primarily through the MRN Programme, and integration between the networks to be handled by the cooperation and coordination of the different investment programmes.

First Road Investment Strategy


Road investment delivers significant benefits for users and the economy.

Analysis of newly built roads shows...
Scheme-specific objectives met




94%

For every £1 spend, the average return was more than £4 in long-term benefits



The biggest benefits were:



Source: Analysis of all major schemes completed on the SRN from 2002-2010 using Post Opening Project Evaluations

Is there anything further you would like added to the MRN proposals?

7. Annex A – Consultation Questions

Core Principles

Do you agree with the proposed core principles for the MRN outlined in this document?

1

Defining the MRN

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the quantitative criteria outlined and their proposed application?

2

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the qualitative criteria outlined and their application?

3

Have both the quantitative and qualitative criteria proposed in the consultation document identified all sections of road you feel should be included in the MRN?

4

Have the quantitative or qualitative criteria proposed in the consultation identified sections of road you feel should not be included in the MRN?

5

Do you agree with the proposal for how the MRN should be reviewed in future years?

6

Investment Planning

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the roles outlined for local, regional and national bodies?

7

What additional responsibilities, if any, should be included? Please state at which level these roles should be allocated.

8

Do you agree with our proposals to agree regional groupings to support the investment planning of the MRN in areas where no sub-national transport bodies (STBs) exist?

9

Are there any other factors, or evidence, that should be included within the scope of the Regional Evidence Bases?

10

Do you agree with the role that has been outlined for Highways England?

11

Eligibility & Investment Assessment

Do you agree with the cost thresholds outlined?

12

Do you agree with the eligibility criteria outlined?

13

Do you agree with the investment assessment criteria outlined?

14

In addition to the eligibility and investment assessment criteria described what, if any, additional criteria should be included in the proposal? Please be as detailed as possible.

15

Other Considerations

Is there anything further you would like added to the MRN proposals?

16

8. How to Respond

The consultation period runs for 12 weeks, from Saturday 23rd December 2017 to Monday 19th March 2018. Please make sure that your response reaches us before the closing date as we will not be able to consider responses received later.

You are invited to respond to the consultation online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/dft#consultations>

Alternatively, you may send your response by email to: MRNconsultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Or by post to:

MRN Consultation
Department for Transport
2/15 Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

When responding, please tell us whether you are acting as an individual member of the public or representing the views of an organisation or group. If responding on behalf of a larger organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of its members were assembled. Please include your contact details if you would like to be informed when the response to this consultation is published.

If you would like further copies of this consultation document, or to receive it in a different format, you can contact us using the methods described above.



9. What Will Happen Next?

The Department will analyse consultation responses following closure of the consultation.

A formal consultation response will be published on gov.uk during summer 2018.

The Department will continue to engage with both local and regional bodies to support the finalisation of an MRN Programme to be launched in summer 2018.

Freedom of Information

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

If you want information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence.

In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information, we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Consultation Principles

The consultation is being conducted in line with the Government's key consultation principles. Further information is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>

If you have any comments about the consultation process please contact:

Consultation Co-ordinator
Department for Transport
Zone 1/29 Great Minster House
London SW1P 4DR.

Email consultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk

