
Subject:	Department for Transport Invitation to Bid for "Local Pinch Point Fund"
Cabinet Member:	Dick Tonge Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Key Decision:	No: Briefing Note only

Background

1. As part of the 2012 Autumn Statement the Government announced the creation of a Local Pinch Point Fund worth £170m¹ to remove bottlenecks on the local highway network which are impeding growth. The Fund reflects the Government's strong commitment to supporting economic growth by tackling barriers on the local highway network that may be restricting the movement of goods and people. The Fund is intended to secure immediate impacts on growth and is therefore aimed at those schemes that can be delivered quickly, with the Department for Transport's funding contribution (in the form of capital) only available in financial years 2013-14 and 2014-15.
2. Bidding Guidance was issued on 3rd January - the deadline for bids to DfT is 21st February.

Eligibility

3. The Fund is designed to promote economic growth through the rapid deployment of schemes that remove transport barriers or prevent the emergence of new transport barriers
4. Eligible schemes should be those that provide new or improved links to key economic sites (such as an Enterprise Zone, development site or urban employment centre), or which tackle congestion.
5. Given the strong growth focus of the Fund, and the need to ensure that the limited resources are focussed where they will have the greatest growth impact, the guidance suggests it would be beneficial although not essential

¹ (Note: Although not strictly applicable, if the population formula used to distribute the separately devolved major scheme funding stream is used as a proxy, the Wiltshire "share" would be around £1.7m.)

due to the timescales for submitting applications, for the relevant LEP to be involved in the submission of bids.

6. There are three categories:
 - small schemes requiring DfT funding of between £1 - £5m (DfT will apply proportionate appraisal requirements for schemes of this size)
 - by exception large schemes requiring DfT funding above £5m but no more than £20m. (presumption against bids over £10m unless they are of truly exceptional value).
 - structural maintenance schemes (small or large) where structural condition results in traffic congestion, or where diversions may be adversely affecting the local economy.
7. To ensure strong local commitment, promoters will need to contribute at least **30%** of total scheme costs.
8. Scheme deliverability is of paramount importance and bids must demonstrate that the scheme will be delivered as soon as possible, with supporting evidence.

Selection

9. Having regard to all of the above, it is considered that there is one particularly strong candidate for Wiltshire, where problems relating to the local economy and congestion need addressing, and where a solution is both deliverable and affordable within the opportunity offered by the Fund.
10. The scheme best fitting the bid invitation is the dualling of the A350 north of Chippenham - more specifically between the Malmesbury Road roundabout and Jacksom's Lane. This link is consistently identified as a priority for improvement, and more recent analysis of the impacts of future growth forecast a steady worsening in congestion and journey times. A plan showing the length in question is attached.
11. Furthermore, the improvement does not require planning permission, and can be undertaken with highway limits (ie without land acquisition)
12. The Wiltshire Core Strategy is clear on the priority for improvement along the A350 corridor.
13. Core Policy 66 affirms that:

“The Council, in conjunction with the Highways Agency, Network Rail, transport operators and other agencies, will seek to develop and improve the strategic transport network to support the objectives and policies in the core strategy and local transport plan”

and continues:

“The A350 primary route carries the highest volume of traffic and HGV movements on the county's non-trunk road primary routes. Because of its strategic importance, and the locally significant traffic growth that has occurred in the last ten years, the route will be selectively improved to maintain and enhance journey time reliability.”

14. The development templates within the Core Strategy and the accompanying Infrastructure Delivery Plan further reaffirm the direct link between growth along the A350 corridor, and the need for proportional improvement(s)

Scheme Details

15. The bidding guidance requires the submission of a package of evidence, including the shape and form of the scheme, strategic and economic cases, an assessment of value for money, the degree of local commitment (ie local contribution) and a clear timetable for delivery. Work to develop that evidence is underway.
16. Bids require an accompanying Section 151 Officer letter confirming the promoting authority accepts the liability for any cost overruns or delivery slippage.
17. It is proposed that final approval of the bid submission will be through delegated decision by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.

Finance

18. Initial assessment of the full scheme cost is in the range £2.25m - £2.75m.
19. Applying the minimum requirement for a local contribution of no less than 30% produces a figure of between £670k - £830k. This funding could come via 106/CIL and/or other sources ie Growing Places etc.

Recommendation:

20. For briefing purposes only