

Subject:	Response to Government consultation on a Major Road Network		
Date of Meeting:	20 March 2018		
Report of:	Executive Director – Economy, Environment & Culture		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 In line with announcements it made last year, the Government published its proposals to develop and establish a Major Road Network [MRN] for consultation on 23 December 2017.
- 1.2 The MRN consultation includes proposals for creating a designated network of England's most important routes (A class roads) which complement motorways and strategic trunk roads (the Strategic Road Network [SRN]). It is based on the 2016, independently published, Rees Jeffreys [RJ] Road Fund Report. The DfT expects that the MRN will be of approximately the same mileage as the SRN which Highways England is responsible for, and is being described as the 'middle tier' of roads in the country, between the SRN and local roads.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee:

- 2.1 Note and endorse the officer response submitted to the Government's Department for Transport on 12 March 2018 on behalf of the council in response to the consultation on its proposals for the creation of a Major Road Network in England and Wales, as attached in Appendix 2 of this report, including the particular requests for additions and deletions set out in paragraph 3.9 of this report;
- 2.2 Note the officer response submitted to the Government's Department for Transport on 7 February 2018 on behalf of the council in response to the consultation on the Highways England report entitled 'Shaping the future of England's strategic roads', as attached in Appendix 3 of this report; and
- 2.3 Note and welcome the continued progress being made by the emerging Transport for the South East Sub-national Transport Body, as summarised in paragraphs 3.20 and 3.21 of this report.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Rees Jeffreys Road Fund [RJRF] exists to provide financial support in the form of grants and bursaries for courses, research projects and programmes or schemes to improve the highway network and the roadside environment with the aim of promoting and securing better and safer roads in terms of design, engineering and aesthetics including enhancements of the experience of road users.
- 3.2 In 2016 the RJRF published a report 'A Major Road Network for England', which made the case for more investment in the most economically important 'A' roads managed by local highway authorities. The Government accepted the case made in that report and developed plans to consult on the creation of a MRN in the Transport Investment Strategy, published in July 2017. The consultation began on 23 December 2017 and runs until 19 March 2018. A formal consultation response is scheduled to be published in summer 2018, at the same time as the finalised MRN network.
- 3.3 The creation of the MRN intends to provide more long-term certainty of funding, with a portion of the capital funding available through the National Roads Fund being dedicated to the MRN. The National Roads Fund will be funded through Vehicle Excise Duty and is due to be implemented by 2020. However, it is expected that initial funding will be dedicated to Highways England's funding requirements so it is possible that funding for the MRN may become available from around 2022.
- 3.4 The consultation does not propose any changes to current local authority responsibilities. Following the creation of the MRN the roads within it will continue to be managed by the local highway authority. The proposals set out a role for Sub-national Transport Bodies [STBs] in developing a Regional Evidence Base which would identify and prioritise potential schemes to tackle issues impacting the network. Further guidance is to be issued on the Regional Evidence Base, although the timescales for this are unclear.
- 3.5 To assist in understanding the MRN proposals and developing the council's response to the consultation, officers have been involved in the TfSE's Senior Officer Group and Transport Strategy Sub-Group and their meetings and activities. These have included participation in a workshop to identify links for potential addition or removal; benefitting from the advice of one of the co-authors of the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund Report on the creation of a MRN (who has been commissioned to advise TfSE on its response to the consultation); attendance at a further workshop with transport planning, highway management and maintenance representatives from TfSE's constituent authorities and LEPs, which reviewed the suggested changes to the MRN network in the South East and the draft response to the consultation.
- 3.6 The council's approved 2015 Local Transport Plan (March) identified the strategy and policy development work that is required to further develop and strengthen the council's overall Transport Strategy. These included a Transport Carbon Reduction Plan; a Coach Strategy; a Freight & Delivery Strategy; a Technology & Travel Information Strategy; an Interchange Strategy; and a Corridor/Route Hierarchy. The latter was considered important because there had been very

little review or change to the designation and numbering given to roads in the city for many years. It was therefore considered appropriate to consider how the city's roads are actually used and how that compares to their designated status/numbering and determine if any changes are required to better reflect their role or manage the network differently.

- 3.7 In October 2015, this committee also agreed to the development of a citywide Traffic Network Management Strategy [TNMS] and in November 2015 this committee also agreed further prioritisation of the LTP workstreams and agreed that of the above strategies and plans, those for Technology & Travel Information; Freight & Deliveries; and the Corridor/Route Hierarchy should be considered as part of the development of the Citywide 'Traffic' Network Management Strategy. In particular this would enable a strategic approach to be taken to a number of other issues that have been identified as priorities. The work on a national MRN therefore also provides further impetus to the need to develop a TNMS and consider and address the city's Corridor/Route Hierarchy.
- 3.8 In November 2017, this committee also agreed to request that officers have regard to the role and future of the A259 when responding to the forthcoming Government consultation on proposals for a Major Road Network.
- 3.9 In creating the MRN, 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.
- 3.10 The MRN consultation was structured around 16 key questions focused on:-
- **Core principles** – increased certainty of funding; a consistent network; a co-ordinated investment programme; clear local, national and regional roles; a focus on enhancements and renewals; and strengthening links with the SRN.
 - **Defining the MRN** – based on traffic flows, economic centres, transport hubs, SRN resilience and relief.
 - **Investment Planning** – requiring the preparation of Regional Evidence Bases that will include an assessment of the network and identification of priority corridors to inform the development of the MRN Investment Programme, which will be updated every two years.
 - **Eligibility and Investment Assessment** - 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 and will be assessed based on the DfT's five central policy objectives.
- 3.11 The types of schemes that will be eligible for funding will be bypasses, missing links between the MRN or SRN, widening of MRN roads, major structural

renewals, major junction improvements, variable message signs, traffic management, and the use of smart technology and data, and packages of improvements.

Response to MRN consultation

3.12 The DfT's MRN proposals include an indicative network based on its defining criteria. In Brighton & Hove, the DfT only included the A23 between the A27 and Valley Gardens; the A270 (Lewes Road) between the A27 and Valley Gardens; and the A270 (Upper Lewes Road). At present, the primary recommendations by officers for additional sections (or deletions) of MRN road lengths in Brighton & Hove based on the proposals published by the DfT are summarised below and illustrated in Appendix 1.

- Include the A259 from ESCC boundary to WSCC boundary
- Include the A23 – southern section (from London Road/A270 to A259)
- Include the A293 (between the A27 (Hangleton) and A259 (Portslade))
- Delete the A270 (Upper Lewes Road).

3.13 Appendix 2 of this report includes the officer response that has been prepared and submitted to the DfT on behalf of the council, in order to meet the consultation deadline of 19 March 2018. A copy of the response submitted on behalf of the Transport for the South East Sub-national Transport Body in response to the MRN consultation has also been placed in the Members' Rooms, for reference.

3.14 The next steps are expected to be a formal consultation response will be published during summer 2018. The DfT will continue to engage with both local and regional bodies to support the finalisation of an MRN Programme to be launched in summer 2018, and it expects to review and refresh the MRN every 5 years.

Highways England Report on the Strategic Road Network [SRN] Consultation

3.15 In December 2017, the Government also published 'Shaping the future of England's strategic roads: consultation on Highways England's Initial Report'. The deadline for comments to be submitted was 7 February 2018.

3.16 The report covers Highways England's [HE's] approach to its Roads Investment Strategies [RISs] (RIS1 = 2015-2020 and RIS2 = 2021-2025), which address:-

- „ Operations, maintenance and renewals
- „ The smart motorway spine
- „ Expressways
- „ Transformational investments
- „ Delivering a balanced programme
- „ Renewed focus on small schemes
- „ Refined designated funds
- „ The future.

3.17 To inform its response to the HE's initial report, the DfT has itself sought views on the proposals made by HE; the DfT's analytical approach for developing RIS2 and whether it is sufficiently robust; and whether the DfT has heard the full range

of views that should be incorporated into the RIS2 programme, including about the shape/extent of the SRN. Appendix 3 of this report includes the officer response that was submitted to the DfT on behalf of the council, in order to meet the SRN report consultation deadline in February.

- 3.18 There is a clear relationship between the existing SRN and the proposals for the future MRN and therefore there will be an interdependency between, and implications of, the consultations and any conclusions drawn from each of them. The Government therefore intends to ensure that the two networks are complementary and that ownership of roads properly reflects their purpose in the transport network.
- 3.19 The next steps are:-
- a formal, DfT consultation response is expected to be published in June 2018;
 - the evidence gathered during this consultation will help inform decisions on the content of RIS2, which is a statutory process; and
 - the DfT expects to announce the result of this process of decision-making in 2019.

Transport for the South East [TfSE] Sub-national Transport Body

- 3.20 The work of the emerging TfSE was reported to the ETS Committee in November 2016. Since that time a considerable amount of progress has been made and a number of milestones achieved, in addition to its work on, and response to, the MRN consultation. These include:-
- Full Shadow Partnership Board [SPB] Meetings and a Visioning Event
 - Active participation of partners and key stakeholders
 - Budget and Business Plan Agreed
 - Commenced Initial Work on a draft Transport Strategy via an Economic Connectivity Review
 - Parliamentary Event at House of Commons of South East MP's
 - Agreeing and initial SRN RIS2 Feedback
 - Arrangement of formal Ministerial Launch Event on 8 May 2018 in Farnborough
 - Recognition of Shadow Body Status from Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling MP.
- 3.21 The SPB will also be expecting to consider a number of other issues in the coming months including the development of draft Statutory Order to formally establish TfSE.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The only alternative to submitting a response to this consultation would be to not do so, or to await this committee's consideration and approval of a response, which would have not met the consultation deadline of 19 March 2018. Neither option is considered appropriate given the significance and implications of having routes in the city that could form part of a nationally recognised road network.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The consultation is a national process and therefore open to anyone to respond to. The consultation has been discussed by The Connected City's Transport Partnership in order to raise awareness of it and encourage responses. Where cross-boundary issues or interest have arisen e.g the A259, officers have worked closely the colleagues in ESCC and WSCC to discuss and arrive at in principle agreement/consensus for certain roads. This accords with the recent decision made by this committee to work jointly with adjacent authorities when considering issues associated with the A259, which have been raised by local residents.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The proposed creation of a MRN is welcomed, as it presents an opportunity to deliver increased investment in the most economically important 'A' roads managed by local highway authorities. Some of these roads also cross boundaries and will therefore reinforce the role of the city within the Greater Brighton City Region, especially the A259. It is considered essential that the council responds to this important, national consultation on its road network. Officers have therefore prepared and submitted a response to the consultation on behalf of the council in order to meet the consultation deadline of 19 March, in advance of this committee meeting.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with the preparation or submission of the officer response to this consultation or this report and its recommendations, as all activity has been undertaken within the existing revenue budgets available to the City Transport Division during 2017/18.
- 7.2 The Government plans to make additional funding available to maintain and improve the MRN via a specific new funding stream which will be dedicated to investing in this network and raising the performance standards which motorists experience on it. This funding is expected to come from the current Vehicle Excise Duty and will be called the National Roads Fund [NRF]. Subject to the outcome of the consultation and further Government decisions and processes, the NRF is expected to be made available for investment in the MRN in 2020.

Finance Officer Consulted: Gemma Jackson

Date: 02/03/18

Legal Implications:

- 7.3 There are no direct legal implications associated with the preparation or submission of the officer response to this consultation, or this report and its recommendations.

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 08/03/18

Equalities Implications:

- 7.4 There are no direct equalities implications associated with either the preparation or submission of the officer response to this consultation, or this report and its recommendations. An Equality Impact Assessment [EqIA] would not usually be carried out in order to respond to a consultation. The DfT has actively considered the needs of blind and partially sighted people in accessing this document, and the text was made available in full on the Department's website. The text could be freely downloaded and translated by individuals or organisations for conversion into other accessible formats.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.5 There are no direct sustainability implications associated with either the preparation or submission of the officer response to this consultation, or this report and its recommendations.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 7.6 The development and designation of a new MRN will provide an opportunity to secure additional funding to invest in the city's most strategic local roads and is therefore welcomed.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.7 There are no other significant implications associated with either the preparation or submission of the officer response to this consultation, or this report and its recommendations.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Map illustrating the DfT's proposed Major Road Network and the city council's proposed amendments.
2. Officer response submitted on behalf of the council to DfT's consultation on proposals for the creation of a Major Road Network [MRN].
3. Officer response submitted on behalf of the council to DfT's consultation on the Highways England initial report about the Strategic Road Network [SRN].

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. Government's consultation document 'The creation of a MRN' (December 2017) - also available via:-
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/670527/major-road-network-consultation.pdf
2. Government's consultation document 'Shaping the future of England's strategic roads: consultation on Highways England's Initial Report' (December 2017) – also available via:-
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/666965/shaping-the-future-of-englands-strategic-roads.pdf
3. Response of Transport for the South East [TfSE] Sub-national Transport Body to the MRN consultation

Background Documents

1. Agendas and Minutes of TfSE Shadow Partnership Board meetings (June 2017 to March 2018)
2. BHCC LTP (2015).