

Strategic Transport Forum

14th October 2016

Agenda Item 3: Major Road Network for England

It is recommended that the Strategic Transport Forum:

- a) Welcome the publication of 'A Major Road Network for England'
- b) Agree to include the identification of a Major Road Network for England's Economic Heartland as an integral element of its future Transport Strategy
- c) Call on Government to include roads identified as part of the Major Road Network as being eligible for investment using ring-fenced funds from the Vehicle Excise Duty.

1. Context

- 1.1. The Strategic Transport Forum was briefed on the work of the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund at its inaugural meeting (12th February). That meeting agreed to:
 - a) Support the concept of a Major Road Network, and express its support for continued engagement with the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund study
 - b) Commission work to begin developing a proposal for the Major Road Network across the Strategic Alliance area
 - c) Invite the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund study team to brief it on their recommendations at a future meeting
- 1.2. The final report of the study is scheduled to be published on 12th October. The leader of the study – David Quarmby – will present the Study's recommendations to the Forum.

2. Next Steps

- 2.1. The Forum will be invited to agree its initial position statement on strategic transport issues for across the Heartland area as the next item on the agenda. This highlights the key role that the highway network has in servicing and supporting national and sub-national economies. It sets out how the concept of a Major Road Network reflects what is self-evident: namely whilst the network of motorways and trunk roads owned and operated by Highways England is unquestionably of strategic importance, there are a number of Local Authority owned roads that are equally of strategic significance.
- 2.2. The study team has had a number of discussions with representatives from the Strategic Alliance during the course of its work and these have helped shaped the final report.
- 2.3. The importance of having a longer-term strategic view on the infrastructure requirements for England is a Government priority. When it comes to the highway network Government has traditionally focused on the Strategic Road Network (as owned by Highways England). The announcement in Budget 2015 to ring-fence funds raised through Vehicle Excise Duty for investment in strategic roads whilst welcomed in principle, needs to result in investment in

those parts of the highway network that play a strategic role in servicing and supporting economic activity and growth.

- 2.4. In this regard the identification of a Major Road Network – one that better reflects the strategic significance of certain local authority owned roads – is significant, offering as it does an evidenced based approach to policy making and implementation, as well as helping inform the identification of future infrastructure requirements.
- 2.5. It is therefore recommended that in developing its more detailed Transport Strategy, the Forum looks to make the the concept of a Major Road Network an integral element of that work.
- 2.6. Given the basis of a Major Road Network is to identify those roads of strategic significance and which support economic activity and growth, it is recommended that the Strategic Transport Forum call on Government to include such a network as being eligible for investment using funds from the ring-fenced Vehicle Excise Duty.

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October 2016