

Strategic Transport Forum

15th September 2017

Agenda Item 4: National Investment Programmes - Roads

Recommendation: It is recommended that the meeting agree (subject to any amendments agreed by this meeting) the Forum's strategic road investment priorities (as noted in sections 4-7).

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To consider and agree the Forum's strategic road investment priorities, which will form the basis of input into future Government funding rounds (such as the Road Investment Strategy).

2. Context

- 2.1. The first Road Investment Strategy (RIS1) set the investment for England's Strategic Road Network for the period from 2015 to 2020, including 100 major schemes funded by over £15.2 billion of public money.
- 2.2. Highways England and the Department for Transport (DfT) are currently working on the Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2).
- 2.3. The DfT recently published the [Transport Investment Strategy](#) indicating their support for identifying a Major Road Network (MRN). The Strategy appears to suggest that the DfT views the MRN as a network sitting alongside the Strategic Road Network (that owned and operated by Highways England). The Strategy emphasises the importance of Sub-national Transport Bodies (STBs) in shaping future investment priorities for nationally led investment programmes. It also sets out that the STBs will have a role in allocating funds for the soon to be established National Roads Fund.
- 2.4. The Strategic Transport Forum supported the concept of the MRN following the publication of the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund report in 2016. The original report proposed that the MRN should be viewed as a single network – one that combines the Highways England Strategic Road Network with the more significant local transport authority roads.
- 2.5. Although the difference in what constitutes the Major Road Network might initially appear a question of semantics, it is in fact potentially a significant issue.
- 2.6. The establishment of the National Roads Fund in 2020/21 is a significant step forward. It is likely the level of funding available for investment in the most significant roads will be greater than the level of funding available to Highways England via the Roads Investment Strategy.
- 2.7. The Strategic Transport Forum's position has consistently been that considering the MRN as being a single network (combining both the Highways England Strategic

Road Network with the more significant local transport authority owned roads) will ensure that the funds available will be targeted more effectively than if the two 'networks' were considered separately. This becomes particularly relevant for the Heartland area where the more significant local transport authority owned roads are a key part of the overall transport network.

3. Highways Heartland

- 3.1. A new 'Highways Heartland' Board has been established with the DfT and Highways England. The first Board meeting was held on Wednesday 6th September
- 3.2. This builds on a similar approach pioneered with Transport for the North wherein the three partners meet on a quarterly basis to maintain an overview of strategic issues and progress with the delivery of the agreed work programme. Extending this approach to the Heartland area will strengthen the working relationship between the three parties to the benefit of the wider corridor community.

4. Overall Approach

- 4.1. The economic potential of the Heartland area has been set out in the National Infrastructure Commission's Interim Report (published November 2016). The critical importance of improving connectivity – particularly east-west connectivity – in support of planned growth (economic and housing) has led to Government prioritising the need to deliver the components of the multi-modal spine across the Heartland (the combination of the 'expressway' and East West Rail).
- 4.2. As noted elsewhere in the papers for this meeting, there will be wider implications arising from improved connectivity, implications that will need to be reflected in the identification of the MRN and in subsequent investment priorities.
- 4.3. Indications are that the scope for new investment in RIS2 may be limited by the need to deliver on commitments made in RIS1 – delivery of which may tip over into the new RIS period.
- 4.4. Set against this backdrop it is proposed the Strategic Transport Forum's input into the RIS2 process should be based on the following three key principles:
 - a) Ensure that RIS1 commitments are delivered in full.
 - b) Ensure that investment priorities identified as a result of the strategic studies undertaken as part of RIS1 are programmed in RIS2 and taken forward into delivery.
 - c) Ensure that any additional investment priorities are determined on a joint basis between Highways England and the Strategic Transport Forum, using an agreed Major Road Network as the basis for identifying those priorities.

5. Delivery of RIS1 Commitments

- 5.1. Whilst there is good progress being made with the delivery of schemes identified in RIS1, not all those identified will be completed in the RIS1 period.

- 5.2. The key scheme in this category is the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet scheme. Highways England recently consulted on a number of route options for this improvement and an announcement on the way forward is expected shortly.
- 5.3. The original funding provision for the scheme will need to be increased in order to enable the preferred solution to be delivered. Some of that additional funding will need to be secured within the RIS2 allocation.
- 5.4. An outstanding issue that needs to be resolved is the question of the preferred solution to the problems associated with the A1(M) – which bisects the A428 corridor at Black Cat.
- 5.5. Whilst the A1(M) was a strategic study undertaken as part of RIS1, a decision on the preferred way forward has yet to be taken.
- 5.6. In addition to the issues being addressed on the Highways England network, this part of the Heartland area is also bisected by the central section of East West Rail.
- 5.7. Emerging Local Plans for the area are identifying the development opportunities in and around this area, making a decision on both the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet scheme and A1(M) critical in terms of enabling those opportunities to be realised.
- 5.8. Given the timing of the Local Plan process, decisions in respect of these two issues are a matter of strategic urgency. Allocations within RIS2 should reflect that urgency.

6. Investment Priorities Arising from Strategic Studies

- 6.1. The RIS1 programme included three strategic studies that are of significance for the Heartland area (out of just six studies nationally): these were:
 - Oxford to Cambridge Expressway
 - A1(M)
 - M25 South West Quadrant
- 6.2. This meeting has considered the issues associated with the Oxford to Cambridge 'expressway' as a separate item on the agenda. Based on the presumption that the output from the next stage of the development work is required to report in 2018/19, provision should be made within the RIS2 programme for funding to enable a commencement of works.
- 6.3. The importance of making provision within the RIS2 programme for funding to enable delivery of both the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet and A1(M) improvements is dealt with in the previous section of this report.
- 6.4. There is an implied assumption with the work surrounding the Oxford to Cambridge 'expressway' that implementation of the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet scheme will be sufficient in order to provide an 'expressway' standard route between Milton Keynes and Cambridge.

6.5. However, given the scale of economic opportunity in and around the immediate Cambridge area it is proposed that the Strategic Transport Forum promote the need for a new strategic study for the RIS2 period – one specifically targeted at looking at the longer-term requirements of the Major Road Network supporting the Cambridge economy. If commissioned as a priority at the start of the RIS2 period it may be appropriate to identify some initial funds to enable implementation of the funding at the tail end of the RIS2 period.

6.6. The final report of the M25 South West Quadrant Study was published in March 2017. Its recommendations focused on opportunities to:

- Reduce pressures
- Provide parallel capacity

The intention that these would help relieve the motorway network rather than widening existing roads.

6.7. It is important that any improvements help to relieve strategic issues on the wider local network (connecting to and affecting the M25), such as the A404. If this does not form part of the extended study work, then consideration will need to be given to a separate study to cover this.

6.8. In determining the way forward for the report's recommendations it will be essential to consider the wider context of strategic transport issues covering the area surrounding the M25 itself, specifically:

- The introduction of Crossrail (Elizabeth Line) services serving central London, Heathrow Airport and the wider Thames Valley will have an impact on travel patterns. The need to deliver Western Rail Access to Heathrow as a key component of any expansion of Heathrow Airport is likely to have a further impact on travel patterns.
- In the medium term delivery of development proposals at Old Oak Common, coupled with strategic rail improvements to/from the Heartland area associated with the Northampton – Milton Keynes – Aylesbury – Wycombe – Old Oak Common corridor (identified as a priority in the recently published Network Rail Route Strategy) will likewise have an impact on travel patterns.

6.9. The issues here are multi-modal and any investment in the M25 taken forward as a priority through the RIS2 process needs to have been developed in partnership between the Strategic Transport Forum, Highways England, the London Mayor and the emerging Transport for the South East Sub-national Transport Body.

7. **New Investment Priorities for RIS2**

7.1. In keeping with the key principles set out earlier in this paper, and noting the establishment of the National Roads Fund, it is essential that the identification of additional investment priorities are grounded in the need to ensure that future investment is targeted at enabling the delivery of planned growth (economic and housing).

- 7.2. The identification of the MRN should be used as the basis for determining investment priorities. As noted earlier the transformational nature of delivering the multi-modal spine, coupled with the scale of economic opportunity identified by the National Infrastructure Commission, is likely to have implications for the scope of the MRN.
- 7.3. Work to develop the MRN for the Heartland is being taken forward on a collaborative basis – with input from local transport authorities, local planning authorities and local enterprise partnerships, alongside Highways England and the DfT.
- 7.4. Without prejudging the outcome of that work, corridors that have been identified as potentially being of strategic significance (on the basis of their contribution towards enabling the delivery of planned growth) include:
- The A43/A45 corridor
 - The A505 corridor
 - The A47 corridor
 - The A14 (Thrapston and Brampton)
- 7.5. In addition, in terms of Highways England's network issues that may be identified as being of strategic significance include:
- Improvements to the M1 corridor where these are required to enable delivery of planned growth, focussing on:
 - junctions - in particular Junction 14 and Junction 10A; *and*
 - the southern section (into Hertfordshire)
 - Improvements to junctions on the M11 corridor (potentially picked up as part of the proposed new strategic study)
 - Improvements to junctions on the M40 corridor where these are required to enable delivery of planned growth - in particular Junction 9 and Junction 4

8. Next Steps

- 8.1. The relationship with the DfT and Highways England continues to strengthen through a combination of the establishment of Highways Heartland and regular ongoing communications.
- 8.2. Once discussed and endorsed at the Strategic Transport Forum meeting, the agreed strategic road priorities will be shared with the DfT and Highways England in order to encourage future investment.

Martin Tugwell
Programme Director

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