

Proposals for the creation of a Major Road Network

Page 2: Respondent details

Q1. Your contact details. We will only contact you if we need to clarify any of the answers you give us.

Your name Hastings and RotherTransport Action Group

Your email Cllr.Ian.Hollidge@rother.gov.uk; cllr.peter.chowney@hastings.gov.uk

Q2. In what capacity are you responding?

Other (please specify):
Transport group

Q3. In which region are you based?

South East

Page 3: MRN core principles

Q4. In order to deliver our objectives for the MRN, we believe there are a number of fundamental principles that must be at the heart of our plans for a MRN and its programme of investment. These are: increased certainty of funding a consistent network a coordinated investment programme a focus on enhancement and major renewals clear local, regional and national roles local and regional contributions strengthening links with the Strategic Road Network Q1. Do you agree with the proposed core principles for the MRN outlined in the consultation document?

Yes

Page 5: Defining the network

Q6. 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 to the level of funding available. 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 network. This approach ensures: the network is coherent, ie 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 Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the quantitative criteria outlined in the consultation document and their proposed application?

Agree

Page 7: Defining the network - qualitative criteria

Q8. Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the qualitative criteria outlined in the consultation document and their application?

Agree

Page 9: Defining the network

Q10. Q4. 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?

Yes

Q11. Q5. Have the quantitative or qualitative criteria proposed in the consultation document identified sections of road you feel should not be included in the MRN?

No

Page 10: Defining the network – refreshing the MRN

Q12. 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. We propose to review the MRN every 5 years to coincide with the existing Road Investment Strategy (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. Q6. Do you agree with the proposal for how the MRN should be reviewed in future years?

Yes

Page 11: Investment planning

Q13. 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 local authorities 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 the consultation 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. The consultation document sets out roles for: local bodies (such as local authorities and local highways authorities) regional bodies (such as sub-national transport bodies) national bodies (such as the department) Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the roles outlined in the consultation document for:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree not disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
local bodies		X			
regional bodies		X			
national bodies		X			

Page 12: Additional roles and responsibilities

Q15. Q9. 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?

Yes

Page 13: Investment planning – regional evidence base

Q16. 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 the 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 Q10. Are there any other factors, or evidence, that should be included within the scope of the regional evidence bases?

Yes

If you answered yes, describe the additional factors or evidence you feel should be within the scope of the regional evidence bases.

Please see the response to Q16

Page 14: Investment planning – the role of Highways England

Q17. 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. 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 Q11. Do you agree with the role that has been outlined in the consultation document for Highways England?

Yes

Page 15: Eligibility criteria

Q18. 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. We are proposing the following schemes would be eligible for MRN funding: bypasses missing road links widening of existing MRN roads major structural renewals major junction improvements variable message signs traffic management and the use of smart technology and data packages of improvements Q12. Do you agree with the cost thresholds outlined in the consultation document?

No

If you answered no, what should be the cost thresholds?

Please see later comments

Q19. Q13. Do you agree with the eligibility criteria outlined in the consultation document?

No

If you answered no, what should the eligibility criteria be?

Please see the response to Q16

Page 16: Investment assessment criteria

Q20. 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 Alleviate congestion Environmental impacts: improve air quality and biodiversity reduce noise and risk of flooding protect water quality, landscape and cultural heritage sites Support economic growth and rebalancing Industrial strategy - support regional strategic goals to boost economic growth. Economic impact - improve ability to access new or existing employment sites. Trade and gateways impact - improve international connectivity, eg access to ports & airports. Support housing delivery Support the creation of new housing developments by improving access to future development sites and boosting suitable land capacity. Supporting all road users 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. Supporting the SRN Improve end to end journey times across both networks. Improve journey time reliability. Improve SRN resilience. Q14. Do you agree with the investment assessment criteria outlined in the consultation document?

Yes

Q21. Q15. In addition to the eligibility and assessment criteria described what, if any, additional criteria should be included in the proposal? Please be as detailed as possible.

Please see the response to Q16

Page 17: Other considerations

Q22. Q16. Is there anything further you would like added to the MRN proposal?

General comments

The Hastings and Rother Transport Action Group (HRTAG) fully supports the Government's core policy objectives and key principles behind the development of the Major Roads Network (MRN) and welcomes the recognition of the existing funding gap between local roads and the Strategic Road Network (SRN). However, more clarity is needed in terms of the future relationship between the MRN and SRN and how they are integrated in terms of consistency in the use of smart technology and seamless journey quality across the whole network.

Defining the Network

It is understood that that DfT's consultation is the first step in the development of the MRN and at this point it is about establishing the principles and framework for the MRN rather than agreeing which routes should be part of it.

The HRTAG is supportive of DfT's indicative MRN map (p.27) as a starting point for discussion and development, subject to further inclusion of the following suggested routes, which are additional to the map shown in the document.

A2690, The Combe Valley Way (previously known as the Bexhill Hastings Link Road) - We propose its inclusion as part of the Major Network given strategic role it plays in the regeneration of the most deprived area in the south east and one of the most deprived in the UK. Hastings is ranked one of the most deprived authorities in England in 2015. Among other things, A2690 greatly reduces the traffic along A259 Glyne Gap between Bexhill and Hastings and Hastings seafront.

B2093, The Ridge (connecting the Combe Valley Way and A21 with the A259 Strategic network going to Rye) - traffic flows along the Ridge have seen an increase since the Link Road opened two years ago.

The opening of the Gateway Road is likely to increase traffic levels even further. We believe this section of B2093 shows characteristics similar to other 'A' roads in the region in terms traffic flow and HGV usage. By not designating this section either as a SRN or MRN, the proposal disconnects Hastings from potential funding and regeneration benefits associated with the designation.

Both routes will form a coherent network of inter-urban links between economically important towns in the sub-region. The success of the Link Road has had a positive effect on travel patterns in relieving congestion along the A259 Seafront route. However this has resulted in more using the Ridge East B2093 causing considerable congestion at peak times around the Conquest Hospital. We believe this potentially could get worse with the opening of the Queensway Gateway Road. It may be that a reconfiguration of car parking arrangements at the Hospital may offer some relief. The main point is a "B" road is being used as a Major Road meriting improvements and investment.

We believe our suggestion is consistent with the quantitative and qualitative criteria suggested by DfT and in the previous Rees Jeffreys Study.

A259 Pevensey to Brenzett forms part of the South Coast Trunk Road and is single carriageway through Rother and Hastings with the exception of less than 1m of King Offa Way Bexhill. It is a mixture of short sections with many junctions, crossings, severance and slow moving traffic, increasing pollution levels. It is one of the main planning objections we receive, " how will the roads cope". Improving the flow of traffic for users and quality of life for residents along the route is our aim.

Many people making longer journeys are held up by those making shorter trips. A NMU Audit would identify where Walking, Cycling and access to public transport would relieve pressure on those needing to use the Road network.

We also support the inclusion of the A271/A269 as part of the Major Road Network because of the lack of resilience of A259 Marsh Road. Many drivers use Sluice Lane, an unsuitable road for Strategic use when congestion or closure occurs. Traffic around Little Common again is used a planning objection to developments.

Criteria

The HRTAG considers that the proposed criteria used to define the network are generally sound but would recommend that they are widened, where evidence suggests, to include strategic and economically important roads either B roads.

We suggest that the quantitative criteria proposed should also consider forecast traffic levels. Whilst it is understood that the MRN will be reviewed every five years, there needs to be some element of looking further forward and some sense of how traffic levels are going to evolve - particularly in the interests of unlocking future planned growth.

Further refinement of the MRN will be required between now and when the Secretary of State makes a final decision on the extents of the MRN.

The additional funding stream associated with the MRN is welcomed, however more clarity is required on the development process for schemes, timescales, funding arrangements and the eligibility criteria.

Finally, the group is supportive of East Sussex County Council's response on this consultation.