

**Report to:** Transport Committee

**Date:** 15 March 2019

**Subject:** **Roads update - Opportunities to fund improvements on strategically important roads**

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| Is this a key decision?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?                                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?               | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1: |   |

## 1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To advise Transport Committee of recent announcements with implications for funding improvements on strategically important roads.

## 2. Information

### Background

- 2.1 Improving the Road Network is a core theme of the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy 2040, adopted by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority in 2017. The ambition of the Combined Authority and partner councils is for an efficient, safe and reliable road network for all users that creates new opportunities for jobs and housing development. The Transport Strategy places emphasis on identifying, prioritising and seeking funding for key infrastructure projects to reduce congestion and disruption, particularly on strategically important roads, to improve journey times, reliability, resilience and quality.
- 2.2 The road network has a number of definitions, related to the design and function of a road. To help with definitions:

- **West Yorkshire Key Route Network (WYKRN)** - a local network identified by the West Yorkshire partner councils. The WYKRN includes 661km (400 miles) of the most congested and most important local roads across West Yorkshire. The WYKRN represent seven % of all of West Yorkshire's roads but carry 60% of all the traffic. The local criteria used to identify this network included vehicle flows and strategic function. The operational management of the WYKRN is the responsibility of the Combined Authority's partner councils as the Local Highway Authorities. All of the West Yorkshire partners signed a Memorandum of Agreement in 2017 to collaborate to improve the management and operation of the WYKRN;
- **Major Road Network (MRN)** – a new definition of a “middle tier” of roads between local roads and motorways, understood as strategically important for connecting economic centres, including towns, cities, ports, airports, enterprise zones and key employment sites. Two different Major Road Networks have recently been published: A national Major Road Network identified by the Department for Transport (DfT), and another identified by Transport for the North (TfN) as a Major Road Network for the North. Both the DfT and TfN networks are intended as being complimentary to, and linking with, the Strategic Road Network. Neither the DfT or TfN have an operational role in the MRN, but both organisation have key roles in influencing the targeting of improvements to roads on the MRN;
- **Strategic Road Network (SRN)** - a national, strategic network of around 4,400 miles long and made up of motorways and trunk roads (- the most significant 'A' roads). The SRN represents around two % of all roads in England by length, but it carries a third of all traffic by mileage. Highways England manage this network.

2.3 These networks, described above, are important as they are the means by which funding to make improvements to important roads will be targeted and prioritised.

#### Department for Transport Major Roads Network (MRN)

2.4 The government in the autumn 2018 Budget announced a new National Roads Fund that would total £28.8 billion in the next Road Investment Strategy period from 2020-2025 (RIS2), with £3.5 billion of that total to be ring-fenced to be spent on improving a newly identified Major Roads Network in the period April 2020 to March 2025. (The larger, remaining £25.3 billion proportion of the £28.8 billion total will be used to fund improvements to the Strategic Road Network).

2.5 In December 2018 the DfT published a response to their own consultation (undertaken from December 2017 to March 2018) on 'Proposals for the Creation of a Major Road Network'. The DfT's consultation response can be accessed here:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/765665/creation-of-the-major-road-network-government-response.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765665/creation-of-the-major-road-network-government-response.pdf)

- 2.6 The Transport Committee meeting of 16 March 2018 agreed key themes to form the basis of the consultation response of the Combined Authority and its partner councils. The West Yorkshire partners broadly welcomed the creation of a MRN and the proposed allocation of a proportion of the new National Road Fund to the MRN to provide a ring-fenced, long term funding stream supporting a pipeline of investments, but also identified concerns with the methodology to identify the roads in the MRN and the proposed criteria to be applied to the allocation of funding to improve the MRN.
- 2.7 The DfT's response is to proceed with their proposals. The DfT are satisfied with the MRN principles published in their consultation, and has not made significant changes to their proposed major road network, although there has been some refinement of criteria resulting in minor changes to roads included in the MRN.
- 2.8 The DfT's MRN extends across England and Wales. Within the North (i.e. the area covered by the Transport for the North partnership) the total length of the DfT's MRN is 2,400km. The DfT has written to each Local Highway Authority to advise them of their consultation response and to provide network maps. Appendix 1 provides a map of the DfT's MRN within West Yorkshire.
- 2.9 The DfT's methodology to identify the national MRN relied primarily on quantitative data from vehicle flows. This approach differed from a more qualitative approach developed by Transport for the North for parallel work that they were progressing with their partners (including the Combined Authority and West Yorkshire partner councils) to identify a MRN for the North, which focussed on connectivity needs, rather than flows, to identify roads that join up existing and future Important Economic Centres. TfN had anticipated that they and the DfT would arrive at a common methodology and one, agreed Major Road Network. The DfT's consultation response makes it clear that they did not consider the TfN methodology and resultant larger network to be appropriate for DfT's purposes. The 2,400km DfT MRN is less than half the length of the 5,000km MRN for the North adopted by TfN.
- 2.10 The DfT's final MRN is not entirely as the West Yorkshire partners would have preferred. The Combined Authority had written to the DfT to identify proposals to remove and add roads to their initial MRN published in the consultation document, suggesting:
- Removal of some roads considered unsuitable by the partner councils, or that did not meet the DfT's own quantitative criteria. In some instances preferred, alternative routes with higher vehicle flows were proposed;
  - Additions of some roads considered of strategic importance, with high traffic flows, which were not included in the consultation MRN.
- 2.11 The DfT have satisfactorily made some amendments but there remain anomalies in the DfT's final MRN and more significantly the published MRN omits some key roads in West Yorkshire with high traffic flows that the West Yorkshire partners consider strategically important to the economic functioning of the region (e.g. Leeds Inner Ring Road and inner radials, where there are

also particular challenges to funding major structural renewals of these roads). The DfT did not provide direct feedback to any consultees, but does address omissions in their consultation response:

“As well as requests for the inclusion of more urban roads, there was some confusion as to why some urban roads that meet traffic thresholds were missing from the indicative MRN. The focus of the MRN is connecting different places and as a result the network is purposely focused on roads that play a regional role and make connections between cities, rather than connections within city centres. This has been reflected in the network”.

- 2.12 The DfT has identified that their MRN will be reviewed periodically but this is not expected to be within the next five years. The Combined Authority is seeking specific feedback from the DfT on the inclusion and exclusion of roads from their final MRN and the implications and options for improving roads not currently on the MRN.
- 2.13 In December 2018 the DfT also published its Investment Planning Guidance to enable regions to plan and prioritise investments on the Major Road Network specifically through bidding to the £3.5 billion National Roads Fund allocation (identified in paragraph 2.4 above) to improve the MRN in the period 2020-2025. This guidance can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/major-road-network-and-large-local-majors-programmes-investment-planning>. The guidance summarises the eligibility criteria for the MRN programme, explains the roles and responsibilities of local and regional bodies in the MRN, including the importance of regional evidence bases to support bid submissions and provides pro-forma for submitting bids. Major Road Schemes are envisaged to cost in the region of £20 million to £50 million. The guidance also details the process for submitting proposals for Large Local Majors (i.e. schemes costing greater than £50 million) on the MRN and SRN.
- 2.14 The objectives of funding improvements to the MRN are to: Reduce Congestion; Support Economic Growth and re-balancing; Support Housing Delivery; Support all road users; and Support the Strategic Road Network. The types of schemes identified as eligible for MRN funding are:
- Bypasses or new alignments which alleviate congestion and make through journeys quicker, safer, more reliable;
  - Missing Links – new roads that link existing stretches of the MRN or SRN;
  - Widening of existing MRN roads where there is a known congestion point or safety risk;
  - Major structural renewals on roads, bridges, tunnels and viaducts on MRN roads, where significant work needs to be done to renew the carriageway or prevent closure or weight restrictions;
  - Major junction improvements such as a grade separation that would improve the safety, performance or flow of an MRN road;
  - Variable message signs, traffic management and the use of smart technology and data to raise the performance of the network;

- Packages of improvements which may include elements of safety, widening, junction improvements and new alignment.

2.15 Key features of the criteria for bidding are:

- Only schemes on the DfT's MRN are eligible;
- The MRN funding contribution will be in the range of £20 million - £50 million (exclusive of any match funding). Schemes seeking more than £50 million would be considered a large Local Major Scheme for which a separate process exists, but with bids to the same £3.5bn allocation of funding in the RIS2 period;
- Local match funding required of at least 15% of the total scheme cost;
- Bids will need to be well progressed to Strategic Outline Business Case for submission;
- Sub National Transport Bodies (e.g. Transport for the North) have a key role in the process in providing the regional evidence base and prioritising a ranked set of up to 10 scheme bids per region, for submission to the DfT.

2.16 The DfT deadline for submission of bids to the first tranche of National Road Fund (identified in paragraph 2.13 above) for the Major Road Network and Large Local Major schemes is 16 July 2019. The bid timetable, criteria and requirements are challenging. Within the North the starting point to identify possible bids will be those eligible schemes identified in the list of potential road interventions in TfN's Long Term Investment Programme (LTIP) which was published by TfN in February 2019, and the evidence collected by TfN through their Strategic Development Corridor studies that identified the schemes for the their LTIP. TfN has also started engaging its partners to seek bid suggestions. The Combined Authority and partner councils are involved in this process.

2.17 It is proposed that the Combined Authority and partner councils

- Work to the DfT's Investment Planning Guidance and with stakeholders to develop funding bids for the Major Road Network;
- Work to influence the DfT in respect of roads not currently on the Major Road Network and their eligibility for funding.

A progress report will be made to a future meeting of the Transport Committee.

### **Transport for the North Major Road Network for the North (MRN)**

2.18 Transport for the North (TfN) published its Strategic Transport Plan (STP) for the North on the 11 February 2018. The Strategic Transport Plan is the subject of a separate report, Item 9, to this Transport Committee meeting.

2.19 The STP provides its own map and explanation of a Major Road Network for the North. This is the larger MRN of 5,000km referred to in paragraph 2.9

above, above. A map of the TfN MRN within West Yorkshire is attached as Appendix 2.

- 2.20 The TfN MRN was developed with the input of its partners and agreed by TfN Partnership Board. The TfN MRN shares some roads with the smaller DfT network (identified in para. 2.8 and Appendix 1 above), but also includes other roads which TfN consider to provide strategic, pan-northern routes linking current and future centres that are important to the economic health and growth of the North. Within West Yorkshire the TfN MRN aligns with, and is informed by, the work of the West Yorkshire partner councils to identify a West Yorkshire Key Route Network.
- 2.21 In deciding to adopt their version of an MRN, TfN acknowledge that having two MRN's is potentially confusing for stakeholders, and that routes identified on the TfN MRN for the North that are not in DfT's MRN will not be eligible for the National Roads Fund mentioned in paragraphs 2.4 and 2.13 above. TfN propose that their MRN for the North will be used by TfN and partners to inform and target other priorities for funding, putting the North on the front foot for bidding opportunities.
- 2.22 The MRN for the North has been the basis on which road interventions have been identified for TfN's Long Term Investment Programme (LTIP) which was launched concurrently with the STP. The West Yorkshire partners are satisfied with the identified MRN for the North and the possible road interventions that have been identified through TfN's Corridor Studies and included in the LTIP. Headline details of possible road interventions are listed in the LTIP. Maps to show the location of possible road interventions will be provided in the summaries of the Corridor Studies, which are currently being finalised by TfN and will be made available on TfN's website in March 2019. The LTIP identifies possible interventions on the motorways including the M1, A1(M) and M62 motorway and also alternative east-west routes on the MRN to provide relief to the M62, and to open up opportunities for jobs and housing growth.

### **Highways England Route Investment Strategy (RIS2) 2020 - 2025**

- 2.23 The 2018 Budget identified a commitment from the government to spend £25.3 billion from the National Roads Fund on the Strategic Road Network in the second Road Investment Strategy period: 2020-25 (RIS2). The details of the RIS2 programme are awaited to be published by Highways England, and expected later this year. The Combined Authority and the partner councils will be looking to see improvements for the Strategic Road Network in West Yorkshire that were identified in TfN's Long Term Investment Programme confirmed in Highways England's RIS2 programme. An update report will be made to a future meeting of the Transport Committee.

### **West Yorkshire Key Route Network (WYKRN)**

- 2.24 The Transport Committee meeting of 8 September 2017 signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the West Yorkshire partner councils and the Combined Authority to collaborate to improve the management, operations

and performance of the West Yorkshire Key Route Network. A high level action plan was appended to the Memorandum of Understanding. Recent delivery highlights include:

- Asset Management - Significant progress in developing a consistent approach for the management of highway assets, with the converging of specifications and performance standards, and the procurement of West Yorkshire wide contracts;
- Network management – The West Yorkshire-plus Transport Fund project for a joint West Yorkshire approach to Urban Traffic Management Control has progressed to Full Business Case;
- Network management - Work has commenced on the development of a new permit scheme to extend the current West Yorkshire Common Permit scheme to all streets, but with a particular focus on reducing disruption to road users arising from road and street works activity on the WYKRN. There is also a collaborative cross boundary approach to minimising potential traffic disruption due to construction activity happening at the same time across West Yorkshire as major schemes and third party investment are constructed;
- Network performance and scheme prioritisation – Work has commenced to develop an analytical and dashboard presentation tool using DfT provided data to better understand and communicate network performance consistently across all the West Yorkshire districts. This tool is expected to be available in May 2019 and will show performance on all of the WYKRN by route and time period in respect of journey times, speed, congestion delay and reliability. This tool will align with a similar approach developed by TfN for the MRN for the North. The work to develop this tool has identified the need to make some amendments and add newly opened road links on the WYKRN.

2.25 It is proposed to provide a more detailed update on the WYKRN action plan to a future meeting of Transport Committee, including a presentation of the WYKRN dashboard tool and recommendations for amending the WYKRN.

### **3. Financial Implications**

3.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

### **4. Legal Implications**

4.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

### **5. Staffing Implications**

5.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

### **6. External Consultees**

6.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

## **7. Recommendations**

- 7.1 That Transport Committee notes the contents of this report
- 7.2 That Transport Committee agrees to the Combined Authority working with partner councils, Transport for the North and the Department for Transport to develop funding proposals for the National Road Fund for improvements to the Major Road Network and for Large Local Major schemes.
- 7.3 That Transport Committee agrees that the Combined Authority continues to seek to influence the Department for Transport in respect of the roads contained within the Major Road Network and funding opportunities for other roads that are excluded from the Major Road Network.

## **8. Background Documents**

Report to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Transport Committee meeting of 8 September 2017, Item 8 - Road Networks Update

Report to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Transport Committee meeting of 16 March 2018, Item 10 - Consultation Replies on Highways Related Matters

## **9. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Map - DfT Major Road Network (MRN) within West Yorkshire.

Appendix 2 – Map - TfN Major Road Network (MRN) for the North within West Yorkshire.