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Parliamentary Under Secretary of
State for Transport
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Programme Office
c/o Buckinghamshire County Council
County Hall
Walton Street
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19th March 2018

Dear Jesse,

Joint Response from Sub-national Transport Bodies: Proposals for the Creation of a Major Road Network

Thank you for your support to date in developing the role of Sub-national Transport Bodies, including in establishing Transport for the North as the first statutory Sub-national Transport Body in the country.

The Major Road Network (MRN) is a landmark and critical opportunity to support Government in driving economic growth across the country. The nascent Sub-national Transport Bodies can act as effective 'bridges' with local government to plan and deliver improvements as efficiently as possible.

Our four Sub-national Transport Bodies have come together in an unprecedented way to demonstrate to you our commitment to support the MRN and ensure it is the success it needs to be. We will continue to work together to enable you to have a series of strong, united voices providing a national picture of the substantial economic growth that road investment can unlock.

As the Highways England 'Road to Growth' analysis in 2017 demonstrated, only by recognising the growth opportunities along key road networks can we unlock the benefits we all aspire to. We will highlight and promote the new opportunities the MRN brings to businesses and residents across the country.

Our four Sub-National Transport Bodies all welcome the explicit reference in the consultation document to our potential roles and responsibilities that incurs.

We are individually submitting detailed responses to the consultation from our own areas. However, we also have six joint recommendations. These are all intended to strengthen economic opportunities, provide a consistent and effective approach across the country and ensure programmes are both planned and delivered effectively.

- 1. The Department for Transport should work with the nascent Sub-national Transport Bodies to define the Major Road Network.** The Sub-national Transport Bodies (STBs) have all worked closely with their local government partners to identify and reach consensus on the priority roads in their regions, with these priorities backed up by robust evidence. This local leadership and expertise should be recognised and drawn upon in the development of the England-wide MRN.
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2. **Plan and invest in the Major Road Network as a single network.** This original concept from Rees Jeffreys Road Fund research should be embedded in the MRN. Only by having an explicit reference to the single network will our residents and businesses have confidence that we are focusing on outcomes for users, through the function and role of roads, not differentiation based on ownership of the asset.
3. **Identify indicative, regional funding levels within which advice on investment can be planned over the long term.** These would be indicative but, like rail investment, can incentivise an effective pipeline of improvements to be planned and funded by all parties together. Recognition of agreed growth priorities, including through statutory Transport Strategies and Strategic Economic Plans, would provide a more direct and effective route for new options to be developed with Government – it also entrenches the responsibilities of STBs to drive the prioritisation of proposals.
4. **Investment should have an unerring focus on outcomes for road users, including wider economic benefits.** We agree with DfT that this should be the focus but we disagree with the approach to specifically identify eligibility criteria which could limit the holistic view the MRN is seeking to enable. We welcome updates to the Treasury's Green Book which now includes recognising the potential agglomeration benefits of investment; the MRN should embrace not limit such approaches.
5. **STBs should provide a reporting and monitoring role which should align with our work as owners of a regional evidence base, considering wider economic benefits and multi-modal options for our areas.** We support the proposal that the definition of the Major Road Network should be reviewed on a five-yearly cycle, consistent with the approach used for both Network Rail and Highways England managed investment programmes. We believe a role for STBs would help ensure programmes are planned and delivered effectively and embed the Infrastructure and Projects Authority's proposals for systems and life-cycles of programmes to be as efficient and targeted as possible.
6. **DfT should clarify the important, long-term role STBs can offer in any further announcements on the MRN.** STBs can offer Government an effective conduit to local partners and act as a co-creator for the road network. In most cases, Local Highways Authorities will be delivering the MRN and therefore DfT is benefitted by having strong, united voices to support and safeguard the delivery of the MRN. With STBs' roles emerging, we can only offer a consistent and effective service to Government and our partners with more confidence and certainty on our role and resource expectations.

We will meet again with your officials going forward and offer our ongoing services to provide you with the best and targeted evidence to make decisions throughout the year.

Yours sincerely



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Glazier'.

Councillor Keith Glazier
Leader and Chairman of East Sussex Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Cridland'.

John Cridland
Chairman of Transport for the North

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Peace'.

Sir John Peace
Chairman of Midlands Connect

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Tett'.

Councillor Martin Tett
Leader of Buckinghamshire County Council
Chairman of England's Economic Heartland
