



Transport & Infrastructure Committee	Agenda Item
12 July 2023	5

Title:	The Combined Authority's proposed response to National Highways Strategic Road Network Initial Report (RIS3) Consultation
Report of:	Robert Jones, Transport Programme Manager
Lead Member:	Cllr Anna Smith, Chair of Transport and Infrastructure Committee
Public Report:	Yes
Key Decision:	No
Voting Arrangements:	Recommendation A: No vote is required Recommendation B: A simple majority vote

Recommendations:	
A	To provide feedback on and approve the Combined Authority's proposed strategic response to Government consultation on National Highways' Strategic Road Network initial report which includes future priorities for the next road period – Roads Investment Strategy 3 (RIS3).
B	To delegate authority to the Interim Head of Transport, in consultation with the Chair of the Transport and Infrastructure committee to refine and finalise the Combined Authority's response (as at Appendix 1) following feedback from the Committee and submit a response to National Highways.

Strategic Objective(s):	
The proposals within this report fit under the following strategic objective(s):	
X	Achieving good growth – a key ambition of the National Highways' plan is to achieve good growth – in line with our emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan
X	Increased connectivity – the Strategic Road Network allows for increased connectivity across our region through the A1, M11, A14, A428 and A47.

1. Purpose	
1.1	To outline the key, strategic points that the Combined Authority will be responding with to National Highways' RIS3 consultation. The Committee will be asked to provide feedback on these key strategic issues and whether any additional comments should be included ahead of the consultation's submission deadline of 13 th July 2023.

2. Proposal	
2.1	This paper outlines the planned response by the Combined Authority to the recent consultation by National Highways (NH) to their future pipe line of works from 2025 to 2030. This is the third roll out of the future works of the Road Investment Strategy and is therefore named RIS 3.

The consultation is part of the legislative process for setting the next Road Investment Strategy (RIS3). It is primarily seeking views on:

- Proposed strategic objectives for RIS3, identified in RIS3 planning ahead;
- National Highways' assessment of the current state of the Strategic Road Network potential future needs and proposed priorities for the next road period (RP3), covering the financial years 2025/26 to 2029/30;
- Analytical approach NH are proposing to inform the setting of RIS3; and
- Future extent of the strategic road network.

The consultation information is available via the following link - <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/futureroads>.

3. Background

3.1 The existing national road network passes through the Combined Authority boundaries via both Motorways and Trunk Roads. RIS3 has six strategic objectives that closely align to our own emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan's aims and objectives. The RIS3 objectives are:

1 Growing the economy

If the Strategic Road Network (SRN) performs its role of supporting long distance journeys, then businesses prosper, by dependably connecting people to jobs and companies to customers. This includes ensuring resilient integration with our ports, airports, and rail terminals through which we access global markets. It also means using roads to unlock housing and improving connectivity for communities that are poorly served. As NH seek to build a stronger economy the role the SRN will play is vital.

2 Improving safety for all

Safety is NH's top priority for the SRN. A key priority of the RIS3 investments is to reduce the number of people killed or injured and working on our roads. England's SRN is already one of the safest in the world and NH plan to do even more to prevent incidents arising and reduce the severity when they do occur. Working with NH and other partners the Combined Authority is committed to investing in tackling behaviours that make road traffic collisions more likely.

3 Network performance to meet customer needs

NH will explore what can be done to make journeys more reliable, less congested, and safer while protecting the environment plus health and wellbeing. This will involve trying to meet the particular needs of all users, from freight firms to pedestrians, and where they interact with the network. The SRN is an aging asset with many structures nearing the end of their design life. As these assets age they are less predictable and resilient. To reduce this deterioration and retain the networks capacity NH have stated that they will need to continue to invest in maintenance and renewals. It is important that the transport network is considered as a whole, integrated system. In order to deliver this successfully it will be important that the Department for Transport consider their budget holistically and ensure funding is provided for sustainable transport and active travel in addition to the needs of the SRN and National Highways.

4 A technology-enabled network

The context in which NH and the SRN operates is evolving. Changing ways of living, working, new services and technologies will change what NH and stakeholders expect from the SRN and how it interacts with the local roads and wider transport. RIS3 will not be able to predict all these changes, but it should help prepare the ground for them, building in flexibility to respond as they emerge. The Combined Authority will expressly outline to NH that we need to be ready to harness the possibilities of new technology to change the way people think about transport plus how vehicles and physical infrastructure respond to each other. Technology is not an end in itself, but it will play an important role to help improve network capability.

5 Managing and planning the SRN for the future

To develop a more sustainable and resilient economy, it will be crucial for the SRN to be in a good condition. NH need to continue to improve their understanding of the condition of the SRN, its structures and associated equipment and ensure they are systematically renewed so they continue to serve the country while still well placed to deal with the challenges of climate change.

	<p>6 Improved environmental outcomes</p> <p>Road travels future is moving towards a decarbonised environment, with vehicles powered by alternative fuels such as electricity, hydrogen, and biofuels. NH have outlined that it will be ensuring that the infrastructure that is built, maintained, and operated will use near zero carbon products and techniques. The SRN's impact on the natural, built, and historic environment is something that can, and must, continue to be reduced. In particular, NH will consider how best to achieve biodiversity net gain, minimise light pollution and flooding risks, reduce impacts of air pollution and noise plus protect water quality.</p>
3.2	<p>Key areas within the Combined Authority's Response</p> <p><u>Sweating the asset and improvements</u></p> <p>The Combined Authority agrees that is important for NH to be making the most of the existing network and hope to see improvements where necessary on the SRN. These improvements should include a commitment by NH to further enhance the A428, A1, A47, M11 and A14 in line with their overarching objectives outlined earlier in the paper. The necessary improvements on these key routes through Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will need to vary on the local circumstances and therefore it is essential that the NH recognise the importance of these key strategic corridors and work with the Combined Authority to find the best possible solutions for each of these. With the much-needed improvements at the Black Cat Junction it is important for NH to recognise that a key priority should be improvements to the A1 between this key interchange and Buckden.</p> <p>The Combined Authority support the need to better maintain assets, particularly to be more resilient to extreme weather events. The extreme heat in summer 2022 led to damage on many of the region's road network which has adversely impacted on traffic flows and exacerbated congestion.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Budgetary Consideration</u></p> <p>The key priority for the Combined Authority is the funding and subsequent construction of the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement (EACE) scheme. While a key rail project this junction improvement will significantly reduce the amount of freight on the SRN by increasing capacity for rail freight on the vital Felixstowe-Midlands freight corridor.</p> <p>Work undertaken by Network Rail so far demonstrates that the improvements would deliver substantial national economic, levelling up and decarbonisation benefits through the planned doubling of freight capacity, alongside increased passenger services on poor frequency routes. With the benefits being felt well beyond the East, supporting access and growth in the Midlands and North as well.</p> <p>The importance of the scheme has been further reinforced by England's Economic Heartland and Transport East outlining recently that EACE will return £4.89 for every pound invested in the £466 million project. With around 70% of intermodal containers coming into the UK from Felixstowe are destined for distribution hubs in the Midlands and northern England. EACE will increase capacity around the key East Anglia hub from 6.5 trains per hour to 10, with an extra six freight trains running to and from the port per day – 2,900 per year.</p> <p>As a consequence, an estimated 98,000 lorry movements would be removed from the roads every year, in addition to an estimated 277,000 extra passenger journeys. Road congestion would be expected to be cut by 5.6 million hours per year. Carbon emissions due to fewer lorry movements are predicted to be 1.7 million tonnes lower over 60 years. Therefore, the Combined Authority wish for RIS3 and NH to examine its budgetary position and provide a significant proportion of the funding required for EACE due to the significant benefits that the scheme would have on the SRN, particularly in relation to east-west movement.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Performance measurement</u></p> <p>The safety of the SRN should continue to be the important measure of performance. In addition, the measures should closely align to those of the objectives and therefore more thought should be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic growth and how the SRN can improve the performance of a region's economy; • Rural connectivity – the rural nature of some of the SRN within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough heightened importance on the SRN's ability to connect people to essential services. Measuring the SRN's ability to provide these connections effectively could be useful to ensure investment is being made in the right places and at the right scale; and • Journey time reliability is also an important measure. This leads to increased costs for businesses and freight.

3.5	<p><u>Digital Improvements</u></p> <p>The Combined Authority agree with NH that digital technology can support the reliable, fast, efficient, and safe running of the SRN network and welcome the proposals. The Combined Authority would like to ensure join-up in digital technology for end-to-end journeys as many journeys that use the SRN also link to the local MRN. It is important that any digital technology complements the complete journey and not just that on the SRN and feel this can be done through effective engagement with the Combined Authority, Connecting Cambridgeshire, Local Authorities and Sub National Transport Bodies.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Analytical approach</u></p> <p>It is important that NH collate better evidence on the need to support large infrastructure projects across our region. The Combined Authority, alongside the Sub National Transport Bodies and other interested groups, have undertaken a significant amount of work to progress options and plans over recent years and it is important that NH take account of this in analysis and evidence gathering.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>To conclude, the Combined Authority welcomes future improvements for the connectivity of the transport network there are a number of key considerations that should be carefully considered and embraced;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The health and welfare of the regions. • The inclusion of active travel considerations and future proofing of both existing and future highway infrastructure, especially in locations of potential or current severance. Whilst NH are conscious of severance, further commitment is required. • Inter connectivity of transport systems, in particular local public transport capability and priority. • When published NH should carefully consider the local strategic requirements detailed within our emerging <i>Local Transport and Connectivity Plan</i> and other key strategies at the local and regional level; and • The NH's <i>Environment and Sustainability Strategy</i> clearly lists their seven priorities are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving health and well being ▪ Promoting Active Travel ▪ Using Natural flood management ▪ Good Road Design ▪ Promoting sustainable resource use ▪ Increased connectivity ▪ Enhance cultural heritage <p>The Combined Authority support these seven items; however, with the NH's infrastructure passing through local communities it is imperative that due consideration must be given to their concerns.</p>

4. Appendices

4.1	Detailed response contained within Appendix A.
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5. Implications

Financial Implications

5.1	There are no direct financial implications of this paper.
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Legal Implications

6.1	There are no known legal implications associated with the Combined Authority's submission.
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Public Health Implications

7.1	Improvement and integration of the local key route and strategic road network is essential to the improvement of traffic movements and integration with public transport and Active Travel Solutions.
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Environmental & Climate Change Implications	
8.1	The DfT are committed to improvement of the national key and strategic route network and that is covered within their Environmental Sustainability Strategy link Environmental Sustainability Strategy - National Highways.
Other Significant Implications	
9.1	N/A.
Background Papers	
10.1	There are no background papers for this paper.