



## **RAC response to Department for Transport consultation 'Proposals for a Major Road Network'**

**This response has been written by Nicholas Lyes, RAC Public Affairs Manager, on behalf of RAC Motoring Services**

### **About the RAC**

With more than eight million members, the RAC is the oldest and one of the UK's most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. As such, it is committed to making driving easier, safer, more affordable and more enjoyable for all road users.

The RAC, which employs more than 1,600 patrols, provides roadside assistance across the entire UK road network and as a result has significant insight into how the country's road networks are managed and maintained.

The RAC is separate from the RAC Foundation which is a transport policy and research organisation which explores the economic, mobility, safety and environmental issues relating to roads and their users.

The RAC website can be found at [www.rac.co.uk](http://www.rac.co.uk).

In September 2017, the RAC published its latest [Report on Motoring](#).

### **RAC Response**

#### **Core Principles**

##### **1. Do you agree with the proposed core principles for the MRN outlined in this document?**

Yes. We welcome the core proposals for the creation of an MRN which will reduce congestion, improve journey reliability, cut congestion in towns and cities, improve air quality and provide a more resilient and robust network.

##### **2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the quantitative criteria outlined and their proposed application?**

Agree. The RAC supports the quantitative criteria outlined. While using projected traffic data would be useful, we understand that this may overcomplicate the proposals because of the numerous projection scenarios. Questions over whether re-trunking may prove to be beneficial may need to be addressed, but ultimately the RAC believes that local authorities may be best placed to understand the needs of local traffic and the benefits of upgrading particular stretches of road.

##### **3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the qualitative criteria outlined and their application?**

We agree with the proposals outlined as recommended in the Rees-Jeffreys report "A Major Road Network for England." The RAC was represented on the External Advisory Panel which assisted in the

preparation of this report and therefore we had the opportunity to contribute views during the research which underpins the report.

**4. 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. We feel this strikes the right balance by identifying strategically important local A-roads based on objective criteria.

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

No, on balance we feel the criteria has identified the sections of road.

**6. Do you agree with the proposal for how the MRN should be reviewed in future years?**

Yes. This should be carried out during the development phase of each Road Investment Strategy. This would ensure that future work on the MRN and the SRN can complement each other.

**7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the roles outlined for local, regional and national bodies?**

We broadly agree. It makes sense that assessments are made by local authorities alongside contributions from STBs and LEPs as they are well placed to understand both the local and wider regional needs.

We understand that submissions will need to be made to the Department for consideration. While this would appear to be a logical step for the Department to prioritise investment in schemes for which the business case is most compelling, we do have some concerns about the costs that local authorities may incur in preparing submissions and their ability to fund these, particularly as there is no guarantee of success.

**8. What additional responsibilities, if any, should be included? Please state at which level these roles should be allocated.**

The RAC believes the document outlines all responsibilities and we do not have any further comments to add.

**9. 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. It is important to have a consistent framework as this will create an even playing field for regions looking to improve their sections of the MRN.

**10. Are there any other factors, or evidence, that should be included within the scope of the Regional Evidence Bases?**

Regional Evidence Bases should include consideration of how regional plans link with one another so that discontinuities in assumptions and forecasts do not exist either side of regional boundaries. Support from Highways England might enable such discontinuities to be avoided.

**11. Do you agree with the role that has been outlined for Highways England?**

Yes. Given Highways England's role in managing and developing investment plans for the strategic road network, it is appropriate that Highways England also has a role in the development of the MRN. We also note that funding for both the MRN and the SRN will come from the Roads Fund which further supports the case for Highways England involvement.

If Highways England has the capacity, we agree with the principle of their involvement in programme support, analytical support and cost estimate support. Delivery support would also be welcome given Highways England's expertise in this area.

**12. Do you agree with the cost thresholds outlined?**

The RAC does not agree nor disagree. We have no specialist knowledge on the costs of typical scheme upgrades; however we would welcome further clarification on why the minimum figure of £20m and the maximum figure of £100m were cited by the Department for Transport as adequate thresholds. We would welcome the application of Highways England's skills, knowledge and experience to ensure that schemes deliver value for money.

**13. Do you agree with the eligibility criteria outlined?**

Yes. See our response to Q12 on cost; however we agree with all of the types of schemes which would be eligible for investment.

**14. Do you agree with the investment assessment criteria outlined?**

Yes. We would like to see a specific additional commitment to improve the condition of such roads (e.g. road surface, lighting etc.) as part of an objective on MRN resilience in addition to the stated objective on SRN resilience. Improving consistency and/or reducing duration of journey times should also be part of the MRN assessment criteria.

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

Please see our response to question 14.

**16. Is there anything further you would like added to the MRN proposals?**

No further comments at present.

**Please address any comments or further contact to:**

Nicholas Lyes, RAC Public Affairs Manager

[nlyes@rac.co.uk](mailto:nlyes@rac.co.uk)



David Bizley, RAC Chief Engineer

[dbizley@rac.co.uk](mailto:dbizley@rac.co.uk)

Pete Williams, RAC Head of External Affairs

[peter.williams@rac.co.uk](mailto:peter.williams@rac.co.uk)

Date of submission: 27<sup>th</sup> February 2018