

CECA Consultation response

Civil Engineering Contractors Association
1 Birdcage Walk
London
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7 February 2018

Dear Sir / Madam

[Shaping the Future of England's Strategic Roads: Consultation on Highway England's Initial Report](#)

The Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the above named call for evidence.

CECA is the representative body for companies who work day-to-day to deliver, upgrade, and maintain the UK's transport and utility networks.

With more than 300 members throughout England, Scotland and Wales, we represent firms who together carry out up to 80 per cent of all civil engineering activity in the UK, in the key sectors of transport, energy, communications, waste and utilities including electricity and water.

Our members include some of the largest construction firms as well as a range of small specialist and regional contractors. Our industry supports the employment of over 200,000 people in the UK with annual activity worth £25 billion.

We trust that you find our comments below helpful and that they will be taken into consideration.

Yours faithfully,

Marie-Claude Hemming
Director of External Affairs
Civil Engineering Contractors Association

1. Do you think Highways England's proposals will deliver what users of the SRN want? If not, what could be done differently?

CECA welcomes the publication of these proposals and notes the extensive consideration given to the future of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and what should be included within Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS 2).

CECA believes that the proposals cover all the issues that as road users, our members feel are important. To this extent, the focus of the proposals on road maintenance is vital, yet we seek further clarity on how this sits with other intervention priorities such as upgrading the network.

In our view, surface quality, signage and road markings, combined with good quality accessible information should be high on the list of priorities for enhancing the existing network.

We concur with the introduction of Expressways and the increasing use of Smart Motorways as beneficial elements of the SRN that meet Highways England's imperatives for safety, customer service and delivery.

A vital issue for the effectiveness, efficiency and resilience of the SRN is its integration with the local road network, especially the new Major Road Network.

2. Do you think Highways England's proposals will deliver what businesses want? If not, what could be done differently?

Business needs are related to avoidance of congestion and ensuring journey times are minimised. Clearly it is vital to ensure that there is sufficient road space and capacity for freight, commuting and business-to-business travel. These drive the UK's economic performance. Most notably, the SRN has a major role to play in freight transport, especially in terms of linking airports and ports to distribution centres and beyond.

In order to ensure that these needs are met there also has to be a clear link with the Major Road Network and national and regional economic growth plans. To this extent the economic corridor studies by the emerging Sub-National Transport Bodies must be part of Highways England's planning. While economic drivers are a key part of Highways England's strategic studies, they must be linked closely with the work being done within the regions to avoid a disjointed approach.

The same can be said regarding local connectivity issues and, again, clear liaison with the local devolved administrations in the Combined Authorities and City Regions coupled with the Sub-National Transport Bodies is essential.

Finally, CECA believes that Highways England must also consider development plans for public transport. There must be a continued focus on reducing congestion and increasing capacity across all our transport networks.

3. Do you think Highways England's proposals meet the needs of people affected by the presence of the SRN? If not, what could be done differently?

CECA believes that recent new highways schemes have met the needs and expectations of those impacted by them, have delivered local social value and have opened up the amenity value of the countryside adjacent to rural schemes. We anticipate these needs continuing to be addressed in the development of future projects, especially with the use of Expressways.

The approach in the proposals to the natural environment, linkages to housing demand and considerations of air quality appear to meet the needs of those affected by the SRN.

There are and will continue to be challenges, particularly around major schemes such as the A303 and the Trans-Pennine Tunnel where it will be necessary to make a clear robust case to show that the benefits outweigh the dis-benefits. There will also be potential challenges surrounding the impact of vehicle charging infrastructure.

4. Do you agree with Highways England's proposals for:

- **Four categories of road and the development of Expressways (Initial Report sections 4.4.3 and 5.3.6)**
- **Operational priorities (Initial Report section 5.1)**
- **Infrastructure priorities (Initial Report section 5.2)**
- **Enhancement priorities (Initial Report section 5.3)**
- **A local priorities fund (Initial Report section 5.3.8)**
- **Future studies (Initial Report section 5.3.11)**
- **Designated funds (Initial Report section 5.4)**
- **Performance measures and targets (Initial Report section 6.3)**

If you disagree with any of these, what could be done differently?

Four categories of road and the development of Expressways

CECA is supportive of proposals for four categories. We welcome in particular the direction of travel in terms of improving road safety. But we must also work to ensure that road users must be able to see clear signage to enable them to travel seamlessly throughout a journey regardless of its designation.

Operational priorities

We believe that the operational priorities seem appropriate. Furthermore, preparation for autonomous vehicles, can largely be achieved by maintaining the network in a very

good condition. At the same time better roadside information technology for drivers will help both driven and driverless vehicles.

Infrastructure priorities

CECA welcomes these priorities which we feel have been neglected in previous years. Drainage in particular has been seen - when carrying out improvement works on existing roads - to be in a poor state of repair with little attention to its maintenance. Surface condition is a key customer consideration and should be high up the list along with road markings, signage and drainage. It is hoped that the Asset Delivery approach will address the shortcomings on the network in these areas, and we note that more work is needed to understand in detail the condition of every asset belonging to Highways England.

Enhancement priorities

CECA believes that the proposed approach is satisfactory in terms of looking ahead to RIS2. At the same time the approach must take account of the economic growth studies being carried out in the sub-regions, and must take account of the Major Road Network study which Government has now also adopted in principle. A stable long-term pipeline is to be welcomed as this will provide the right incentives for development investment and investment in the necessary skills and resources to deliver the programme of enhancements.

Local priorities fund

CECA is supportive of proposals for a local priorities fund and are keen to seek clarity as to how the revenue stream will be funded and managed.

Future studies

CECA calls on Highways England to work in conjunction with the Strategic Transport Bodies and authorities to ensure all transport needs and modes are addressed to ensure efficient use of resource.

5. Are there any other proposals in the Initial Report that you do not agree with? If so, which ones and what could be done differently?

CECA is generally in agreement with the proposals, but would stress that consistency of route provision is vital in order to improve the journey experience.

It would be worthwhile Highways England investing in comprehensive understanding of existing assets in order to ensure efficient integration of new designs.

Furthermore, Highways England must also focus on an economic corridor approach working alongside other transport bodies. There are emerging regional strategies for transport which must be considered as substantive evidence to guide Highways England's approach.

We also have some concern as to how Highways England will resource the aspirations outlined in this report. Both the public and Highways England's supply chain need a clear

understanding of how Highways England operates and how it will interact with its users and suppliers in the future, and in particular smooth, sustained and consistent growth.

6. Do you agree with Highways England's assessment of the future needs of the SRN (Initial Report section 4.4)? If not, how would you change the assessment?

CECA is generally supportive of this assessment, especially the recognition of the difficulty in predicting the future. The planned approach of structured maintenance and improvements seems sensible. It is important again to stress that Highways England must work with other transport bodies to ensure the right solutions are developed. We commend Highway's England engagement to date with Transport for the North as an example of working in alignment with regional bodies.

Furthermore, we would stress the importance of an Asset Delivery approach across all transportation to guide Highways England's decision making, combined with a focus on increasing capacity and horizon scanning.

7. How far does the Initial Report meet the Government's aims for RIS2 (economy, network capability, safety, integration and environment - described in paragraph 2.3)? Which aims could Highways England do more to meet and how?

CECA believes that the Initial Report meets the Government's aims for RIS 2, but again would stress the importance of working with the rest of the transport network to ensure the right solutions are chosen and resources used to deliver them.

8. Do you think there should be any change in the roads included in the SRN (described in paragraph 1.3)? If so, which roads would you propose are added to or removed from the SRN, and why?

CECA is supportive of the principle of the Major Road Network (managed by local authorities) and as such believe it will deliver benefit to Highways England's SRN as long as the two approaches are integrated.

9. Is there anything else we need to consider when making decisions about investment in the SRN?

If so, what other factors do you want considered? Please provide links to any published information that you consider relevant.

In addition, in relation to the analytical approach summarised in Chapter 6 and set out in more detail in the strategy document accompanying this consultation:

CECA believes that Highways England must work towards achieving good journeys across all of the SRN, and work with other bodies to ensure seamless travel between local roads and the SRN.

Furthermore, it is important for the supply chain to have long-term visibility of workload from Highways England in order to manage resources smoothly.

We also recommend that funding is included in RIS2 to develop RIS3 and Major Road Network schemes.

10. Does the analytical approach taken have the right balance between ambition, robustness, and proportionality? If not, what do you suggest we do differently?

CECA would suggest that the analytical approach taken by Highways England must also be flexible in order to deliver the right outcome, working closely in conjunction with local transport bodies. This will ensure that any approach meets economic needs as well as the day to day requirements of the network.

In particular the scheme appraisal process needs to be flexible for the benefit of the route as a whole. Elements of routes that are missing must be permitted to progress, despite their apparent lack of business case as an element.