



# URBAN TRANSPORT GROUP

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Consultation response

## The Road to Growth - Discussion Paper

Highways England

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Urban Transport Group (UTG) represents the seven largest city region strategic transport bodies in England, which, between them, serve over twenty million people in Greater Manchester (Transport for Greater Manchester), London (Transport for London), the Liverpool City Region (Merseytravel), the North East (North East Combined Authority), the Sheffield City Region (South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive), the West Midlands (Transport for West Midlands) and West Yorkshire (West Yorkshire Combined Authority).
- 1.2. This response was developed by UTG's Strategic Highways Group.

## 2. Response

**Do you agree with the areas of research we have focused on to better understand the relationship between the strategic road network and economic growth on page 6-16?**

We agree with the overall approach however it would be sensible to ensure that the research and evidence base being developed by Highways England (HE) relates to the research and evidence base being developed by individual city regions, new sub-regional bodies like Transport for the North and Midlands Connect as well as the Urban Transport Group. It is also important to bear in mind the crucial role that Cities and City Regions play in fostering economic growth.

An effective transport network is key to the success of big city economies. Transport gives people access to goods, services and jobs, and it gives business access to a labour force and to markets. City regions are the drivers of productivity and growth in modern economies.

**Do you agree with the vision we have articulated on page 4?**

We agree with the outlined vision but it is felt that a greater focus on job creation would be welcome.

It is worth noting that it is vital that national transport agencies reflect a devolving England, to ensure that their plans reflect city region priorities at both an operational and a strategic level. For example most traffic on the Highways England network has an origin and destination on the sub-national highways network.

**Do you agree with the strategic economic roles for Highways England that we have articulated on page 17-18?**

We agree with the key role that Highways England can play but the consequences of decisions on the national highway network have implications on the sub-national highway network. We still believe there is more that can be done to ensure that HE strategic decisions on road capacity and operational measures are taken in consort with Sub National Transport Bodies (SNTB) and Combined Authorities (CAs) rather than in isolation from them.

HE should also reflect on the Rees Jeffrey's Road Fund Report "A Major Road Network for England. The report by David Quarmby and Phil Carey proposes a new "Major Road Network"



(MRN) tier of road. This tier adds 3,800 miles of local authority roads to the 4,200-mile HE Strategic Road Network.

The basis of this is that the existing SRN is not large enough to serve actual strategic needs of regional economies, and that one enlarged network, consistently planned, managed and funded would serve the UK economy more effectively. It is worth noting that this larger network should not include roads on any agreed Key Route Networks (KRN), which are planned and managed by the various CAs.

**Do you agree with our categorisation and definition of economic opportunity areas, on page 19-22?**

We support the principle of categorisation and opportunity areas as long as they reflect the wider need to rebalance the economy and would welcome the ability to work with HE to ensure that this is the case. We would welcome discussions with Highways England on this and also on the supportive role that can be played by HE's Designated Funds.

In addition, we would welcome the recognition of the crucial role that regional airports play. Regional Airports that need to be recognised on page 11 (fig.5) including Newcastle, Liverpool and Leeds/Bradford.

**Do you agree the two-perspective approach to prioritising economic growth locations around the strategic road network, as set out on page 23?**

We would like to express concerns that the proposed approach prioritisation economic growth may not allow for growth to be facilitated in a balanced way across the country. The rebalancing of the economy is a Government priority and is being led by the devolved CAs and SNTB.

UTG would be happy to facilitate dialogue between its members, SNTBs and HE to discuss this issue.

**Do you agree with our emerging approach on page 24?**

We support this approach. It is vital that the emerging approach is consistent with the approaches being taken within the RIS2 process, Route Strategies and by SNTBs.

**Do you have any further suggestions as to how we can work differently to better enable economic growth on page 25?**

It is vital that Highways England engage with Combined Authorities to ensure economic growth is maximised in a way that benefits regions, and sub-regions.

It is important that HE engage with CAs in regards to planned maintenance on the SRN. Better planning will support the operation of sub-regional KRN's, as well as improving wider network resilience. Poorly planned maintenance has a detrimental impact on local areas adjacent to, and linked, to the SRN.

It is also important to note the positive impacts that investing in rail and local alternatives can play in relieving pressure and demand away from the SRN. There is currently insufficient regard to the way in which changes to the capacity of the SRN have a knock-on effect on wider



city region highway networks and insufficient consideration of alternatives to highway capacity increases (such as improvements to parallel rail corridors).