RESPONSE OF THE TRANSPORT AND HEALTH STUDY GROUP TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE MAJOR ROADS NETWORK

March 2018

Q1. PRINCIPLES

We disagree with the existence of a separate fund for roadbuilding. We believe that the fund should be focused on the purpose of improving the experiences of road users, rather than making an assumption that this will be best achieved by work on the road system. The work of Mogridge showed that the speed of road traffic in London was affected more by the speed of the rail system than by anything done on the roads, even the substitution of motor vehicles for horse drawn vehicles and in terms of a saturated road system it is easy to see why that should be so as it would affect the relocation decisions that create congestion. We believe that a fund intended to improve the experience of road users would look at schemes which might ease congestion in other ways. For example improvements to the rail line into Whitby allowing the running of more than the current four trains a day might well ease the severe congestion problems on the roads to and in Whitby. The proposal for a rolling motorway of vehicle carrying trains over the Woodhead Pass which would also convey passenger rail vehicles in the same trains is better than the proposals for a new road because it would be cheaper to build and it would bring the same benefits to the road system whilst also bringing rail system benefits as well. Public transport improvements may well ease congestion in the east of Stockport better than the A6 to M60 road link - the Council is looking at this but feels constrained by the funding situation. Improving rail services to Bodiam Castle in collaboration with the K&ESR might well ease congestion better than road improvements. These suggestions may or may not be right but they deserve consideration not ruling out of attention. We are in danger of going back to the days when people built roads because that was all they could get funding for rather than because it was best.

Q2. QUANTITATIVE CRITERIA

We feel that regard should be had to the future transport network. We are moving towards a world in which high speed intercity travel will be carried out by hyperloop at 750mph, short distance local travel will be by cycle or foot because of health implications, congestion and air quality and medium distance local travel will be by a system of total mobility based on the combination of driverless vehicles and public transport. The first of these statements may or may not be true but the bulk of informed opinion is now firming up behind belief in the hyperloop and investing in other forms of intercity transport is like buying an ostler's business in 1830. The promotion of active travel must happen to save the burden obesity is causing to the NHS. OECD has shown the huge increase in congestion that driverless cars will bring if they are not shared and linked to public health but also the capacity that such a link has to reduce congestion. Predictions of the effect of such change may prove to be wrong. But predictions that no such changes will occur are bound to be wrong.

Q3.QUALITATIVE CRITERIA
We make the same comment that we made about the quantittative criteria. We need to focus on planned patterns of transport use not current ones.
A major qualitative criterion should be be that inclusion of the road would facilitate development that would tend towards improved patterns of transport. For example roads which have no parallel railway are more likely to have a long term major role in our transport system than roads which do.
Given that driverless vehicles will make it easier to develop shared road and rail infrastructure roads that could, if converted to shared use, fill a valuable gap in the rail system should be included

Q4.ROADS WRONGLY EXCLUDED
Please see the examples given in our preceding answers, including the suggestion for inclusion of roads which might contribute to future transport patterns eg roads suitable for conversion to road/rail combined used when that becomes easier with dirverless vehicles.

Q5.ROADS WRONGLY INCLUDED
Some roads may be included because of traffic flows which in the future will not or should not occur.
There is a general assumption in the document that road building improves congestion. That is only true in unsaturated road systems. Once a road system becomes saturated congestion is the natural mechanism for limiting relocation decisions so that they do not create traffic in excess of the capacity of the system. Saturation occurs when the road system cannot possibly be improved to a point at which it would carry all the traffic that would occur if the unmet demand for relocation were met. Broadly speaking this occurs when major conurbations become closer together than the distance which a vehicle on an uncongested road system could traverse in the time that people are prepared to spend commuting. On that basis the outer suburbs of Manchester could be in Nuneaton. Once this state is reached all that increased road capacity does is temporarily open the scope for relocation until congestion rises to close it again. It does not ease congestion, it simply exposes more people to it. There is now ample evidence that this is the long term effect of road building but there is a general failure to act off that evidence because people think of suppressed demand in terms of suppression of individual jourbeys and it does not ring true in their perception of the behaviour of themselves and their friends. Once you realise that what we are talking about is actually suppressed demand for relocation the evidence is readily explicable.

Q6.REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS
We agree with a review every 5 years but it should also include those involved in changing transport behaviour and promoting health not just those involved with roads.

Q7. PROPOSED ROLES
No comment

Q8.SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDITIONAL ROLES
A responsibilty should be placed on local Directors of Public Health to assess and advise on the implications of the MSRN for the creation of healthier transport systems.
A responsibility should be laid on the National Infrastructure Commission to monitor the impact of technological developments such as driverless vehicles and the hyperloop and their impact for road policy.
A responsibility should be laid on STBs to consider such implications in their plans and also to consider the implications of saturation of the road system
STBs should be required to have a mechanism for public health advice, as TfL does
National Parks Authorities and local authorities responsible for AONBs should have a special role in trying to identify ways to avoid the need for traffic on the roads within the Park or AONB, including rolling motorways (vehicle carrying trains)

Q9. CREATION OF REGIONAL GROUPS WHERE THERE IS NO STB
No comment

Q10. ANY ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE TO CONSIDER
Consideration of what changes in transport behaviour are necessary to address issues of air quality, climate change and the prevention of obesity and how the MSRN can contribute to them.
Consideration of what changes in transport systems are facilitated by developing technology especially by the development of driverless vehicles and the hyperloop
In the case of schemes involving National Parks or AONBs there should be a particular obligation to consider schemes which reduce the need for traffic on the road in question, including serious consideration of rolling motorways (vehicle-carrying trains)

Q11. ROLE OF HIGHWAYS ENGLAND
We agree with all the roles proposed but we feel it should also have responsibilities to have regard to the total transport system, to the needs for changes in transport behaviour, to the implications of saturation of the road system and to the potentials arising from the development of new technology
Highways England should be required to have a system of public health advice
Highways England should have a power and duty to take steps to secure the operation of rolling motorways (vehicle carrying trains) and to develop schemes for increasing rail freight capacity where this can reduce the need for road traffic.

Q12. COST THRESHOLDS
As we will say in our answer to Q13 schemes which avoid the need for a qualifying scheme should also be eligible. There should be no cost threshold to such a scheme - if a scheme costing £5m can avoid the need for a scheme costing £21m it would be foolish to say that the latter scheme qualified and the former didn't.

Q13. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
Rolling motorways (vehicle carrying trains) should be added to the list of eligible schemes.
Schemes which will avoid the need for an eligible scheme should be eligible. This might include public transport schemes which reduce congestion levels or cycling and walking schemes which reduce local traffic on a stretch of the MSRN.

Q14. INVESTMENT ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
In general we agree with the proposals but we have two caveats
(a) it should be acknowledged that where the road system is saturated reduction of congestion cannot be achieved by increasing road capacity (we have defined what we mean by "saturated" in our answer to Q5 where we defined it as "when the road system cannot possibly be improved to a point at which it would carry all the traffic that would occur if the unmet demand for relocation were met"
(b)We would also have reservations about improving end to end journey times where the road system is saturated.We would strenuously object to it in circumstances where it would create saturation on roads which are currently not saturated.

Q15. ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT CRITERIA
Supporting transport behaviour change
Supporting the development of active travel.
Creating flexibility for addressing the changes in the transport system to accommodate new technology
Reducing traffic in National Parks and AONBs

Q16. ADDITIONAL ISSUES
In our answers to all of the questions we have expressed the need to
- address transport behaviour change
- create flexibility for new transport technology
- reduce the need for new roads instead of providing them
-acknowledging the problem of saturation of road systems (ie situations where roads cannot possibly be improved to such a level as to accommodate all the traffic that would be created by fully meeting all the unmet demand for relocation) and recognising that in such situations congestion cannot be avoided by increasing capacity and improved journey times may prove counterproductive.
These principles should be built into the proposals