STB – by e-mail



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Dear xxx,

I am writing to set out the position on the Major Road Network (MRN) / Large Local Major (LLM) programme following the Spending Review. As with many areas, the SR has challenged Ministers to make choices and to focus on key departmental priorities. As a result, it is likely that we will not have sufficient funding to continue to fund all the schemes currently in the programme to the current scale or timing. In addition, since the programme was set up in 2019 there have been changes to Government policy around transport investment, analytical requirements especially on carbon impacts, the impact of new forecasts and of course the effects of Covid on delivery and future demand. It is therefore right that we now take the opportunity to review the programme. I am writing to all Sub-National Transport Bodies (STBs) to seek your help in undertaking this review.

As a first step we would like to give all scheme promoters and the relevant STBs the option to reconsider the schemes in the current programme. Certain schemes may no longer be a priority because they have increased in cost, cannot be progressed in a timely fashion or no longer fit with the local authority’s latest transport objectives.

Second, we ask that all local authorities (LAs) and STBs consider whether schemes in the programme will meet either the original objectives of the MRN programme which are:

* Reducing congestion
* Supporting economic growth and rebalancing
* Supporting housing delivery
* Supporting all road users
* Supporting the Strategic Road Network

or more recent, wider objectives of Government transport investment. These include:

* Strategic case – does the scheme still meet the objectives of the MRN programme and/or the latest objectives/policies of the LA or STB?
* Value for money (VfM) – as a result of recent changes to Transport Analysis Guidance and other issues, is the scheme likely to be low or poor VfM?
* Timely progress – what progress has been made on the scheme since it was added to the programme in 2019 and will the scheme be ready to start construction by the end of the forthcoming Spending Review period i.e. March 2025
* Local support – is the scheme actively supported by the local MP(s) and others in the wider community?

In addition, the importance of decarbonisation has increased since May 2019 so consideration of whether the scheme is likely to make carbon worse and lead to a lower VfM, especially now the cost of carbon has been increased substantially, should also be a factor in your reconsideration. Active travel and bus improvements are also issues that have grown in importance and any opportunities to promote these in major schemes should be reflected, where possible.

Given your role in the original development of the programme, I would be grateful if you could co-ordinate within your area a response to this request based on the issues and questions above and return to the Department by Tuesday 1st March.

Any LA choosing to withdraw a scheme will not be penalised in any future funding rounds . We are also conducting our review and Ministers reserve the right to consider the status of all schemes in the programme against overall programme affordability. The starting point for the review is that any scheme that already has approval at Outline Business Case stage will not be considered for removal unless the LA/STB decides otherwise or unless the case for the scheme changes significantly.

We are writing in similar terms to all local authorities with schemes currently in the programme.

We would be happy to discuss.



Philip Andrews

Head of Road Investment, Policy and Pipeline Development