

Guide to the road decision-makers

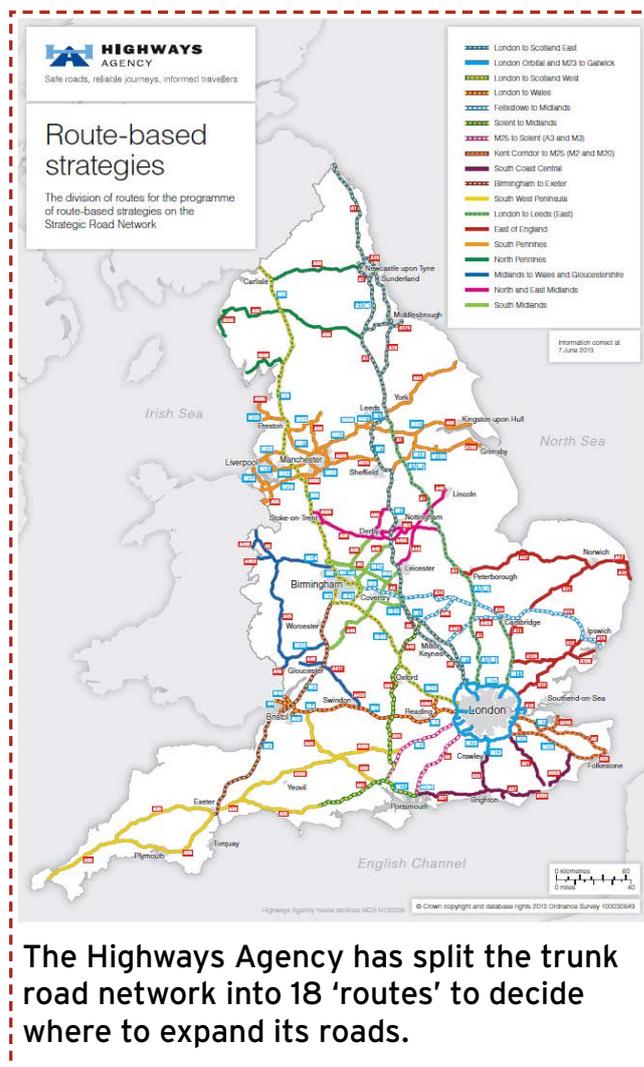
The Government and the Department for Transport

For strategic road schemes and large local authority schemes planning and funding decisions are taken by the Secretary of State for Transport, with their junior ministers.

Ministers are advised in their funding decisions by an array of civil servants in the Department for Transport (DfT). Civil servants can be a useful source of information and you can ask them questions about a road scheme if the DfT is directly funding it.

On planning, the Secretary of State for Transport is the joint decision-maker with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. In October 2015, the Government set up a new **National Infrastructure Commission** to advise on major projects including trans-Pennine connections and large-scale investment in London transport.

A new regional body, **Transport for the North**, has statutory powers for the North of England, as does **Transport for London** in the capital. Currently the DfT is devolving funding for local road schemes to Local Transport Bodies and Local Enterprise Partnerships (see below). However, larger local schemes still need the direct approval of funding from DfT, so influencing ministers will remain important.



The Highways Agency has split the trunk road network into 18 'routes' to decide where to expand its roads.

Highways England

Highways England is a Government company, wholly owned by the Department for Transport. It was created in April 2015, and has more independence than its predecessor the Highways Agency, which was a directly managed Government agency, and has responsibility for the core trunk road and motorway network. Staff at the agency do not make decisions about which roads to build, although they are very influential in advising the Secretary of State.

If you are fighting a road that is already in the Highways England business plan, try not to get distracted by lobbying Agency staff; keep your attention focused on the politicians.

Roads promoted by Highways England should appear in the Highways England business plan (published each year in April) and on its website in the 'road projects' section. This business plan will show how and when Highways England plans to deliver the programme of road building as set out in the Roads Improvement Strategy which is drawn up by the DfT

Route Strategies

In 2015, a series of *18 Route Strategies* were published covering the whole of the Strategic Road Network. These outline Highways England's investment programme over the next 5 years in both new build and maintenance.

Feasibility Studies

In 2014 the DfT carried out six rushed 'Feasibility Studies' looking at these cross-country routes:

A303/A30/A358 corridor (to the west of England)

A1 north of Newcastle

A1 Newcastle - Gateshead western bypass

A47/A12 corridor (across Norfolk)

A27 corridor (on the south coast)

Trans-Pennine routes (Manchester to Sheffield)

These have now been published.

The DfT is now embarking on a number of new Feasibility Studies for the following areas:

M25 south west quadrant

Manchester M60 north west quadrant

Trans-Pennine tunnel

Northern trans-Pennine

Oxford - Cambridge Expressway

A1 south of Peterborough

Local authorities

Local authorities often make the initial decision to promote a road scheme, so it is essential to try to influence them early during consultation on local plans (**Local Transport Plan** for Local Transport Authorities or **Local Development Framework** for Local Planning Authorities).

If a road gains funding, it still has to get consent through the local planning process including public information and consultation. Local authority officers may help provide information but it can be difficult to talk to them if they have spent many years (even decades) promoting a scheme.

Ultimately councillors on the planning committee make the decisions so they should be the target for any campaigning. Your strategy should be to persuade or put pressure on them to vote against a new road scheme and instead explore other options

Local Transport Bodies and Local Enterprise Partnerships

From 2015, responsibility for funding decisions for local road schemes will be devolved to Local Transport Bodies, part of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). The areas covered by LEPs are larger than Local Authority areas and there are 39 covering England, with some LEP areas overlapping.

Local Transport Bodies include representatives from councils and LEPs and may also include other stakeholders from the community (but this is quite rare). They are usually quite small in size.

In 2014, LEPs were given a share of the future DfT budget as part of a larger 'Local Growth Fund' and were asked to put together bids for funding a range of transport and infrastructure projects. Despite the influence of LEPs, any roads prioritised for funding via these growth deals should still appear in Local Transport Plans and Local Development Frameworks (or be added to them after consultation):

Our website has more on these plans, and you can find your local LEP and the Growth Deal agreement for your area on our interactive map:

www.bettertransport.org.uk/roads-nowhere/local-transport

Legal responsibility for roads in Growth Deals will remain with local transport authorities. LEPs are not directly covered by Freedom of Information legislation as they are not public bodies so requests for information will need to be made to the relevant councils instead.

