

Policy committee
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Secretariat memorandum

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Transforming the Highways Agency consultation

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. To suggest a London TravelWatch response to the Department for Transport's consultation on transforming the Highways Agency into a government- owned company.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Highways Agency manages the motorway and trunk road network outside London. It also manages a few motorways that come into the Greater London Authority area, for example the M1. The Highways Agency is described as an executive agency of the Department for Transport.
- 2.2 In London the majority of the roads are managed by either the London boroughs or Transport for London (TfL).
- 2.3 There has not previously been any statutory body with a specific remit to represent users.

3. The Department for Transport's (DfT's) proposals

- 3.1 The DfT proposes to establish the Highways Agency as a government-owned company along the lines of Network Rail. It is believed that this will give the organisation a better focus, more stability of funding and thereby result in better outcomes. The proposals may be found at:- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/transforming-the-highways-agency-into-a-government-owned-company> . The consultation finishes on the 20th December 2013.
- 3.2 The Government intends to establish a Roads Investment Strategy for the agency that would provide strategy and funding for five years or longer. This would be akin to Network Rail's 'High Level Output Statement' and 'Statement of Funds Available'. The recent
- 3.3 It plans to ask the Office of Rail Regulation to monitor and hold the agency to account in terms of the efficient use of its funds and its delivery of the Roads Investment Strategy.
- 3.4 The Agency will be required to consult with and take into account local authorities.

3.5 It plans to ask Passenger Focus to be the voice of the users of the strategic road network.

4. Discussion

4.1 It is clearly to be welcomed that there is to be a voice for the users of the motorway and national trunk road network.

4.2 One would hope that the management of the road network will improve with a newly refocused organisation having stable, medium term funding. Similarly the Office of Rail Regulation would seem to be well placed to manage the technical efficiency of the Agency

4.3 Setting the strategy is the role of Government and London TravelWatch can contribute to the development of that. We have done this in the past when major road proposals have been suggested, for example the Government's Orbit study.

4.4 The area that will be of most interest to London TravelWatch is the operation of the motorways that interface with the TfL road network (TLRN). Some of these, though categorised as motorways, perform a local function. Changes to how they are managed, for example if tolling were introduced, would impact on the TLRN. A specific case could be the charges imposed to use the Dartford Bridge were to be increased that may well lead to displacement onto river crossing further west, i.e. the Blackwall tunnel.

4.5 Therefore it is important that London TravelWatch is consulted and its views take into account where changes to the management of the motorways in and around London are proposed.

5. Prioritisation criteria

5.1 There will only be a few occasions when London TravelWatch would normally take an interest in the motorway network of the trunk road network outside of London. However, there could be large impacts on the TLRN and therefore London TravelWatch should take an interest in this development.

6. Equalities and inclusion implications

6.1 There are no particular equality issue.

7. Legal powers

7.1 Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider – and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight).

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications for London TravelWatch arising from this report, beyond the cost of publication which will be undertaken within the existing budget.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 London TravelWatch responds to this consultation by particularly welcoming a role for Passenger Focus, but asking that London TravelWatch be formally consulted where (a) proposals are put forward for roads and motorways within the Greater London area and (b) proposals would be likely to impact on the operation of the TLRN.