

M56 New Junction 11a Scheme Reference Group - Terms of Reference

Background

In autumn 2014, the government announced the first Road Investment Strategy which included a new junction between 11 and 12 on the M56. The stated purpose of the junction was creating an improved link to the new Mersey Gateway Bridge from the south.

The new Mersey Gateway Bridge represents a £2Bn investment with economic, transport and social benefits, including 4,640 new jobs, reduction in journey times of up to 10 minutes and improvements to public transport facilities. The new junction 11a will play a role in increasing the benefits of the Mersey Gateway, as well as providing better access locally to the M56.

Scheme Objectives:

- Improve the link to the Mersey Gateway bridge;
- Improve connectivity and community cohesion;
- Maintain strategic access and journey time reliability for trips to/from North Wales, Cheshire and Merseyside, Manchester and its Airport;
- Improve accessibility of proposed development sites and areas of growth via both the Strategic Road Network and Local Road Network, including Mersey Gateway Crossing; and
- Supporting the use of sustainable modes.

Further consideration of proposals for the M56 New Junction 11a scheme requires engagement and close liaison with local stakeholders. Highways England considers that this can be better achieved through establishment of a reference group to involve representatives of those parties likely to be more directly affected by the proposals.

Purpose

The M56 New Junction 11a Reference Group's role is to ensure effective external involvement in the development of the proposals for the M56 New Junction 11a. The Reference Group will act as a sounding board and ensure that the views of local stakeholders are captured and considered and that stakeholders have an opportunity to feed into the work of the project team.

The Reference Group is not a decision making body and ultimate authority and accountability for the development of the proposals will continue to rest with Highways England.

Principles

The Reference Group serves to:

- a) Represent the views of their organisation or community group in relation to the proposals for the junction, and where possible, the views of wider stakeholders;
- b) Provide details where necessary of related activities, strategies and proposals which may impact on, or need to be taken account of in the project development; and
- c) Communicate the activities of the project team with regards to the M56 New Junction 11a to a wider group of regional and local stakeholders.

Membership and Chairmanship

To keep the Group to a manageable size, a maximum of 1 individual shall be nominated to represent each of the organisations and groups invited to this Group (with substitutes to attend on occasions this individual is not available).

The Membership of the Group will be kept under review to ensure it continues to capture the views of stakeholder interests throughout the development of the M56 New Junction 11a proposals. Propositions for additional membership will be considered by Highways England.

The Reference Group will be chaired by a representative from Highways England with support from their consultants. Highways England will also provide the Reference Group Secretariat function.

Accountability

The members within the Group will be accountable to each other to ensure that partnership working is productive, sustainable and supportive. All members of the Group are expected to show commitment and support to the Group and lead by example to ensure trust and co-operation at all levels.

Members are expected to disseminate information within their community regarding the scheme's development and to identify, collate and communicate back to the Group the community's issues and concerns.

Members responsible for specific actions will be accountable to the Group for ensuring the delivery of these actions.

Meetings

The intention is that the Group will meet quarterly at least until the scheme statutory public consultation. This schedule may however be altered to align with scheme key decision points.

The Initial venue is the Holiday Inn, Runcorn, however this will be reviewed after each meeting and attendees will be asked to consider a rotation of venues.

The Secretariat will circulate an Agenda and relevant papers if appropriate at least one week before the meeting.

The Secretariat will circulate Group minutes at least two weeks before the date of the next meeting, including actions and decisions. The Group will review progress against the recorded actions in future meetings.