

APPENDIX 3 – CONSULTATION QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTED RESPONSE

The draft RFA Advice is accompanied by a series of consultation questions. These cover all aspects of the advice but a number specifically relate to transport issues. These, along with suggested responses, are set out below.

Q8 *The existing major transport schemes investment programme is currently 35% over-programmed to 2015/16. Even with the further three years planning assumptions announced in RFA2, the programme will remain over-budget for the period 2009/10 to 2018/19. How should the region address its now significant level of over-programming?*

Proposed response – Cheshire East feels the proposal to defer some of the RFA schemes is considered to be realistic but may act to disadvantage some very worthwhile proposals on the grounds that these have not yet secured Programme Entry status. This issue is exacerbated due the disproportionate level of cost increases attributed to Highways Agency schemes. It is, therefore, considered that the lack of Programme Entry status alone should not be the only criteria for deferral. Consideration must also be given to the overall deliverability of schemes alongside further assessment of the wider economic benefits that schemes will support. As a result, it is recommended that all schemes are regularly scrutinised as part of future RFA refresh exercises.

Q9 *From 2011/12 onwards, do you consider the existing balance of spend between major schemes (36%), the integrated transport block (32%) and maintenance block (32%) to be the most effective, or should the region consider viring money between the three transport elements?*

Proposed response – Cheshire East believes the existing balance between the funding blocks should be maintained to ensure overall equity. There was particular concern that Local Transport Plan objectives and targets would not be secured if funding was removed from the LTP blocks in order to meet the increased cost of major schemes. In addition, the current share of overall funding between local authorities be maintained.

Q10 *Regions have the discretion to set aside a certain proportion of the regional allocation to fund schemes of local importance. In the North West, there is concern that sub £5 million schemes that do not meet the DfT criteria for consideration as major schemes are unaffordable to some local authorities, particularly unitaries. How should the region address these concerns?*

Proposed response - Cheshire East would welcome detailed research into how this might be achieved before forming a view on this proposal.