



Rees Jeffreys Road Fund

Established 1950

Rees Jeffreys Road Fund Call for Extended Abstracts Addressing the User Experience and Governance of Roads in England

Proposal in Summary

The Rees Jeffreys Road Fund (RJRF)¹ is inviting extended abstracts on subjects that develop the strategic thinking about the English Road network under the two key areas described below. These extended abstracts will be considered by the Trustees as part of the development of their future programme of projects which are to be funded in 2018. Subject to the nature of abstracts received, the Trustees anticipate inviting one or more abstracts to be fully developed into position papers (with funding provided). The two areas of study for this invitation cover the *User Experience* and *Governance* of English roads. The Trustees welcome abstracts that are wide ranging within the two areas described.

Background

The RJRF is a charitable foundation that exists to provide financial support in the form of grants and bursaries for:

- Courses leading to qualifications related to traffic engineering and transport planning.
- Research projects relevant to one or more of the Fund's objectives.
- Programmes or schemes to improve the highway network and the roadside environment.

The aim of the Trust is to promote and secure better and safer roads in terms of design, engineering and aesthetics including enhancements of the experience of road users.

In the recent study produced by RJRF, 'A Major Road Network for England'², the focus was on the roads that were considered to matter the most in terms of the economy and for mobility to support quality of life. The study has

¹ <http://www.reesjeffreys.co.uk>

² <http://www.reesjeffreys.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/A-Major-Road-Network-for-England-David-Quarmby-and-Phil-Carey-Rees-Jeffreys-Road-Fund-October-2016.pdf>

successfully provided the platform for Government to take forward the proposal for a major road network in England and has published a consultation³ on the routes that will constitute the network and possible funding sources to support the network.

The success of delivering benefits to the wider economy of the road network in England goes beyond identifying a *major* road network. The intent of the Trustees is to continue the development of thinking about the entire road network (in England) in order that improvements can be achieved in planning and delivery of a better road service for the future.

Subject Areas

The importance of roads in supporting and delivering a service for people and the country is a key part of Government's thinking on transport and the wider health of the economy. The Trustees are interested in sponsoring further strategic thinking into the specific areas of: (i) the user experience; and (ii) how the road network will be governed (planned, managed, operated and funded) looking forward to 2050. With all the many changes and future development prospects associated with roads and road transport, it is timely to consider how these will or may affect the two areas chosen for study. The recent National Infrastructure Commission's consultation document "Congestion, Capacity, Carbon: Priorities for National Infrastructure"⁴ also seeks to prompt further thinking on such matters.

a. User experience

The focus for this area is on what the road network could and/or should be like physically, operationally and in turn experientially for users in the future and on identifying the key factors/decisions that need to be addressed in the near term that will enable desirable outcomes to be achieved. In many respects we are in a phase of 'imagineering' what the manifestation of (what some are calling) a 'revolution' in road transport might be.

For example, there are many studies and initiatives that are looking at how technology will become a major influence on how people use the road network (urban and inter urban) as well as how it will affect the road environment.

³ <http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/propoals-for-the-Creation-of-a-Major-Road-Network.pdf>

⁴ https://www.nic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Congestion-Capacity-Carbon_-_Priorities-for-national-infrastructure.pdf

Trials of autonomous vehicles are helping to bring out the user issues as the interaction with people highlight the critical issues that exist in making such a major change happen successfully. Our road network is a socio-technical system and there is a need to consider both technological possibility alongside user and system needs and benefits.

The scope for this subject area is wide and the Trustees welcome a broad perspective on issues relating to the user experience which, as far as possible, can complement rather than duplicate what has already been receiving attention by others. By way of further context, the Government's Transport Investment Strategy for 2040⁵ sets out the ambitions for transport and refers to the user experience for people using the transport network:

"The satisfaction and benefits derived from a journey is not driven solely by its speed, reliability and punctuality – it is also affected by factors such as comfort and design, the ability to work and communicate while travelling or the ease with which people can access services, plan journeys and find their way around the system – including during disruption and when things go wrong."

Road journeys may be different in terms of journey planning, congestion, comfort and services to the user. Questions that might be considered include but are not limited to:

- Is the focus for the users of vehicles going to be about the future development of the inside of the vehicle rather than about the road and other users as more control is transferred to and between vehicles?
- What steps might to be taken to move from today's open but congested higher risk road system, with freedom of access and control, to the more automated and improved environment projected for the future?
- How might roads change for those who are less able to access the benefit from current developments but need better accessibility and improved services?
- What mix of vehicle types for both passenger and goods movements in terms of ownership, size, power source and control might share future road space and with what consequences for user experience?

⁵ 1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-investment-strategy>

b. Governance

The governance of the 100,000 miles of English roads is the responsibility of numerous bodies who have a variety of powers and duties that have changed many times in the last 50 years. The importance of roads within those bodies also varies depending on their status as well as other responsibilities which can take precedence for several reasons. The existing geographically based structure of governance has recently changed to add a further layer within the governance hierarchy. The resulting layers at local, regional, sub national and national level depend on complex relationships to deliver the planning, management and operation of roads. The likely introduction of a statutory role for the sub national transport organisation, Transport for the North⁶, does provide a strategic layer of planning that has brought together planning for road and rail improvements with closer links to regional and local bodies. However, the impact that sub national bodies will have on the overall governance is still to be realised.

Conversely the source of funding has seen less change over the years, although the Government's commitment in 2015 to utilising Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) for a new National Roads Fund, represents a major change in the allocation for national roads from 2020/21. There are issues about the level and source of funding for local roads and the complexity of the grant system for local roads remains a problem,

The Trustees are interested in what changes (if any) might be made in how the nation's road network is planned, managed, operated and funded.

- Is there an evolutionary approach that might be adopted to the existing structures of governance or is it necessary for a radical change in governance to deliver an effective and efficient road transport and network?
- How might the road user be better served by those who make the decisions about planning and funding?
- Are the proposed changes to funding utilising VED in the Transport Investment Strategy the answer and what other options for funding may be available for meeting the ambitions for investment and improved service for the future?

⁶ 2. <http://www.transportforthenorth.com/>

Details of Invitation

The Trustees are extending an open invitation to those who have an interest in the transport sector to provide an extended abstract (a maximum of 1000 words) for producing a position paper (between 7000 and 10000 words) on either one or both of the topics identified above.

Qualifications and Experience

Authors are asked to provide a CV and information about their experience/interest in the transport sector.

The Trustees welcome abstracts from individuals, organisations or collaborations who have experience or qualifications pertinent to the transport sector.

Possible further invitations and awards

The Trustees intend to use the submitted abstracts as the basis for inviting position papers on the chosen subject areas in 2018. For those abstracts that the Trustees pursue, author/s would be invited to produce a position paper within 3 months. An award of £6,000 would be made, conditional upon the production of a document deemed of acceptable quality and style by the RJRF Trustees.

Intellectual Property Rights

RJRF reserves the right to draw upon the ideas in the submitted abstracts and any subsequent finished papers in any future work that it supports and makes available publicly. However, it will not unreasonably prevent the author(s) from using the content of any commissioned position papers for their own purposes such as in pursuing publication or incorporation into subsequent research activity.

Timescale and contact details

If you are interested in providing an abstract to the Trustees, please send your contribution by Friday 9 February 2018 to the RJRF Secretary, Brian Murrell - brianmurrell@reesjeffreys.org. It is anticipated that those providing abstracts will be contacted with the Trustees' response by the end of February. Authors invited to prepare a full position paper should be prepared to complete the work by the end of May 2018.

If you have any queries about this call please direct them to Brian at the email address above.