

Answers from Campaign for Better Transport to online consultation questionnaire on the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme

June 2014

<http://www.highways.gov.uk/roads/road-projects/a14-cambridge-to-huntingdon-improvement-scheme/>

[Questions 1 and 2 cover personal details]

3. Do you believe that there is a need to make improvements to the Cambridge to Huntingdon Section of the A14 in order to achieve the objectives listed above?

[Objectives listed are:

- **Combat congestion**
Making the route between Huntingdon and Cambridge more reliable and providing capacity for future traffic growth
- **Unlock growth**
Enabling major residential and commercial developments to proceed, leading to increased economic growth, regionally and nationally
- **Connect people**
By placing the right traffic on the right roads and freeing up local capacity for all types of road user, including pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians
- **Improve safety**
Designing the scheme to modern highways standards, introducing better lane control and providing adequate capacity for predicted traffic levels
- **Create a positive legacy for the region**
Recognising the wider benefits of the road improvement scheme for local communities and businesses]

No, we do not believe this major road-building scheme is justified by the reasons given above. There is a strong case for improving safety on this section of the strategic road network and, similarly, for better managing the consequences of crashes and breakdowns, which mean the temporary use of alternative routes is necessary. However, these objectives would be better achieved by reducing the volume of lorry traffic on the road, providing more refuges and, where needed, safer overtaking lanes and lower speed limits, as well as more use of smart traffic management measures, such as variable message signage and alerts to drivers when incidents occur.

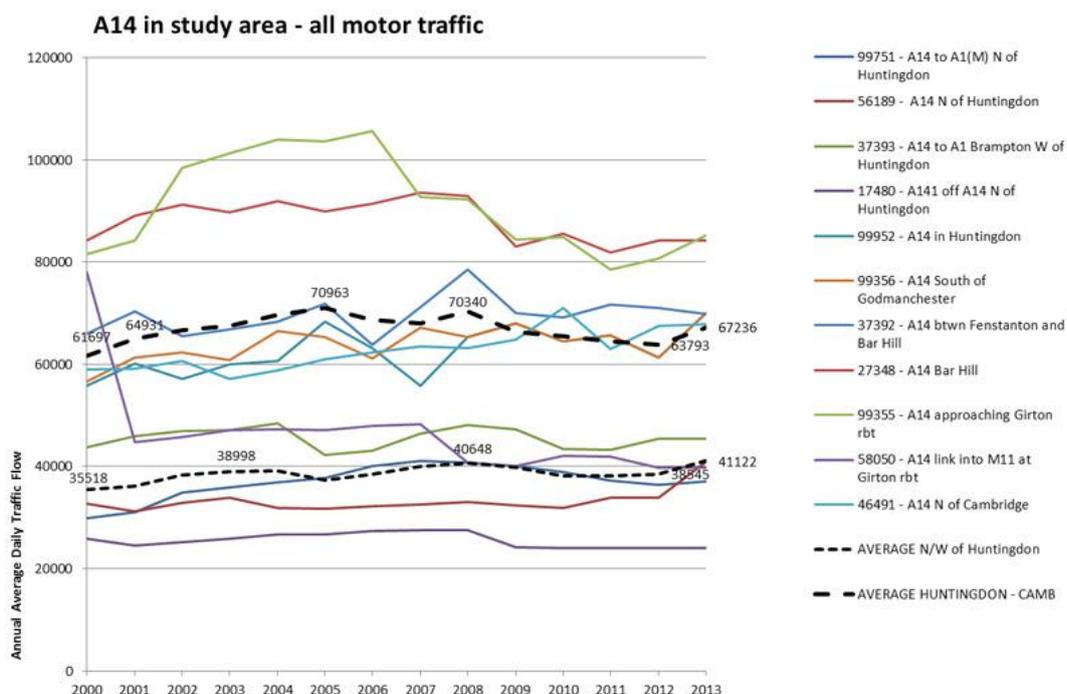
New roads won't solve congestion, and are not justified by claims of traffic growth

The first and fourth objectives cite current congestion and future traffic growth as justification for the scheme, but we believe the scheme is more likely to incite unnecessary traffic growth and encourage car dependency than it is to solve any congestion problems in the area.

In our responses to the 'A14 Challenge' and the previous consultation on proposals in 2013, we provided evidence that traffic in the area has not grown significantly since 2000 (and that HGV traffic has in fact fallen as parallel rail routes have improved for freight traffic).¹

With new 2013 traffic counts now available,² we can update this evidence. Despite an increase from 2012-2013 in traffic on some sections of the A14 (principally those to the North and West of Huntingdon) the long-term flat/low-growth trend in overall motor traffic remains clear, and there has been an overall reduction in HGV traffic at all count points in the past decade.

Chart 1: All traffic on the A14 in the study area 2000 to 2013



Comparing conditions in 2013 with 2003 on the A14:

A14-A1(M) link North/West of Huntingdon

- Motor traffic changed by +5.4%
- HGV traffic changed by -6.1%

A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon

- Motor traffic changed by -0.3%
- HGV traffic changed by -0.4%

We can also see reductions in traffic compared with the highest peak levels. Only for car traffic to the North/West of Huntingdon (on the section of A14 approaching the A1) are traffic levels now at a historical high. Even there, however, HGV traffic is now 10% below peak levels:

A14-A1(M) link North/West of Huntingdon

- Motor traffic rose by 1.2% vs 2008
- HGV traffic fell by -9.8% vs 2005

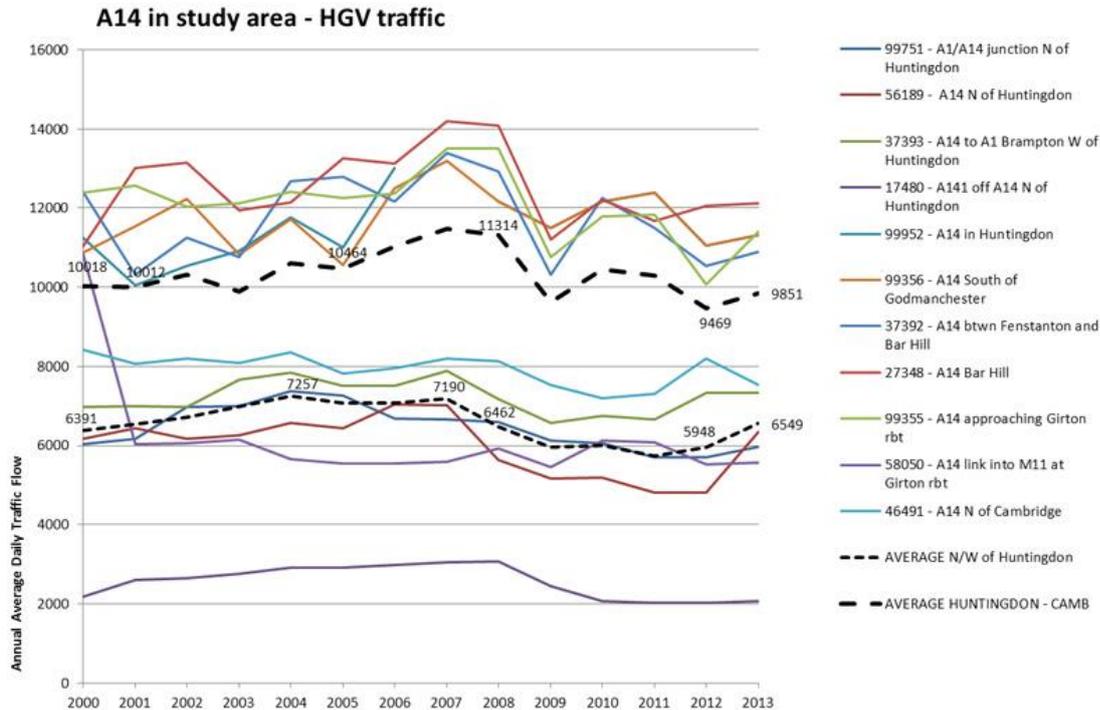
A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon

- Motor traffic fell by -5.3% vs 2005
- HGV traffic fell by -14.1% vs 2007

¹ A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme – consultation response. Campaign for Better Transport, October 2013 http://bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/A14_HA_Consultation_response_Oct13.pdf

² DfT Traffic Counts website resource: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/traffic-counts>

Chart 2: HGV traffic on the A14 in the study area 2000 to 2013



The scheme will create traffic and worsen car dependency

That the new road will encourage car use and facilitate car-dependent new housing and commercial developments is stated in the second objective above. We do not believe 'unlock growth' is a meaningful term. What the scheme will in fact do is open up a range of greenfield sites to development that could be placed elsewhere, and which will add to traffic on the roads, Induced traffic will be found both on the A14 and on local roads, as very few of the journeys prompted by the scheme will start and end on the A14 itself.

Building on large, greenfield out-of-town sites near main roads is a counterproductive and outmoded model of town planning. New housing and commercial development in the area would be better placed in and around existing urban areas and alongside existing or new public transport facilities. There is much evidence that this pattern of investment is better value for money, is preferred by investors and is not only better in terms of providing sustainable economic growth, but also more equitable, providing connections to jobs and services for the large numbers of people without cars as well as those who drive.³

4. Do you believe that the route option we are proposing would offer the right solution to address current problems and meet future needs?

No, and we do not believe that alternative solutions and packages, especially in relation to public transport, have been properly considered before arriving at this large road-building proposal. We also have severe concerns about the environmental impact of the scheme.

³ Smarter spending to boost the economy. Campaign for Better Transport, November 2011 <http://bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/Smarter-Spending.pdf>

Alternatives not properly considered

The objectives listed against question 3 appear to be highly skewed in favour of road capacity expansion. Increasing road capacity may be the mode and method upon which the Highways Agency wishes to focus its spending, but the Treasury Green Book and WebTAG requirements for considering alternatives when spending public money are clear that a wider range of alternatives should be considered first.⁴⁵

Having taken part in the 'A14 Challenge' and observed the three stages of the A14 Study that led to this point,⁶ we do not believe that other modes and alternative ways of improving safety and congestion on the A14 have been adequately considered. In particular, the potential for the use of high quality coach services for commuters into and between Cambridge and Huntingdon has not been assessed realistically.

In addition, the contribution of upcoming and likely further Felixstowe to Nuneaton rail freight improvements to reducing HGV traffic does not appear to have been properly included in baseline scenarios. Neither do the potential benefits of East West Rail reaching Cambridge in the future.

Effect on carbon and air pollution emissions

When talking about 'future needs' it is also important to look at the need to comply with relevant environmental objectives, including the carbon budgets for the UK set under the Climate Change Act 2008 and the legal requirements to improve air quality provided by the 2008 EU Air Quality Directive.

The preliminary traffic report provided with the consultation documents acknowledges that the scheme will lead to higher traffic levels than are otherwise predicted on the A1 and A14 (up to 71% higher than without the scheme on the A1) and on many local roads, particularly those in and around Cambridge (with the bypass element, some roads in Huntingdon see reduced traffic with the scheme, compared with forecasts, though higher than now).⁷

The preliminary environmental information report similarly acknowledges that, while traffic diverted from Huntingdon will reduce local air pollution in that area, the overall effect of the project will be to increase air pollution emissions due to new traffic generated by new road capacity.⁸

With six Air Quality Management Areas in the vicinity of the scheme, and many residents who are not currently experiencing high levels of pollution who will be exposed to increases (particularly in Brampton which will see a large increase in the number of lanes of traffic passing close to the village), the effect on compliance with the EU Directive remains in question.

It is important to remember that the terms of the Directive require that countries with areas of high air pollution must – now the UK has failed to meet the original deadlines for reducing levels below limit values – ensure levels are reduced 'as soon as possible'. Even if the areas chosen for the assessment so far are not predicted to suffer new breaches of the limits, a scheme that increases pollution over a wide area and delays compliance in existing AQMAs may not be permissible.

It is also not clear whether these preliminary assessment documents also take account of the effects of new traffic generated by the associated new developments mentioned in the objectives. The effect of the road

⁴ Treasury Green Book, Chapter 5, Appraising the Options. <http://www.fao.org/ag/humannutrition/33236-040551a7cfbc0e73909932192db580c4.pdf>

⁵ WebTAG overview. DfT 2013 <https://www.gov.uk/transport-analysis-guidance-webtag>

⁶ A14 Challenge and Study Output Documents. DfT <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a14-challenge>

⁷ A14 Preliminary Traffic Report. Highways Agency, April 2014

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/301425/A14_Prelim_Traffic_Report.pdf

⁸ A14 Preliminary Environmental Information Report. April 2014

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/307665/Preliminary_Environmental_Information_v4_0_-_FINAL.pdf

alone is of great concern, but with additional generated traffic from development (which forms part of the justification for the scheme and should be considered) is more of an issue still. We will be looking closely at the detailed Environmental Statement for the project when it is published.

5. Do you agree with our proposed approach to mitigating the potential adverse environmental impacts of the proposed scheme?

We will not be providing a detailed response to this question.

6. Please provide any comments you have about the potential impacts the proposed scheme would have during the construction period

We support the comments of local groups and residents on these impacts.

Questions 7 to 15: requests for comments on individual sections of the proposed scheme, and detailed layouts:

- 7. Widening of the A1 between Brampton Hut and Alconbury**
- 8. Proposed layout of the A1 and A14 adjacent to Brampton**
- 9. Demolition of existing 14 viaduct and related changes to local roads in Huntingdon**
- 10. New Huntingdon southern bypass**
- 11. Widening of the existing A14 between Swavesey and Girton**
- 12. Widening of the existing Cambridge northern bypass between Histon and Milton**
- 13. New local access roads between Fen Drayton and Girton**
- 14. Improvements to existing junctions along the A14 at Swavesey, Bar Hill and Girton**
- 15. Please explain your reasons for your responses and anything else we should take into account in these areas**

Our previous answers show that we are opposed to the overall aim of this scheme to increase road capacity across the area. Of all these elements, therefore, we are most opposed to those that significantly increase the capacity of the main roads, including the Huntingdon southern bypass and the A1 and A14 widening proposals around Brampton and Cambridge.

As we state in our answer to Question 3, minor junction changes (especially if these also reduce severance and improve conditions for cycling, walking and other non-motorised traffic) and work to provide safer overtaking and more refuges for use during incidents and breakdowns on the A14, as well as similar improvements to relevant diversion routes, would potentially be useful elements of a package-style scheme – one that also invested in infrastructure and support for local public transport, rail alternatives and express coaches for longer journeys, and active travel.

16. Please use this space to provide any further comments, either positive or negative, regarding any particular aspects of the proposed scheme not covered in the previous questions

As in our previous responses, we urge the Highways Agency to look at more sustainable long-term options and review the many better alternatives and packages proposed by us, our local representatives and local residents as part of the A14 Challenge and in answers to the previous consultation.

Throughout this process, the Highways Agency appears to have looked seriously only at road capacity solutions, so we also urge the Government to commission a more concerted, wide-ranging, multi-modal review of any transport problems in the A14 corridor, focused on ways of increasing access to jobs and providing more homes in the area that do not require ownership of a car and driving licence. These could be combined with much more limited road-based measures to produce an integrated package of measures to be implemented by the Highways Agency and others.

June 2014

Sian Berry
Campaign for Better Transport

Campaign for Better Transport's vision is a country where communities have affordable transport that improves quality of life and protects the environment. Achieving our vision requires substantial changes to UK transport policy which we aim to achieve by providing well-researched, practical solutions that gain support from both decision-makers and the public.

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