

Response to Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership's 'Making Connections' Sustainable Travel Plan

December 2022

1. To what extent do you support or oppose the proposals for bus improvements and fare reductions?

Strongly agree

2. Do you have any comments on the proposals for:

- **Cheaper fares?**
- **More routes?**
- **Fast, high frequency services?**
- **Longer operating hours?**
- **Increased rural services?**
- **Simpler ticketing?**
- **Zero emission bus services?**

This is a bold and much-needed plan to dramatically enhance public transport, reduce congestion and transform life for all in the region. We believe that bold, integrated plans like this one are exactly the approach which is required across the country.

In the last ten years bus vehicle miles declined by 5,000 routes (27%) and the East of England saw 30% of bus services cut in the first year of the pandemic alone. Cambridgeshire has seen a 43% decrease in bus mileage since 2019. We believe that cheaper and simpler fares, more routes and improved services as proposed will redress this. Improving connectivity and public transport is a fundamental element of achieving levelling-up. Given the current cost of living crisis, it is all the more important that there is an affordable public transport system available.

Zero emissions services are an important element of increasing passenger numbers and encouraging modal shift. A recent survey by 'Go-Ahead' found that 55% of people would be more likely to travel by bus if they knew that a zero emission bus was available. Modal shift is essential if the UK is going to come close to achieving its Net Zero commitments. Therefore, there needs to be a public transport system sufficiently attractive to entice people out of private cars.

3. Are there any additional improvements to bus services that would be needed for you to use bus services for more of your journeys? If so, what are they? Or if you are a non-bus user, what would encourage you to use the bus?

Fare price and reliability of services are key factors in encouraging people to take more journeys by bus. Providing affordable and dependable buses with bus priority measures to ensure they are not held up by congestion will encourage non-bus users to switch. It is therefore important that the bus roll-out and congestion charge be introduced simultaneously to prevent increased bus services creating more congestion.

4. The bus improvements are proposed to start immediately after a decision in summer 2023 and ramp up over the following 4-5 years. What bus improvements would you want to see delivered first? (select up to 3)

1. Cheaper fares
2. Fast, high frequency services
3. Increased rural services

5. To what extent would you support or oppose the franchising of the local bus network by the Mayor and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority?

Support

6. To what extent do you support or oppose additional improvements to walking and cycling, accessibility and public spaces?

More cycling and walking connections in the city	Strongly agree
Extending the fully segregated rural cycleway network (the Greenways)	Strongly agree
Improving our public spaces	Strongly agree
Making our city more accessible for disabled people and others with mobility needs	Strongly agree
More secure cycle parking	Strongly agree
Car clubs	Strongly agree
Additional funding for maintenance and improvements to footways and cycleways	Strongly agree

7. If a Sustainable Travel Zone was introduced, are there any other improvements you would like to see funded?

Walking and cycling improvements should definitely be a priority, along with an emphasis on car clubs. This will ensure there are safe alternatives to driving and that those who do need car have access to one, while reducing car ownership and use.

8. Do you have any comments on the proposal to introduce a Sustainable Travel Zone?

We are supportive of the current proposals. There is plenty of evidence to demonstrate that charging for road use, in combination with sustainable transport improvements, is the best approach for reducing congestion and air pollution and for fairly funding road and transport improvements. For example, in the first year of congestion charging alone, London enjoyed a 30% reduction in traffic congestion and a 30% increase in average speeds, while bus passenger numbers rose 38%. Nottingham's workplace parking levy has contributed to a 33% fall in carbon emissions in Nottingham since 2005 and directly raised £83 million for investment in public transport. Nonetheless, the primary objective of the scheme should be to reduce congestion and pollution and to increase the proportion of trips made by sustainable means, rather than an emphasis on raising revenue.

9. To what extent do you support or oppose the introduction of a Sustainable Travel Zone to fund improvements to bus services, walking and cycling?

Strongly support

10. If you do not support the introduction of a Sustainable Travel Zone to fund improvements to bus services, walking and cycling, what alternative funding proposals would you propose to tackle the challenges faced by Greater Cambridge?

N/A

11. Do you have any feedback on the proposed Zone and its boundary?

12. Do you have any comments on the proposed hours of operation of the Sustainable Travel Zone?

13. To what extent would you support or oppose the principle of phasing in the Sustainable Travel Zone charge?

Support

14. Do you have any comments on the suggested phasing approach?

We are supportive of the current proposals, however, we do have some reservations about the timelines. Both we and bus operators we have spoken to are concerned that bus roll-out before the introduction of the congestion charge might actually result in increased congestion. We also agree with the Healthy Air Coalition that 2025 would be a more appropriate date for the introduction of the charge than 2027.

There is a risk, related to the above, that if increased congestion does occur as a result of this order of events, objectors might capitalise on increased congestion and overturn these highly commendable plans. Therefore, the implementation phasing-in should be quicker. Charging over full hours and all vehicles should be sooner, in order to reduce congestion and make buses more attractive sooner.

15. Do you have any comments on the proposed charges?

We believe it is unfair for powered two-wheelers to be charged the same as cars; £2 per day would be a more appropriate rate for this vehicle category. We support the 50% discount for zero emissions vehicles as a way to encourage their uptake. A more graduated approach should also be explored depending on vehicle emissions. The figure for the charges should be reviewed closer to the time of implementation to account for inflation and other factors.

16. Do you have any comments on the below proposed discounts, exemptions and reimbursements?

Our research on road user charging published in September this year revealed that more people (34%) felt that those on benefits should not be exempt. However, having reduced rates or higher tax free driving allowances for people on welfare or low incomes was supported by 48%, with only 15% opposed. A tapered discount for those with a low income might be a means of addressing this, however would be administratively very complex.

17. Do you have any other comments on the proposed discounts, exemptions and reimbursements?

Our road user charging survey revealed that 50% of people feel exemptions and discounts for different groups is necessary to make the system fairer. Only 13% disagreed, however one quarter were unsure. Half of participants were concerned that discounts or exemptions might create loopholes allowing people to escape payment. Therefore, the qualification criteria for any category would need to be explicit.

Therefore, while mitigation measures would improve the popularity of the system, there is a large body of opinion that still needs to be persuaded. This should be addressed in arguments and published material advocating the charges to the public.

18. Taking into account the improvements suggested above, are there any changes to the proposals or additional measures that would help enhance or address impacts on you / your business / your organisation and the way you travel?

As stated above, we have concerns over the bus improvement and congestion charge phase-in periods and feel that more emphasis should be placed on EV charging points in the Sustainable Transport Zone. Otherwise, we feel these are the measures that local authorities across the country need to adopt in order to reach Net Zero, deal with air pollution and improve sustainable transport. We commend GCP for their work so far and plans moving forward.