From: [redacted]
To: TRANSPORTINFRASTRUCTURE
Subject: C2C busway: Objection to the GCP's proposed route
Date: 02 January 2025 15:59:59

To: Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

Dear Louise Haigh,

I am writing to you in your role as Secretary of State for Transport to state my objection to the Transport and Work Act Order that was sent to the Department for Transport for a new busway linking Cambourne to Cambridge and was submitted by Cambridgeshire County Council on 12 November 2024.

I, Ioannis Brilakis, of [redacted], am writing to make a formal objection to the above Order.

Overall, I support the improvement of public transport in the city of Cambridge as well as the expansion of the city and its network. However, I object to this scheme, and especially the off-road section between Madingley Mulch and West Cambridge. In the upcoming age of autonomous cars, which is an area of science I understand well as a Professor of Civil and Information Engineering at the University of Cambridge, I see little value for money overall in rural busway schemes like the one proposed in this case. Nevertheless, the off-road section is an even worse value case, as there is an excellent on-road alternative including new bus lanes and bus priority measures following the A1303 which has never been properly assessed by the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP). I wish to stress the latter, as I use the GCP consultation process on this topic as a prime example of biased statistical science in my university lectures.

The on-road alternative will provide a more direct route to the Cambridge biomedical campus and allow other buses and emergency vehicles to use the priority lane. Furthermore, although I recognise that the GCP scheme includes facilities for active travel, such facilities will be much better provided by the GCP-sponsored Comberton to Cambridge Greenway which avoids Madingley Hill. I am also very concerned because the GCP route (which terminates in Grange Road) does not serve Cambridge's sixth form colleges which commuters would have to traverse the city centre to access. This is a major cause of road traffic, and the current design will not address it.

On the cost side, the difference is stunning. The cost/benefit ratio for the GCP scheme is less than 0.5 which is very poor value for money and does not meet the Department's criteria for considering such a scheme. Instead, the on-road alternative would cost a fraction of the GCP's off-road route cost. I work quite closely with National Highways, as I lead the £17M Digital Roads of the Future initiative at Cambridge. From this work, I understand working patterns have changed since the Covid pandemic, which is something that the GCP has not properly assessed. I am also aware that the new Labour government has confirmed in its October 2024 budget that it intends to proceed with the East West Rail development which will provide a direct link between Cambourne and the new Cambridge South station adjacent to the Biomedical Campus. I support this very sensible plan, as it is a far better transport option. However, once East West Rail is built, the cost/benefit ratio of the busway will fall further, making it extremely poor value for money.

On the environment side, the busway would dissect Coton Orchard, a County Wildlife Site and East Anglia's largest remaining traditional orchard, which is the eighth largest in the UK. As I stated above, I do not oppose the expansion of the city or its transport network; the opposite, I welcome it. But I strongly believe we must expand sensibly, giving proper consideration to the environment and cherishing its treasures and landmarks, not dissecting them.

Kind regards,
Ioannis

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