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From: Miranda Fyfe <[redacted]>
Sent: 06 March 2025 20:13
To: TRANSPORTINFRASTRUCTURE
Subject: Objection to TWAO for a new busway to the southeast of Cambridge

Dear Secretary of State for Transport,

I am writing to object in the strongest terms to the Greater Cambridge Partnership's (GCP) application for a new busway to the southeast of Cambridge, submitted by them on 9 January 2025, and I hope that you will recognise this proposal as being fatally flawed and as such, refuse to grant the TWAO.

I have already made an objection to the similar TWAO for the Cambridge to Cambourne busway, and all the points I made in that objection apply equally to this one, which I'll summarise again here:

- Buses already run on existing roads, their frequency needs to be increased, and the services better marketed.
- The consequent virtuous circle of increased ridership will automatically reduce private car traffic, eliminating bus service delays.
- Most delays to existing bus services occur in the centre of Cambridge, which this Busway will not solve.
- Cheapest all-day tickets need to cover a wider area outside the city than at present.
- Passenger infrastructure such as comfortable Waiting Areas and consistent information provision is very important to users (more so than journey times) and this should be addressed as a priority, rather than laying bespoke bus roads.
- Increased frequency of buses on existing road infrastructure has not even been tried (now that a Franchising Plan has been agreed, can it finally be done? No need for new infrastructure!)
- The irrational and belligerent pursuit of Busways plans by GCP suggests the influence of outside vested interests.
- The bus network in the historic centre of Cambridge needs serious rethinking: double deckers have no place in our narrow medieval streets, the 'bus hub' alternative routing plan should be given serious consideration: https://www.smartertransport.uk/cambridge-city-bus-hub/
- **Disincentivizing private car use in general must be driven forwards at a national level,** by reforming vehicle taxes to be based on a function of miles driven (data easily collected at yearly MOT test) and published vehicle weight, noting the 4th power law of stress to road surfaces caused by motor vehicles.

As regards this specific 'CSET' Busway application, for a new Babraham Park and Ride (P&R) and route from there to the Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC), I have reviewed what I'd submitted to the GCP a little over four years ago in response to their Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) consultation, and feel that all those points are still as valid as ever. So I am appending my full consultation response below for your consideration as part of my objection. Since December 2020 the fares I referred to have increased, although this is currently ameliorated by the option of the £2 flat fare single tickets (while that subsidy lasts); bus fares in London are still much cheaper than here, at £1.75 for unlimited journeys within one hour of first touching in, and a daily cap of £5.25. In Cambridgeshire by comparison, a 'Multibus' ticket currently allows all-day travel on most operators for £8, albeit some specific routes are excluded from that.

I really hope that you will be the Secretary of State for Transport who does finally start that honest conversation with the public about road pricing which the Transport Select Committee recommended three years ago, and is so desperately needed in order to combat congestion, pollution and climate breakdown. And I hope that you will see the fatal flaws in these busway schemes and refuse to grant them permission.

Thank you for reading, and I look forward to hearing what you decide to do about this TWAO application.

With best regards,

Miranda Fyfe
[redacted].
- a Green Party Member, and stood for Parliament here in the July 2024 election.

APPENDIX:

My Personal response to the GCP's CSET EIA consultation, submitted via online form on 11th December 2020.

Q.17 text

This proposed “new public transport route” is entirely unnecessary and a shocking waste of public funds. The problem with access to Cambridge from this direction is a lack of bus services, not a lack of roads to run them on. I believe that the proposed route should be abandoned immediately, and instead all that public money should be directed urgently towards providing frequent and cheap bus services along the existing public roads network.

Great Abington is currently served by a maximum of two bus services per hour, reducing to only one per hour after 7pm. Journey time on this service [from the stop nearest your proposed P&R site] into Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC) is 13 minutes as per the timetable. The return fare for an adult is £7, and £4.85 for a child. This bus route runs through the centre of the village, meaning all passengers have easy access without needing to use a car.

Sawston is currently served by a maximum of three bus services per hour, reducing to one per hour after 6pm. Journey time on this service [from the stop nearest your proposed Sawston bus stop] into CBC is 21 minutes as per the timetable. Again, the return fare for an adult is £7, and £4.85 for a child. As with the Abington route, this bus runs through the centre of the village, meaning all passengers have easy access without needing to use a car.

Stapleford and Great Shelford are served by the same bus route as Sawston, which runs through the spine of these two villages, making the stops easily accessible to many residents, rather than the stops being stuck right out on the periphery of the villages as per your proposal. Journey times to CBC are between 9 and 15 minutes from these villages, depending how far along the route passengers get on the bus. The return fare for an adult is £4.50 (only available as a Dayrider ticket), and £3.70 for a child (only available as two single tickets).

Stapleford and Great Shelford are also served by a council-subsidised bus route which runs very close to both villages’ stops as proposed in this scheme. Journey time to CBC from Haverhill Road [very near your Stapleford stop] is 14 minutes, and from Hinton Way [nearest to your Great Shelford stop] is just 7 minutes. The return fare for an adult is £3.30, and £2.20 for a child. This service also runs through the centre of both villages, as well as serving Little Shelford and other villages. It runs just five times per day, about once every two hours.

A significant reduction in car journeys could be achieved much more quickly and cheaply by spreading out your proposed eight services per hour among these existing routes, in addition to their existing services, and ensuring that fares are much lower than at present. The equivalent length of journey in Greater London would cost only £1.50 each way, which is the benchmark I think GCP should aim for. Reliability of these more frequent bus services

will automatically be improved from any current peak-hour issues, simply by the resulting reduction in car traffic; there is absolutely no need to implement extensive 'bus priority measures'. These improved bus services could be up and running in the short few months it would take to order and get delivery of a fleet of electric buses, and to recruit and train their drivers. No environmental impact assessment would be required at all, and the huge benefits for everyone would be almost immediate.

I was told during one of the consultation events that any bus company would require this dedicated new off-road infrastructure in order to be able to provide the proposed frequency of buses and still make a profit. That begs the question: "What is the purpose of Public Transport and government-funded infrastructure?" This whole scheme with its huge budget seems to be largely focussed on providing the means for a private bus company to make handsome profits for its directors and shareholders. That is an outrageous misuse of public funds, when the money could instead be used to provide actual bus services, directly benefiting the public. Furthermore, running new electric buses along the existing road routes would have none of the huge environmental impact that all of your proposed new construction of tarmac route, parking provision, concrete flyovers, and so on will have: all that excessive production of CO2 in the construction process is counter to the national aim to reduce carbon emissions in order to combat the climate emergency, and it is simply not necessary if the ultimate goal is just to provide extra bus services. The GCP should now be seeking out the least carbon-intensive means to providing the desired extra public transport services. It is ridiculous to hide behind the fact this proposed off-road route option came out slightly ahead compared with enhanced on-road provision in a consultation a few years ago. There is no sound justification for building this new public transport route, when the low-cost, low-carbon, quick-win solution of simply providing many more and much cheaper bus services on the existing roads has not been tried.

The provision of a large new car park as an integral part of this scheme, far from meeting the aim of providing "an alternative to the car", will simply serve to bake-in an increased reliance on the private car in future. The existing P&R sites at Babraham Road and Trumpington have had a disastrous effect on people's journey habits: instead of checking the timetable and catching a bus that leaves only a few hundred metres or less from their house, many people from these villages will drive around two miles in their cars to catch a Park and Ride bus into Cambridge. This in turn has led to a reduction in service provision of the regular buses, such that those who either cannot drive or prefer not to for environmental reasons are disadvantaged; and at the same time car traffic and pollution is increased by those wholly unnecessary car journeys to the P&R site. The principle of Park and Ride is entirely flawed, and instead what should be provided is greatly improved frequency of all those existing bus services which go near to where people live, and/or improved bus routes along existing roads.

Finally, the GCP's assumption that commuter journeys into Cambridge will soon return to pre-Covid levels is not supported by the evidence of what Cambridge-based companies are now doing: one large local tech-industry employer that I know about has recognised that many of its staff will now work from home at least some of the time on a permanent basis, and is consequently surrendering long-term leases on its overspill offices, as it re-adjusts to a permanent reduction in the need to provide a desk space for every employee. Contrary to what one GCP officer stated in a consultation event, this is a completely new balance of office-based versus home-working for these high-tech companies, and its effects on the future demand for transport provision should be properly reviewed.

In summary, I cannot see how any marginal improvements in journey times on this new route can possibly justify the enormous and wide-ranging environmental impacts it entails. Better Public Transport along existing roads is what we need, and that is what GCP should be providing.

Q.18 text (Equalities Act question)

This proposed new route will negatively impact anyone with a disability that means they can't drive, because all the new bus stops are essentially unreachable unless you have a car, and also it is likely to lead to a further reduction in existing services which do currently go sufficiently near to people's houses.

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