

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: [TRANSPORTINFRASTRUCTURE](#)
Objection to TWAO to the Department for Transport for a new busway linking Cambourne to Cambridge as submitted by Cambridgeshire County Council on 12 November 2024
Date: 08 January 2025 22:45:31

To: Secretary of State for Transport
c/o Transport Infrastructure Planning Unit
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

Dear Heidi Alexander MP,

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

I, Niki Fanouraki, of [REDACTED], am writing to make a formal objection to the above Order.

In principle I support the improvement of public transport in and around the city of Cambridge but not this project in its current format. More specifically, I object to the off-road section between Madingley Mulch and West Cambridge.

To set the background as to what qualifies me to express this objection with conviction, kindly note that I have lived in the area since 2013 and I am a Chartered Engineer and Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers, presently working as an Associate Director for the Engineering Consultancy AECOM. I am thus well aware of both the local infrastructure and its use over the past decade, and an experienced specialist on what it takes to build new, or to repurpose existing, infrastructure.

Of the multitude of flaws and unanswered questions with the proposed off-road busway, I will limit this letter to the three that I consider most telling, i.e. the outdated data, the poor value for money for the taxpayer, and the questionable and unscientific conduct of the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) and the CCC.

Outdated data

The vast majority of the traffic data for this proposal pre-dates the COVID pandemic. The pandemic gave rise to more flexible patterns of work, including less rigid start and end times and remote working for at least part of the week. Cambridge and the greater area are home to professions where many are afforded this flexibility. I live in the area and perceive lasting changes in traffic patterns since the pandemic, with peak traffic on Madingley Road west of the M11 reduced now compared to pre-pandemic, likely due to home working and distance learning reducing traffic altogether, and due to flexible start and end times spreading the traffic over wider time windows. One exception may be the on-road buses, as I have heard from fellow villagers that at times the buses are too full to take on passengers from our village. Despite the increased demand for public transport, the current bus provision has not been expanded and remains limited in its hours of operation, infrequent, and consequently unreliable. For starters, the GCP needs to collect and analyse current road traffic

and bus use data, in order to piece together the demand and its distribution during the day in 2025, not in 2015. If 2025 data is collected, fresh consideration should be given to expanded, more frequent on-road bus services: for example, what difference would it make to have the X2, X3 and City 4 buses run every 15 or 10 minutes at peak times?

Poor value for (taxpayer) money, and beyond

The off-road busway proposal is a scandalous waste of taxpayer money. Despite stretching the (rather opaque) benefits as far and as wide as possible, GCP is only able to present a £0.50 benefit for every £1 that will be spent!! And these numbers are from the era of low inflation and low interest rates. Hundreds of millions of taxpayer money will be spent on another white elephant project, for swaths of compulsory land purchases and for the tarmac-ing of natural habitats and arable land. Indeed, Weetabix buys the wheat that grows in the field opposite my home on Cambridge Road; the same field that GCP proposes to tarmac for the off-road busway. The concerns of the local residents, farmers, businesses and of other stakeholders have been ignored. There are legitimate, unanswered, questions around the financial, environmental and social costs, with the GCP acting defensively and without accountability to the requests for transparency, not sharing how the benefit-to-cost ratios were arrived at. Following the Northwest Cambridge area development and key resignations from the GCP board (see Cambridge University representative), one cannot help but wonder what ulterior motives may be at play. I ask you to support the requests for current benefit-to-cost ratios, and for transparency as to how these are arrived at.

Questionable and unscientific conduct of the GCP and the CCC

As an engineering consultant, I am well aware that I am here to serve my clients on the basis of their needs and the brief that they provide. I will make suggestions where I see room for improvement, though ultimately, it is the client who decides what gets and does not get done. Throughout the years the GCP has vehemently resisted calls from the local community for the proper study of an on-road alternative to the off-road busway. What is the GCP afraid of? That a better option may be available? It is also unbelievable that GCP has been comparing apples to oranges, i.e. an off-road option that takes passengers to a non-central point (Grange Road) with no further connectivity, to an on-road option that takes passengers to the Cambridge city centre where both final destinations and further public transport are available. How can the GCP turn such a blind eye to such an unscientific comparison of end points and associated travel times?? Are the consultants that GCP employed incompetent, or is this the brief that GCP provided? Outrageously, the GCP has refused to make the brief to its consultants available. And what of the times we live in, with ride-sharing and alternative (e.g. Voi) transport platforms up-and-running, and of autonomous vehicles not that far away? The GCP itself ran the autonomous shuttle from the Madingley Park and Ride to Cambridge University's West Campus in 2021. Yet there has been no consideration of autonomous vehicle technologies in the Cambourne to Cambridge scheme, where there is an excellent on-road A1303 alternative put forward by the local community. Most disappointingly, GCP has spent over a decade looking into Cambridge traffic in the most fragmented of ways. GCP needs to go back to the drawing board and to consider the various schemes (e.g. East-West Rail, cycling Greenways) holistically. There is a real risk of building more infrastructure to inferior user experience outcomes, in the process wasting valuable taxpayer money and irreparably harming the environment and local communities. The GCP seems stubbornly stuck to a practically unsubstantiated proposal and unwilling to embrace the true opportunities. Please, support the opportunity to have a scientifically-led and evidence-based enquiry.

Thank you for reading this far and for your consideration. The local community and I believe in an improved Cambridge and greater area public transport network. I want my teenage children to go into town independently and safely, at a cost we all can afford. At the end of the day, I put this objection forward so that they get to live in a world that's better connected, and where decisions are transparent, and based on evidence and the scientific method.

Respectfully,

Niki Fanouraki, CEng MICE

Associate Director at AECOM

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