

Cambridge South East Transport Order

Statement of Case of Paul Bristow, Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Introduction and role of the Mayor

1. I am the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This statement outlines the evidence I intend to present to the public inquiry into the Transport and Works Act Order ('TWAO') application for the Cambridge South East Transport ('CSET') scheme.
2. I was elected as Mayor on 1st May 2025. In this role, I lead the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority ('the Authority'). The Authority area covers the whole of the ceremonial county of Cambridgeshire, which includes the City of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire (which together form 'Greater Cambridge' for various administrative purposes).
3. The Authority is the Local Transport Authority, which is the strategic transport authority for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. As leader of the Local Transport Authority, it is my duty to promote the right long-term strategic decisions to support the growth of Greater Cambridge and the wider region. The importance of the role of Mayors in formulating and delivering these strategic plans has been reinforced by the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill and the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, both of which are progressing through Parliament.

These will further expand the powers of Mayors in relation to planning and transport.

4. The CSET Busway has been designed by the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) and is proposed for the purposes of the Transport and Works Act Order application by Cambridgeshire County Council ('the Applicant').
5. The Authority is responsible for supporting, improving and building the bus network around the region. It also has powers under the Bus Services Act 2017 to reform the bus market. In February 2025, under my predecessor, the Authority committed to adopt bus franchising¹. The Applicant supported this decision (the Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council voted in favour of the introduction of bus franchising the Authority's Board Meeting in February 2025²), and I have confirmed that I will proceed with this commitment.
6. To this end, I have recently commissioned an independent review of bus franchising by an industry expert to ensure that our future franchising scheme in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is sustainable and offers value for money for the taxpayer. When bus franchising is in place, the Authority will be responsible for issuing service permits for bus services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, including those that operate on guided busways. Any services using the proposed CSET Busway will therefore need to meet the requirements of the final franchising model that is adopted by the Authority. This model is yet to be agreed.
7. The area to the south and southeast of Cambridge is of particular importance to the economic

¹ <https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s3399/MDN%20001%20-%20Mayoral%20Decision%20Taking%20Forward%20Bus%20Reform%20in%20the%20Cambridgeshire%20and%20Peterborough%20Combined.pdf>

² <https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g570/Public%20minutes%2006th-Feb-2025%2010.00%20Combined%20Authority%20Board.pdf?T=11>

success and global reputation of Cambridge, owing to the presence of four internationally significant life sciences campuses: Cambridge Biomedical Campus ('CBC'), Babraham Research Campus ('BRC'), Granta Park and the Wellcome Genome Campus ('Genome Campus'). Together with smaller sites, such as Unity Campus in Sawston, these form the 'southern cluster' for science and technology, which is the focus of much of the inward investment and future job creation in the Cambridge area.

8. I am fully committed to delivering better public transport in this southeastern corridor, while also integrating this into a wider regional network. I also fully support the principle of building a new transport scheme to serve this corridor; however, I have reservations about the CSET scheme as currently proposed by the Applicant:
 - a. the route of the scheme does not serve or connect the southern cluster as a whole, being predicated on travel to CBC from the travel hub, rather than maximising travel from Cambridge South station to (and between) the other employment sites in the cluster;
 - b. at this stage, I cannot guarantee the Applicant's assumed bus service levels on CSET will be viable under future bus franchising arrangements operated by the Authority;
 - c. transport benefits could be delivered more quickly, more cheaply and with less environmental impact through an on-road alternative; and
 - d. the use of guided buses conflicts with my mayoral plan to deliver a light rail network for Cambridge, prioritising an extended route on this southern corridor.

CSET route and the southern cluster

9. The proposed CSET Busway essentially acts as a park-and-ride scheme, at significant cost. It links CBC to a large rural car park and 'travel hub', which is around 1km from the nearest

entrance to the BRC (around 2km from the furthest point of the campus) and a similar distance from Granta Park. This will not directly facilitate outward travel via Cambridge South station.

The Applicant suggests that some bus services could divert to these sites from the CSET route; however, it also suggests that most services will go to the travel hub, leaving passengers with a significant onward journey by other means. It is a considerable distance to walk, particularly in inclement weather, or after dark, or for those with mobility issues.

10. Since the current CSET scheme was first proposed, the Genome Campus - a key employment site in the southern cluster – has been granted planning permission for a large expansion.

Construction is already underway and will see the campus grow from 125 to 440 acres, with an additional 1.6 million square feet of laboratory and research space, 1,500 homes, amenities and community facilities, including a local primary school³. The number of employees working at the campus is expected to grow from 3,000 to up to 9,000 over the next few years⁴. CSET does not serve this site at all.

11. This travel corridor has the potential to connect four internationally important life science sites together, with significant economic benefits. Although an altered, longer route would be more expensive, it would offer far higher benefits.

Assumed service levels under future bus franchising arrangements

12. The Applicant's Outline Business Case is predicated on eight bus services per hour in each direction⁵; however, the Applicant will not be responsible for delivering these services. Under

³ <https://scambs.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/new-communities/wellcome-genome-campus>

⁴ <https://www.wellcomegenomecampus.org/thecampus/campusexpansion/>

⁵ OBC Appendix D (para 2.2.1) <https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/asset-library/Sustainable-Transport/Public-Transport/Cambridge-South-East-Transport/Outline-Business-Case-2020/CSET-OBC-Appendix-D-Public-Transport-Network-Strategy-403394-MMD-BCA-00-RP-BC-0370-Rev-B.pdf>

bus franchising, the Authority will be responsible for assessing passenger demand and determining the routes and services that bus operators can bid to run. It will also bear the financial risk should predicted demand not materialise.

13. The Authority will decide what services will be viable and sustainable under the new franchising arrangements. This will require modelling of the whole network based on future data, including real passenger data following the opening of Cambridge South station. As this exercise has yet to happen, I am not able to commit to the assumed levels of service that underpin the Applicant's business case.

The alternative option of an on-road scheme

14. CBC faces immediate challenges with traffic congestion and pressure on its onsite parking. This is already impacting upon staff and visitors to the campus. There are short term interventions that could be progressed and implemented much faster than the CSET busway, at relatively low cost, allowing time for a better long-term solution for this travel corridor.
15. The opening of Cambridge South Station in early 2026 will hugely improve access to CBC. The station is expected to enable up to 1.8 million rail passenger journeys per year⁶, drastically reducing the need for private vehicles to be brought on site. It may also change travel patterns more than predicted, by allowing people to park at other stations and complete their journey to CBC by train. However, the GCP has not progressed proposals for parking hubs at Foxton and Whittlesford Parkway to facilitate this use.
16. Better bus access to CBC from the southeastern corridor is also needed, as many of the staff

⁶ <https://www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/news/full-train-service-expected-for-new-cambridge-south-station>

who work on the campus commute from this area, which includes the town of Haverhill. I am persuaded that changes to the A13017 and a new spur road to CBC would deliver improved access to the campus at far lower cost.

17. A new on-road bus lane (which was one of the GCP's original options for this southeastern corridor) would allow buses to bypass traffic on the A1307 and proceed into CBC. This has the advantage of directly serving the new Children's Hospital and the planned expansion of this southeastern corner of the campus. I gather that an on-road alternative will be set out in detail by the Better Ways for Busways group ('the BW4B alternative').

18. CSET cannot be operational until the whole busway is constructed. An on-road alternative would not only be cheaper, but far quicker to deliver (and could be progressed in stages) while still delivering on most of the stated objectives of the CSET scheme. It would also have a lower visual and environmental impact.

My plans for light rail

19. Throughout the recent mayoral election, I committed to delivering a light rail network for Cambridge. I also confirmed this commitment in my election manifesto⁷. It makes no sense to build busways that cannot integrate with a light rail network and would be expensive and time-consuming to convert. The greenfield requirements for light rail have a lower environmental impact and are cheaper than the conversion costs for a road-like surface.

20. In contrast with the guidance technology proposed by the Applicant for CSET buses, light rail is a proven technology. It is safe, reliable and widely adopted across the world, including many

⁷ <https://www.paulbristow.org.uk/sites/www.paulbristow.org.uk/files/2025-04/Get%20Moving.pdf>

cities of a similar size and character to Cambridge.

21. I have recently appointed the Authority's first Light Rail Commissioner, who has extensive experience in light rail planning, procurement, design, construction, operations and maintenance and safety. He led a team of planning, design and construction specialists to build three new regional tram extensions for the West Midlands Combined Authority and oversaw the expansion programme and letting of the operating contract at Metrolink in Manchester. The Authority is now working with key stakeholders on the evidence base for a mass rapid transit system in and around Cambridge. I have also commissioned a study to examine light rail options for this specific corridor, connecting the life science sites together and to multiple railway stations.
22. CSET is categorised as offering low value for money under Department for Transport guidelines. Initial assessment suggests that adapting and extending CSET into a light rail, life sciences line would bring far greater benefits.

Statement dated 19 September 2025