
CambridgeshireTransportCommission

Tuesday 21 July 2009

CAMBRIDGESHIRE DESERVES AND NEEDS TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS

Cambridgeshire deserves and needs hundreds of millions pounds of investment in transport to tackle congestion – that is the verdict of the Cambridgeshire Transport Commission.

Sir Brian Briscoe, the Commission Chairman, today announced the findings of an extensive independent inquiry that sifted through thousands of pages of evidence, heard from over 1000 local residents via an online survey and directly from 119 witnesses at 15 public hearings.

The report said that the package of transport improvements suggested by Cambridgeshire County Council as part of its Transport Innovation Fund (TiF) submission should go ahead for the well being of the county and the country as well.

The Commission recommend Cambridgeshire submit a TiF bid to Government for funds to improve cycling, walking, public transport and the roads. It states that a congestion charge may be needed in the future but no earlier than 2017 and should only be considered after the £500m TiF improvements are in place and working, and crucially only when congestion reaches a level – to be agreed with the Government – where nothing else will help. The Government needs to understand that the sequence of any changes made is important to their overall chance of success.

The report puts the decision in the hands of the public, business and councils within Cambridgeshire to agree a 'trigger point' where congestion is so bad that it may be necessary to bring a charge in.

Sir Brian said: "It would be wrong to introduce a congestion charge before the proposed transport improvements are introduced, the A14 widened and the Chesterton Station project completed. The earliest date is 2017 – eight years time at least. It is up to the public, business and the councils to agree a point with Government when congestion charging would be introduced. Of course, if people decide to use the transport improvements and

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transfer from their cars in sufficient numbers, this point can be put off into the future. We suggest Cambridgeshire reaches an agreement with Government that funding is given for transport improvements with the understanding that a congestion charge will be brought in only if and when congestion reaches a certain level that is measurable. That level needs to be debated and locally agreed.”

The report praises the transport improvements, such as Park and Ride, that have already been introduced but says bus ticketing and information should be significantly improved.

It also says that the County Council should ensure that improvements benefit the whole of the County and rural areas, not just Cambridge.

The Commission also calls for a formal, powerful, Partnership for Transport to be created that would drive forward a clear vision of what transport improvements are needed and help to encourage the public to use more environmentally friendly forms of transport. The partnership should include the Greater Cambridge Partnership, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council as well as the County Council.

Sir Brian added: “Cambridgeshire is important to the country as a whole and it is vital for the local area and the rest of the UK that transport improvements are made. There is a real possibility that Cambridgeshire, given the right investment, could become the outstanding UK exemplar of environmentally sustainable economic growth. Such an achievement would of itself make the city and county more attractive. To make this happen there needs to be a vision the public fully understands and is engaged with. We hope our report helps Cambridgeshire in that direction.

“I would like to thank everyone who gave evidence and had their say on this challenging issue. Tony Travers and I have listened, asked tough questions and now considered carefully the wealth of information put in front of us. It has been obvious from the start how important the transport issue is to local people. As a result, the quality of submissions has been impressive.

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Cambridge and Cambridgeshire have a near-unique opportunity within Britain to have a future that is both economically successful and environmentally responsible. We hope the public, businesses and the councils can, in the light of our report, now work together to deliver this result.”

The full report is available online at www.cambstransportcommission.co.uk

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Notes for editors

For further information please contact James Wilson, Secretary to Cambridgeshire’s Transport Commission on 01223 699240.