
CambridgeshireTransportCommission

Cambridgeshire Transport Commission

**Interim Report on Public Consultation
February 2009**

Introduction

Sir Brian Briscoe, Chair of Cambridgeshire Transport Commission, put out his first call for evidence on 27 January 2009. He pitched his request broadly, with the aim of getting input from local people who are affected by congestion on a daily basis. The public were asked whether they think transport improvements are needed and, if so, to give their own ideas about what could be done to improve public transport, walking and cycling facilities, and the road network, to cope with congestion in and around Cambridge. Sir Brian was also eager to test out public views on Cambridgeshire County Council's Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) bid and more specifically on the Government's requirement that any transport improvements so funded should include a form of demand management, such as congestion charging.

The Commission's website had over 1,500 visitors in the first week. Midway through the consultation period the Commission has already received over 400 submissions via its website as well as a number of emails and letters. Inevitably, given the emotive nature of the issue, there is a huge range of opinion, much of it contradictory. Some of the assertions reported may or may not be accurate: some undoubtedly need to be tested to ensure they are supported by evidence. However, the process is proving extraordinarily helpful in highlighting key issues that concern the Cambridgeshire public. It was therefore decided to publish an interim report in order to further stimulate the public debate.

1. With the congestion in and around Cambridge and plans to build a large number of new homes in Cambridgeshire, do you think transport improvements are needed?

Transport improvements

For many respondents, transport improvements in and around Cambridge are long overdue.

"Yes, as Cambridge seems to be grinding to a halt at most times of the day and on any given day." (164)

"I am of the view that we already face very serious problems over congestion in the City now, and certainly more so in the future." (email 2.2.2009)

"For many journeys public transport is not even viable now." (2)

"(Transport improvements) were needed ten years ago." (102)

Some even saw this as a kind of trick question, luring respondents into accepting the inevitability of a congestion charge.

"This is a leading question with all the subtlety of a double-glazing salesman - ask an opening question everyone... will say 'yes' to and leave the price (congestion charge) until question 5..." (email 9.2.2009)

However, a number of respondents believe that Cambridge's traffic and transport problems have been exaggerated.

"Things seem fine to me." 160)

"Improvements will help but the congestion problem is often overstated." (130)

"I don't think congestion is awful, nor do I think it has become significantly worse over the several years that I have been cycling beside one of the main routes into the city." (email 2.2.2009)

"I don't agree that Cambridge has worse congestion than any other city or large town in the UK." (212)

"It is not proper congestion, you should go and take a look in London and proper cities across the country (Manchester, Birmingham etc.)." (229)

And some feel that no transport improvements are needed because...

"The facilities are adequate." (149)

Development plans

Most respondents do not question Cambridgeshire's development plans, though some note that these will necessitate considerable investment in infrastructure.

"It is clear that the development of the south east around Cambridge requires a long term vision on transport, and major investments." (email 2.2.2009)

"Transport improvements will be essential to support the future development of Cambridge and the surrounding regions." (398)

"Those occupying new homes in Cambridgeshire outside the city should be entirely independent of the need to enter Cambridge, having their own businesses and social facilities within the new developments." (293)

There are, however, some outspoken critics who feel that development should be limited or stopped.

"Review the long-term county plan and make it more realistic as regards growth." (323)

"We shouldn't be building any more houses – the area is already ruined." (18)

"I don't want more new houses built as this will create intolerable burdens on our public services as well as destroying our lovely English countryside. There should be a referendum in the county before any more houses are built." (41)

"Not building more houses and improving transport would be even better." (194)

"We need to reduce demand, not increase supply. Don't build more homes is the obvious solution." (100)

The Marshall's airfield site is a particular target.

"I think the number of houses should be reviewed e.g. the airport site." (235)

"Make Marshall's airfield a regional park instead of 20,000 new homes." (378)

A number of submissions criticise planning policy, which they believe allows housing development to take place irrespective of whether local infrastructure can support it.

"The County Council is being ... careless in allowing new development to take place without a transport infrastructure in place. This careless planning will destroy the environment that is attracting people here in the first place." (112)

"The policy of building new homes some miles from the workplace is the root of the problem. Whilst this continues the transport infrastructure will be inadequate..." (176)

"We seem to have a culture of build the homes and let the people find their work." (371)

Retail and other business development in or near the city centre is also seen by some respondents as a cause of traffic congestion.

"If more John Lewis type developments are built in the centre of a mediaeval market town we should not be surprised to see more congestion." (150)

"Think about major retail parks being situated in or near the town centre. Newmarket Road in Cambridge is a good example of poor planning permission, without taking into account traffic congestion". (319)

"Move shops that require people to drive (B&Q, Homebase) to the outskirts, near a park & ride site for example." (327)

"The only way to stop congestion is to encourage companies to move out of Cambridge." (263)

2. What do you think should be done to improve public transport, walking and cycling facilities, and the road network?

Culture change

For some respondents, the key to Cambridge's transport problems is a radical culture change...

"We need a change of culture where people learn that they can travel differently." (269)

"I think transport improvements are a short term fix to a long-term problem. Some creativity in devising ways to encourage people to travel less may offer better solutions." (141)

Better public transport

Most respondents do, however, see a solution in better and cheaper public transport – especially outside Cambridge city boundaries.

"Public transportation in the Fens." (145)

"Improved public transport network so that South Cambs. residents... have a genuine alternative to using their cars." (60)

"More transportation links are needed, especially down the A10. Also services that provide access to outlying areas in Cambridge..." (108)

Bus service

Buses are the most mentioned form of public transport. There is almost universal agreement that there need to be...

"More buses, more routes, more frequently." (289)

"More (or larger) buses at peak times." (380)

"Buses are the answer – main double-decker park & ride and smaller... buses in the centre." (361)

"If there were more frequent bus services and routes maybe more people would chose that as an option." (105)

A number of respondents mention villages which have no services or have lost services.

"I read weekly about villages that lose services e.g. Horningsea, Oakington and of Sunday services finishing earlier." (419)

"Half hour bus service from Waterbeach to Cambridge has been reduced to hourly." (413)

"People... can't come into Cambridge from our village (Isleham) as there is no bus..." (358)

"From villages such as Cottenham, the direct bus service to Cambridge (should be) at least twice an hour." (201)

Other suggestions for improving the bus network include...

"... a continuous bus route running around the ring road." (284)

"More direct bus services between areas of the town. To commute from one side of the city to another you have to go via the very congested city centre." (125)

"Make sure there are more bus services so people do not have to take their cars and drive out of town to a park and ride in order to catch a bus to work."

There are requests for improved services.

"... especially evenings to and from villages." (156)

"Bus services that run through the night." (212)

"24 hour bus operation with frequent services from 7am to 7pm." (email 6.2.2009)

A number of quality issues are also raised about the present bus service...

"Buses are cold and not very comfortable..." (119)

"Cleaner buses, more comfortable buses..." (75)

"Better shelters." (362)

... with the operator, Stagecoach, explicitly or implicitly criticised.

"The bus service in Cambridge is faulty. The drivers are not adequately trained. Approximately 20% of buses never show and more than 75% do not run on time. Stagecoach should have their contract with the city revoked." (309)

"Some basic customer service skills training for bus drivers." (27)

"Bus companies that provide enough buses and drivers to provide public transport when they are supposed to." (97)

"Getting rid of Stagecoach would be both very popular and effective." (358)

"Don't give (more money) to existing bus companies, they will just pocket it without any real improvement. Give them some if they show a commitment to renew their fleet and lower the prices." (389)

Bus fares are felt to be too expensive to encourage a modal shift and there are requests for more flexible ticketing options.

"(A) ticket system that allows transfers." (209)

"Co-ordinated bus and train travel (single tickets valid on both) and cheaper subsidised fares." (112)

"An improved regular ticket structure on public transport would also encourage frequent use." (264)

Finally, several respondents suggest that information about services could be improved.

"More information about available buses and bus routes." (234)

"Use the current technology to give accurate arrival times on all bus stops." (242)

"Electronic real time information at every bus stop (not just a few major ones) – the web page for this is quite a good improvement but is no good when you are standing outside in the rain." (362)

Park & Ride

A number of respondents praised the development of Park & Ride facilities in Cambridge.

"Park & Ride has proven itself and with extended hours/services it goes from strength to strength." 363

There were a number of suggestions for extending the network.

"A Park and Ride by the A603 near M11 junction 12 to ease congestion on the Barton Road." (202)

"Another Park & Ride (in the) Newnham area ." (416)

"Park & Ride near Girton, possibly M11 junction on Barton Road and Histon Road at the A14 junction." (268)

"Extend Park & Ride boundaries to cover villages further out of Cambridge e.g. Fulbourn, Ely, Cottenham." (281)

A repeated grouse was cost and it was also suggested that Park & Ride facilities should stay open later.

"(Park & Ride) fares could be reduced and ridership might increase." (33)

"P&R... Payment should be per car. Not per person." (231)

"Better public transport won't solve the problem of large families coming by car who pay for each person on the park and ride buses." (182)

"Increase the times Park & Ride are open. Until midnight at least." (75)

And one respondent suggested that Park & Ride would be more attractive if a swift bus journey to the city centre could be guaranteed.

"Make Park & Ride lanes non-stop all the way into the city centre (increase the bus lanes)." (386)

A more critical note was injected by a respondent who noted...

"Despite the accolades... the current Park & Ride system is poor because the sites all (but the Milton one) lie inside the current by-pass roads: consequently it takes nearly as long to reach the P&R sites as it does to get right into town." (email 10.2.2009)

... and another respondent echoed this and suggested...

"... new P&R sites must be well out of town on all the main access roads (in the Green Belt) ... (but) must be sympathetic to the purpose of the Green Belt and include consideration of underground parking." (email 6.2.2009)

Trains

A relatively small number of respondents mention trains – sometimes in general terms...

"Better and cheaper train services across the county." (41)

"More rail travel – particularly by freight." (145)

"Spend more on additional parking near train stations." (182)

... and sometimes with more specific requests.

"Reopen the railway line to Bedford." (103)

"Have more spaces on the trains from Ely and Waterbeach and bigger car parks for those stations." (140)

"The trains that travel from King's Lynn/Norwich need to be longer to accommodate more passengers. Currently there is never enough space on these trains." (392)

"Need to make more use of the railways such as the stations at Cherry Hinton and the hospital." (129)

Some respondents regretted that the disused railway line to Huntingdon was being used for the Guided Busway and would like to see this decision reversed. (The Guided Busway is discussed in more detail in Section 4 below.)

"Start expanding the rail network so that there is a link from Cambridge to Huntingdon and stop throwing money at the guided bus." (191)

Redevelopment of the central railway station was also mooted.

"A second railway platform on the East side of Cambridge station to relieve train congestion." (email 6.2.2009)

Walking/cycling

Whilst one submission noted that there should be...

"More investment to prioritise sustainable transport modes of walking and cycling – bus travel is NOT a sustainable transport mode." (93)

... and another noted...

"The power balance between vehicular traffic and pedestrians and cyclists needs to be examined." (301)

... most respondents do not make extravagant claims for walking and cycling as a panacea for Cambridge's traffic issues, perhaps because the city is already the UK leader for journeys made to work by bicycle.

There are, however, a number of general requests for better, and better-maintained, cycle paths.

"A quality over quantity approach to designing cycle paths." (27)

"Money must be spent on proper cycle facilities - not just painting lines on the roads and footpaths and calling them a cycle route. Any routes must be built to a high standard." (29)

"Have cyclist facilities that are there to help cyclists, rather than facilities that remove cyclists from obstructing motorists. (100)

"More gritting of cycle paths in winter, faster repair of cycle paths." (288)

Facilities for parking cycles are also criticised.

"Cycle parking (at the new Grand Arcade) opened months after the car park... Then it transpires that cyclists are CHARGED for parking their bikes. If the justification for a congestion charge is that people will be less likely to do something if they have to pay a fee, then this must similarly apply to cyclists..." (email 2.2.2009)

"The cycle arrangement for parking at the station is truly horrific." (email 2.2.2009)

One respondent compared the situation for cyclists in the UK with Holland.

"Look at the attitude behind their cycle facilities – bikes come FIRST, not a poor second..." (email 2.2.2009).

Although it was claimed...

"Forget cycles- they only affect Cambridge. Cambridgeshire consists of more than just Cambridge." (346)

... in fact there were a number of requests to improve cycling facilities to the surrounding villages and towns.

"Improve cycling infrastructure all over the city and necklace villages, but by consulting cyclists NOT town planners..." (47)

"Suggest safe cycle paths are extended into the southern villages." (30)

"More inter-town cycleways." (145)

"And as far as travel from Ely, why is there not a dedicated cycle route direct to Cambridge? If there was I would use it." (360)

"Construction of surfaced and lit cycle ways – especially beyond Cambridge city limits." (380)

"We live in Little Eversden... there is no cycle lane on the major road..." (email 2.2.2009)

One respondent made a *cri de coeur*...

"Please tell bus drivers to take more care around cyclists. Buses are probably the biggest perceived safety threat to cyclists." (150)

.. and another noted...

"I have) heard no problems from cyclists other than having arguments with bus drivers." (394)

There were few specific requests for improving the lot of pedestrians other than...

"Pedestrians should be given priority walkways rather than having to walk further to get around roundabouts." (185)

"More walking priority routes (not shared with cycles)" (93)

The impact of the recent harsh winter also prompted one respondent to ask for...

"Sand/salt on paths... No excuses for not getting to school." (email 4.2.2009)

However, it was also noted that...

"Most of the commuting distances around Cambridge are impractically long for (walking)." (email 10.2.2009)

Road network

A number of respondents suggested that...

"The biggest problem is the inadequate road network in and around Cambridge. This is the root cause of the current congestion problems and should be given the highest priority in any attempt to alleviate congestion now and in the future." (171)

"The road structure within the city lets the county structure down." (267)

One noted that the County Council should...

"Improve roads. Buses and cyclists use roads too you know, but you are so obsessed with anti-car schemes that you seem to forget this (143)

A number of submissions suggested that Cambridge needs a better ring road.

"From my perspective improving the ring road would be high on the agenda." (360)

"Improve ring road junctions to offer greater capacity." (90)

"(A) three lane Cam25 Ring Road with Express-Ways into the city centre, just like Birmingham, which is a joy to drive around." (118)

"We could do with a complete ring road – partly to make it easier for commuter traffic to reach the appropriate access roads and partly to relive problems due to accidents when they occur." (email 10.2.2009)

Other major roads which are felt to need improvement include the A14...

"The main problem I see regularly is peak time congestion on the A14." (328)

"Until the A14 is improved a 50MPH speed limit should be imposed at times of high congestion as is used now on the M25."

"The A14 needs upgrading." (82)

"Transport improvements... end of M11/A14." (120)

... the A10...

"Dual carriageway on the A10..." (90)

"Dual the A10." (387)

"The widening of the A10 to allow for two lanes of traffic both ways, or at least another lane which can be used as a contra-flow during peak travel times." (108)

"I would like to see the A10 improved – this would encourage more housing developments in Ely." (360)

... the A428...

"Complete the upgrade of the A428 by dualling the section between Caxton and the A1 Black Cat." (381)

... and Newmarket Road...

"The entire length of Newmarket Road for example is a series of terrible junctions. They should be reduced – especially around the Coldhams Lane area." (125)

"Take out bus lanes (on) Newmarket Road where shops have been encouraged to be established. Many drivers break the rules on this road. Change the layout at West garage coming from Coldhams lane." (133)

"Newmarket Road has been developed as a shopping area, yet the road has been reduced to a single lane and it is impossible to enter Tesco's without driving illegally in the bus lane."
(email 2.2.2009)

Some motorists also complained about restrictions on vehicular access...

"Stop restricting access to roads like Silver St." (18)

"Open many of the roads that have been closed." (104)

"...the County Council is making matters worse, such as the closure of some roads... (e.g.) the closure of Emmanuel Road pushes all traffic onto East Road and the Elizabeth Way roundabout..." (416)

... although others felt that schemes involving bollards, one-way systems and routes that are exclusively for public transport access are an essential part of tackling congestion in the city centre through...

"(Making) the road network less attractive to private vehicle users." (email 6.2.2009)

Other, more general, suggestions include better designed road junctions and better road maintenance.

"Model road junctions so they work – at the moment things are designed to deliberately disadvantage the motorist." (387)

"Simple junction improvements would go a long way to improving matters." (125)

"Better local road surfaces and better maintenance of village roads and markings." (252)

Traffic flow

A number of respondents claim that Cambridge's problems are essentially an issue of traffic flow.

"Remove bus lanes and obstructions. Review the placement and use of traffic lights. Make the top priority to allow traffic to flow again." (104)

"Remove bus lanes. Next remove traffic lights, next remove stupid traffic calming features, humps (etc) and build lay-byes for buses so they don't impede the traffic." (131)

"If you want to know why there is low traffic flow in Cambridge at peak times, it is because of traffic lights." (email 9.2.2009)

There is some concern about phasing of traffic lights.

"Phasing of traffic lights would help." (390)

"Coordinate traffic lights so they don't work against each other." (393)

"Better traffic light phasing (longer cycles, spend less time switching between red and green)." (205)

"They have the traffic light control system called SCOOT... With SCOOT they should be able to co-ordinate traffic light operation to optimise traffic flow. I see no indication of this."
(email 9.2.2009)

Indeed more than one respondent would like to...

"Do away with all traffic lights and reintroduce roundabouts." (163)

Some respondents particularly dislike traffic calming measures.

"Some of the calming traffic measures are counter productive – unnecessarily slowing the traffic and are a nuisance for ambulances and fire engines. Some of the chicanes are dangerous... The calming measures of Cherry Hinton are almost comical in their ferocity." (416)

Bus lanes, too, come in for criticism. Some respondents would get rid of them altogether; others would like to see their use restricted to peak periods.

"Get rid of bus lanes, which are a waste of space, being empty most of the time." (178)

"Better laid out roads with no more bus lanes coming and going so you don't know where you are supposed to be driving." (164)

"Bus lanes stand empty most of the day. Why not have them used in rush hours only?" (258)

"Open the bus lanes to motor cars after the peak time i.e. 0700 to 0930 then 1600 to 1900." (206)

"It's just not efficient to force 98% of people into 1 lane to leave the other free for 2% of people in buses." (email 9.10.2009)

And one respondent put in a special plea...

"Allow Motorcycles in bus lanes." (286)

Speed limits are also mentioned, with one respondent suggesting...

"Ban the 20mph zones, upgrade to 30mph so vehicles can perform better." (131)

The school run/ university

A number of respondents feel that both schools and the university have a considerable negative impact on congestion in the city...

"It is manifestly obvious that traffic in Cambridge flows far more easily during the school holidays... This is a problem mainly for the private schools with parents driving their children into Cambridge from out-of-town." (email 6.2.2009)

"Private schools and the university should contribute more. Lots of the congestion in some parts of Cambridge is caused by school traffic." (307)

"Compare the traffic levels when the schools are off and we don't have a congestion problem. Get good school bus schemes in place and stop all the 4x4s coming into the city just to drop kids off." (175)

... and that the County Council should do more to mitigate the impact of the school run...

"Make the schools lay on school buses..." (50)

"Restrict people dropping off children at schools and college." (173)

"Bus children in from designated points outside Cambridge." (321)

"Park & Ride for all Cambridge schools." (307)

...and

"Crack down on students who have cars when they are not supposed to." (195)

"Sort out the university. The university does not need to start lectures at 9:00 am and finish at 5:00 pm, and it DOES do this, adding thousands of bikes to rush hour. Get them to start at 09:30 and finish at 4:30." (email 3.2.2009)

3. Cambridgeshire County Council has bid for £500 million from Government under the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) scheme. What are your views on the proposals?

What proposals?

Despite publicity generated by both previous County Council consultations on the TIF and the establishment of the present independent commission, it is clear that many respondents had little or no knowledge of the TIF proposals and (despite the link to the TIF proposals) did not find the Commission's website helpful in this respect.

"What proposals" (21)

"I can't find enough information on the full proposals to have a comment – the only information I can see is on congestion charging." (7);

"Where is the web site with a presentation of the ideas within the proposals?" (311)

"Where are the details of the scheme? I cannot find them on the background or FAQ pages." (169)

'Blackmail'

The Government's insistence on tying TIF funding to the introduction of demand management was criticised by some respondents as a form of blackmail or bribery.

"The Transport Innovation Fund scheme is Government blackmail, do you wish to succumb to that?" (409)

"Government blackmail, it's as simple as that." (319)

"If they are having to bribe us to accept their scheme it can't be very popular can it?" (237)

"This smacks of bribery." (272)

"There's no such thing as a free lunch – the strings attached to the 500M are too great." (50)

It was suggested that the Council could try to negotiate a relaxation of this restriction.

"I do not think the restrictions on these funds are appropriate – the government needs to change the scheme rules." (69)

The £500 million is dependent on imposing the congestion charge. The County Council should not accept this condition as it will have a detrimental effects on the city. There are better ways of improving the lot of residents." (136)

In favour

Hardly surprisingly, opinion was divided. Many respondents supported the proposals, although with varying degrees of warmth.

"The proposals are wide-ranging, controversial but utterly necessary if Cambridge is going to learn from the mistakes of other cities which have received less funding. Cambridge's congestion can only get worse but the city's growth is vital." (356)

"Yes... it needs to be focussed and bold." (109)

"Agree with proposals. Money spent on well-designed public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure in consultation with users (cyclists, pedestrians etc.) will ease congestion." (113)

"Well, if the expenditure of half a billion pounds of public money does not help it is hard to know what would." (223)

"As long as it's thought about I cannot see it making congestion worse." (105)

Equivocal

Some respondents felt that the funding on offer was not sufficient in light of planned development and Cambridgeshire's future transport needs.

"£500m will help – but still a drop in the ocean." (1)

"With the increased housing due to Northstowe, I have doubts as to whether it will even keep the status quo." (32)

"It will mitigate problems but will not solve congestion due to proposed increase in population." (147)

"Looks promising – it should help but won't solve it." (142)

Opposed

Many were opposed, largely because they were did not feel that there was any merit in introducing a congestion charge.

"I am very much against the idea of congestion charges... I don't think it is the right solution to a problem that I don't see exists at the moment." 160

"It will just make sitting in queues more expensive (because of the congestion charge)." (6)

"Congestion charge the wrong approach for a smallish city with a housing affordability problem in a primarily rural area (with typically East Anglian public transport options)." (27)

Some respondents were also inherently suspicious of the county council and its transport engineers.

"This isn't going to solve congestion – it will simply make the county council lots of money." (387)

"Not with the county council in charge. They would only use it to create more congestion." (244)

"I think the county council needs to do a full study of the traffic flow and publish the results before just deciding to throw money at it." (396)

4. Is Cambridgeshire County Council planning to spend £500m for transport improvements in the right way? What changes would be better, or more acceptable, for local people and businesses?

TIF proposals

Apart from the suggestion of introducing a congestion charge, discussed in full in the next section, many respondents knew little or nothing about the detail of the TIF proposals. Most commonly mentioned were the plans for Chesterton Station, which were generally approved.

"Proposals for Chesterton station would be welcomed as would the planned increase in bus capacity to outlying villages." (72)

"New station at Chesterton seems sensible. Could there be others?" (382)

"...preferably one north and one south of the city. The trains can still stop in the centre to pick up those who live in Cambridge, but the rest of us should not need to go into town." (email 3.2.2009)

Respondents were also aware that the TIF scheme would build on the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway – and indeed some seem to have thought that the Busway was itself part of the TIF proposals. Here there was some scepticism.

"Not the misguided bus." (16)

"Scrap the ridiculous white elephant of the guided bus and re-instate the rail link across the County." (45)

"The guided busway is an expensive white elephant. Northstowe will be hugely delayed by the house market slowdown and the thing is useless for most of the nearby villages." (6)

"The guided bus is only for those who work at Addenbrookes or go to the station." (74)

"Building a guided bus route to bring more people in? Why are local people not working in Cambridge? (185)

However, some respondents feel that extending the Guided Busway is actually key to tackling congestion problems.

"Extend the Guided Bus Route service to provide North, South, East and West development corridors so as to provide an efficient means of public transport." (email 6.2.2009)

"Maybe the guided bus will help, if frequent enough and priced reasonably." (327)

With the exception of the Guided Busway, some people felt that not enough was being done for villages west of Cambridge...

"Looks pretty reasonable – but villages to west of Cambridge largely ignored..." (362)

... or that the emphasis was too heavily on the needs of the city...

"No, it will be spent on stupid systems such as guided busways – we need the money to be spent to the benefit of all, not just Cambridge." (346)

A number of respondents felt that more should be done for the road network.

"The proposals don't include any road improvements and thus do not tackle the fundamental problem. Therefore they are of little value." (171)

Very many submissions included suggested improvements to existing public transport and cycleways. These comments have been included in section 2 above. A particularly frequent request was that public transport/ Park & Ride use should become much cheaper, or even free, in order to tempt people out of their cars.

"People have to know that they will actually save money by using alternatives to their cars." (38)

"P&R has great potential but there must be a real financial inducement if uptake is to increase." (email 6.2.2009)

"Use the money to make all public transport free." (163)

"Free bus services with dramatically increased frequency (every 5 minutes)." (196)

Some alternatives

A number of respondents felt that the County Council should have been bolder in its transport solutions, looking at monorail, trams or even an underground system to improve Cambridge's traffic issues.

"My main concern is that the city centre will remain a bottleneck whatever is done on the periphery. That's why a monorail system would be preferable, as it wouldn't be on the already congested roads." (174)

"We need something new, underground transport, light railways..." (84)

"Cambridge needs a decent tram system as used in other countries." (244)

"(A) tram system should replace ALL city centre vehicles, i.e. no taxi, buses or cars except in emergency or delivery..." (email 3.2.2009)

"An underground system should be built linking Park & Ride sites, city centre and railway station as a first step. It should then be extended out of Cambridge." (16)

It was claimed that Cambridge clay was particularly suitable for tunnelling.

"Professor Mair, a world authority on tunnelling, says that the Cambridge clay is about the best medium for tunnel construction, and that using the existing technology, its cost could be easily covered by the TIF funding." (email 6.2.2009)

Others respondents suggest a more comprehensive ban on traffic going into the city centre...

"Stop traffic going into Cambridge – the park and ride facilities have proved this works." (10)

"Access to the city centre by tram, bicycle or foot only." (41)

"If the problem is really that bad, vehicles should be banned from the city centre during these times, not used as a tax raising exercise." (128)

"Make visiting coaches drop off visitors at an out of town car park and ride site/visitors' centre." (50)

For some, buses and coaches are the main cause of congestion in the city centre. There are several requests that the coach terminal in Drummer Street should be closed.

"(Remove) the inter-city bus terminal from Drummer Street and (relocate) to one of the P&R sites close to the M11." (email 6.2.2009)

"Why not have out-of-town buses arrive at out-of-town termini?" (email 3.2.3009)

Some respondents also suggested limitations on lorries...

"ban lorries during commuter times." (19)

"Set the fees for freight transport from the Midlands to Felixstowe at a sensible level, then the A14 won't be one continual line of thousands of lorries." (email 3.2.2009)

Other suggestions for lorries on the A14 include...

"Articulated lorries should be restricted to the inside lane between 7-9 and 16-18. The A14 and M11 are 90% of the time congested with lorries overtaking." (117)

"Ban lorries from the A14 either at certain times or make them pay a charge. Ban lorries from overtaking on the A14." (386)

Be decisive

Some respondents fear that political considerations may dissuade the Council from agreeing the kind of action they feel is necessary to meet Cambridgeshire's traffic and transport problems, and urge politicians to be decisive.

"How about making a decision and taking some action! We've had too many planning committees and ideas and studies. Maybe we need less democracy and more action." (247)

"Above all do not go down the easy path of holding a referendum. London's scheme is working and accepted. In Edinburgh and Manchester they did not have the political courage to act and dodged the issue." (416)

One respondent suggested that the best way to ensure transport improvements of all kinds was to introduce a unitary authority.

"Yes, I know there is a Joint Transport Sub-Committee, or whatever, and they say they work very well – but the evidence in the real world is quite the opposite... Most residents refer to 'the Council' (in the singular) and have little idea which Council is responsible for what." (email 2.2.2009)

5. Does the need to tackle congestion justify a charge for most vehicles coming into Cambridge in the morning peak (7.30am until 9.30am)? Are there alternative ways of reducing congestion and greenhouse gases?

Transport improvements first

A number of respondents stress that there should be demonstrable public transport improvements in place before any consideration is given to introducing road charges.

"I don't see how a congestion charge will help. There needs to be an alternative first." (3)

"Real, meaningful, publicly acceptable P(ublic) T(ransport) improvements must come into operation before any charging measures." (15)

"There is currently no justification for a charge because viable alternatives are not proposed. Without alternatives it is just a tax." (157)

"An important factor is demonstrating the improvements before introducing charges – this way you will be able to introduce many changes that will be palatable to all users of the roads." (166)

"There needs to be a viable alternative for car drivers where such a charge exists." (404)

More than one respondent suggested that improved public transport should be sufficient in itself to reduce Cambridge's congestion issues.

"Do you think people like being in a traffic jam? Do you think they have an alternative? Improve public transport and congestion will reduce of its own accord." (158)

"If people had a better option they wouldn't drive." (404)

"Daily congestion is self-regulating. If it regularly takes two miles to drive a mile, many people will choose another means of transport... Thus providing reasonable alternatives is what is needed." (email 2.2.2009)

In favour of/ opposed to a congestion charge

There are many proponents of road charging, some very enthusiastic, others seeing it as a perhaps regrettable inevitability...

"Yes, charge completely justified. Bring it on." (359)

"There are undoubtedly alternative ways, but I think this is the best one." (122)

"Unfortunately making people pay is the only way that affects their car use." (115)

... and some forceful opponents, many of whom feel they are already taxed enough.

"I already pay road fund tax to use my car. If they are introduced for Cambridge, I will no longer visit Cambridge unless absolutely forced to do so. I can and will take my business and money elsewhere." (176)

"You already have a huge demand charge in the form of exorbitant parking charges." (211)

"We are already paying road charges by means of road fund licence and fuel duty... This is a con trick." (101)

There are also sceptics, who are not convinced that a congestion charge actually delivers...

"Has it worked in London?" (387)

"From my reading of the statistics, congestion charging has less effect on incoming traffic flows than providing effective park and ride sites." (email 6.2.2009)

... or would attack the real causes of congestion in Cambridge.

"The issue isn't really within Cambridge – it's the surrounding transport network such as lorries having to get to the coast. You are punishing those that have to come into Cambridge to work rather than resolving the real problem." (180)

Some concerns about congestion charging

A number of respondents claim charging as essentially a tax on the poor.

"A charge is a tax on the needy as the rich will not care." (96)

"Charging is not demand management it is choice reduction. What good are empty roads if only the rich can afford to use them?" (125)

"Those with middle/high incomes will be able to drive around relatively congestion free area and get to their destinations 20/30 minutes quicker. Whilst those on the lowest of incomes will be heavily penalised and restricted in movement." (email 2.2.2009)

There are fears that it might achieve no more than traffic displacement...

"It is not justified and long term will not reduce congestion just move it to different times and places." (409)

"(A congestion charge) will only push all the congestion, especially in the centre, to a later hour." (111)

"Congestion charge won't help. What it may do is encourage vehicles to stay just outside the congestion charge zone, making travel here even worse than it is now." (393)

"(Because of) infrequent and expensive bus services from outlying villages – the congestion charge will probably only move the peak traffic to outside those hours." (8)

... and concerns about the logistics.

"... the logistics of cameras. Charging, running costs etc are tricky. Worry is that some drivers will get away without paying (foreign cars, dirty number plates etc)." (58)

Impact on business

A more specific issue for respondents is the possible negative impact on businesses in Cambridge.

"Congestion charging will raise money for the council but at what effect to businesses? We are in a world recession and damaging commerce in the city is not a wise move." (32)

"Particularly during the current financial crisis, businesses will be very hard hit." (187)

"(People) can go to Peterborough, Lakeside, Bluewater with cheap or free parking." (84)

"It will kill the city, with dire effects on income from business rates." (136)

"The cost of the charge will be an extra £1000 per year and this will seriously impact on my employees and my ability to recruit decent staff." (email 3.2.2009)

Small businesses were felt to be particularly vulnerable.

"It also puts up the costs to local resident small traders such as plumbers and builders who need to get about with vans as part of their trading activity." (email 6.2.2009)

Congestion charge zone

A number of respondents feel that the proposed charge zone is far too extensive.

"So why on earth are you proposing to introduce a congestion charge for the WHOLE of Cambridge? It is the centre of Cambridge which has the problem." (email 8.2.2009)

In particular there are concerns that the zone is likely to include a number of Park & Ride sites...

"I am all for the congestion charge if it is implemented in a way that allows to park in the P&R without paying the charge. In case I want to take my car into the city centre I am happy to pay the charge." (169)

"The Park & Ride sites must be accessible from the A14, A10 and M11 without incurring the (congestion charge)." (208)

"Our Park & Ride site lies within the boundary – do you really expect people to pay to get to the Park & Ride sites? (418)

...and the hospital.

"Centralisation has forced us to use Addenbrookes rather than the more local hospital – are you expecting us to be taxed to attend hospital?" (418)

Other criticisms included...

"Charge zone needs looking at – should not include Girton at north end." (58)

"The Science Park was built as an out of town business park. Enveloping it in a congestion charging zone is ridiculous, counter-intuitive and harmful to low-paid jobs and this businesses." (370)

One respondent suggested that the concept of a charge zone was itself flawed.

"Better to charge at points where congestion is caused rather than a blanket charge (although I realise that this will move congestion elsewhere so (it) will have to be intelligently applied." (233)

Charge times

Whilst many respondents agree that congestion is worse in the mornings, some of the proponents of charging would like to see charges levied across more of the day, or even on Saturday as well as weekdays...

"Other times would be acceptable too." (182)

"Why not extend it to the whole day?" (398)

"Is there only going to be a congestion charge during the morning peak time? Why not all day? During the hours 8.00 am to 6.00 pm." (120)

"This should be applied during the morning and afternoon periods." (152)

"Charging also needs to address the worst time for traffic on Saturday morning and early afternoon..." (271)

... with perhaps a...

"Very much higher charge for those who regularly drive in the morning peak." (65)

Who should pay?

There is some resistance on the part of Cambridge residents that they should be expected to pay to travel within the city.

"No... it is stupid to have to pay to move your own car off your own drive!" (132)

"I would happily pay a congestion charge to visit someone else's town – at least I would have the choice of going or not. I would have no choice if a congestion charge was imposed on city residence." (email 5.2.2009)

"A congestion charge should be implemented for vehicles travelling into Cambridge from outside the City. Residents of Cambridge City should pay a small annual fee to allow them to drive their personal vehicles in the city." (402)

Several respondents were particularly critical of the idea that they would have to pay the charge to leave the city, both because they believe the worst congestion is always on the way in, and because they claim that there is no alternative to the car for the journeys that they make out of Cambridge at peak hours.

"I also do not understand why those leaving the city centre would also be taxed when their routes are not congested." (150)

"Do not charge residents any congestion charge when leaving the City during the rush hour. Traffic is only built up in the opposite direction, i.e. going into town, and there is no credible alternative to the car." (199)

"My wife and I travel four miles along Histon Road to Waterbeach (no buses available) to look after our three grandchildren while our daughter goes to work. It would not be fair to make a charge for travel OUT of town." (415)

"Not if it penalises town residents driving OUT of town to their places of work (usually an out of town place with no rail or usable bus service." (308)

However, out of town residents point out that for them, too, there may be no alternative to the car.

"No, this will not work, and it will be costly to those that need to drive. One must remember that this is the fens where travel by car is a necessary need." (108)

Some are resentful of the notion that Cambridge residents should have any special dispensation.

"I would be incensed if people living in Cambridge pay no or a lower charge. We would love to live in Cambridge but cannot afford the house prices." (418)

"It is fully justified for city residents driving during the rush hour too.." (203)

Other suggestions about charging include that only polluting vehicles should be charged, or at least that the heaviest polluters should pay the largest charges...

"Charge the polluting vehicles and exempt electrical... charge only as a last resort." (389)

"Yes but large cars and 4x4 should pay more than smaller cars." (129)

... and there should be incentives for car sharers...

"Perhaps there can also be an incentive for people who share cars/" (253)

Alternative solutions

Some respondents feel that vehicle technology may provide a solution, or partial solution, to pollution and greenhouse gases.

"Cars already exist that will reduce the environmental impact...it's made by Honda and it's an electric car driven by hydrogen." (email 3.2.2009)

"Electric cycles and scooters could have an effect." (11)

"Encourage low emission taxis (such as rickshaws and tuk-tuks) – currently the costs imposed on prospective businesses are very prohibitive." (370)

Congestion is a different issue. One respondent asked rhetorically...

"Is congestion ever really solved? Decentralisation of work environments or incentives to work locally may assist in reducing the need to travel although viability is questionable." (381)

There were a number of suggestions about encouraging employers to allow homeworking and flexible working in order to reduce pressure on the roads in peak periods...

"Encourage homeworking and flexitime to cut congestion. The greenhouse gas stuff is just a smokescreen, we are not fooled." (143)

"Consider encouraging employers to change their working hours so that the workers can stagger the morning journey to work." (144)

"CCC can promote education to companies to encourage more working from home." (145)

... as well as promoting car pooling, car clubs and individual travel plans.

"Car pooling lanes." (195)

"Even more emphasis on reducing private car ownership e.g. car clubs" (147)

"More measures in helping companies and individuals implement traffic plans." (399)

It was also suggested that businesses should charge their employees for using car parks at work in order to encourage them to find alternative ways of travel.

"Use of workplace parking should be charged at the same rate as the city centre multi-storeys." (65)

A number of respondents feel that the only real solution is even more radical and there should either be a stop to development, or the Council should ensure that all new development is self-sustainable in terms of infrastructure and that people be encouraged to work in the place where they live. Comments are included in Section 1 of this report.

Finally, one respondent felt that the County Council should do more to educate the population of Cambridgeshire to combat 'ignorance and self-interest'.

"Local people need to know about the health problems caused by NOx and particular emissions, the climate change implications of CO2 emissions and the increased pollution and business costs caused by traffic congestion." (email 5.2.2009)

Final report

The above interim report is based on submissions from individual members of the public who responded online to the Cambridgeshire Transport Commission's appeal for evidence in the first two weeks of the consultation. The report will be updated to include further on-line submissions, as well as letters to the Commission, and a final report will be published before Easter.