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PRESS RELEASE: Refusing half a billion pounds of funding for transport schemes would be madness

Cambridge Cycling Campaign has said that to refuse a package combining half a billion pounds of free government money for transport with a weekday morning-only congestion charge would be a huge lost opportunity.

The proposed charge is part of a package whose other major (and arguably more important) aspect is an absolutely enormous fund of £500 million to provide a huge range of public transport (bus and train), cycling and walking schemes, plus new and expanded park and rides sites. Such money would be contingent on a charge.

A scheme of two parts: £500 million followed by a congestion charging

The Campaign's Co-ordinator, Martin Lucas-Smith, said:

"Do Cambridgeshire residents really want to throw away £500 million of funding, which would give them genuine, high-quality alternatives to being stuck in traffic queues? This level of funding would totally dwarf current levels of investment. It would be free money on the table from the Government, assuming a bid would be accepted, as seems likely."

Press Officer, James Woodburn, said:

"The Campaign agrees with the principle of demand management, though there remain many questions to be answered before we can give complete backing. However, we feel the proposals must be seen as part of a much bigger package of public transport, Park & Ride and cycling improvements. We would like to see more press coverage of the other half of the scheme: the proposed half-a-billion pound package of transport investment."

Jim Chisholm, Liaison Officer, said:

"Many motorists, particularly those coming in from outside Cambridge, would ironically be the biggest winners of this scheme. The improved public transport would get many city-dwellers out of their cars. Public transport users would see huge benefits and the current level of around 25% of commuter journeys by bike would rise."

Facts and figures

The Campaign is concerned that many of the facts about the proposals have not yet been heard by those currently opposing the scheme:

- The charge would be **7.30am-9.30am** only, Monday to Friday. So there would be very little effect on people travelling for shopping or leisure.
- There are to be another 50,000 houses (perhaps 125,000 people) around Cambridge by 2016 in an attempt to cater for demand and to lower house prices. Those opposing the congestion charge proposals need to suggest how to avoid complete gridlock from such a huge influx of people into the city.
- The estimated £30m raised annually from any charge would be ploughed back into local transport provision.
- Continental-style cycle provision could be introduced with the sort of money on the table. Making space for cycling in this way has real potential to increase levels of cycling and thus reduce motor traffic.



Continental provision: 'hybrid' provision, as proposed by the Campaign: on-road but partially segregated from traffic

- The 10% level of traffic reduction, even accounting for new residents, that the County Council envisage would be a great benefit to all road users.
- The charge would be introduced only from about 2011 once the package of measures has been implemented, so the alternatives would be in place before any charge.

ENDS

For further information please contact:

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Notes for editors:

1. Cambridge Cycling Campaign was formed in 1995 and now has over 800 members. Run by volunteers, it campaigns for "better safer and more cycling in and around Cambridge". Its website, at www.camcycle.org.uk, contains a wide range of information on its activities.
2. Ongoing comment on the proposals can be found on our website at: <http://www.camcycle.org.uk/campaigning/issues/congestioncharge/>
3. Photo above available at <http://www.camcycle.org.uk/map/location/11195/>