

August 16, 2007

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PRESS RELEASE

Congestion charge opponents 'ignoring basic housing growth realities'

Cambridge Cycling Campaign continues to express concern that opponents of a possible congestion charge are ignoring basic realities about the development of Cambridge. The Campaign considers that the proposals must be seen as part of an unprecedented £500m up-front proposed package of public transport, Park & Ride and cycling improvements. Many opponents of the congestion charge seem to be unaware of these potential improvements.

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

Some 50,000 new dwellings are planned for the outskirts of Cambridge in the coming decade. That amounts to perhaps 125,000 new people, very many of whom are likely to want to travel in and around Cambridge. We already have huge traffic problems on major routes, and that's without the vast influx of new residents expected in the next 10 years. Radical measures are needed.

Jim Chisholm, Liaison Officer, said:

"There are two forms of demand management on the table. Either drivers can sit in total gridlock, or the city can potentially get an enormous £500 million of new transport investment coupled with a weekday morning-only peak congestion charge to make people think more carefully about how they travel. With 50,000 extra new dwellings around the edge of the City in the coming decade, a radical change simply has to be made. And the reduced levels of congestion would make Cambridge a far more pleasant place to live, work, and play.

Press Officer, James Woodburn, said:

"Although we as a Campaign are waiting for the full details before we can pledge our full backing, the proposals have real merit because of the half-a-billion pounds of up-front government transport money that it would bring. Opponents of a charge need to say otherwise how they would cater for the huge influx of people to the area to prevent intolerable congestion."

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 little effect on people travelling for shopping or leisure.
- The £500m of transport investment would benefit all road users, including motorists, by vastly improving the alternatives to the car. But the government is only offering this money on condition that Congestion Charging is introduced.
- We understand there are to be another 50,000 dwellings (perhaps 125,000 people) around Cambridge by 2016 in an attempt to cater for demand and to lower house prices.
- The estimated £30m which we understand would be 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/>