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P R E S S R E L E A S E

Proposed bus lane will increase conflict

The County Council's proposal to install a bus lane on Hills Road will lead to increased conflict between all modes of traffic using the route. Cambridge Cycling Campaign is organising a campaign to raise local awareness of the Council's plan and to inform local councillors of its potentially dangerous consequences.

The plan is to introduce a bus lane on Hills Road in the outbound direction between Cavendish Avenue and Long Road, a length of about a third of a mile. Two alternatives are proposed. Both involve the removal of the existing dedicated cycle lanes and dividing the road into an outbound bus lane, and narrowed inbound and outbound traffic lanes. As a result, cyclists will be forced to ride either in the narrowed traffic lanes or share pavement cycleways with pedestrians. Given the number of cyclists using this route – over 1800 a day – the likelihood of congestion and conflict is high.

Jim Chisholm, who organised Cambridge Cycling Campaign's traffic count on the route, stated, "Over three quarters of cyclists are currently voting with their wheels and choosing to ride on the road in the cycle lanes rather than to use the pavement cycleway. The inconveniences associated with pavement cyclepaths, such as the lack of visibility at driveways and need to give way when crossing side roads, are particularly acute on this stretch of Hills Road. Many cyclists will continue to prefer to cycle on the road, even if the dedicated cycle facilities are removed, leading to increased frustration and conflict for cyclists and motorists alike." The impact of this kind of re-allocation of road space can be seen daily on Milton Road, where the creation of the inbound bus lane has left an extremely narrow outbound traffic lane, where motorists do not have room to overtake cyclists who choose to stay on the road. This results in exasperation, even aggression and intimidation.

Similarly, any significant increase in the number of cyclists on the cyclepath could lead to increased risk of incidents involving the many pedestrians on Hills Road, including those on

their way to Addenbrooke's or local schools. These concerns are shared by Living Streets (the Pedestrians Association). Spokesman Stephen Hills said, "There has been a welcome shift in policy recently towards provision of dedicated cycleways on the carriageway and the Hills Road proposals seem a retrograde step to the detriment of pedestrian safety."

Moreover, traffic surveys by the County Council and Cambridge Cycling Campaign have demonstrated that serious delays here are not typical, even during the peak time in school term, and the typical time that buses will save by using the proposed bus lane will be negligible. Jim Chisholm commented "It seems a very high price for cyclists, pedestrians, residents and motorists to pay, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, when the proposed bus lane is unlikely to improve the average time taken by buses to cover this stretch of Hills Road by much more than a minute. Alternative initiatives such as improvements to bus ticketing procedures, which could save minutes when loading buses for every trip, are much more likely to increase the attractiveness of public transport on this route."

Cambridge Cycling Campaign is urging those concerned about the proposed changes to contact their local City and County councillor, and to complete the Council's consultation form before the deadline of 2nd December. The form is available online at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/sub/eandt/highways/cambridge/hillsroad.

Further information can be found on the Cambridge Cycling Campaign's website, www.camcycle.org.uk/campaigning/issues/hillsroad.

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Notes for Editors

The Council's proposal

The County Council plans to introduce a bus lane on Hills Road in the outbound direction between Cavendish Avenue and Long Road. Two alternatives are proposed:

Option A would introduce a 4 m wide bus lane with narrow inbound and outbound traffic lanes. This would require road widening, generally at the expense of the grass verges. This would be similar to the arrangement in Trumpington Road.

Option B would provide a narrower bus lane, again with narrow traffic lanes. The result would be similar to the arrangement in Milton Road. The pavement on the outbound side would be widened slightly and resurfaced to create a 2 m wide path shared between cyclists and pedestrians.

Is it justified?

The County Council said in June this year (Papers for Cabinet, Agenda Item No.3, Paragraph 4.2) that "over a two-hour peak (minimum in term time)" in the afternoon/evening, "it can take between 10-15 minutes for buses to travel the half-mile leading up to the Long Road junction."

Following many hours of observation of buses and bikes on this stretch of Hills Road, Cambridge Cycling Campaign decided to time bus journeys in two evening rush hours early in November. Between 4:30pm and 6:00pm, the time that each bus passed points at the start and end of the proposed bus lane was recorded with synchronised clocks.

On the first day (Monday 4 November) the longest bus journey was 5 minutes 37 seconds. On the second day (Wednesday 6 November), the longest was 4 minutes 32 seconds. The average bus journey time during this peak period was only 2 minutes 26 seconds. Out of a total of 68 outbound buses, only 5 took more than 5 minutes, and none took more than 6 minutes. The full timings are available on the Cambridge Cycling Campaign website.

The survey revealed a more significant problem which the proposed bus lane will not alleviate at all, that of 'bus bunching'. The times between successive buses on two services, C1 and 99 were noted. Both of these are supposed to run every 10 minutes at this time of day.

Gaps between arrival times of outbound C1 (Arbury to Fulbourn) buses at Cavendish Avenue:

Date	Gaps between successive buses on the C1 service, between 4:30pm and 6pm (minutes:seconds)
Monday 4 November	0:40, 25:26, 1:44, 1:56, 15:09, 1:33, 15:45, 0:40
Wednesday 6 November	7:52, 3:34, 15:38, 39:50, 0:24, 0:04, 32:37, 2:21

In other words, on the Monday, two C1 buses arrived 40 seconds apart, and then there wasn't another one for over 25 minutes. On the Wednesday, there wasn't a C1 bus for nearly 40 minutes, and then three of them arrived in under a minute. In fact, these three buses chased each other: whilst one was stopped picking up passengers, one of the other two would catch up and overtake, and then wait at the next stop picking up passengers. The third bus was almost empty.

Gaps between arrival times of outbound 99 (Park & Ride) buses at Cavendish Avenue:

Date	Gaps between successive buses on the 99 service, between 4:30pm and 6pm (minutes:seconds)
Monday 4 November	12:55, 5:27, 4:29, 13:22, 9:57, 7:30, 8:22 (with no 99 between 17:33:28 and 6 pm, when the survey stopped)
Wednesday 6 November	9:44, 15:12, 4:30, 10:28, 7:25, 21:12, 18:58, 8:07

There are ways of tackling this issue. Buying bus tickets from on-street machines before boarding as passengers do on the Continent would help. If more people were able to pay for tickets in advance, the first bus would spend less time at a bus stop loading passengers, thereby reducing the delay to the first bus, in turn reducing the amount by which the bus behind would catch up. Cambridge Cycling Campaign are not alone in saying this. An independent report on bus provision in Cambridge (Steer Davies Gleave, December 2001) says: "Improved Ticketing Procedures: the most significant short/medium term measure to reduce vehicle dwell times in the hub." Better control of departure times from Drummer Street might also help.

There are many other measures which should also be taken to speed up buses on this route, such as yellow cross-hatching on the road surface at the Long Road / Hills Road junction, at places on the Addenbrooke's roundabout and at the junction with Worts' Causeway.

The impact of the proposal on cyclists

On Thursday 7 November, Cambridge Cycling Campaign volunteers counted bikes on Hills Road from 7am to 7pm using a mechanical counter.

	On the pavement cycle path (both inbound and outbound)	On the road cycle lanes (both inbound and outbound)
Total	431	1375

Over 75% of these cyclists were on the road, with the remainder were on the existing pavement cycleway. If the council's proposals go ahead, many of these cyclists will feel compelled to use the cycleway. This will mean many faster cyclists on the pavement, more congestion and conflict with pedestrians and the loss of priority at side-roads.

Those cyclists who choose to stay on the road will suffer the same kinds of problems already happening on Milton Road. Paul Oldham, chairman of Milton Parish Council, said, "Milton Road is the place in the city where I've had more abuse from drivers while cycling than anywhere else both going out of Cambridge in the road (verbal abuse from drivers) and into Cambridge in the bus/cycle lane (tooted at by taxis, bus driving inches from my mudguard). As a result I now avoid using Milton Road on my bike. I can't think that was what the County Council intended."

For further information on the issues raised above, contact Jim Chisholm, Cambridge Cycling Campaign, on (01223) 690718 or via contact@camcycle.org.uk