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Our ref: C00021

Your ref:

Mr Mike Grant
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Dear Mr Grant

Cycle Provision in the New Rail Franchises for the Cambridge Area

Now that the process of issuing new franchises for Train Operating Companies has begun, we are writing as an active group representing nearly 700 cyclists in the Cambridge area with requests about cycle provision on trains and at stations under the new franchises.

Our requests relate specifically to new franchises for Train Operating Companies whose trains use or will use Cambridge station – West Anglia Great Northern Railway, Central Trains, Anglia Railways and, in future, Thameslink Rail. But because this area has the greatest level of cycle usage in the UK and members of our organisation have particularly extensive experience of using cycle facilities on trains and at stations, we consider that our suggestions for cycle provision could provide a useful model for provision in the rest of the country.

All the major political parties are agreed that cycling should be encouraged and that provision for cycling and for cyclists needs to be improved. The recent government policy statement *Transport 2010: The 10 Year Plan* sets a target of trebling the number of cycling journeys from their 2000 level by 2010. The new rail franchises provide a major opportunity for helping to achieve this target.

We will present our proposals under the following headings:

- (1) Provision for bicycles on trains
- (2) Cycle provision at Cambridge station
- (3) Cycle provision at other stations
- (4) Cycle access to stations

(1) Provision for Bicycles on Trains in this Area

The need to provide space without booking at all times of day for four cycles per carriage (i.e. 16 cycles on 4-carriage trains, 32 cycles on 8-carriage trains, etc.) both in existing and new rolling stock.

One of the greatest obstacles to the carriage of bicycles on trains is the fact that trains are frequently very overcrowded, to the point of offering standing room only. **This problem of insufficient capacity needs to be urgently addressed** as it affects all passengers and makes train journeys unpleasant and less desirable than other forms of transport. It is especially difficult for disabled people and people with pushchairs, heavy luggage or cycles. **More trains and more carriages per train** must be put into service to accommodate present and future passenger numbers in the Cambridge area.

We believe that the **franchises should require that bicycles be carried freely at all times without prior booking** in exactly the same way that passengers, wheelchairs, pushchairs, luggage, etc. are carried at all times without any necessity to book in advance. However, we believe that the franchises should make **additional provision for some bookable cycle spaces** for a small fee on long-distance trains in a way that is directly comparable to the procedure for booking passenger seats on such trains.

We ask that the new franchises for Train Operating Companies in the Cambridge area should specify a **minimum provision of space for four cycles per carriage** (or the equivalent of four cycles per carriage if provision is concentrated in some particular area of the train). That is to say a four-carriage train would have provision for sixteen cycles, an eight-carriage train would have provision for 32 and so on. This number is not high when seen in the context of recent surveys carried out by WAGN and by ourselves where more than 20 cycles were counted on some four-carriage trains at peak times. The scale of cycle usage in Cambridge is well illustrated by the new Railtrack plans for Cambridge station which make provision for over a thousand cycle parking spaces. The proposed provision for at least four cycles per carriage should apply to all trains including those at peak times. Cycling is not to be treated as a mere leisure activity for which off-peak provision is sufficient. It is, for many of us, essential for travelling to work at peak times.

The Cambridge area has a large number of dispersed hi-tech research companies, with young, highly qualified staff, many of whom have no aspirations to car ownership, but work flexible hours. A two or three mile bike ride at either end of a rail trip is often the only viable travel choice, resulting in **high levels of demand for cycle carriage on all trains within commuting distance of Cambridge.**

It should, we believe, be the responsibility of Train Operating Companies to decide how to provide the minimum of four spaces per carriage. But we do have some observations to make about such provision. **Dispersal of provision along the train may be preferable** because it does improve loading and unloading times and allows cyclists to remain with their cycles. A preferred option is to have **an area of flexible space sufficient to accommodate four bicycles in each carriage** in which a number of individually-hinged fold-down (not fold-up) seats are mounted along the sides of the carriage. A notice should say that this place is normally for wheelchairs, heavy luggage, pushchairs and bicycles and that the seats should only be used when all other seats are occupied. In this way there would be no overall reduction in seating except when wheelchairs, heavy luggage, pushchairs or bicycles are actually present.

Another option would be to use the vestibules inside sliding doors provided that this can be done safely at a time of rising safety expectations. If the vestibules were to be widened slightly (to 1.8 metres) and up to two cycles were to be carried in each offside, unused doorway, the stipulation of provision for four cycles per carriage would be met. However, it

would be desirable to specify in the franchises that at all stations other than termini, trains should always use platforms on the nearside. In our area Stevenage is a particular problem in this respect.

Our proposals relate both to existing and to new rolling stock. We ask that the **new franchise agreements should require urgent interior redesign of existing rolling stock as well as appropriate design for new rolling stock.**

(2) Cycle Provision at Cambridge Station

The need for a cycle centre, covered and secure staffed cycle parking and sufficient numbers of Sheffield stands. Space must be allocated for expansion of cycle parking.

We believe that there should be a **large cycle centre at Cambridge station**. This would include **cycle parking, cycle hire, cycle repair and sale of spare parts**. There are many such facilities in continental Europe. The cycle parking would be staffed, enclosed, well-lit and covered and paid for by a modestly-priced season ticket. Such provision would be additional to normal free cycle parking with Sheffield stands. If such enclosed cycle parking is not provided, secure cycle lockers should be provided instead. Lockers are, we believe, a better option than the present special "Premier Parking" bicycle stands at Cambridge station which provide no protection against vandalism and no storage space for helmet, lights, etc.

The recently publicised Railtrack plans for the development of Cambridge station and adjacent areas do offer welcome improvements for cycle parking but, in our opinion, they do not go far enough and do not offer sufficient space for future expansion. The plans would increase the total number of cycle parking spaces from the present 675 to 1050. We believe that the number of **cycle spaces should be increased to at least 1400 and preferably to 1700**. If, as seems probable, a levy on car parking spaces is introduced in Cambridge, cycle usage may be expected to increase substantially. If the government target to treble cycle journeys by the year 2010 is to be achieved, there must be space to treble cycle parking by that date. **Additional space will be needed to increase it even more beyond that date.**

All cycle parking needs to be **actively managed with up-to-date CCTV monitoring to limit theft and vandalism and with active culling of abandoned cycles.**

To stress the community benefits of cycling and the disbenefits of motoring, **cycle parking should continue to be closer to the station entrance than car parking.**

(3) Cycle Provision at Other Stations

The need for secure cycle parking, including cycle lockers, at all other stations and the need for easily accessible platforms.

Cycle provision at each station should be based on local needs. There should be a clear **duty to hold public meetings and to consult interested parties, especially disability, pedestrian and cycling groups**, when planning station modifications.

The main cycle priority at stations in the Cambridge area is for good, sufficient and secure cycle parking using cycle lockers and Sheffield stands. There should be an **adequate number of cycle lockers** available for a small fee to regular commuters who wish to keep their cycles and gear safe in high-risk areas. To deter theft and vandalism, the **Sheffield stands provided should be in an area of high visibility**, ideally on station platforms, and covered by up-to-date CCTV.

All platforms need to be easily accessible without having to use stairs. People with wheelchairs, pushchairs, wheeled luggage or cycles all need ramped bridges, underpasses or lifts.

(4) Cycle Access to Stations

The need for safe and convenient access to Cambridge and other stations for cyclists and pedestrians and for better access than is proposed in the current Railtrack planning application for Cambridge station.

Station authorities should **work with local authorities to provide safer and more convenient access to stations for cyclists and pedestrians**. Local cycle groups such as ours as well as national groups such as Sustrans should be actively involved. Individually designed solutions are needed for every station in this area.

In the newly publicised Railtrack plans for Cambridge station we welcome the proposed new bus and cycle access road from Hills Road bridge and the improved access from Devonshire Road. We are very critical of the **failure to provide for a new ramped access to the Carter pedestrian and cycle bridge**. We think that such an access should be a major feature of the development of the station area and that it should be highlighted with an imposing entrance. It would be valuable not just for pedestrians and cyclists but particularly for wheelchair users and those encumbered with pushchairs or wheeled luggage. We would also like to see clearer **safeguards in the station plans for the Chisholm Trail**, a long-planned cross-Cambridge pedestrian and cycle route alongside the railway which passes in front of the station.

Railtrack and others are spending many millions of pounds to reduce train journey times by relatively small amounts. Spending **much smaller amounts of money to provide more convenient cycle and pedestrian access to stations can shorten total journey times much more cost-effectively**.

Conclusion

We call on the Shadow Strategic Rail Authority to ensure that the new rail franchises for the Cambridge area require that Train Operating Companies provide properly for the already high level of cycle usage in the area and for the government target to treble cycle journeys by the year 2010

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign,

Clare Macrae