Cambridgeshire & Peterborough
Bus Strategy consultation guide

The Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) is asking regional residents to share their views on its bus strategy. Its vision is for a "comprehensive network of bus services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough that people find convenient, easy to use, reliable and good value for money, that is inclusive and offers a viable alternative to the car."

The Authority aims to more than double bus passenger journeys compared to 2019 levels, to around 60-75 million. Its strategy document does not contain details on specific bus routes or services but instead sets out the "strategic aims, objectives, and aspirations of the Combined Authority [which will enable it] to bid for further funding and shape the network to meet the needs of the people of the region". 80% of those that responded to the CPCA's survey on buses wanted to see improvements (both bus users and non-bus users) and the CPCA believes better public transport will be essential to support the region's other goals, for example tackling climate change, reducing inequality and delivering sustainable growth.

We encourage you to have your say. **Share your views before the consultation closes on Friday 24 February at tinyurl.com/CP-buses**

The following recommendations and comments may help you with your response.

Section one (page 1 & 2)

These sections of the survey require personal answers as they ask about age, location and how often you use a bus.

Section two (page 3): bus strategy vision

5. How much do you agree with the Vision of the Bus Strategy? Vision See page 9 of the [bus strategy document here](#).

Our suggested response: AGREE

Our reasoning:
We cannot recommend a 'Strongly Agree' response as the vision does not encompass everything we would expect to see in a comprehensive bus strategy.

CSTA comments:
This strategy should be more ambitious.

Doubling bus passengers by 2030 sounds unambitious given the recent cuts, the impacts of the pandemic and the reduction of car miles required by that date (15%).

In order for this vision to be achievable the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority will need to bring buses back under public control. This should be explicitly explained in the vision.

"Transitioning to new, low emission vehicles, providing all the benefits of modern bus travel" sounds weak compared to the strategies in other cities. For comparison, the vision for the West Midlands says: *"A world-class integrated, reliable, zero emission transport system providing inclusive travel for all"*. Cambridgeshire's bus strategy should be at least as good as other places.

The strategy also fails to adequately integrate with other local travel strategies.

This vision should include everything listed as well as:

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- There must be safe, speedy and accessible pedestrian movement between bus stops and between buses and other transport modes e.g. trains. All stops should be connected to a footway, suitable for use by passengers using wheelchairs or other mobility aids;
- All stops should display real-time timetable and key fare information and a location-named bus stop flag with the phrase 'Towards [key destination(s)]'.
- Wherever possible a shelter, with seating and lighting should be provided.
- Key edge-of-town and edge-of-village locations should be developed as 'travel hubs' with secure cycle-parking and interchange facilities with demand-responsive transport.
- Reliable bus services that users can trust are required.
- Buses must be fully accessible for all kinds of disabilities and be able to accommodate multiple wheelchairs.

In addition the aspiration of "Buses are part of a fully integrated and planned transport system" should explicitly mention cycling and walking including safe routes to bus stops and secure, accessible cycle parking.

6. How much do you agree with the Aims of the Bus Strategy? See page 10 of the [bus strategy document here](#).

Our suggested response: STRONGLY AGREE

Our reasoning:
We strongly agree, however we think these aims are vague and very open to interpretation. There is no clarity about how success will be measured which is vital if service providers are to be held to account.

CSTA comments:
Convenient:
The document refers to a table about frequency which is not present in the document. Without this included we cannot express support for any

frequency. 'Frequent' will inevitably mean different things on different services.

There needs to be a rationale for 'range of tickets'. Having a 'range' should not be prioritised over simple ticketing that can be easily understood by all users.

There must be a clear definition of 'evening'. It is essential that buses are available for hospitality and shift workers. Service hours must be specifically stated.

Rural routes should meet or exceed the aspirations of the Campaign to Protect Rural England's 'Every village, every hour' campaign.

There should be a commitment to 'no stranded passengers' including avoiding overlong journeys owing to delays and missed connections.

The strategy states that *"all areas are well served by bus"*. Once again, this is a vague aim that is open to interpretation. a clear definition of "well served" must be provided.

Attractive:
The aims the CPCA has stated here are by and large sensible. The CSTA believes the core elements for an attractive bus service are:
- Reliable, times and places
- Staff are customer-focussed
- Buses are of a good and comfortable standard

When these standards are met the CPCA will have the opportunity for authentic marketing of buses as an attractive travel choice.

Easy:
The strategy should view the concept of 'easy' from the perspective of a visitor to Cambridgeshire with no prior experience of our bus service. Would a visitor find it easy to find out how to use our buses, where and when our buses travel and how ticketing works?

The point *"Buses run at regular time intervals and with consistent frequencies."* is crucial - people must be able to rely on the bus departing and arriving on time (with real time information if things go wrong).

The point "*Ability for people to transfer between bus and other travel*

modes (walk, cycle, e-scooter, car, coach, train)" should elaborate on what the transfer experience should be like. For example - transfer safely, easily and affordably. It should also elaborate on the impact that ticketing systems will have on transfers. There should be shared ticketing so that new tickets are not required when transferring across operators and transport modes.

This section should also include the aim of simplicity. Passengers should be certain that they have the best/most suitable ticket and route without complex comparison of options.

7. How much do you agree with the four main principles of delivering the Bus Strategy? See pages 11-12 of the [bus strategy document here](#).

Our suggested response: AGREE

Our reasoning:
We agree with the direction of the principles for delivery however once again they are too vague to ensure accountability. It must be clear that successful delivery will require franchising and road space reallocation.

(Franchising – requiring operators to bid to run bus routes – offers the best way of re-regulating buses, gives the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority power to set fares and timetables, and will also permit profitable routes to cross-subsidise routes which cannot cover costs from farebox revenue.)

CSTA comments:
Achieving a continuous cycle of passenger growth and service improvement
Growth in passenger numbers/journey numbers is essential to maintain the income to sustain the bus service.

The strategy should explicitly state that bus priority measures are about prioritising buses over other motor vehicles so that there is road

space for buses to flow. Investing in buses that will be constantly stuck in traffic will be pointless.

Bus prioritisation strategies must be in line with the Road User Hierachy (which prioritises active travel and public transport over private motor cars) and must be considered with other transport strategies like the Sustainable Travel Zone. Bus priority must not be at the expense of active travel.

Using the best operational model of provision to achieve the necessary step change in the most effective way
This principle should be rewritten in language that is meaningful to bus users and free of corporate jargon.

This strategy must be clear about how bus driver recruitment and retention will be improved. There should be more information about better conditions, pay, career progression and flexible working hours for bus drivers.

The operational model must also consider partnership and on this issue the CSTA strongly recommends franchising.

Partnership
For bus services to be sustainable and this vision achievable there must be increases in passenger numbers. The strategy must be clear about how it will be delivered: CSTA's view is that franchising will be required.

Integration
This principle must elaborate on improvements being made possible by integration with other transport strategies (e.g. Cambridge City Access). Buses can't run at regular time intervals with consistent frequencies unless priority measures allow them to avoid traffic jams.

8. How would you prioritise our strategies (see page 13 of the [bus strategy document here](#))? Please drag and drop the strategies into your preferred priority order, starting with your top priority first, or number them from 1 to 7 using the dropdown boxes, with number 1 being your top priority.

Our recommended answer:

All of the above strategies are vital in persuading people to switch travel modes and 'trust the bus'. Is it appropriate to rank them when all the aspects are needed to work/balance with each other? All are required for a satisfactory bus experience and growth in bus journeys. However, given the need to rank, this is the order we would suggest:

1. Information and getting the message out
2. Bus services for rural areas
3. Value for money and simple, integrated ticketing
4. An integrated coherent network linking people to the places they want to get to
5. Getting to places quickly and on time
6. Bus services that people want to get on
7. Delighting customers

CSTA comments:
1. Bus information (fares, timetables, places served and stop locations) is currently very poor. This will be a quick, easy and cheap improvement.
2. People unable to drive, or otherwise without a car, in rural areas are cut off from employment, educational, cultural and social opportunities.
3. There is, currently, a confusing range of tickets, mainly valid only on one operator's services, and queries to the driver about 'best value' delay boarding and lengthen journey times. They also discourage bus travel.
4. Operator maps must show other operators' services. There should be clear journey planning information with multi-operator ticketing and recognised interchange points.

5. Getting to places quickly and on time seems dependent upon the points above.
6. 'Bus services that people want to get on' are dependent upon the factors above..
7. 'Delighting customers' is an outcome if all the strategies above are effective.

9. Do you [have] any further comments on the Bus Strategy?

CSTA comments:

The strategy document and the consultation survey are poor quality with missing information and mismatched text between the strategy and survey. The survey fails to be accessible to many people, with the Bus Strategy Document having poor compatibility, in places, with screen-readers used by people with limited vision. The survey is, thereby, at a risk of not considering all user experiences when further developing the Combined Authority's strategy.

There are no references in the Bus Strategy document to 'disabled/disability', 'hearing loss', 'deaf', 'visual disability', 'sight loss', 'blind', 'reduced mobility' or 'mobility aids' nor other coginitive impairments. This suggests that the needs of a huge swathe of potential bus users have been disregarded. Design for all should make the service easy to understand for everyone.

The strategy is disappointing in its lack of vision and of specific aims and strategy for ensuring that bus services are fully accessible to people living with disabilities. There must be a clear strategy about accessibility.

The strategy must be explicit about pursuing bus franchising as the crucial step to improving bus services. (See the Cambridge Area Bus Users explainer: Bus Franchising, Quality Partnerships, and other ways of Improving bus services.)

The strategy must go beyond the bus stop and include access to the bus stop by connecting with wider strategies for pavements, pedestrian networks, cycling infrastructure and cycle parking.

While well-used buses running on fossil fuels are still better than private cars, there must still be a strategy to move to zero emissions which seems to be missing from this document.