



Briefing paper: Next steps for a Sustainable Travel Zone in Cambridge

Thursday 31 May, 2023

"The opponents are always very loud. But the people who are in favour of such a plan, they are mostly silent, they support you, but you don't hear them. And if you are in politics, you should have a policy for your city. It should be a policy for the people of the city. Not for the cars."

Filip Watteuw, Deputy Mayor of Ghent and architect of the city's successful traffic reduction plan which led to a 40% reduction in car traffic, 25% increase in cyclists and 18% reduction in air pollution in the first year.

1. People want the Sustainable Travel Zone plans to be BETTER

There is strong support for active travel, including from those who oppose a road charge. Walking, cycling and wheeling should be placed at the heart of any plans for better transport and we need urgent action on improvements.

Respondents to the *Making Connections* consultation showed strong support for active travel improvements, such as improved cycleways and footways and secure cycle parking.

- The list of sustainable travel proposals were supported or strongly supported by an average of 75% of respondents (Figure 8-1). There was a low level of opposition to them.
- When asked what additional measures they would most like to see funded, the most common comment received was to improve cycling infrastructure.
- As noted in point 3.12 of the agenda papers, many people have reminded the GCP that the *Making Connections* package must not be allowed to become solely about the bus network.

Camcycle reiterates the points made in our consultation response which was guided by our more than 1,650 members.

1.1. A package of active travel works must be brought forward prior to the implementation of a Sustainable Travel Zone charge.

This should consist of quick wins for walking, cycling and wheeling such as improvements to road and path surfacing and maintenance (which would benefit all road users, including drivers); the installation of dropped kerbs; crossings that prioritise people walking, cycling and wheeling; the removal of exclusionary barriers (replacing with bollards where appropriate); the rollout of School Streets, and the installation of secure cycle parking near homes, workplaces, shops, education, healthcare and leisure destinations.

1.2. The road classification and resident parking scheme should be urgently progressed.

The new road hierarchy for Cambridge is important to ensure that space within the city is prioritised for safe walking and cycling routes, reliable bus journeys and improved public realm. It is an essential

part of delivering high-quality alternative options to driving and measures such as modal filters and bus gates must be in place before the Sustainable Travel Zone where possible or shortly after once spare capacity has been created. The road classification & residents parking scheme must be urgently progressed and improved to help create the people-focused streets that will change and embed new travel behaviours and create a more pleasant and sustainable city for everyone.

1.3. 20% of revenue from the Sustainable Travel Zone charge should be ringfenced for walking, cycling and wheeling.

The proposed business case delayed funding for active travel in the initial years of operation. This is not acceptable: to enable people to walk, cycle or wheel for more journeys, the active travel network requires a significant amount of initial and continued investment. Improvements are needed not just within the Cambridge travel-to-work zone, but across the whole county. The GCP should consider rebalancing its transport investments from a small number of expensive projects to a broader programme of active travel and bus changes that could be implemented more quickly, delivering faster benefits.

2. People want the Sustainable Travel Zone plans to be FAIRER

Motor traffic reduction and a reliable source of consistent funding are essential for better active travel in our region. To gain public support for a scheme that works, the plan must be amended to address the equity concerns raised in the consultation.

The majority of responses across the consultation survey, the opinion polling, stakeholder responses and targeted meetings showed there was strong support for improving the bus network across Greater Cambridge. However there were a number of concerns raised by respondents regarding the Sustainable Travel Zone.

2.1. Maintain the size of the zone, but introduce exemptions for Addenbrooke's

We agree with the GCP that it would be challenging to define the boundary of a smaller zone and that the reduced number of journeys included in it would significantly affect the funding and roadspace gained for sustainable transport. To do this while retaining the desired outcomes would require additional measures such as a system of traffic filters (as planned for Oxford) or a citywide Workplace Parking Levy (as in Nottingham).

We support the principle of excluding Addenbrooke's, but believe further options of how this is deliverable must be explored. For example, a Workplace Parking Levy for the Biomedical Campus could be a good proposal to capture the vehicular impact of businesses in this area without affecting Addenbrooke's. This could also only promote vehicular access via Addenbrooke's Road to reduce the impact on local people and active travel routes in the communities around the Biomedical Campus. Residents driving to the hospital and using the Long Road and Hills Road entrances could benefit from a limited number of free passes a week (see point 2.2).

2.2. Introduce a system of free passes for both residents and non-residents, but extend the scheme to the weekends

In the existing proposals, the weekend exemption would create significant pressures on the road network and affect the reliability of buses and the safety and attractiveness of active travel. We believe that the two-day exemption of Saturday and Sunday should be transferred to a system of free-day passes that could be used to allow people to make a few critical journeys per week on days and times to suit their needs. An example scheme could see Cambridge residents receiving 2 passes per week and residents of the wider travel zone receiving 1 free pass per week.

2.3. Consider adjusting the charge (or exemptions) throughout the day

Reducing the charge duration (e.g. by limiting the STZ charge to peak time only) reduces the revenue available to fund bus services and build active travel infrastructure. It may encourage more people to travel to work later, increasing peak congestion in the evening. It only deals with congestion during the time the zone is active, potentially increasing congestion at other times.

However, we would support a proposal to taper the cost throughout the day, This would still significantly reduce congestion and provide funding as well as, allowing for faster running buses during these hours and more space for walking, cycling and wheeling, whilst reflecting that as the remaining chargeable time decreases, so does the price. For example: £5 charge 7am-12pm; £4 charge 12pm-5pm; £3 charge from 5pm-7pm. In addition, some free passes or exemptions could be limited to off-peak hours (such as after 11am and weekends).

2.4. Deliver a clear system of exemptions for those in most need

We strongly support the recommended blue badge exemptions and system of discounts including for those on low incomes. 64% of our members want to see further discounts for people with disabilities. We also agree that consideration should be given to ways to reduce the burden on small businesses and carers.

We do not believe that electric vehicles should be exempt from the charge, as they have many additional impacts, contributing to road danger, particulate pollution, damage to road surfaces and congestion. Furthermore, a charge reduction would benefit only those on higher incomes who are able to buy electric vehicles, and lead to a loss of future revenue as EV take-up increases.

Detailed information should be provided on exemptions and how they will operate. The system should build on existing support and exemption schemes, and be able to operate, in the most part, autonomously, reducing the time that people have to spend on using the system.

2.5. Review additional means of funding

Restricting parking is an alternative way both to reduce motor vehicle journeys and raise revenue for sustainable transport. Camcycle would support a Workplace Parking Levy either just applied to the Biomedical Campus (see 2.1) or across a wider area. This would not need to be limited to the city, but could be expanded to other major employment areas which contribute significantly to congestion such as the Genome Campus, Cambridge Research Park and Granta Park. We would also support a tourist tax, although the income from this would be relatively small and it could be argued that the revenue should be spent to cover other tourist related costs.