
To: Greater Cambridge Partnership
Subject: Cycling Plus: Investing in Greater Cambridge's Active Travel Network
Date: 16 August 2021
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Response to Cycling Plus consultation

About Smarter Cambridge Transport

Smarter Cambridge Transport is a volunteer-run think tank and campaign group. It was formed in 2015 to advance sustainable, integrated and equitable transport for the Cambridge region. It is run by a team of around 30 people, with a wide range of expertise and interests, and led by Edward Leigh, a qualified transport economist. Its website is at www.smartertransport.uk.

Executive Summary

This is a poor-quality consultation, purporting to be about “active travel” when, in fact, it is about prioritising some disjointed and ill-thought-through cycling improvement schemes in and around Cambridge. Confusingly, these overlap with several of the county council’s [Cambridgeshire Active Travel Schemes](#) without any cross-reference or explanation.

The funding available will cover just two of the thirteen short-listed schemes, which still omit key routes, including east of Barton Rd and Burrell’s Walk. Rather than attempting to resolve conflicts in the city centre between pedestrians, cycles, buses, taxis and private vehicles, the report proposes making most, but not all, of the inner ring road attractive for cycling. This has huge ramifications for city traffic, bus services and the level of investment required. As a strategy, it needs to be thoroughly tested before it is adopted by default.

The lack of an overarching strategy is yet again evident here. We continue to see proposals to narrow pavements and designate more pavements and footpaths as ‘shared use’ to avoid reducing capacity for motor traffic. The latter outcome is still referred to as a “risk”, even though it is a [stated and agreed objective](#) of the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

The very limited range of organisations involved pre-consultation, primarily representing large employers, have skewed the recommendations. Consultation with residents, schools and other groups would have identified many of the shortcomings we have identified. The lack of consideration for the needs of disabled people and parents of babies and infants is especially concerning.

Comments

The following points relate to the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) [Future Investment Strategy: Active Travel Opportunities](#) report, on which the [Cycling Plus](#) consultation is based.

Cycling, not active travel

- The report is mistitled: it is exclusively about improving provision for cycling, not active travel, which includes walking, running, using a wheelchair, and riding a mobility- or e-scooter. In fact, in several places, it proposes *reducing* the quality of provision for walking.
- There are multiple references to “taking space from footway”. No data is provided to show that the remaining width would be appropriate to the long-term future demand. Government and GCP policies to promote active travel will lead to an increase in people walking (as well as cycling and e-scootering), so current data on pedestrian flows (where even available) are not a good guide to future demand.
- There are multiple references to “shared use footway”, acknowledging that this will “provide a lower level of service for cyclists”, but failing to acknowledge that shared-use pavements and paths provide a *much* poorer experience for people walking, exposing them to greater danger and stress. At best, shared-use is an interim solution for a low-traffic route. It should not form part of a long-term strategy to promote active travel.

Lack of overarching, holistic strategy

- The status of this report is *de facto* strategic, in that it was adopted by implication at the March executive board meeting, and contains the recommendation, “this work should be used as an ongoing reference and be reflected on should additional funding opportunities present themselves.” Yet it is not set within a strategic framework for how space (and traffic signal times) should be allocated between pedestrians, cycles, buses, taxis and private vehicles.
- The report contains an implied strategy of encouraging more people to cycle around the inner ring road, rather than through the city centre (on pages 15 and 18):

“... helping to contribute to an outer [inner] ring road of better quality cycle provision around the City Centre, thus potentially avoiding the need for cyclist [sic] to travel through the City Centre.”

This would have wide repercussions for all modes of traffic: significantly reduced capacity for motor vehicles on a critical route, potentially increased delays for buses, and huge costs and disruption entailed in redesigning large and busy junctions to provide protected routes for cycles. It therefore needs to be tested thoroughly before it is adopted as a strategy.

- The identified “risks” relating to road capacity highlight the lack of a strategy on capacity reduction. A target has already been agreed (10–15% reduction on 2011 levels), but there is still no plan for whether or how that reduction in traffic will translate into reduced

capacity. What steps will enable and trigger a reduction in capacity (e.g. provision of new active travel routes, bus services or delivery distribution depots)?

- The risk identified for Queen’s Rd, “potentially difficult to remove coach parking,” highlights the lack of a strategy for managing tourist coaches or, indeed, for supporting sustainable tourism in general.
- A strategy is needed to remove conflicts between buses and people walking and cycling, and to cater to a large growth in the number of buses travelling into the city as part of efforts by GCP and the Combined Authority to promote travel by bus. This report contains almost no reference to the conflicts on Silver St, Trumpington St, Pembroke/Downing St, St Andrew’s/Regent St, Emmanuel St, Parker St, Park Terrace, Hobson St, King St, Jesus Lane Bridge/Magdalone St, Round Church St and Park St.
- A strategy is required to reduce or remove conflicts between cycles and pedestrians on narrow and busy streets in the city centre, whilst also catering to a large growth in the number of people walking and cycling in the city. This report contains no reference to the conflicts on Garret Hostel Ln, Trinity Ln, Senate House Passage, St Mary’s St, Market St, Sidney St, St John’s St and Trinity St.

Inconsistency with stated objectives

- A “risk” identified for the Gonville Place intervention states, “high traffic impact, which may be unacceptable to traffic modellers”. Why would traffic modellers have a veto? Their role is to test if a scenario is likely to meet a desired outcome. What is the desired outcome?
- There are multiple references to “loss in traffic capacity” and “impact on traffic capacity” as a risk. The GCP has an agreed objective of reducing traffic in the city, by 25–30% on 2019 levels. Therefore, capacity reduction is not a risk. The only risk is that the intervention is not co-ordinated with other measures to ensure that demand to travel can be met satisfactorily in other ways (i.e. some combination of active travel, public transport, ride-sharing, remote-working, home-delivery, etc.)
- Possibly having to install traffic signals at the Butt Lane/High St junction in Milton is classed as a “risk”. How can be this be a risk when its purpose would be to enhance safety?
- De-scoping of some junctions, e.g. Chesterton Road–Elizabeth Way roundabout and Mitcham’s Corner gyratory, is accompanied by a note that it “may present a gap in the network for cyclists wishing to use this route”. The doubt implied by the word “may” is wrong; it should be “would”. The critical Addenbrooke’s Hospital roundabout has been de-scoped because it “would be very expensive and complex.” There is no justification for de-scoping elements of the network at this stage, before a cost–benefit analysis has been performed.
- Some other junctions have been de-scoped because they are being reviewed separately, e.g. Newmarket Rd–East Rd and Coldham’s Lane–Barnwell Rd roundabouts. The latter is inaccurately described as already having funding: the allocation by the Combined Authority

was deemed insufficient to proceed with the scheme. If these projects are not delivered, or delivered to a sub-standard design, they will leave critical weak links in the active travel network.

Incomplete analysis

- There is not one mention in the entire report of the needs of disabled people, users of wheelchairs or mobility scooters, or people conveying babies in prams or young children in pushchairs. Their needs argue for wider pavements and footpaths, less sharing with cycles and e-scooters, more controlled and priority crossing, and more benches. No such enhancements are proposed; quite the reverse: many of the proposals are for narrower pavements and more shared-use paths.
- There are multiple references to use of grass verges to widen the carriageway to accommodate raised cycle lanes, perhaps most controversially along Queen's Road. Grass verges are an important feature in the urban realm: they visually enhancing the cityscape; provide a psychologically calming effect; slow rainwater run-off; lock up carbon dioxide in the soil; and reducing the urban heat-island effect. Their removal should not be recommended without an appreciation of the environmental and heritage impacts. If there is a clear net benefit in removal of a grass verge, and no alternative is viable, even after reducing the carriageway width, then new green space should be created or significantly enhanced elsewhere, ideally close by.
- Major trip destinations appear not to have been considered:
 - Further education colleges (Hills Rd, Long Rd, Parkside, Queen Edith's Way, Kings Hedges, Milton, Impington, Comberton, Cottenham)
 - ARU campus (East Road/Mill Road)
 - Supermarkets and retail parks (e.g. Newmarket Road and Coldham's Lane)
- On page 3, the report states, "Following engagement with key business organisations and locations," What "locations" and, more specifically, who?
- How are the businesses engaged with (listed below), and invited to participate in two workshops, representative of all the people who may cycle in the city? What about representation from residents, residents' associations, schools, small businesses, retailers, bus operators, Camcycle, Living Streets, Cambridge Area Bus Users, Cam Sight, Milton Cycling Campaign, et al?
 - Cambridge Science Park,
 - Addenbrooke's NHS Trust
 - University of Cambridge
 - Cambridge Ahead
 - Cambridgeshire County Council
 - Greater Cambridge Partnership.

Inadequate funding

- The report concludes that just four roads, Mowbray Rd, Perne Rd, Long Rd and Queen Edith's Way, should be prioritised. This is all that the £20 million the GCP has allocated to active travel, out of the £75 million Future Investment Strategy funding for "public transport improvements and sustainable travel", will pay for. Even that is uncertain, given the costs are only estimates.
- The two recommended schemes, out of a shortlist of thirteen, are connected to just three of the greenways (Sawston, Trumpington and Linton). Three greenways (Haslingfield, Comberton and Hardwick) will still lack an unconflicted, direct route to the city centre, railway stations and the Biomedical Campus. Only the Fulbourn greenway will have a relatively unconflicted and direct route to all three of those destinations.
- The funding allocated was intended to fill gaps in the cycle network that will otherwise undermine investment in the greenways and cross-city cycling schemes. This is an extract from the Executive Board report on Future Investment Strategy, 10 December 2020 (our emphasis added):

*5.6 Firstly, recognising the opportunity to encourage active travel and build on the emergency measures and existing GCP spend commitments, it is proposed that an allocation is made to enable targeted investment in gaps in the cycling network. Planned investments through the GCP programme, as well as by partners, will significantly improve the cycling network across Greater Cambridge. The Greenways will provide a step-change in provision outside the city, and the Chisolm Trail and Cross City cycling projects will provide much needed connections. However, **there will still be gaps in the network that could discourage people from cycling and taking advantage of the new infrastructure.** In order to maximise the potential for use of new active travel routes and leave a strong active travel network as a City Deal legacy, it is suggested that an additional allocation is made to address gaps. Initial analysis suggests that there would be a range of potential schemes that could be taken forward, and further work would be needed to refine the final list of projects.*

- The estimated cost of all thirteen schemes, which would still not provide a comprehensive city network, totals £94.6 million. Will the GCP fund any more than two of these schemes? Given that the GCP's entire budget is already over-allocated by £128 million, what scheme(s) would be de-prioritised to ensure the active travel network can be completed?

Poor quality consultation

- The questionnaire relates to active travel generally, yet the supporting report is concerned only with cycling, and the proposed schemes are almost exclusively about improving provision for cycling.

- The questionnaire refers to “personal security and safety”, but does not drill down into what factors are important, for instance:
 - *Poor road/path maintenance*: The very real risk of being injured, especially when roads are wet or lighting is poor, is a strong deterrent to cycling and, for less mobile people, walking. The experience of physical discomfort is also a deterrent, possibly subconscious.
 - *Visibility – field of view and lighting*: Being visible to other people, and being able to see someone who may pose a threat or danger sufficiently early to take evasive action are both very important.
 - *Secure cycle parking*: Theft and vandalism are often very stressful, can disrupt someone’s life, and even lose them their job.
- Extensive use is made of technical language and jargon that responders to the consultation cannot reasonably be expected to understand, or to appreciate the implications in terms of cost or time to implement, associated risks, and disruption caused:
 - CYCLOPS junction
 - Dutch roundabout
 - modal filter
 - clashes with utilities
 - cyclist priority features
 - improve cycle movements
 - traffic impacts
 - reduced level of service for pedestrians
 - land consent and approval
 - CCC
 - bus cage [!]
- A second consultation on active travel, the county council’s *Cambridgeshire Active Travel Schemes*, is being conducted in parallel with this one. Even though they overlap in several of the interventions described, there is no cross-referencing or explanation of how either fits within a comprehensive strategy for promoting active travel.