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**To:** Greater Cambridge Partnership  
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**Subject:** Response to Making Connections consultation  
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## Executive summary

The Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) has never developed a compelling vision for what it is trying to achieve, and this consultation is no exception. It assumes the proposed transport interventions sell themselves. They don't. In general, people who don't use buses now don't believe their quality of life will be improved by taking the bus; and people who don't cycle now don't believe their quality of life will be improved by cycling. Therefore, most people are likely to perceive GCP's *Making Connections* proposals as being about making them pay more to drive in order to fund better transport for *other* people.

The consultation provides spuriously detailed information on the proposed new and enhanced bus services. It is unclear what evidence has been used to design the routes, specify operating hours, frequencies and fares, and calculate the subsidy cost. It is also unclear whether bus operators have been consulted. Their buy-in will be essential if these changes are to be introduced under Enhanced Partnership Agreements, which is likely to be quicker than using the Combined Authority's franchising powers.

The proposed hourly services on 'Rural Connector' routes are unlikely to attract many new bus users. Detail on the 'regular connecting' and 'demand responsive' services is absent, so people cannot judge how attractive those will be.

There is an inconsistency between GCP's proposals to improve rural bus services and continuing to build Park & Rides, which only truncate car journeys and require large tracts of greenfield land. We recommend building a network of travel hubs, all served by express bus services, rather than Park & Rides, to enable people to make many more trips without a car.

GCP needs to consider the impact of many more buses entering Cambridge city centre, which is already a congested and conflicted space. We recommend re-routing express buses around the inner ring road to free up more space in the city centre for walking and cycling.

The proposals for funding options provide too little detail on the practicalities and timescales for their introduction, and how they might be combined. We recommend a staged introduction of charging for workplace parking and polluting vehicles, consulting again on adding a congestion charge when the enhanced bus services are running.

We recommend GCP consider additional measures to decrease carbon emissions, air pollution and congestion, such as gradually reducing the availability of parking; promoting ride-sharing, club cars and micromobility hire services; and enabling more efficient movement of freight.

## Bus services

The broad outline of the proposals is encouragingly ambitious. However, the details are seemingly somewhat arbitrary, and not obviously informed by close analysis of local need, of operators' local knowledge, or economic viability. For instance, has GCP examined where people live and work now (rather than at the time of the 2011 Census)? Or where secondary and further education pupils live and go to school?

The proposed hourly services for 'Rural Connector' services are unlikely to be very attractive to people who currently do not use the bus, even if they are a welcome improvement for people who do. The proposed "regular connecting" and "demand responsive" bus services are not described in any detail, so it is impossible for anyone to know whether these will provide a viable or attractive alternative to driving.

Notable oddities in the proposed route maps include that Comberton is served only by an hourly service, even though it is home to a college with 1,800 pupils and 250 staff; and several routes duplicate and compete with rail services.

Is the intention to use Enhanced Partnership Agreements to deliver the new and enhanced services? If so, and since these require voluntary agreement from incumbent operators, what steps have been taken to involve bus operators in designing the proposals in the consultation?

How will the increased number of services arriving in the city centre be accommodated? The Drummer St area is already congested with buses at peak times. Buses are in conflict with people walking and cycling and with taxis in many parts of the city centre, in particular St Andrew's St, Hobson St, Jesus Lane, Park St, Round Church St, Bridge St, Magdalene St, Silver St, Trumpington St, Pembroke St and Downing St. This creates a stressful environment, which deters some people from walking or cycling in the city centre. This undermines aims to increase active travel within and into the city.

## Recommendations

Smarter Cambridge Transport would like GCP to set out:

- Output objectives in terms of milestones for absolute patronage or modal share for bus travel.
- Optimisation objectives for patronage and subsidies (e.g. maximise patronage for a given subsidy, or minimise subsidy for a given patronage).
- Evidence supporting the proposed bus routes, service hours, frequencies and fares.
- Plans for accommodating the increased numbers of buses in the city centre.
- Phasing of introduction of changes: will express bus services come first, or DRT/connecting services to, for instance, Park & Ride sites?
- Feasible timescales for the introduction of changes, taking into account the procedures for making Enhanced Partnership agreements and/or using franchising powers.
- Multi-year budget profile, showing anticipated fare revenues, funding from proposed new charging measures, GCP's bridging investment, and other funding sources.

- Contingency plans for any shortfall in funding to ensure that services are not scaled back or withdrawn after being introduced, which would damage public confidence.

We recommend GCP appraise our proposal for ‘lollipop’ routing of express bus services (see Figure 1), which received strong support from the Citizens’ Assembly (see Figure 2). This builds on the existing route network to provide:

- Additional capacity in the city centre by re-routing express buses around the inner ring road instead of through the historic city centre.
- Bus priority around the city centre by making the inner ring road one-way with a contraflow bus lane.
- Easy and intuitive interchanging between all routes at any point on the inner ring road.

## Funding options

Presumably the revenues quoted are net of all costs? What do “impact on congestion” percentages mean? There is no detail on the practicalities and timescale for introducing these options, nor how they might be combined or sequenced.

The ‘parking charges’ option unhelpfully conflates two distinct policy proposals:

1. Increase the cost of “the city’s parking” (does this include residents’ parking permits?)
2. Introduce a Workplace Parking Levy that would apply to employers providing staff parking.

It is perfectly rational to support one, but oppose the other, but the survey will not reveal why people favour or reject this option.

Survey question 7 is ambiguous (“If public transport, walking and cycling were improved, which of the following ideas should we prioritise to help fund and deliver this? Please rank the ideas where 1 is the idea we should consider first.”) Does “consider first” mean consider for introduction first, with other options potentially introduced at a later date? Or does it mean, consider if it meets objectives before potentially rejecting in favour of one of the other options? There is no opportunity to elaborate on what the respondent may have in mind for “introducing a combination of the above.”

One of the benefits of a Workplace Parking Levy not mentioned is that it would incentivise employers to organise and support lift-sharing schemes for their staff (see below). This is a simple and effective way for employers to reduce the number of parking spaces they require, and hence their tax liability.

We fully support charging people to drive in the city as this contributes to air pollution and congestion, which increases costs for other people – in terms of delay and impaired health. The question is how to do this fairly and effectively. Ideally, the government would introduce a national road user charge, and empower local authorities to add a local supplement to be paid directly to them to support local transport – from maintenance of roads, cycleways and footways to subsidising bus services. That may yet come.

For GCP to implement a “flexible” (congestion) charge by itself, there are significant challenges,

which are not fully acknowledged in this consultation:

1. Public awareness of the proposals is low.
2. People do not trust that the proposed improvements to bus services and active travel will happen before the charge is introduced.
3. Even if they do believe improvements will be introduced in time, they don't believe they will meet their own needs.
4. Therefore, people who drive now see the proposal simply as an additional tax they will pay to provide better transport for *other* people.

It means that, of the options proposed, a “flexible” charge has the highest chance of failure, in terms of lack of popular support and political buy-in. We therefore believe GCP should start with measures that primarily target businesses. It is much easier to tailor a scheme to businesses than to private individuals, partly because the number of parties involved is much smaller, and partly because businesses have simpler needs and objectives, which are amenable to rational debate.

## Recommendations

We recommend a phased approach:

1. Introduce a Workplace Parking Levy. Agree with employers the rules and parameters for setting rates, exemptions, discounts and rebates.
2. Introduce a pollution charge for goods vehicles (not, in the first instance, cars or passenger service vehicles). Agree with affected businesses rules for determining rates, exemptions, discounts and rebates.
3. Increase the cost of residents' parking permits, in particular for second and more vehicles, to complement a policy of reducing the number of spaces allocated (see *Parking Capacity* below).
4. Update all rates, exemptions, discounts and rebates annually.
5. Gradually widen the scope of the Workplace Parking Levy to include most or all employers.
6. Gradually widen the scope of the pollution charge to include most or all vehicle classes. Note that electric vehicles release particulate pollution from tyres and brake discs, and therefore could rationally be brought into scope for a pollution-based charge in the future.
7. If the government does not introduce a national road user charge scheme before, say, 2025, consult on supplementing the pollution charge with a congestion charge, applicable to all vehicles (including zero-emissions) driving in the city at times when congestion affects bus services (to make clear the connection between the charge and the external cost it is designed to compensate for).
8. Explore with the Department for Transport the idea of introducing a Retail Parking Levy, where customer parking spaces at retail parks and supermarkets are subject to a levy. This would encourage retailers to rationalise the quantity of parking they provide, freeing up land for more productive uses; deter use by non-customers (e.g. by charging for parking and rebating the charge if making a purchase); improve delivery service options to homes, businesses and collection hubs.

## Park & Ride

GCP's primary policy for managing growing demand to drive into Cambridge is to build more Park & Ride capacity, extending a policy started in the 1990s. Though GCP is ascribing to new Park & Rides the term 'travel hub', they are in fact little different to existing Park & Rides in both function and design. Travel hubs should be located and designed to reduce, not simply truncate, car trips (see *Travel hubs* below).

Park & Ride reduces (or slows the increase) in traffic in Cambridge, but does nothing to reduce traffic in South Cambridgeshire. For villages located adjacent to a Park & Ride, traffic levels will increase, as traffic diverts from other routes to reach it. There are also environmental and ecological concerns about urbanising large tracts of greenfield land.

Modelling for the draft Local Plan indicates that Park & Ride car park capacity will need to grow to 30,400 parking spaces.<sup>1</sup> There are just over 7,000 spaces now, and GCP plan to add another 7,000 at:

- Foxton (200)
- Hauxton (2,150)
- Babraham (2,000)
- Madingley (2,000)
- Longstanton (650)

There are no published plans for more P&R car parks, though there is an indication on some GCP maps of a site at Barton. There is therefore a shortfall in 2041 of somewhere in the region of 16,000 parking spaces. That is more than double the number of spaces currently available. Even at a compact land allocation of 3.5 hectares per 1,000 parking bays, there is an implied requirement for nearly 60 hectares of greenfield land for car parks and access roads. This has no agreed policy backing.

## Travel hubs

Travel hubs can significantly reduce carbon emissions; reduce traffic and congestion on rural roads; improve air quality and health in rural areas; and reduce car dependency, increasing social mobility in rural areas (benefiting in particular the young, poor and disabled).

In essence, travel hubs are small railway or bus stations, served by trains and/or express bus services to major local destinations (e.g. Cambridge city centre, Cambridge Biomedical Campus, and railway stations). Those services would normally run frequently from early morning (before 6am) to late evening (at least 11pm).

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<sup>1</sup> This is contained in the [Transport Evidence Report](#) (October 2021). We have assumed the ratio of usage to capacity is two trips to one parking space. Usage can exceed the static capacity of a car park as there will be some turnover during the course of a day (i.e. one parking space may be occupied by two cars at different times, generating four trips to and from the site). However, that is likely to be more than offset by underuse on some or all days. Usage tends to self-regulate at a peak of around 85% because that is when people perceive the car park to be full.

Travel hubs are connected to the surrounding settlements, workplaces and other amenities by safe and convenient non-motorised user paths. They also include space for feeder and demand-responsive bus services to call in, enabling passengers to transfer to/from rail and express bus services; and a pick-up/drop-off zone for taxis and private vehicles. They would normally have an enclosed waiting area and toilets. They may also have some car parking, but this should be determined at a local level (e.g. by the parish council).

Travel hub car parks, where provided, may also be used for other purposes, including farmers' and craft markets, and mobile services (e.g. public library and health screening). A travel hub may be co-located with a school (more usually secondary or further education college), health centre, co-working offices, shops, a delivery collection point, and/or other amenities.

## Recommendation

We recommend GCP build a network of travel hubs, served by express bus services, instead of Park & Rides. The aim is to reduce the distance most people must travel to access a train or high-quality bus service. If that distance is walkable or cyclable, or conveniently and cheaply covered by a feeder or demand-responsive bus service, then trips may be made without using a car at all.

If GCP does not accept this recommendation, we urge it and the planning services of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire to set out and consult on their vision for Park & Ride up to 2041, identifying potential sites for the car parks required to increase parking capacity in line with demand.

## Parking capacity

We recommend GCP consider a policy of gradually reducing the availability of on- and off-street parking in Cambridge. Such a policy has been highly effective in Copenhagen. Car parks are designed to attract car, and hence generate traffic, which can cause congestion – most notably on Pembroke and Downing Streets, where cars queue to enter the Grand Arcade car park, blocking bus services.

Because local authorities derive significant income from parking charges, they have a conflict of interests when considering any proposal to reduce parking capacity. One solution is to increase parking prices to offset the reduction in revenue. However, the social equity and wider economic consequences need to be examined carefully.

On-street parking spaces could be converted to:

- Loading bays. This would help ensure delivery vehicles do not have to park on pavements, where they obstruct and endanger people walking and cycling, nor to double-park, where they delay traffic.
- Cycle parking, including secure cycle hangers
- Trees, parklets or landscaping
- Communal bin storage

## Recommendations

In the case of on-street parking, we recommend setting an annual target for the number of parking bays to be removed or converted to another use. County councillors in Cambridge could be tasked with nominating each year which parking bays they would like to be removed or converted to another use, based on consultation with residents in their respective divisions. This would empower local people in the decision-making process, moderating opposition.

In the case of council-owned off-street parking, the GCP should explore options for alternative uses that could generate a replacement revenue. Alternative uses for multistorey car parks might include supervised cycle parking, rooftop restaurants, urban farms, skate parks, markets, metro stations, housing grid-balancing batteries, or redevelopment (as in the case of the Park Street car park) for housing, retail or offices.

## Ride-sharing

Increasing vehicle occupancy rates is one of the simplest, quickest and cheapest ways to reduce the number of cars on the road. Ride-sharing schemes in particular can achieve a significant reduction in commuter car trips. An [example provided by Liftshare](#) is Arup's Midlands Campus, where 52% of staff were ride-sharing on a regular basis in 2019.

Planning restrictions on the number of car parking spaces permitted at employment sites (e.g. as part of the North East Area Action Plan) or a Workplace Parking Levy can compel or incentivise employers to consider new ways to help their staff travel to work, including organising and supporting ride-sharing schemes.

## Recommendation

We recommend that GCP actively promote ride-sharing with all major employers and assist smaller employers to club together to enable their employees to participate in ride-sharing schemes and to cover the cost of a taxi should an employee find themselves stranded.

## Car clubs

As recently [stated by junior transport minister Trudy Harrison](#), owning a car is outdated “20th-century thinking” and Britain should move to ‘shared mobility’ to cut carbon emissions. Given that privately owned cars spend around [96% of their life unused](#), private ownership is a remarkably inefficient and unsustainable way to provide convenient personal mobility. Once people have access to active travel and public transport options that can replace most car trips, a car is only needed for occasional trips. Club cars can fulfil that need more cost-effectively than owning a car.

When someone has a car always available to them, driving is naturally the default mode of travel. Renting a car makes it an option to be considered only when it is the most cost-effective or convenient of all the options available. That means people who do not own a car make far fewer car trips, contributing to a reduction in motor traffic.



## Recommendation

We recommend that GCP work with its member authorities to identify more parking spaces to allocate to club cars, so that everyone living in the city and larger villages can have access to a club car within, say, a five-minute walk. We also recommend that GCP look to work with partners to provide grants, incentives or loans to support the expansion of club car services. A key partner will be the train operating companies or Great British Railways, to ensure that there is a club car available at all railway stations.

## Micromobility hire

Ready availability of hire bikes, e-bikes and e-scooters at transport hubs (such as railway and bus stations) in the city and travel hubs outside the city is an important complement to public transport. It gives occasional travellers options to complete their journey quickly and conveniently, reducing the attractiveness of taking a taxi or making the entire trip by car.

## Recommendation

We recommend GCP work with planning services and the Combined Authority to identify land in appropriate locations for docking stations, and to develop terms and conditions for micromobility operators that ensure that their vehicles are available where needed, are easy to use in conjunction with public transport (e.g. using a single payment app for both), and are parked safely without causing obstructions.

## Freight hubs

Delivery vehicles are a significant component of traffic and congestion in the city. Facilitating more efficient movement of freight in and out of the city should be a key objective for GCP.

## Recommendation

We recommend GCP work with planning services and the Combined Authority to identify land in appropriate locations for a hierarchy of hubs for the break-out and consolidation of freight.

- Sites should be able to operate around the clock without causing undue disturbance to any nearby residents.
- Site locations should support the most efficient movement of freight, minimising vehicle-mileage associated with moving freight, especially in HGVs and MGVs.
- Access roads need to be appropriate for the number, size and weight of vehicles entering and leaving the site.
- Non-motorised user routes connected to the site must be sufficiently wide and safe for cargo bikes to use.

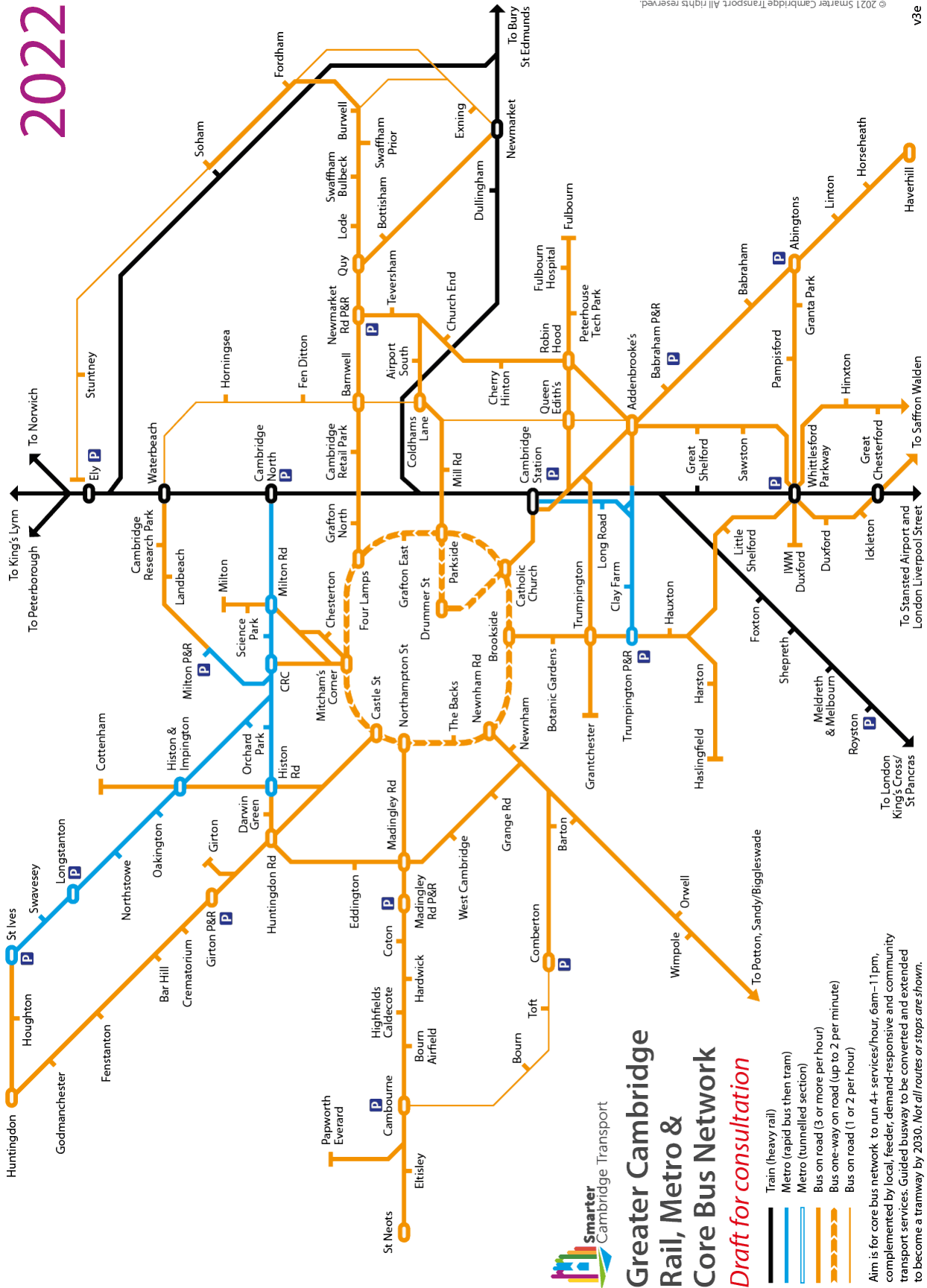


Sites meeting the above criteria should be identified in the Local Plan for:

- Major hubs on the strategic road network.
- Hubs for processing rail-born freight.
- Smaller hubs to serve all parts of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire villages.

Land within the Girton Interchange could be a prime location for the principal road-freight hub for Cambridge. It would require additional slip ramps to be built to enable direct access from the A14 east, A428 and M11.

2022



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Figure 1: Schematic map of proposed routing for major bus routes into and around Cambridge

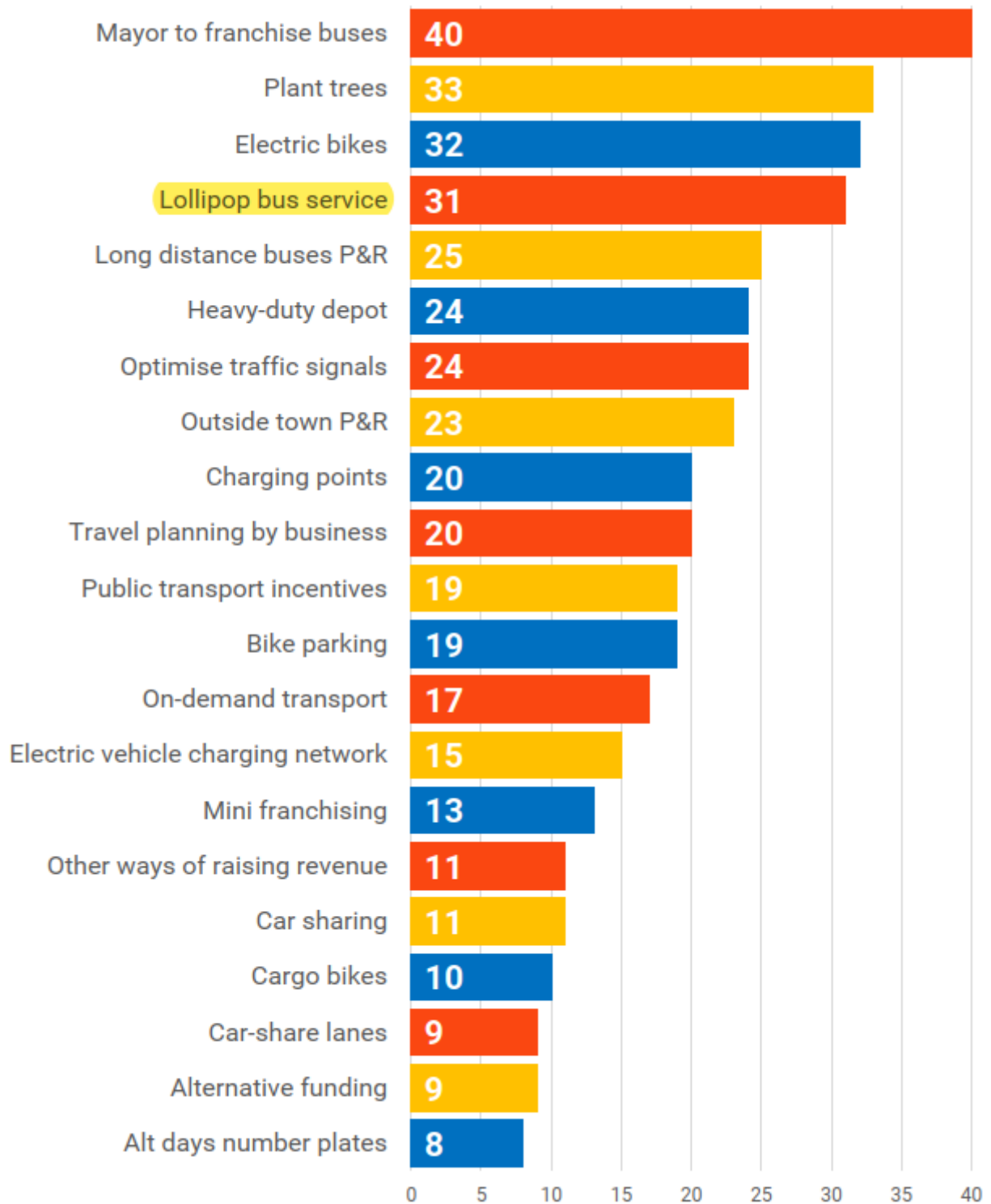


Figure 2: Greater Cambridge Partnership Citizens' Assembly votes for "supporting measures"