



Growing and sharing prosperity
— Delivering our City Deal —

Greater Cambridge Partnership Executive Board and Joint Assembly

Minutes of the extraordinary joint meeting
of the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) Executive Board and Joint Assembly
Monday 26 June 2023
2:00 p.m. – 5:10 p.m.

Present:

Members of the GCP Executive Board:

Cllr Mike Davey	Cambridge City Council
Cllr Elisa Meschini (Chairperson)	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr Brian Milnes	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Andy Williams	Business Representative
Andy Neely	University Representative

Members of the GCP Joint Assembly:

Cllr Tim Bick (Chairperson)	Cambridge City Council
Cllr Simon Smith	Cambridge City Council
Cllr Katie Thornburrow (Vice-Chairperson)	Cambridge City Council
Cllr Claire Daunton	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr Neil Shailer	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr Graham Wilson	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr Paul Bearpark	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr Annika Osborne	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr Heather Williams	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Claire Ruskin	Business Representative
Christopher Walkinshaw	Business Representative
Karen Kennedy	University Representative
Kristin-Anne Rutter	University Representative
Helen Valentine	University Representative

Officers:

Peter Blake	Transport Director (GCP)
Lynne Miles	Director of City Access (GCP)
Nick Mills	Democratic Services Officer (CCC)
Rachel Stopard	Chief Executive (GCP)
Wilma Wilkie	Governance and Relationship Manager (GCP)

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chairperson of the Executive Board welcomed members of the Joint Assembly and Executive Board to the extraordinary joint meeting of the two bodies, which had been convened upon request by the Joint Assembly to scrutinise a set of proposals that would be considered by the Executive Board on 29 June 2023. She emphasised that no decisions would be made at the extraordinary joint meeting, and that the members of the Executive Board were in attendance to listen to the Joint Assembly's debate.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Heather Richards and Mayor Dr Nik Johnson.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

4. Feedback from the Joint Assembly

The Chairperson of the Joint Assembly presented a report which summarised the discussions from the Joint Assembly meeting held on 8 June 2023, noting that only section 4 of the report (Making Connections Consultation Feedback and City Access Strategy) was relevant to the agenda of the extraordinary joint meeting.

Following consideration of the consultation process and its outcomes, the Joint Assembly had discussed and shown varying levels of support for a range of potential changes to the proposals. However, members had agreed that further information was required on the impacts of these changes on the scheme's original objectives as well as wider equality issues before a decision could be made on which changes should be taken forward. The Joint Assembly had also indicated that it would like to scrutinise the subsequent work before it was presented to the Executive Board on 29 June 2023, which had resulted in the convening of the extraordinary joint meeting on 26 June 2023.

5. Making Connections Consultation Feedback and the City Access Strategy

The Director of City Access presented the report, which detailed the methodology and process of the second Making Connections consultation, which ran from 17 October 2022 to 23 December 2022, and its headline findings, which were summarised in Section 6 of the report and set out in detail in Appendix 1 to the report. A range of themes and concerns had been identified in feedback to the consultation, and its meeting on 8 June 2023, the Joint Assembly had considered whether to change any of the core parameters of the scheme, whether to change any of the rules about who was required to pay and under what circumstances, and

whether to change any of the benefits that the scheme would deliver, as set out in Section 8 of the report. Following that meeting, three illustrative scenarios that included changes to the original proposals had been developed, to be considered alongside both the original proposals and the option to not implement a Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ). The Joint Assembly was invited to consider these illustrative scenarios in the presence of the Executive Board, and to give a view as to whether and how the Executive Board should proceed with any of them. The Joint Assembly and Executive Board received a presentation on the consultation and potential changes to the proposals, which was published on the [meeting website](#) and will be attached at Appendix A of the signed minutes.

While discussing the report, members:

- Drew attention to the Gunning Principle that for a consultation to be considered legitimate, conscientious consideration must be given to the responses before a decision could be made, and emphasised the importance of therefore considering and responding to the wide range of feedback and alternative proposals that had been received, such as the implementation of a workplace parking levy.
- Suggested that it would be helpful to be informed of the direct impacts that changing certain aspects of the proposals would have on the concurrent improvements to the bus and active travel network, to fully understand the consequences of any changes, noting that feedback from the consultation had identified which elements of those improvements people valued most and wanted to see implemented first. Members highlighted the importance of identifying which changes would have the maximum impact while also retaining the maximum number of benefits, to avoid undermining the scheme by failing to achieve the improvements to the bus network that were so badly needed.
- Queried whether further work had been carried out on establishing the administrative costs of the scheme and how they could be affected by the various possible changes. Members were informed that while high level costs had already been estimated, more detailed calculations would be made once the final parameters and features of the scheme had been established. It was emphasised that the Executive Board would need to be aware of the administrative costs of the scheme and any proposed changes before it could decide on how to proceed.
- Expressed concern about the relatively low Multi Criteria Analysis Framework scores of the proposals based on the strategic objectives of Making Connections, as set out in Table 9 of the report, although it was acknowledged that Scenario 2 had a higher score than the original proposals. It was also clarified that the scenarios set out in Section 9 of the report were only illustrative and could be refined or combined in a wide range of ways.
- Considered whether the scheme could cover the whole week, rather than Monday to Friday, with account holders exempt from payment on a set number of days per week, especially given that working habits had changed and some communities had different working patterns. However, it was noted that the consultation had been carried out based on the scheme covering only Monday to Friday, and legal advice would therefore have to be sought on whether such a change could be made.
- Generally agreed that scenarios 1 and 2 were the preferred options, as they responded to the feedback from the consultation in a way that still ensured

sufficient revenue would be raised to support the improvements to the public transport and active travel networks.

- Observed that ‘doing nothing’ was not an accurate description of the option to not include an STZ, as a scheme of widespread improvements could still be developed using alternative funding mechanisms to a vehicle charge, and the high level of support for improvements to the public transport and active travel network demonstrated that, despite significant opposition to the STZ, people were not content with the current situation. It was noted that other regions in the country had made improvements without implementing an STZ, and argued that a more detailed option for not including an STZ should be presented as an alternative, based on the feedback of the consultation. However, members expressed concern that a ‘doing nothing’, or an alternatively titled ‘no STZ’ approach would fail to reduce congestion or provide sufficient resources to improve the public transport and active travel networks in a way that provided more people with genuine alternatives to car travel.
- Argued that any changes to the scheme that resulted in the removal of fare reductions for public transport would not be sufficiently progressive and would fail to increase access to the services.
- Suggested that it could be more effective for the STZ to include a lower charge for more people, than a higher charge for fewer people.
- Emphasised that the proposals were not just about improving public transport and implementing an STZ but were also based on improvements to the active travel network, with one member highlighting the inequality of the disparity in active travel provisions between the city of Cambridge and the wider Greater Cambridge region. Members also emphasised the importance of improving infrastructure to support people shifting to more sustainable forms of transport, including secure parking for bicycles, additional and better bus stops, and more benches.
- Suggested that a tapered implementation of any restrictions or charges would allow people to experiment with alternative methods of travel and become accustomed to such changes in a more achievable way. Members also requested further information on the possibility of phasing implementation of the scheme across geographical areas.
- Considered the illustrative proposal in Scenario 2 to initially include 180 free days to account holders and to progressively reduce the level of free days, resulting in their complete removal in 2030, noting that such a proposal responded to a wide range of concerns that had been raised in the consultation. Members argued that an initial 180 days was an excessive amount and would result in many people not being required to pay for travel in the STZ, although it was noted that 180 days had been chosen as an initial figure that would be progressively reduced, affording drivers the opportunity to become accustomed to the system and prepare accordingly. It was argued that a residual number of free days should remain in place for perpetuity to respond to concerns about journeys that could not be made using alternatives to cars or other motor vehicles. Concerns were raised about how such a scheme would be administered and that it would appear to encourage multi-car ownership.
- Queried whether there were schemes elsewhere that had implemented free days for account holders, to understand the risks and administrative costs. Although it

could not be confirmed if other schemes had implemented such a feature, members were informed that some other schemes exempted various portions of all vehicles on alternative days. One member suggested that free minutes, rather than free days could help overcome issues raised by people living close to the proposed boundary of the STZ.

- Suggested that varying the charge over different times of the day could be a preferable alternative to simply implementing it during peak hours, as proposed in Scenario 1, and would also incentivise fewer journeys. It was also argued that charging only during peak hours would unfairly and disproportionately impact people who were unable to travel during other time periods, while simply displacing congestion to different periods of the day. However, it was acknowledged that this would be more complicated to administer and understand, with members informed that other schemes around the world were generally more accepted by people when they were simple and easy to understand.
- Suggested that a charge could be implemented for use of certain key roads, although it was acknowledged that this would be likely to lead to rat running and displacement of congestion.
- Emphasised the importance of encouraging businesses to work together for last mile deliveries to reduce vehicles on the road. It was noted that Scenarios 1, 2 and 3 sought to address delivery concerns in differing ways, and members were informed that the GCP was looking to develop a freight consolidation pilot to identify what level of support it would need to provide to businesses prior to any charge being implemented.
- Suggested that consideration should be given to boundary cases such as the Science Park, with only out commuters from the STZ charged to drive to the site, given their wider range of alternative travel options.
- Requested further information on any modelling and consultation that had been carried out on any changes to the proposals that would involve Addenbrookes and the wider Cambridge Biomedical Campus. It was noted that the proposals suggested alternative approaches, including a blanket exemption for site visits and also free days to accommodate such visits. It was also emphasised that the original proposals included a range of exemptions for hospital visits.
- Expressed concern about the impact that the scheme could have on recruitment within Cambridge, although it was acknowledged that some businesses found that the current congestion and lack of public transport problems were themselves detrimental to recruitment.
- Sought clarification on whether the scheme would require agreement with parking authorities and companies to compensate for loss of revenue. Members were informed that the ongoing development of an integrated parking strategy was considering the financial impacts of the proposals, alongside other issues.
- Established that the Executive Board would decide how to proceed with the scheme and how any further scenarios or amendments to the proposals should be considered.
- Considered how progressive it was to base a public transport system on buses, with one member arguing that cars and trains could be more innovative if

organised better. Another member argued that expanding the bus network would not only provide more people with an alternative to car use, but it would provide some people with travel options when they currently do not have any at all.

- Highlighted the importance of ensuring that any initial improvements made to the bus and active travel networks were sustainable and would not be reversed in the future, and acknowledged that this meant not developing that aspect of the scheme until a final design for the STZ had been agreed. Members also emphasised the importance of ensuring the benefits from initial improvements to the bus and active travel networks were in place and established before the STZ was implemented. Notwithstanding, it was acknowledged that the benefits of such improvements would not be fully appreciated until a reduction in congestion following the implementation of the STZ.
- Highlighted the importance of improving facilities and connections at Park and Ride sites around Cambridge, including minimising queuing to access them, to make them as attractive an option as possible.
- Noted that the success of the scheme would require tens of thousands of people to make behavioural changes, and suggested that the highest number of such changes would be achieved through increased use of Park and Ride facilities. As such, members emphasised the importance of identifying where the most significant gaps in the provision of bus services currently were, particularly in rural areas, to prioritise those areas for early improvements. Members highlighted the need to improve fairness through increased access for people on low incomes and people living in rural areas.
- Argued that improvements to the bus service should focus on connections between rural villages and not just connections to Cambridge.
- Argued that unless targeted fares for groups and families were reduced, the scheme would fail to encourage such people to use public transport. Members also emphasised that ensuring general bus fares were lower than any STZ charge, including during any reduced charge period, would be fundamental to its success.
- Highlighted the importance of secure cycle parking at travel hubs such as train stations, Park and Ride sites and bus stops.
- Drew attention to wider bus reform and franchising as a requirement for the proposed bus improvements.
- Noted that free bus services were not always successful and expressed concern about subsidising bus fares without wider improvements initially being implemented. Members requested further information on the impacts of such subsidies.
- Argued that the priority improvements before an STZ would be implemented should give more attention to active travel, and it was noted that discussions had previously been held about ringfencing funds for supporting modal shift.
- Emphasised the importance of increasing the reliability of bus services.

- Observed that bus journeys were also held up by lengthy stoppages at bus stops, and suggested that a more modern ticketing system, such as the Oyster system in London, would reduce such stoppages and therefore help to alleviate congestion.
- Highlighted the importance of improving bus connections to train stations and encouraging the alignment of timetables between train and bus services where possible.
- Established that the GCP adopted the Office for National Statistics' definition low income as a household earning less than 60% of the national median income. It was also clarified that approximately one third of households in the lower income bracket did not have access to a car. It was noted that the proportion was lower in rural areas than urban areas due to there being fewer alternative forms of transport, and people effectively being forced into car ownership, often when they could not afford it.
- Expressed concern about the potential difficulty and cost of administering a means test for people on low income, and suggested that using eligibility for other benefits, such as Universal Credit, could help reduce this burden, although financial thresholds would need to be periodically reviewed due to the current economic climate. However, it was observed that such a system would not include some people that would be disproportionately affected, such as people with mobility impairments or health complications that prevented them from using public transport, and that additional exemptions or discounts would need to be considered as well. Further analysis of the financial impacts on the rest of the scheme would also need to be evaluated further.
- Drew attention to control of financial assets as a form of domestic violence and expressed concern that means testing that required households to provide evidence of their financial status could risk the disclosure of some financial safety nets accrued by victims in such situations.
- Suggested that alternative support mechanisms to discounts or exemptions could be considered for people on low income, such as free bus passes for key workers or families with children at school, although it was acknowledged that the budgetary implications for such measures would have to be investigated. Members were informed that preliminary analysis of the Government's countrywide £2 bus fare cap scheme had suggested it had been of particular benefit to people on low income, and it was emphasised that the bus improvement proposals included a fare of £1 for bus journeys within Cambridge and a fare of £2 for those coming into or leaving the city.
- Emphasised the importance of clear communications, so people were aware of where documents were publicly available, when decisions would be made, and when any scheme would be implemented.
- Suggested that reviews of how different kinds of transport were used should be carried out following the implementation of any scheme, to establish which aspects were most successful and where future changes should be made. Information on how accident rates had been affected by the scheme would also be of benefit. Members highlighted the importance of ensuring the scheme could be adapted in the future to accommodate behavioural changes and technological advancements.

- Drew attention to the recommendations from the Citizens' Assembly that had been accepted by the Executive Board, and the need to consider the long-term impacts of the proposals, although it was also acknowledged that short-term benefits were important to change behaviour build confidence in the viability and sustainability of the scheme.
- Emphasised that ensuring young people were confident in the viability and sustainability of using public or active transport before they were old enough to drive would help reduce the number of aspiring drivers in the future, noting the popularity of electric scooters in the younger generation. Providing adequate connections between these various modes of transport across the Greater Cambridge region, particularly at rail stations, was therefore of significant importance.
- Noted that written communication had been sent to members of the Joint Assembly and Executive Board from members of public, resident groups and businesses. It was also emphasised that all stakeholder responses were published online and were therefore publicly available.
- Noted the positive impacts that the proposals would have on local communities both inside and outside the proposed STZ, including the increased ability to plan growth sustainably. It was also emphasised that the GCP worked closely with local planning authorities to develop joined-up thinking and holistic approaches across the region.
- Noted that local authorities across the region had made various commitments, including carbon reduction, and emphasised that any scheme should support such initiatives. Members were informed that the Combined Authority had commented on the proposals and indicated that they broadly aligned with its strategies. The Combined Authority was the strategic transport authority for Greater Cambridge and the wider region, which included responsibility for the bus network.
- Noted that the County Council would be required to approve the implementation of a road user charge and sought clarification on its role in the initial £50m expenditure. Members were informed that the £50m expenditure was entirely for the Executive Board to decide on, although it was noted that such expenditure would first require clarity on the longer-term funding that would support it.
- Observed that recommendation (d) in the report did not include a timeline or date, unlike recommendations (c) and (e) and suggested that it would be beneficial to include one.

While summarising the discussion, the Chairperson of the Joint Assembly suggested that all the options should remain on the table, although he emphasised that greater support had been expressed for a refining and blending of Scenarios 1 and 2. He also highlighted support for the concept of free days for account holders alongside less support for restricting the charge to during peak hours. Further information had been requested on the varying administrative costs and processes of the options, and additional consideration to be given to supporting behavioural change.

The Chairperson of the Executive Board welcomed the contributions from the Joint Assembly and assured members that the Executive Board would reflect on what had

been said before its meeting on 29 June 2023. She emphasised the importance of achieving the underlying objectives of the scheme, rather than the means of doing this, while acknowledging the need to establish a funding mechanism to support it and working with partners throughout.

Chairperson
7 September 2023