

# Making Connections consultation FAQs

These frequently asked questions were published alongside the consultation in autumn 2022.

## What is Making Connections?

Making Connections is a proposal in three parts, designed to tackle the challenges of congestion, poor air quality and high carbon emissions and the fact that for many journeys there is no viable alternative to the car which means people miss out on opportunities. With employment and population growth increasing, pressures on our transport system will keep building. We need to do something to keep Cambridge moving.

### 1. **Transforming the bus network**

From mid-2023, we're proposing to transform the bus network through new routes, additional services, cheaper fares and longer operating hours

### 2. **Investing in other sustainable travel schemes**

Alongside the bus network, we are proposing to invest in new sustainable travel schemes, such as better walking and cycling links

### 3. **Creating a Sustainable Travel Zone**

We are proposing the introduction of a Sustainable Travel Zone in the form of a road user charge. Vehicles would be charged for driving within the Zone between 7am and 7pm on weekdays, and money raised would fund improvements to the bus network and other sustainable travel schemes.

The Zone would be fully operational in 2027/28 but only once the first bus improvements are introduced

## Why are you doing this now?

We have a challenge to meet the needs of our area, to keep people moving whilst cutting harmful congestion and pollution. A climate emergency was declared by Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council in 2019, which has been evidenced further by England's hottest summer on record this year.

Congestion in Greater Cambridge is among the worst in the UK and car use is at 92% of pre-Covid levels. Bus use has not recovered and is only at 73% of pre-Covid levels. These high traffic levels mean journeys on the road – whether by car or bus – are slow and unreliable. This causes daily misery for people trying to access jobs, education and services, while leading to more emissions, pollution and car-dominated public spaces.

For those without a car, the combination of high cost and poor-quality public transport leads to limited access to opportunities. This can leave people isolated and make our communities less integrated and more unequal. This divide in access to transport and opportunity will only be made worse by the current cost of living crisis. A lack of affordable, reliable public transport also encourages car use. This increases congestion, which in turn makes services slower and less attractive.

We want to transform the way people travel with better, cheaper public transport and active travel links, but we will need an ongoing source of funding and there is a limit to what can be done without reducing congestion. That's why we're proposing the introduction of a Sustainable Travel Zone.

The Zone would be fully operational by 2027/28 and would not come in until significant improvements to public transport are introduced. This is thanks to the once-in-a-generation City Deal funding allocation.

### **When will the charge come into force?**

If given the go-ahead in summer 2023 the charge won't start until we have brought in a transformed bus network alongside more opportunities to travel by bike, foot and scooter.

Priority bus improvements would be made from the middle of 2023, with fare reductions to be introduced in early 2024. The Sustainable Travel Zone would be fully operational in 2027/28. It's important to stress that no decisions have been made on the project at this stage. A formal decision would be taken in summer 2023, after the proposals have been out to public consultation. Cambridgeshire County Council, the local Highway Authority, will make the final decision in relation to any Sustainable Travel Zone and will be responsible for implementing it.

### **What happens now?**

The Making Connections proposals are out for public consultation from Monday 17 October to midday on Friday 23 December 2022. The inputs from the public consultation will be used to further develop the proposals. Any further developments will be taken to the GCP Executive Board in spring 2023 and a final decision would be taken by the County Council in summer 2023.

### **Are the Park & Ride inside the Sustainable Travel Zone?**

All the Park & Ride sites sit outside of the Sustainable Travel Zone. From outside the Zone, you can travel to them and change to a bus without paying the charge.

### **Why is Addenbrooke's in the Sustainable Travel Zone?**

Getting to Addenbrooke's, Royal Papworth and the wider Cambridge Biomedical Campus can be challenging. For those travelling by public transport, a lack of bus services can make accessing appointments or visiting relatives difficult if not impossible, particularly out of hours or at weekends.

Staff at the hospitals consistently raise lack of public transport as a key issue affecting their wellbeing and career plans. Travelling by car can also be stressful and expensive, with congestion making journey times unreliable, leading to missed appointments or being late for work. Discounts on parking are limited, and there are tight rules for staff around who can park on site.

The Cambridge Biomedical Campus is due to grow significantly in the next 5-10 years, including plans for two new children's and cancer hospitals. Without massively improving access by bus, walking and cycling to the area, these problems will only worsen. Access to medical care, congestion and air quality will continue to deteriorate as will the ability of the campus to develop the world leading treatments for which they are renowned.

Our proposals would provide fast, frequent, direct and cheaper services to the campus between 5am and 1am every day to provide a real alternative to both staff and visitors to the site. The Sustainable Travel Zone would enable the required level of investment to provide a real step change in bus services, while also cutting congestion on the roads for emergency vehicles and people who still need to drive.

There is a need to ensure that there is not a disproportionate impact on people who need to access hospital by car, for example for medical reasons. A range of discounts, exemptions and reimbursements is proposed. This includes discounts of 100% for blue badge holders and up to 100% for people on lower incomes.

During the consultation we are working with the NHS Trusts on the suggested reimbursement schemes for those accessing the hospitals, which include:

- NHS patients clinically assessed as too ill, weak or disabled to travel to an appointment on public transport, including those who
  - Have a compromised immune system
  - Require regular therapy or assessments
  - Need regular surgical intervention
- NHS staff using a vehicle to carry certain items (such as equipment, controlled drugs, patient notes or clinical specimens, blood or breast milk)
- NHS patients accessing Accident and Emergency services
- NHS and emergency services staff responding to an emergency when on call

### **Will Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles be charged to enter the zone?**

It is proposed that licenced taxis which follow Cambridge City Licensing conditions i.e. are zero emission and wheelchair accessible will not be charged to enter the zone (a 100% discount)

### **Who will manage the zone in the future?**

Cambridgeshire County Council is the Highways Authority with the powers to introduce the scheme. The operational management will be developed at the next stage of the project

### **How will you ensure there is enough space on buses for people with wheelchairs/children's buggies?**

We want buses to be more accessible for everyone to encourage more people to make the switch from car to public transport. We are looking at designs for new buses that would provide space to enable more than one wheelchair to get on and travel safely on a bus. We will look at this at the next stage of scheme development.

## **How would this work? Are you franchising the buses?**

The powers to deliver changes to the bus network are held by the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. There are two options to deliver the proposals: through an 'Enhanced partnership' or a franchising system, like London. The Combined Authority is due to make a decision in the autumn on next steps. Introducing significantly better buses supports the government's Bus Back Better strategy and reflects the CPCA's emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.

## **GCP has just consulted on proposals to change the road network in Cambridge. How does Making Connections work with that?**

The GCP's "A new road classification for Cambridge" consultation proposed a new way for vehicles and people to move around the city. It is part of the GCP's overall City Access project, as is the proposed Making Connections programme.

The two sets of proposals would work together to encourage more use of public transport, and walking and cycling. For example, lower traffic levels resulting from the proposed Sustainable Travel Zone would create more choices and opportunities for implementing any future changes to our roads and safer conditions for walking and cycling.

It's important to stress that no decisions have been made on either project at this stage and the Executive Board will consider consultation feedback when making decisions about how each project moves forward.

## **Why not a pollution charge or why aren't electric private cars exempt?**

A pollution charge was also considered, with zero emission vehicles exempt from the charge. This had limited benefits, as more people are expected to buy electric cars over time, so traffic levels would increase and the income to spend on bus, walking and cycling improvements would decrease. Feedback also suggested that not charging zero emission cars could be unfair to those who couldn't afford to buy one.

## **Why are you charging and/or why are there no discounts for people who live in the Zone?**

53% of journeys in the morning peak start within the Zone; over a third of these journeys are wholly within the Zone which are shorter and so are easier to make by foot, bike and bus, than those coming from further away. If we didn't charge these journeys, we would not be tackling the problems of congestion and pollution.

### **Why £5 per day for private cars?**

We looked at a range of different charge levels to arrive at these proposals. The £5 charge for private cars achieves the required level of traffic reduction and the funding for the transformational bus package. It was found that a £10 charge provided more revenue and traffic reduction than a £5 charge, but that a £5 charge still meets the scheme's objectives, with a lower financial burden on those paying. A lower charge would not raise sufficient funds for the improvements or reduce traffic.

### **Why are motorbikes still charged?**

Motorbikes and mopeds, although smaller than cars, would still be charged £5 as they raise potential risks in terms of safety, noise and conflicts with cyclists.