

## Local Liaison Forum Statement to Joint Assembly 1st December 2016

### The Western Orbital

Given the Western Orbital report published last week does not recommend any 'Preferred Options', the Local Liaison Forum made the decision not to rush into holding a meeting to debate and respond to it before this Joint Assembly meeting.

Instead we will meet on the 17th January which will give members time to thoroughly digest it. We will circulate a full statement of our discussions and the resolutions passed immediately following it, and ask that our recommendations be given due consideration in shaping the preferred options.

In the meantime, the LLF would like to raise the following points that have been discussed at previous LLF meetings:

#### **i) The LLF can see the benefits of an on-road Western Orbital**

Whilst the LLF can see the benefits of an on-road Western Orbital route with bus-only slip-lanes in linking the North-West and West Cambridge sites to the Biomedical Campus, members do not believe sufficient evidence has been provided on projected usage and commercial viability to justify the expense and environmental impact of an off-road solution, especially in light of recent national evidence of reducing numbers of bus users.

#### *Response*

*No decision has been taken to favour either on or off road options for the Western Orbital. The report presented sets out the views expressed in the consultation earlier in 2016. The ongoing assessment work will look at the range of issues and opportunities with particular focus on J11 access to the Bio Medical Campus, the plans of Highways England for the M11 and the integration with a future Cambourne to Cambridge option. Further analysis of the usage, viability and environmental effects of different options will form part of this process. The core objective around the City Deal investment criteria is to provide the level of public transport quality which will encourage modal shift from cars into buses. Bus rapid transit systems, including the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway, have provided evidence that fast, frequent and reliable journeys on segregated busways can increase bus usage, against the national trend of bus use declining as buses are adversely affected by traffic congestion. We would expect that any future proposal for the Western Orbital need to demonstrate the quality to provide a viable alternative to the car.*

#### **ii) Members support the idea of extending the current Park and Ride site at Trumpington to capture more motorway traffic.**

Officers are recommending that part of the next phase of work on the Western Orbital is assessing the benefits of options for P&R at Trumpington and Hauxton, including extending the capacity of the existing P&R site.

#### **iii) Members do not support siting a new Park and Ride at Hauxton on the west side of the M11.** Instead we favour bringing forward, into tranche 1, an extended Foxton Level Crossing Interchange Project which could accommodate bus, rail and cycle users as part of the existing plans. We believe this to be a better location for people to transfer onto sustainable modes of transport as it will capture traffic before the congestion begins on the A10, and would also link with the main-line Railway Station. This is certainly worth considering afresh given the recent NIC recommendation to fund the Oxford/Cambridge railway, with work needed between Foxton to Sandy and the projected significant increase in rail provision through Foxton.

#### *Response*

*Foxton Level Crossing is a known issue on the local network and the City Deal partners have had extensive engagement with Network Rail on this issue. We will continue to press NR to prioritise measures to improve the operation of the crossing for general traffic. The proposal for further interchange facilities at Foxton are not precluded by the Western Orbital. The Western Orbital is specifically focused on supporting linkages between housing and jobs along the western part of Cambridge. In that context an assessment of P&R locations was undertaken including Foxton. P&R was not considered viable at that location due to its distance from Cambridge and the issues with reliable bus operation along the A10. Additionally the location at Foxton would not intercept traffic from the northbound M11. Nevertheless future consideration of rail based P&R may form part of future City Deal phases.*

**iv) The idea that Park and Ride locations should be sited further from the city has been consistently made by the Local Liaison Forum.**

It also relates of course to Scotland Farm on the A428. The advantages of both locations are similar, namely that traffic would be intercepted before congestion occurs; they are located nearer the villages they serve, and they better connect with other infrastructure.

*Response*

*Assessment of P&R locations is multifaceted and based on a number of criteria. These include*

- *The availability of suitable sites*
- *The potential for maximising interception of traffic from different directions*
- *The operational impacts on buses*
- *The impact on other local bus services of P&R services*
- *The environmental issues associated with different sites*
- *The situation of the P&R relative to the congestion on the corridor*

*Further work is being undertaken on the Cambourne to Cambridge scheme to review P&R options including Scotland Farm and the outcomes of this work will be reported and discussed with the Local Liaison Forum early in 2017.*

**v) The question of how the Western Orbital will connect with the Cambourne to Cambridge busway remains unclear.**

Since Highways England would not allow the new off-road bridge to have a slip road (it being too close to J13), the off-road buses would have to double-back to the current slip road on Madingley Road to get onto the Western Orbital. An on-road Cambourne to Cambridge busway would connect directly. This is one of the reasons why the LLF would like a full assessment made of A428 Cambourne to Cambridge options that make better use of existing infrastructure.

*Response*

*The next stage of Western Orbital work will include further detailed review of the assessment of interconnection options between different schemes. Again this work will form part of the information presented to the City Deal Board and Assembly in July 2017.*

**The Cambourne to Cambridge Busway**

**Recommendation: The LLF would like the hybrid scheme it proposed to the Joint Assembly in September, that makes better use of existing infrastructure, to be fully assessed as an alternative to option 3/3A**

Why?

- A valid segregated, or partially segregated, option that makes better use of existing infrastructure, has never been assessed.
- An option that that does this, and does not require a new bridge, could cost £100+ million less.
- Key information on potential alternatives was misrepresented or not disclosed.

- New information on the Jn 13 bridge, had it been known earlier, could well have had a material effect on the options that were chosen for assessment.
- Using current infrastructure would allow for more logical interconnection with the Western Orbital scheme.

Option 3a was selected by way of the Multi-Criteria Assessment Framework and estimates of “Wider Economic Benefit”, and concluded to be the ‘Best Strategic Fit’. But what was its on-road comparator?

**No valid two-way comparison that uses existing infrastructure was ever made.**

The only option assessed that uses existing infrastructure - option 1 - did not fit the basic criteria of the scheme. This option envisaged no bus priority west of Madingley Mulch Roundabout and then a single in-bound bus lane only. This does not even pass the scheme’s fundamental ‘Best Strategic Fit’ requirement that the busway be segregated, or partially segregated, from Cambourne to Cambridge. It was not a valid option at all.

**Comparative Journey times were misleading**

Option 1 return journey time is cited as 64 minutes as against the 28 minutes cited for Option 3a. This figure is derived from the current timetable of the Citi4 bus. However the first 26 minutes of its journey time involves the bus circling around Cambourne making various stops before finally setting off for Cambridge. This is seriously misleading as a comparison with the Option 3a bus that sets off immediately.

More importantly though, there are on-road and hybrid options that do compare well against option 3/3A, but were not included among the 5 options assessed.

What was the reason for this?

**Did misinformation regarding the capacity of the Jn 13 bridge, and then non-disclosure of contrary information, influence the options assessed and the decision taken?**

Was it the belief, repeatedly stated by the Senior Officer both in public meetings and by email, that it was not possible to get additional bus lanes over Madingley Road bridge; that it did not have the capacity to take the weight, and so would have to be demolished with serious cost and disruption implications? As recently as September, the Executive Board, the Joint Assembly and many other stakeholders, were told by Bob Menzies that Atkins had done a survey 15 years ago that showed this to be the case, and that the situation would only have deteriorated since.

A report produced by Atkins in May this year, that was not made publicly accessible, states precisely the opposite. The bridge does have the capacity to take four lanes; could potentially take the weight; could be widened to the north or to the south, or could be supplemented with a bus-only or cycle-only bridge directly alongside. All options have been costed and the most straightforward one – reducing the south-side pavement – costs just £600,000. That’s a tiny fraction of the cost of the complete new bridge advocated by the transport officers.

Misleading information on the bridge could well have had a material effect on the options that were chosen for assessment, and on the whole decision-making process. This must therefore call into question the Preferred Option recommendation.

The Joint Assembly was asked to agree the Preferred Option 3a on the following basis:

- without a valid two-way comparison that uses existing infrastructure
- with highly misleading journey time information
- with false advice that the buses could not be accommodated on ‘bottleneck bridge’
- without a feasibility study having been done of existing infrastructure
- with an unsupported claim that the off-road option was somehow going to generate £680m in wider economic benefit, some £500m more than options that use existing infrastructure.

This is simply not credible.

### **Summary of the Local Liaison Forum's recommendations:**

1. Given the new information on the J13 bridge, recommend a full appraisal of the hybrid solution proposed by the LLF, including transparent evaluation of strategic fit, benefit-cost ratio and wider economic benefits.
2. Note that key information was misrepresented or not disclosed that was relevant to the feasibility of solutions which make use of existing road infrastructure.
3. Pause all further work on Preferred Option 3a until this is completed.
4. In light of the results, reconsider whether the Preferred Option 3a is indeed the Best Strategic Fit, or indeed the most sensible solution.

### *Response:*

*The report in October 2016 to the City Deal Board clearly set out the strategic basis for recommending further assessment of a segregated busway between Cambourne and Cambridge. Strong policy support was demonstrated for this option as well as high strategic fit with the City Deal objectives around economic growth. The report and accompanying papers discussed at length the assessment of 'hybrid' options which in effect provided lengths of segregation mixed with lengths of on road bus priority. The assessment determined that the hybrid options did not represent the best strategic fit.*

*Primarily the introduction of high levels of segregation for only parts of the journey loses the key end to end benefits of speed, frequency and capacity represented by the busway. The high quality aspects of the segregated section of the schemes, which in any case would involve off highway construction with the related costs, would be dissipated when the buses were placed back into general traffic some distance from the City Centre. The report in October 2016 explained in detail the scheme development methodology and the inclusion of a different 'levels' of intervention. This included a lower cost on highway intervention. In any case the scheme assessment will include further assessment of the lower cost on highway intervention as a comparator against the higher cost alternative.*

*The proposal identified by the LLF to consider a segregated alignment alongside the existing highway is therefore not considered an alternative to the low cost option. It is considered an alternative to the segregated end to end intervention. As such it will as part of the assessment which is underway, and will need to offer the same levels of end to end segregation from Cambourne to Cambridge, with associated links into a P&R site, to deliver the same strategic benefits as Option 3/3a.*

*This leads on to the issue of the J13 Bridge. The report on Jn13 Bridge was commissioned by the Project Team and carried out by the consultants alongside their work on option appraisal. The J13 Bridge therefore formed part of the on highway assessment for the lower cost option and will continue to do so. The assumption for the assessment presented in October 2016 was that buses did obtain priority over the bridge by means of a bus gate arrangement. As such the argument that introducing a bus lane over the bridge (even if such a bus lane were feasible) would not change the fundamentals of the assessment. The key issue is that only east bound on highway priority would be provided for buses. That remains the case even if it is possible to introduce a new bus lane over the bridge. The information in the report on the J13 bridge was made available to the LLF in June 2016.*

*Officers do apologise that the Senior Officer in responding to a specific question, was not aware of this feasibility report. While that is regrettable, again it does not in any way change the strategic basis for the decision made.*

*Officers are working with the LLF to identify a timetable for workshops and further engagement on specific scheme development issues including the alternative concepts of busways alongside the highway. That process will form part of the ongoing development and form part of the next stage of reporting. Further assessment of the segregated option will include refinement of the BCR and further environmental, economic and transport assessment. This process will lead into a report next*

*July and then be followed by a further public consultation in the Autumn of 2017 in which further specific details about route alignments and P&R sites will be provided.*