



New Road Classification for Cambridge

July 2022

Response from Stagecoach East



Stagecoach East welcomes this consultation.

COVID has had a significant impact on people's travel patterns, with key businesses hybrid working and changes to people's travel times and locations. It is therefore vital that there is an effective means of asking residents in the CPCA area what their transport needs are and using that to design the bus network of the future. This process needs to be a continuous one to ensure that the bus network is an organic one, which develops and evolves as passengers needs evolve.

We welcomed the making Connections Proposal issued in Autumn 2021 and the proposals to tackle congestion, it is pleasing to see we both recognise there needs to be an effective financial deterrent, which economically incentivises the use of the bus. This impact is multiplied, when road space measures such as the removal of car parking spaces are implemented and policed. Only a congestion charge will raise sufficient funds to deliver the bus network required, needs be pan Cambridge wide and operate all day, to ensure there is an economic incentive to catch the bus.

Research regularly confirms that better bus punctuality is a key priority for customers, we recognise a more complex debate centres around what causes poor levels of punctuality, and more importantly where the responsibility or ability to influence improvement actually falls.

If customers value punctuality, then clearly it also has to be a priority for bus operators, and whilst we time and time again collectively and individually emphasise that achieving more punctual and reliable bus services is critical in meeting the needs and wants of our customers, we recognise that has to be a key goal of transport policy makers too.

With customer numbers currently at 75% of 2019 levels, our business challenges remain the same as we try and match requirement to resource and as the cost-of-living increases for our customers, it effects our costs too and we are working even harder now to make bus travel as affordable as possible.

To enable our services to be attractive – we need faster and more reliable buses which must have greater priority on urban roads, bus priority measures must be planned to compliment walking and cycling schemes, and LA must have the powers... and the will, to enforce traffic regulations.

Since 2015, our bus operating speeds have reduced by 1% a year, to maintain frequency we have two main tools. Firstly, by putting more buses in the system, this increases costs that are passed onto the customer, secondly by operating at a lower frequency which results in fewer customers using the service, which results in declining customers who have to pay more for the service. It's a cycle of decline either way. For every 5mph fall in average bus speed, this means an additional daily cost of £2,100 to maintain frequency.

We support the aims of the proposal, but after reading the New Road Classification document created by the GCP in May 2022 our key asks are:-

1. We strongly request the use of our punctuality data to “cross check” the proposed bus routes serving the City. We are concerned that some of our key routes that service the City will still have open access to all other traffic, we refer to Mill Rd, Hills Rd, Trumpington Rd and Newmarket Rd. Our punctuality data shows these are significant hot spots for congestion. We will happily share the data we have to demonstrate the impact of congestion on these routes.
2. We would appreciate the opportunity to work with you on the design and implementation of the potential priority bus routes serving the city centre, for example the bus lane on Hills Road, which currently stops halfway down to allow for a left turn for car traffic, despite there being an alternative route. Hills Road is, in our experience, one of the most congested in Cambridge and anything to make buses faster will increase their appeal as a mode of choice.
3. We would appreciate the opportunity to work with you to explore the potential for traffic signal priority for buses on any of the roads within the city
4. We appreciate the recognition that zero emission cars, which, although they contribute zero-emissions, do contribute to congestion and we note the GCP have not given them any specific dispensation in terms of this particular proposal.
5. We support the use of taxi's not to use bus ONLY lanes, we appreciate the GCP have recognised that taxis have increased significantly over the years and that the proposal that taxis be treated as cars is the right decision to make.

6. We are concerned at the use of shuttle buses to move customers into the City centre. Customers regularly cite journey times as a barrier for sustainable bus travel, so any increase in journey times as a result of having to change buses will have a detrimental effect on those journey times. Other than its obvious size, we see no difference to a zero-emission full size bus (which operate in the city already) to that of a zero-emission minibus.

There are no obvious other interchange points for buses within the City, or for a relocated bus station. We would therefore welcome the opportunity to work with you on the design of the bus network currently serving Regent Street, Park Terrace, Emmanuel Street and Drummer Street to ensure that any growth in the number of bus services can be contained within refreshed and refurbished existing bus infrastructure resources in that area.

We do feel that if Regent Street; Park Terrace, Emmanuel Street and Drummer Street were closed to all but buses it would help traffic levels in those areas and this would be popular with Cambridge residents.

7. We would ask that serious consideration be given to segregation of active travel (cycling and walking) and where it can be achieved, the provision of bus ONLY lanes. A bus only lane will allow buses to operate at increased road speeds, reducing journey times and encouraging sustainable travel.
8. We would ask that consideration be given to enhancing the enforcement of any traffic and parking restrictions. We will work with the GCP to produce significant and regular publicity campaigns about the impact that inconsiderate stopping and parking has on the ability to operate punctual and reliable bus services. One inconsiderate parking action can disrupt a bus with over 80 passengers on it, and this can happen every hour, in every street in our congested City.

Stagecoach is keen to play our part with the GCP on the key goals of high-quality service delivery, affordable fares and public policies designed to encourage and promote effective and sustainable bus use.

As a demonstration of our commitment, we introduced fare simplification from 4th January 22, which resulted in 92% of our customers either being better off or no worse off. We now offer travel In Cambridge for £2.94 a day, with 33% discount for of all Youth fares and group travel for 1 adult and two youths for £6.60. We have a committed investment of £7.5million in 30 new Zero-emission buses for the Park & Ride fleet (due in service November 2022) and our tech teams are working on early introduction of Tap On Tap Off and fare capping capability.

All these initiatives are designed to make bus travel affordable and sustainable, but we recognise that public policies designed to encourage and promote bus use also play their part, that is why we welcome GCP new road classification for Cambridge and look forward to working with the GCP to develop the proposal further.

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