

ONE YEAR ON: PROGRESS IMPLEMENTING THE GREATER CAMBRIDGE PARTNERSHIP RESPONSE

GREATER CAMBRIDGE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY:

How do we reduce congestion, improve air quality and provide better public transport in Greater Cambridge?



January 2021

Introduction

In July 2020, the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) published its response to the Greater Cambridge Citizens' Assembly which met in September and October 2019. The response set out that the GCP:

- Supports the vision set out by the Citizens' Assembly and will seek to bring forward proposals to meet it;
- Is taking forward a series of short-term interventions, prioritising those that respond to the Covid-19 context;
- Is building on this initial response by developing packages of longer-term measures, for consideration by Joint Assembly and Executive Board in November and December;
- Agrees with the principles that public transport should come first, that measures should be fair, and that money raised should be ring-fenced for transport in Greater Cambridge and wider area;
- Will keep participants engaged and updated, and report regularly on progress.

This report provides an update on progress in implementing the GCP's response. It was agreed by the GCP Executive Board at their meeting on 10 December 2020.

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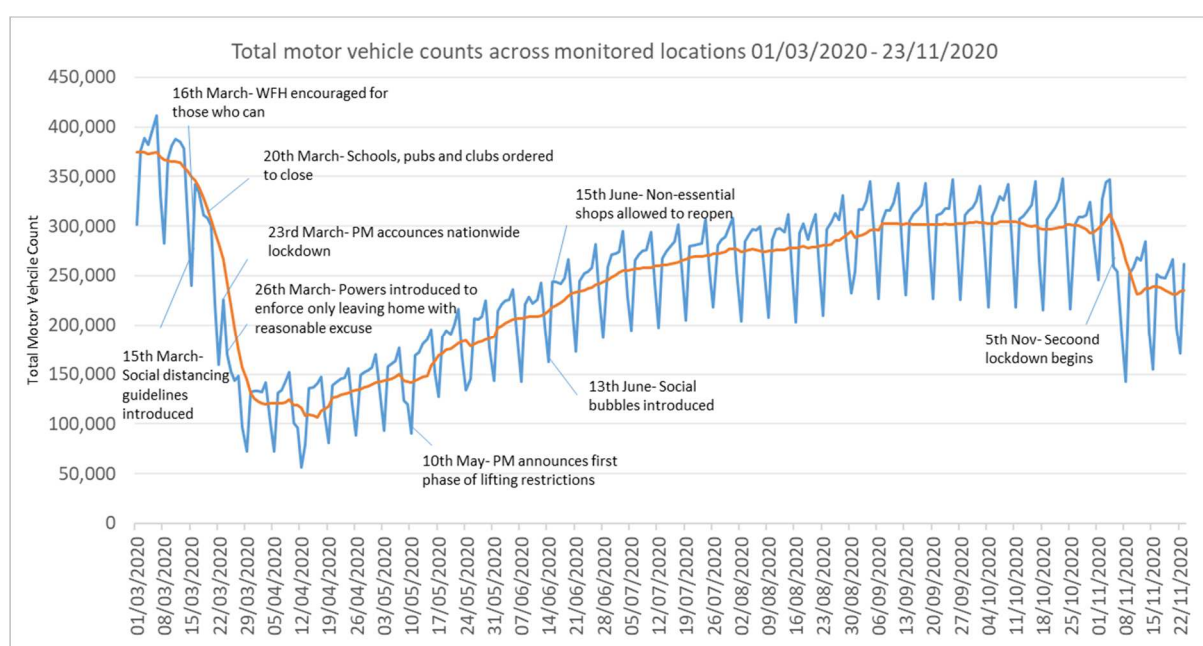
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Covid-19 and transport in Greater Cambridge

Since the Citizens' Assembly met in autumn 2019, the Greater Cambridge area has seen huge changes to transport resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions on travel, work and leisure activities. As set out in the response to the Citizens' Assembly, this has impacted on how the GCP has been able to make progress, particularly in designing and implementing improvements to public transport. The situation is constantly evolving, as national and local restrictions change, but to date the following key trends have been observed:

- Traffic levels fell significantly during the spring lockdown, but rose as restrictions eased, recovering more quickly than other forms of transport. Within Cambridge City, traffic levels remained around 20% lower than pre-lockdown levels but in South Cambridgeshire and across Cambridgeshire more widely, levels rose to above pre-lockdown levels. With high levels of working from home continuing, the rise in car trips suggest more people using their car for journeys they may have made a different way in the past.

Figure 1: Total motor vehicles recorded daily across Cambridge Vivacity Sensors and CA counters from 1 March to 23 November

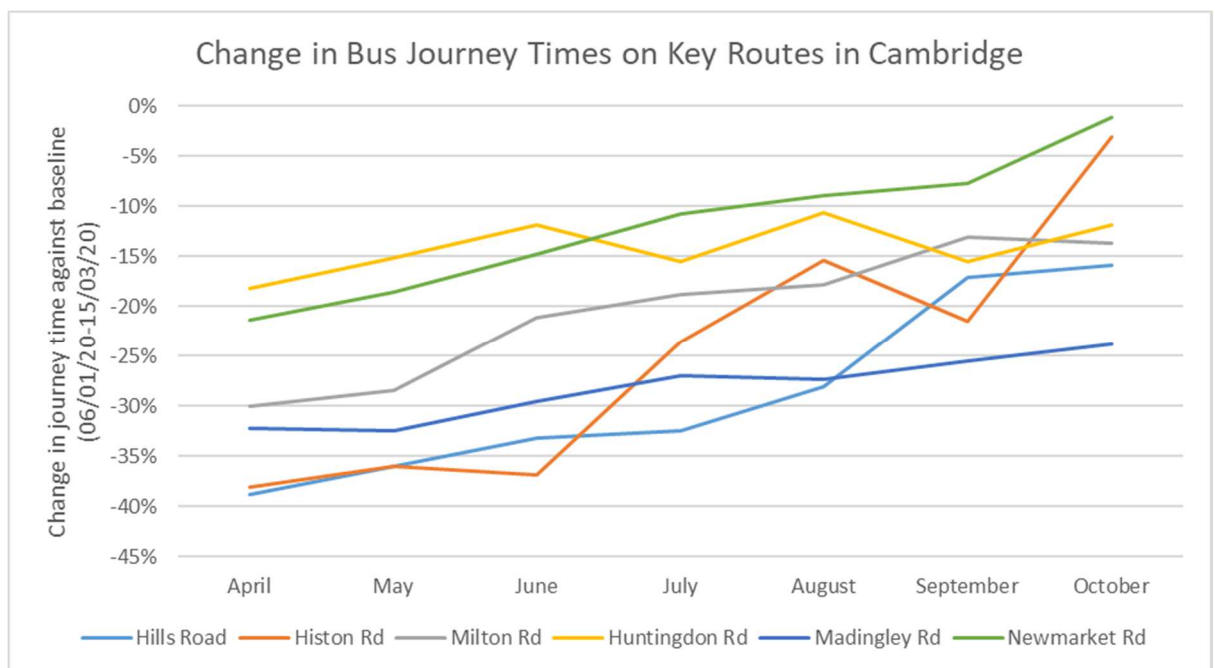


- In contrast, the impact of the pandemic on public transport has been more severe than other forms of transport. The number of journeys being made by bus or train fell by around 95% in the spring lockdown and, although there has been some recovery, public transport patronage remains significantly below usual levels. The government is currently funding bus and railway operations because fare revenue is not enough to cover operating costs. Unless the

number of people using public transport increases, this subsidy is likely to be needed for some time.

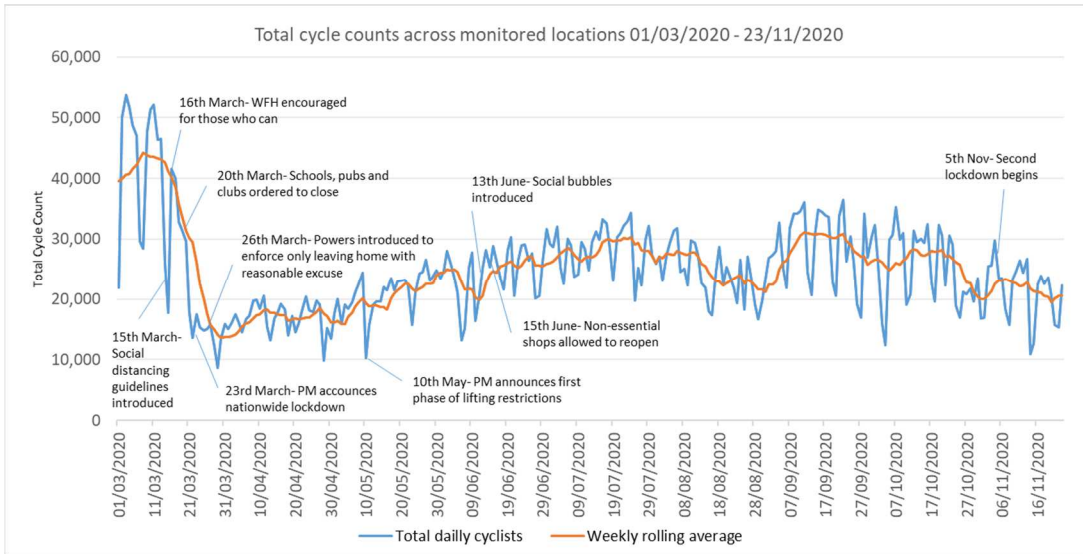
- Equally, it remains the case that a high quality public transport network is likely to be crucial to the success of Greater Cambridge and the wider area in the longer term, to address the issues around congestion, air pollution and carbon emissions discussed by the Citizens’ Assembly.
- Lower traffic levels have shown how congestion can slow down public transport and make it less reliable. In the spring lockdown, buses were completing their journeys faster and arriving on time more often. As traffic levels have increased, so have bus journey times. This impacts on operators’ ability to provide a good service.

Figure 2: Change in bus journey times on key routes in Cambridge



- In terms of walking and cycling, the current sensor network is recording lower levels compared to 2019, though this is likely to be driven by fewer people commuting to work and more people working from home. In lockdown, quieter streets encouraged more people to try cycling and, nationally, there has been an increase in the number of people owning and using a bike regularly. Active travel has been recognised as an important part of economic recovery, both while social distancing endures but also in building healthier, more resilient communities.

Figure 3: Cyclists recorded on all sensors and CA counters from 1 March to 23 November



- Air quality showed a marked improvement during the spring lockdown, with levels of NO₂ 40-65% lower than usual. However, since restrictions eased, Cambridge has seen NO₂ levels increase towards pre-pandemic averages, even with changes to travel. Analysis suggests that both lower overall traffic levels and lower numbers of buses contributed to better air quality during the lockdown.

Figure 4: 2017-2019 average NO₂ compared to 2020, plotted against Defra estimated background levels



It remains unclear what restrictions will be in place over the coming months, and what their impact will be on the economy and the way we travel – both in the short- and longer-term. The GCP will need to balance this uncertainty with the commitments made in the City Deal and in the response to the Citizens' Assembly to deliver investment that supports more people to use sustainable modes of travel and reduce congestion, air quality and carbon emissions. Close monitoring of data will continue and Cambridgeshire Insight is publishing information about key indicators here: https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/coronavirus_cambridgeshire/covid-19-travel-impacts/

Follow up online workshop: understanding the views of Citizens' Assembly participants in the light of this changing context

In September 2020, the GCP held a follow up workshop for Citizens' Assembly participants. The workshop aimed to understand participants' reflections on their recommendations, particularly given the changes seen to transport during the pandemic. Undertaking the workshop also reflected the Joint Assembly and Executive Board's desire to keep participants engaged and updated on progress in developing proposals to respond to their recommendations.

Due to ongoing social distancing requirements the workshop was held online, and facilitated by [Involve](#). All Citizens' Assembly members who had indicated they wanted to stay in touch were invited and a £10 Love Cambridge gift card was offered for those that took part. The workshop focused on two areas:

- Progress in implementing the response to the Citizens' Assembly and the impact of COVID-19 – what were the Citizens' Assembly members' reflections on their recommendations and short term priorities?
- Shaping the future – what were the Citizens' Assembly members' reflections on longer-term directions, opportunities and key messages.

A full report from the workshop, as well as the agenda and video recordings of the presentations, are available here: <https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/greater-cambridge-citizens-assembly-workshop-2020>. A full write up of the discussions is included and sets out the points that were made in detail. The report highlights in particular the following priorities:

- COVID-19 reduction in traffic and improved air quality showed what is possible and maintained participants' priority on:
 - traffic reduction measures
 - shifts to less environmentally damaging transport
 - measures to stop reverting to the car and maintaining a people (rather than car) centred approach
 - underpinning drivers of sustainability, climate change and the environment.
- Maintaining a strong focus on public transport investment and its viability in changing circumstances particularly safety and ways to adapt provision to maintain services.
- The COVID-19 crisis enabling the opportunity to do more, not less – especially for public transport.
- Continued focus on walking and cycling infrastructure and addressing new safety concerns that come from less traffic and different modes of travel.

- Opportunities for reducing congestion, improving air quality and providing better public transport raised by implications of changing work, travel and land use patterns. This included support for:
 - the vision of the 15-minute city / community.
 - homeworking
 - last mile delivery given the rise in online shopping
 - an integrated, holistic approach linking economy, health and climate

- Think bold but act local. Improving small things that don't take huge budgets but have a big impact on wellbeing

The GCP would like to thank the 12 Assembly members who participated in the workshop and shared their thoughts and reflections as part of the discussions. The considered feedback set out in Involve's report will inform the GCP's continued activity in response to the Citizens' Assembly recommendations, as set out in the following sections.

Taking action: progress to date

The GCP sustainable transport programme

As the delivery body for the Greater Cambridge City Deal, the GCP is delivering a comprehensive programme of sustainable transport initiatives, working with local authority partners to create a world-class transport network that can meet the needs of the area now and into the future. In May 2020, a Government ‘Gateway review’ hailed ‘significant success and progress’ the Partnership has made since 2015 on ambitious plans ranging from city cycleways to better public transport routes to transform travel for thousands of people.

The GCP’s sustainable transport programme aims to deliver a public transport and infrastructure network for the future, supporting sustainable and inclusive growth by creating new and improved infrastructure for better, greener journeys. The infrastructure programme includes:

- The GCP’s four corridor schemes – Cambourne to Cambridge, Waterbeach to Cambridge, Cambridge Eastern and Cambridge South East are offering better public transport and active travel¹ routes along four corridors identified as essential to link growing communities to the north, south east, east and west. The schemes form an integral part of delivery of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority’s (CPCA) Cambridge Autonomous Metro (CAM) and part of the GCP’s vision for a future bus network;
- Further improvement schemes at Milton and Histon Road are creating better connections for faster and more reliable public transport journeys and better walking and cycling links
- The GCP is providing over 10,000 additional park and ride spaces by creating and enhancing Travel Hub capacity on busy routes outside the city. New facilities will be equipped with charging points for electric vehicles and integrated with walking and cycling routes.
- The GCP is creating safe and easy routes for more active travel journeys to accommodate Greater Cambridge’s growing number of cyclists, along with those walking and horse-riding. A network of 12 Greenways for between connections for those travelling into the city and inner city Cross City Cycling, Chisholm Trail and Maddingley Road schemes are all underway.

These infrastructure projects sit alongside the work being developed through the city access project, as well as by Smart Cambridge and others. The recommendations of

¹ Active travel is any means of travelling that requires physical activity, such as cycling or walking. It is defined in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough [Local Transport Plan](#) as ‘Physically active modes such as cycling, walking, or horse riding. It also includes walking or cycling as part of a longer journey’.

the Citizens' Assembly are being used to inform the development of the programme as a whole. Reports going to the Joint Assembly and Executive Board now include a section so each project can set out how the proposals will help to deliver the response to the Citizens' Assembly.

Short-term interventions

The GCP's response to the Citizens' Assembly set out a series of immediate actions that had been agreed in February 2020, and how these would be taken forward in the context of the pandemic with the aim of supporting the uptake of sustainable travel options and a sustainable recovery. Given current uncertainty around the longer-term impacts of the pandemic and restrictions on the economy and transport, delivery of these measures remains a key priority.

Road space reallocation

Recognising the key focus of the Citizens' Assembly on creating more space for pedestrians and cyclist and reallocating road space away from cars, the GCP agreed to pilot further road closures and road space reallocation, both in the city centre and on local roads, including the development of community-led schemes.

During the pandemic, the GCP has delivered 6 experimental road space reallocation schemes as part of a wider programme of emergency active travel measures led by the County Council: at Carlyle Road, Luard Road, Newtown area, Nightingale Avenue, Silver Street and Storey's Way. These schemes, designed to encourage more people to walk and cycle during the pandemic and support economic recovery and social distancing by prohibiting through traffic movements, were introduced using Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs) which were made on 29 July.

The schemes can be in place for a maximum of 18 months. During the first 6 months, anyone can comment on or object to making the schemes permanent after that date. Other representations can be submitted at any time. In 2020, the GCP undertook consultation on all six schemes to seek feedback. All representations, objections and feedback, as well as monitoring information, will be considered by the GCP Executive Board in 2021, and they will make a recommendation to the County Council for each scheme on whether it should be made permanent, altered in some way, or removed.

The GCP is continuing to work with the County Council on possible further measures. The County Council's emergency active travel programme will also support several school street closures, and the GCP has also provided funding for a play streets scheme.

Public transport improvements

Three areas were identified as potential short-term improvements to public transport: investment in additional services, development of a fare pilot, and expanding the electric bus pilot. The impact of the pandemic on public transport has been severe and the regulatory, operational and funding environment remains uncertain. This has meant the GCP has not been able to progress service enhancements or fare pilots at this time, although these both remain a priority for action when possible.

Work has been undertaken to identify options for expanding the electric bus pilot, and has identified two areas where additional trials would be helpful: trialling vehicles that charge during the day (opportunity charging) rather than overnight, and, for routes where the mileage is higher than electric vehicles can currently offer, trialling extended range hybrid buses, with geofencing in place to ensure that when the bus was in certain areas it could only use its zero emission mode.

Encouraging cycling and walking

The initial measures also looked to encourage more people to cycle through provision of additional cycle parking at key locations, and by funding a lease scheme for electric and cargo bikes to encourage longer distance, family and business cycle commuting.

The GCP has provided match funding for an ecargo bike scheme launching this Autumn, which will provide bikes for businesses and residents to try out. Additionally, the Combined Authority has entered a partnership with Voi to provide shared ebikes and scooters in Cambridge City. A further ebike scheme – Big Issue eBikes – will launch next year as a partnership between ShareBike and The Big Issue.

Options to deliver additional cycle parking are also being developed. Cycle theft is a potential deterrent to some potential cyclists, particularly those wishing to use ebikes which are more expensive. The GCP wants to encourage the uptake of ebikes as these support more people to cycle, particularly those who are able to ride a bike but find cycling physically challenging and people travelling longer distances. The GCP is working with the City Council to look at options to increase the amount of secure cycle parking in the city centre, as well as developing a support business investment in secure facilities at workplaces, on business parks and on campuses.

City centre freight pilot

Responding to the Citizens' Assembly's recommendations on freight, the GCP agreed to develop a deliveries consolidation pilot for the city centre.

The Covid-19 pandemic has seen changes to delivery patterns for businesses and households. Businesses have worked to adapt to the restrictions but there are longer-term concerns that high levels of goods vehicles can impact on air quality, as well as creating a less pleasant environment for walking and cycling. With limited space available in the city centre, there is the opportunity to provide more space for outdoor tables and chairs and for walking and cycling which would necessitate changes to the way businesses receive and send out goods.

A deliveries consolidation pilot is being developed that would explore the potential for delivery consolidation in Cambridge and provide an opportunity to assess the basis on which it could operate commercially in the longer term, either independent of or in partnership with local authorities. The model being explored would involve goods being delivered to a consolidation centre on the edge of the city for onward delivery by electric bike or other electric vehicle depending on the size of the goods. A secondary site in the city centre would act as a holding point for smaller goods before onward delivery by electric bike and for goods collected for delivery to external customer collection points. Initial discussions have been held with business organisations including the Cambridge BID and Cambridge Ahead, and also the University of Cambridge. Further feedback will be sought from businesses before finalising proposals.

Integrated parking strategy

To support future decisions around parking policy and provision across Greater Cambridge, the GCP agreed to work with partners to develop an integrated parking strategy. The Covid-19 pandemic saw changes to parking patterns across the city. Both city centre car parks and park&ride sites saw reduced use during the main lockdown, though use of city centre car parks recovered more strongly than park&ride, likely at least in part due to guidance around use of public transport. Both the City and County councils made temporary changes to parking operations in response to the pandemic. Parking remains a key tool in reducing congestion and encouraging the uptake of sustainable transport options, and data from the changes through the pandemic will be used to inform development of the strategy. The GCP will work with the City and County Councils in developing the integrated parking strategy, for review by the Joint Assembly and Executive Board in 2021.

Developing longer-term packages

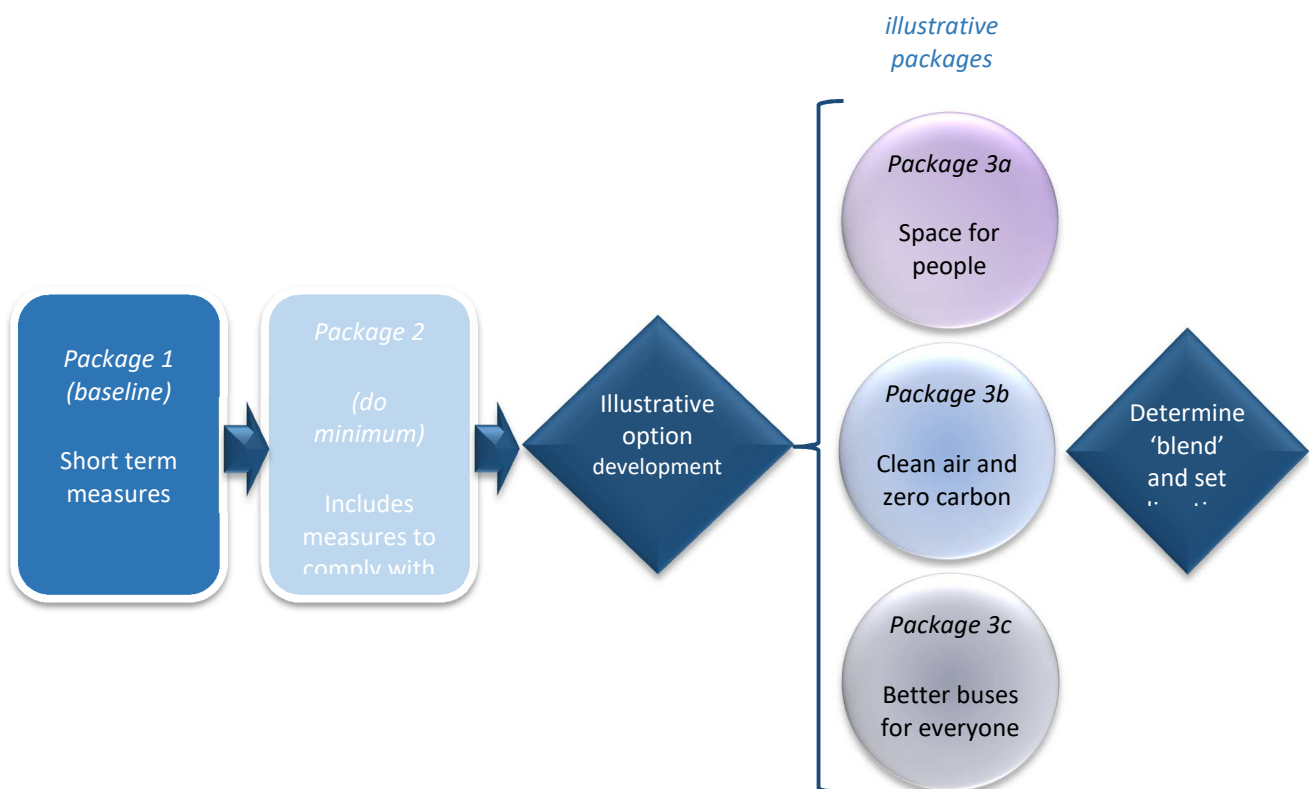
Alongside developing and delivering the short-term measures, the GCP response to the Citizens' Assembly agreed to develop a set of packages informed by the Citizens' Assembly recommendations and providing options for different levels of intervention in the medium-long term.

A series of five packages has been developed, drawing on earlier technical work and the city access principles developed and agreed by the Executive Board in June 2019. The packages build on three key themes from the Citizens' Assembly's recommendations: creating space for people, being environmental and zero carbon, and delivering high quality, affordable public transport.

Figure 5 summarises the development of the five packages and how they relate to one another:

- Package 1 is a baseline package including the agreed short term measures;
- Package 2 builds on the baseline by including measures to comply with air quality legislation, creating a 'do minimum' package;
- The three further packages, 3a, 3b and 3c, take the three Citizens' Assembly themes above and build on packages 1 and 2, with each exploring a different approach and utilising different sets of measures.

Figure 5: city access package development



Each package would be implemented using a phased approach, beginning with investment in measures to improve sustainable travel options, followed by (in packages 2, 3a,b+c) early implementation of measures to tackle air pollution. Once GCP public transport and active travel infrastructure improvements had started to come on stream, packages 3a,b+c would then see more significant demand management measures rolled out to support the uptake of sustainable transport.

The packages have been designed to demonstrate the potential impacts of different levels and types of interventions in order to support discussions about which elements may be most important in refining a final package. Assumptions have been made about the blend of measures, which are designed to be illustrative rather than forming firm proposals. In practice, it is likely a blend of measures from different packages would form any future proposals.

As part of developing the packages, the GCP commissioned a preliminary Integrated Impact Assessment to explore the impacts of each package, including outlining a range of additional mitigation and enhancement measures that should be considered.² The report found that packages 1 and 2 are likely to have smaller and more localised effects and would not achieve City Deal ambitions. Packages 3a,b+c build on these, and are likely to have more significantly positive effects. However, the nature of the measures included in these packages (i.e. designed around a single theme) mean that the benefits are not maximised. Each package is likely to have a range of positive and negative impacts, but the benefits could be maximised by potentially considering how the measures in packages 3a,b+c could be combined to work together in a complementary manner. In doing so, the preliminary Integrated Impact Assessment recommends that specific design and implementation of measures should carefully consider the potential for negative effects to simply be displaced, rather than reduced.

The report also outlines that:

- the relative timing of implementation of each measure is key.
- changing travel behaviour may be more difficult for some groups compared to others, for example those on lower incomes, those with disabilities and SMEs. Measures to ease the transition to new travel behaviours should therefore be particularly targeted at such groups.

A detailed description of the packages and the full findings of the preliminary Integrated Impact Assessment were presented to the Joint Assembly and Executive Board in November and December 2020 for their consideration.³

² <https://greatercambs.filecamp.com/s/thZgVi8Xqm1eClkj/fi>

³ The reports can be read here:

<https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccclive/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1301/Committee/36/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx> and
<https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccclive/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1419/Committee/26/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

Further action: a phased approach

In December 2020, the Executive Board considered a paper setting out proposals for further action. The Joint Assembly discussed this report in November. They supported the short-term measures but wanted to see delivery of these accelerated to support uptake of sustainable travel in advance of the end of pandemic, to avoid a return to previous levels of congestion and air pollution. Members who spoke also expressed a wish to see further action taken at the earliest opportunity to meet this objective, including progress with some of the medium-longer term measures suggested as part of the packages work.

In agreeing next steps and areas for intervention, the Executive Board took into account the current transport context arising from the pandemic and restrictions. This presents challenges in designing and delivering some measures although, at the same time, there is a clear imperative to take action to shape how Greater Cambridge emerges from the pandemic and support a green recovery. This latter point was emphasised by the Citizens' Assembly participants who attended the follow-up workshop in September.

On 10 December 2020, the Executive Board agreed to a phased approach to further action, which would involve:

- Continuing to develop and deliver the short-term measures outlined earlier in this report;
- Building on these measures by progressing further work to reduce air pollution and carbon emissions and reallocate road space to better prioritise sustainable modes of travel;
- Recognising the Joint Assembly feedback – and building further on the Citizens' Assembly's desire for additional action – considering how additional progress can be made towards a final package of measures aiming to improve public transport and reduce congestion, air pollution and carbon emissions, at the next Executive Board meeting in March 2021.

This approach was proposed so that areas where action could be taken now would continue to progress, with additional areas added as soon as circumstances allow. The two areas agreed for immediate progress were:

Reducing air pollution and carbon emissions

Analysis shows that air pollution remains an issue and is likely to do so in the future. In particular, in order to deliver an expanded public transport network, cleaner buses will be needed to avoid adverse impacts on air quality. This has therefore been identified as a key part of any future package and one where progress can be made now. In December, the Executive Board agreed proposals to expand the electric bus pilot, and to build on this by working with partners to support the bus fleet to move to zero emission vehicles. This would include:

- Setting an ambitious but achievable time period for all buses to be zero emission, and agreeing the milestones to achieving this. This will take into account the future of bus operations, potential funding models and the government's wider strategy on decarbonising transport;
- Developing a model for supporting operator investment in zero emission vehicles;
- Working with our partners to develop measures that drive forward the upgrade of the bus fleet and ensure zero emission buses operate in defined areas; and
- Considering the potential impacts set out in the preliminary Integrated Impact Assessment and whether any enhancements or mitigations are needed for a future approach to driving forward and capturing air quality benefits.

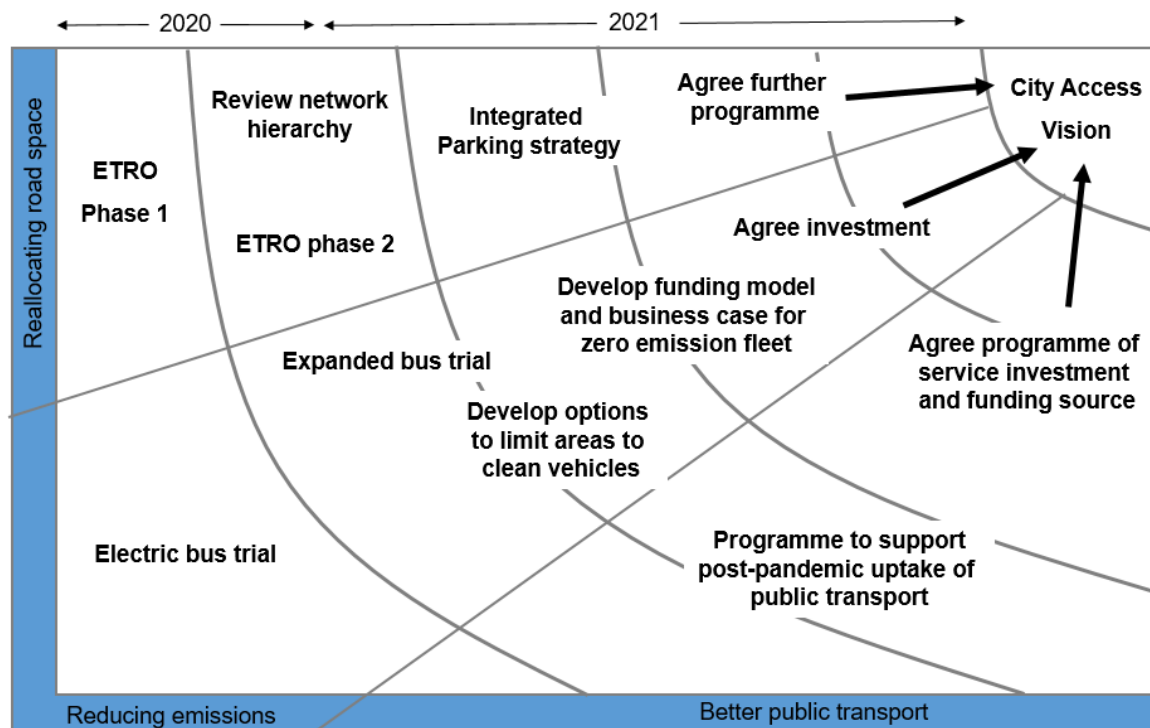
Future road space reallocation

Ensuring we make best use of Greater Cambridge's road space is also going to be a key part of any future package, and another area where additional progress can be made at the current time. Building on the measures to reallocate road space as part of the County Council-led emergency active travel programme, in December the Executive Board agreed to work with the County Council to review the city road network hierarchy to better reflect the needs of sustainable transport and to guide investment in further measures to improve bus reliability and create safer environments for walking and cycling. This will enable a strategic and considered approach to future road space reallocation measures by setting expectations about future use and informing further investments.

Proposed approach

The following diagram sets out actions that will be taken and the proposed approach.

Figure 6: city access and public transport improvements: steps towards a final package



Future Investment Strategy

The GCP has also reviewed its Future Investment Strategy, and an updated Strategy was agreed by the Executive Board in December.⁴ The Future Investment Strategy is designed to look across the whole period of the City Deal and identify funding priorities in order to secure the objectives set out in the deal and agreed subsequently. The Citizens' Assembly has informed the updated Future Investment Strategy. In particular, the Strategy sets out the importance of the wider GCP programme in delivering new public transport and active travel infrastructure to transform Greater Cambridge's transport network and enable people across the area and beyond to travel easily and sustainably. Delivering this new infrastructure will support economic recovery and speaks to the priority coming through from the Citizens' Assembly workshop to maintain a strong focus on public transport investment.

⁴ <https://greatercamb.filecamp.com/s/IEJPbEGCJoFh4hQq/d>

Conclusion

One year on from the Greater Cambridge Citizens' Assembly, the recommendations made by participants are being used to inform and shape the Greater Cambridge Partnership's work to tackle congestion, reduce air pollution and carbon emissions, and improve public transport. This includes taking action across a range of areas in the short term to improve sustainable travel options, informed by the Citizens' Assembly's priorities, as well as looking at how packages of measures might work in the longer-term and identifying additional areas to progress. The Covid-19 pandemic continues to shape the GCP's response to the Citizens' Assembly and the recent workshop gave useful insight into participants' reflections on their priorities for action. The Citizens' Assembly's call to 'be bold, be brave, and take action' will continue to be recognised in the GCP's programme.

The GCP is committed to keeping Citizens' Assembly participants engaged and updated, and to demonstrating how we are responding to their recommendations. This will continue through ensuring all GCP papers include reference to how proposals support the response to the Citizens' Assembly. The Executive Board have also agreed, given the impact of current uncertainty on the GCP's work, that a further report will be brought to the Joint Assembly and Executive Board in a year's time to set out additional progress by the GCP in tackling congestion, reducing air pollution and carbon emissions, and improving public transport.

The GCP would like to reiterate its thanks to every member of the Greater Cambridge Citizens' Assembly for participating and giving up their time to develop the recommendations that are now shaping the GCP's programme and activities.