



Greater Cambridge Partnership – Congestion Charge Zone Consultation CONFEDERATION OF PASSENGER TRANSPORT

Date of Issue: December 2022

Executive Summary:

- We are supportive of Greater Cambridge Partnerships (GCP) ambition to reduce congestion, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions
- Additionally, we support the exemption offered to registered bus services and the proposal to reinvest funds into delivering improvements to the bus network
- Non registered bus services provide vital services for passengers travelling to education and work places and significantly reduce congestion, we would therefore urge GCP to extend the exemption to include these services
- Active travel options provide first and last mile solutions and connect passengers to bus services, it is important supportive measures such as bike racks and safe pedestrian access are introduced to increase bus accessibility
- We were disappointed the proposals include plans to charge coaches £50 per day, coaches can remove up to 50 cars off the road and should therefore be recognised as part of the solution
- We encourage GCP to engage with their local bus operators to ensure that any measures to deliver improvements to the bus network deliver what they set out to achieve
- We encourage GCP to engage with local businesses to understand the full benefits delivered by coach and the impact of the proposals
- We urge GCP to adopt the same approach as the London Congestion Charge Zone, which excludes coaches due to their ability to reduce congestion
- GCP should consider investing in coach friendly measures to incentivise and increase coach travel
- Exemptions should also be considered for PSVAR compliant vehicles

About CPT

We help a dynamic bus and coach industry to provide better journeys for all, creating greener communities and delivering economic growth.

We do this by representing around 900 members from across the industry be they large or small, bus or coach, operator or supplier. We use our influence to campaign for a supportive policy environment, give our members practical advice and support to run their businesses safely, compliantly and efficiently and bring the industry together to share ideas and best practice.

Confederation of Passenger Transport

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We are ambitious to make things better for passengers, inclusive in seeking out different perspectives and we are always there when our members need us.

CPT Response

We are supportive of the GCP's ambition and commitment to reducing congestion, which in turn will deliver carbon emission savings and improvements to air quality for all road users and visitors.

However, we are disappointed to see that only registered bus services will be offered an exemption for travelling inside the proposed zone, both non-registered bus services and coaches play a vital role in reducing congestion and should therefore be included in the exemption.

Registered bus services

We are supportive of the proposal to exempt registered bus services from the congestion charge. Increasing levels of congestion is one of the primary issues facing bus travel, it increases bus journey times and reduces journey reliability which we know are key reasons people choose not to travel by bus. A 10% decrease in bus speeds caused by congestion reduces passenger numbers by 10%¹ and increases operating costs across the bus network by £400 million a year², reducing operators ability to invest in delivering service improvements.

Additionally, we support the proposal to reinvest funds from charged vehicles into delivering improvements to the bus network. We have seen good partnership working between Local Transport Authorities and bus operators across the country throughout the Bus Service Improvement Plan process. The process has demonstrated how effective partnership working can be in ensuring that improvements to bus services are delivered efficiently and economically. We encourage GCP to engage with bus operators who travel to, from and within the Cambridge area to ensure that any proposed improvements benefit passengers.

Non Registered bus services

However, the proposal does not state that the exemption extends to non registered bus services. These will include vital services provided by local education authorities for school and college students and teaching staff, as well as rail replacement services in the event a train service is temporarily cancelled. These are valuable services that significantly reduce congestion and enable many people to access education and work places. Charging

Confederation of Passenger Transport ¹ Professor David Begg for Greener Journeys (2016) The Impact of Congestion on Bus Passengers
22 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1PR ² Industry research

these vehicles could put these services at risk and has the potential to further increase congestion. We would therefore urge GCP to ensure the exemption also covers non registered bus services.

Active travel

Walking and cycling provide first and last mile solutions and connect passengers to bus services, to complete longer journeys where active travel options are less feasible. The average bus user walks or cycles for at least 20 minutes as part of their commute³.

It is important that supportive measures such as cycle racks and safe, well-lit pedestrian access to bus stops are introduced to increase bus accessibility and to encourage more passengers to leave their cars at home.

Coaches

Coaches provide a vital, comfortable and environmentally sustainable travel option and help those who would otherwise struggle to travel. They can transport huge numbers of passengers around the UK, and transport around 600,000 children to school each day. Coaches provide a wide multitude of services to ensure people can get to where they need to go, including rail replacement services, vulnerable group transport, home to school and worker transfer services, all of which significantly reduce congestion. A single coach can remove up to 50 private cars off the road⁴, and we estimate that a 15% increase in coach passenger journeys by British people each year could lead to approximately 47 million fewer cars on the road⁵.

Cambridge is a historic city and a frequently visited tourist destination, attracting 8.1 million visits a year which contribute £835 million to the local economy⁶. Coach also plays a significant role in supporting the UK's tourism industry, in 2019 there were 500 million coach journeys made by British people⁷, 23 million of which were to tourist attractions and contributed £14 billion to the UK economy⁸.

We were therefore disappointed to see coach operators have not been offered the same exemption as buses, and instead the plans include a proposal to charge coaches £50 per day. We do not believe charging coaches will reduce congestion levels and instead penalises a sustainable and accessible travel option.

³ https://assets.goaheadbus.com/media/cms_page_media/6525/FutureOfTransport_Report_Lowres.pdf

⁴ CPT coach strategy

⁵ Based on 2019 figures and CPT analysis of DfT and National Travel Survey data

⁶ Tourism in Cambridge | Meet Cambridge (meet-cambridge.com)

⁷ CPT analysis of 2019 DfT and National Travel Survey data

⁸ CPT Research 2020



The London Congestion Charge Zone offers vehicles that can carry 9 passengers and above a 100% discount⁹, which includes coaches, due to their ability to significantly reduce congestion. We urge the GCP to adopt the same approach, to incentivise coach travel and recognise it as a solution to reducing congestion.

There are multiple business within Cambridge, located within the proposed zone that have green travel schemes in place provided by coaches that would be directly impacted by the proposed charges. We therefore call on GCP to engage with local businesses and undertake research and modelling to fully understand the benefits currently provided by coaches and the impact of the proposed congestion zone.

Additionally, to further support and encourage coach travel, GCP could look to reinvest some of the funds raised through the scheme into ensuring coach friendly measures are introduced at tourist and city locations, these measures include;

- Safe access from and exit to main roads suitable for large vehicles
- Safe areas for passengers to be set down and picked up
- Sufficient space for parking and maneuvering
- Additional consideration given to driver facilities

Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR)

Operators will often use coaches and minibuses equipped with a wheelchair lift for education transport services. These vehicles play a vital role in providing an accessible transport option for disabled passengers. Sheffield and Rotherham have included a payment exemption in their Clean Air Zone plans for any bus or coach that complies with PSVAR. It is vital that any proposed scheme enables these vehicles to continue delivering these essential services without being penalised.

Conclusions

Reducing congestion will deliver economic and health benefits to the Greater Cambridge area and we welcome the ambition set out in the proposals. It is encouraging to see bus travel recognised in the proposed plans however we would urge GCP to extend the exemption offered to registered bus services to include both non-registered bus services and coaches, which are equally sustainable travel options.

Coach is an inclusive, accessible and sustainable travel option that significantly reduces congestion, it is essential their benefits are recognised and promoted to incentivise and encourage more people to use them. This



can be achieved by extending the exemption to include coaches, working with local businesses and introducing coach friendly measures to ensure the full benefits of coach travel are recognised and achieved.

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