

## QUESTION TO EXECUTIVE BOARD

26 July 2017

The GCP transport officers have provided a comparison of Options 1, 3a and 6, using a “multi-criteria assessment” methodology intended to provide a simple, unweighted score for each route option. The methodology and criteria were agreed during constructive workshops held with the LLF technical group. Fifteen criteria were agreed upon, of which 13 could be determined at this stage, and it was agreed in advance that no weighting would be applied. Unfortunately, the scoring was then done unilaterally by the transport officers and their consultants, without LLF collaboration, and there are a number of areas of significant concern in their final output.

Three categories are sufficient to illustrate these concerns:

- 1) **Journey Times.** Despite the agreement that no weighting would be applied, one criterion, journey times, has been afforded four separate scores, thus giving it four times the weighting of any other criterion. As a result, journey time contributes almost 40% of the total score for Option 3a (20 out of 51 points). There is no reasonable basis for selecting one criterion for such special treatment. Just applying a single score for journey time would completely eradicate any difference between Option 6 and Option 3a. (Incidentally, it is interesting to note that in the October 2016 board minutes, Option 3/3a is described as offering “a 28 minute return journey between Cambourne and Cambridge”; now it seems as though this has become a 46 minute return journey as far as Grange Road. Would the Board have expressed the same preference for Option 3/3a had they received less inaccurate information at that time?)
- 2) **Constructability.** In the board reports for the September 2016 meeting, it was stated that “delivery will be most complex where the route options include a new bridge over the M11”. The constructability risk of Option 3/3a was scored as 1, the highest risk; while Option 1 had a score of 2. Option 1 still scores 2 points, but the score for Option 3a has now changed to a very low risk 4, on the grounds that a brand new M11 overbridge is “more straightforward than widening”. Not only does that fail to explain the change with regard to Option 1, it is also irrelevant to Option 6, which does not require the existing M11 overbridge to be widened. An Atkins report of June 2016, eventually disclosed some months later, makes it clear that a bus lane could be introduced on the M11 bridge by reducing the south-side pavement and reducing lane widths to a perfectly acceptable 3 metres – the same width as being proposed at this meeting for the Milton Road corridor scheme, incidentally. It is clearly preposterous to claim that a complete 10 km off-road busway over open countryside, with unknown flooding and other risks and including multiple new road junctions and a new motorway bridge, is less complex than a simple on-road scheme like Option 6.
- 3) **Stakeholder Support.** Despite the metric being agreed as “based on 2015 consultation responses and LLF support”, Option 6 has been scored as just 2 for stakeholder support, compared to 1 for Option 3a and 4 for Option 1. The rationale for the low Option 6 score is “not tested in public consultation”. This is completely false. The consultation document provided to consultees in 2015 did not mention Option 1 or Option 3/3a; it referred to a “central” route, specifying a “bus lane into Cambridge from the Madingley Mulch roundabout along

Madingley Rise and Madingley Road”, which closely matches the Option 6 proposal. Even the initial outline costs stated (£18m) were remarkably close to current estimates for Option 6. If anything, the consultation document may have under-represented the benefits of Option 6, since it offered “no improvements outbound”. This description garnered 67% stakeholder support. Since then, Option 6 has been overwhelmingly endorsed by the LLF. A score of 2 is absurd and unjustifiable.

In most cases, these are not simply differences of opinion or “judgment calls”; they are clear errors of fact or misapplications of the agreed metrics or methodology.

Importantly, correcting these errors and defects would result in a final score that marginally favoured Option 6 over Option 1 and clearly favoured both over Option 3a, even before the benefit-cost ratio is added in.

Will the Board accept that a fair allocation of scores for Options 1, 3a and 6 does not support the Interim Transport Director’s assertion at point 33 of his report that “Option 6 ... does not score as highly as Options 1 or 3a” and that Option 6 should therefore remain in the process and undergo a full, fair and, most importantly, independent assessment?

**Dr Gabriel Fox**