

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: New Communities Portfolio Holder 11 November 2008
AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Corporate Manager
(Planning and Sustainable Communities)

CAMBRIDGESHIRE GUIDED BUSWAY

Purpose

1. Cambridgeshire County Council is beginning formal statutory consultation on the making of a Quality Partnership Scheme, and Ticketing Scheme relating to the operation of the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway. The deadline for making comments on the consultation document is 24 December 2008. Following the consultation, the County Council will consider the responses received and decide whether or not it wishes to proceed with both or either of the proposed schemes.

Background

2. The Cambridgeshire Guided Busway, currently under construction, is intended to provide a High Quality Public Transport system (HQPT) (services of a minimum 10 minute frequency during peak periods and minimum 20 minutes frequency inter-peak) from Huntingdon via St Ives to Cambridge city centre and then to Trumpington and Addenbrooke's Hospital via Cambridge Railway Station. The County Council intends the busway services will be fast, frequent and reliable. It is intended services will operate from 06:00 to 24:00 hours seven days a week, and predicted service levels are higher than HQPT, with service levels eventually up to 24 vehicles an hour each way on the busier sections of the route.
3. Under Section 34 of the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway Order 2005 (which makes provision for the acquisition of the land and construction of the busway, for the operation and regulation of the busway, and for traffic regulation and improvements on connecting roads), the County Council has the exclusive right to operate and use the busway, and the busway is private property not public highway. However the County Council has decided to allow use of the busway on an open-access basis, with any operator meeting certain criteria being able to run services on the busway. (However, the County Council has agreed to accord 5 years of exclusivity to 3 operators who expressed an interest in operating services along the busway following invitations from the County Council, in return for agreement to operate a minimum level of service. After the 5 years, it will be fully open access.)
4. As such the County Council intendeds to put in place certain structures to ensure the appropriate provision of services on the busway – to ensure vehicles are of sufficient technical quality for use on the guideways and ensure they meet the County Council's objectives of HQPT. To ensure this, the County Council intends to make a statutory quality bus partnership scheme under s.114 of the Transport Act 2000. In addition, to enhance the usability and common perception of the services on the busway, the County Council intends to put in place a multi-operator ticketing scheme under s.135 of the Transport Act 2000. Both of these schemes will be in the public interest and will implement policies in the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan 2004-11 and the proposed ticketing scheme will further the operational practices set out in the County Council's Bus Strategy.

5. The Transport Act requires the County Council to consult on the making of the proposed Ticketing Scheme and quality bus partnership. The provisions of both schemes have been developed in close liaison with the 3 operators who have committed to operating services in the first 5 years after opening.

- ***The proposed quality bus partnership scheme (QBP)***

6. Under the QBP scheme the County Council commits to provide the guided busway and certain other facilities. In return the operators of local services are required to meet certain minimum standards if they wish to use the busway. In particular vehicles must meet certain technical requirements (for example, be fitted with the necessary guide wheels) and also quality requirements such as emissions standards, livery, driver training and temperature control. The QBP also allows the County Council some degree of control over the timetable for services operated on the busway by restricting the number of times operators can alter the details of registered services, and ensuring an even headway between services.

- ***The proposed ticketing scheme***

7. The proposed ticketing scheme provides for a multi-operator ticket that will be available in addition to operators' own tickets, for travel on services operating along the busway. The tickets will be based on a 'carnet' system, probably held on electronic smartcard. Each pre-paid 'trip' of the carnet will allow one journey on any operator's services within the zones for which the particular carnet is valid.

- ***Implications for SCDC***

8. Under normal circumstances bus services are commercial operations, outside the control of the County Council, and bus operators determine the services that they provide, including the frequency of service and the type of livery used. However, the County Council, by having some degree of control over bus services through the BQP, will be able to ensure the best possible level of service to bus users, particularly in the first five years of operation. This will include a minimum level of service over a specified period of the day, and with a high quality of livery and supporting infrastructure. This should provide a quality alternative to the use of the car within the A14 corridor. In addition, introducing multi-operator ticketing, will provide greater flexibility to bus users, as passengers will be able to use any of the operators along the corridor, therefore not having to wait for the next bus by the one particular operator.

Implications

9.	Financial	None.
	Legal	None.
	Staffing	None.
	Risk Management	None.
	Equal Opportunities	Improved public transport will offer greater modal choice for South Cambs residents.

Consultations

10. None.

Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

11.	Work in partnership to manage growth to benefit everyone in South Cambridgeshire now and in the future
	Improved public transport will offer greater modal choice for South Cambs residents.
	Deliver high quality services that represent best value and are accessible to all our community
	Improved public transport will offer greater modal choice for South Cambs residents.
	Enhance quality of life and build a sustainable South Cambridgeshire where everyone is proud to live and work
	Improved public transport will offer greater modal choice for South Cambs residents.

Recommendations

12. It is **recommended** that South Cambridgeshire District Council
- (a) supports Cambridgeshire County Council in its aims to introduce a quality bus partnership scheme (QBP) and a ticketing scheme. (These schemes will assist in the delivery of High Quality Public Transport services along the A14 corridor, to provide a quality alternative to the use of the private car).
 - (b) supports the provision of multi-operator ticketing to enable flexibility to bus users, and the proposed measures through the QBP to improve the reliability, quality and therefore public perception of bus services to be operated along the Guided Busway. (This will result in improvements to public transport in and around the A14 corridor to the benefit of South Cambridgeshire residents).

Background Papers: None

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