

As the trade body for the bus and coach industry in all its sectors, we have an interest in representing the interests of the millions of bus and coach passengers who use the services of our members and who rely on the efficient operation of this strategically important stretch of road.

We have considered the evidence presented so far and would wish the Examining Authority to take into consideration the views of CPT in the deliberations of this project. These are generated from a variety of sources including the views expressed by our members, their customers and from our officer's knowledge of the locality.

Our points of consideration include :

How the proposals will help allviate the current levels of congestion and the cost, environmental damage, and inconvenience this causes to users.

The A14 is a key strategic route for both local and long distance bus and coach services, notably for coach traffic travelling from the Midlands and North of England, North Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to the channel ports for onward transit to destinations throughout Europe.

Local bus services use the route, predominantly serving communities directly along it and to the South. The Busway has provided a suitable alternative to using the A14, particularly for those serving communities to the North and offers additional capacity for local and commuter services, particularly into Cambridge.

Congestion on the route has caused difficulties for both local and long distance bus and coach traffic and we fully support any scheme which is able to reduce this congestion and allow the growth of further public transport services.

We are ever mindful of the environmental aspects of new road schemes and welcome efforts to mitigate the affects of such schemes whilst achieving the goals of reducing the congestion which is in itself a major cause of environmental damage.

We have estimated the scheme would extend majority of journeys by between approx 3 miles (for traffic travelling from the M11 to the A14 towards the Midlands) and approx 5 miles (traffic from the M11 to the A1 north) – confirmation of this would be welcome – but believe that if this assumption is correct, this is an acceptable distance if the current delays and uncertainty can be avoided. The volume of coach traffic travelling from the A11/ A14 East/ North of Cambridge on to the A14 west of Cambridge would be a very small proportion of the overall coach traffic along the Huntingdon – Cambridge corridor. As a result we do not feel this particular flow would be of great significance and in any case, would not be significantly affected by the current proposal in terms of additional travelling time/ distance.

Whilst we are open minded on alternative proposals, we believe that the current proposal is a reasonable compromise. The environmental effects are significant but at this stage, we believe that the overall benefits outweigh the disadvantages, both from a customer view and the relief of the significant environmental issues the current congestion causes.

We do have some concerns as to the resilience of the route to possible flooding in extreme circumstances. We note the concerns of others expressed to ourselves directly and those of our members and would like to see a full and robust examination of the proposal in this respect.

Alternative schemes which offer the A428 as a possible relief channel do have some appeal, including the proposed Oxford – Cambridge Expressway. Our concern would be that they don't appear to offer any additional capacity for passenger volumes from the key growth areas between Cambridge and Huntingdon, nor would they reduce the demand for travel along the Huntingdon – Cambridge corridor. The suggestion that traffic heading for the North and Midlands would use this route are somewhat speculative as it would entail additional mileage of around 25 – 30 and also mean a Northbound journey on an already heavily used stretch of the M1 from Milton Keynes/ Bedford to the Catthorpe interchange.

Ensuring that the proposals maintain the through routes and local access to them that are currently in use to minimise inconvenience to bus and coach passengers.

Congestion along the route is a major concern for our members and their customers. It's a widely held belief that the route has been in urgent need of additional capacity for many years. The fact that it is of such strategic importance for long haul journeys, most of them international, means that it causes major problems when there are delays. Driver scheduling will always allow for a certain margin but such is the level of delays and the unpredictable nature of them on this stretch, it is often impossible to legislate for. This causes maximum inconvenience to customers and adds costs in both driver time and increased fuel consumption, all in addition to the environmental cost of increased emissions caused by traffic making slow progress

Peak period delays of up to an hour are commonplace in normal conditions, accidents can extend this further. Outside the peak periods, delays can be less but are often even less predictable. When coaches are being scheduled to meet ferry/ Eurotunnel bookings and passenger interchanges, such delays cause immeasurable cost and inconvenience.

On a local scale, bus services using the road are scheduled to take account of the slower journey times. On top of this, the frequent delays and the operator requirement to meet strict guidelines for punctuality, themselves driven by customer expectations, are often severely challenged. This makes the option of travelling by bus along the route less attractive for customers who resort to the car.

We believe that the option presented offers a solution to the congestion and will not only allow greater reliability for services, but that this will in turn lead to buses offering a more appealing proposition to customers for their transport needs.

Ensuring the proposals can maximise the opportunities that public transport can offer in the area, both locally and for longer journeys.

The area is growing rapidly and whilst the Busway has provided much welcome additional capacity, greatly improved journey times and reliability, those services currently routed along stretches of the A14 and for which it is impractical to use the Busway, still suffer from the affects of congestion. The additional capacity offered by the Busway in conjunction with an improved A14 will offer attractive opportunities for bus services to cater for the growing commuter population travelling into Cambridge and give commuters in the settlements to the West of Cambridge a reliable, rapid and practical alternative to the private car for their travel needs. This could have a major impact in slowing the demand for capacity along the A14 in the years ahead.

The connecting roads planned are of particular interest to our industry in this respect. They will be the difference between success or failure of the route as an integrated transport corridor for both local and long distance traffic and we would urge greater priority for buses along these routes and at junctions.

The route has massive potential to open up additional commuter bus and coach journeys from further afield, both into Cambridge and directly to the growing commercial area in the East of London via the M11.

Representing the views of the industry with regard to the facilities the route currently offers bus and coach operators and their customers in providing services to meet the demands of passengers in the future.”

Whilst we are ever mindful of the environmental issues road schemes can raise, with this scheme as proposed, we are content that given the growth in residential, industrial and commercial development along the Cambridge – Huntingdon corridor, there is a genuine need for additional capacity along this route. Schemes which do not address this will inevitably lead to potential for greater environmental issues to arise in the future.

We believe that the proposed scheme will achieve the best result of anything proposed thus far taking into account environmental issues, reducing the current levels of congestion, and offering the potential for much improved journeys for local, commuter and long distance travel on public transport.