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| Transport & Infrastructure Committee | | Agenda Item |
| 17 January 2024 | | 3 |
| Title: | Public Questions | |
| Public Report: | Yes | |

Question 1 – from Lewis Jordan, Secretary, on behalf of ACORN Cambridge

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| To | Transport and Infrastructure Committee |
| Question: | <p>The Cambridge branch of ACORN, the community union, would like more details about the public consultation on bus franchising: when and where will it take place, who is running it, and what form does it take?</p> |
| Response: | <p>Thank you so much for your question. It's no secret that both mayor Nik and myself want to see better buses, and that we believe that bus reform is a necessary part of that. I'm going to give you quite a short answer today, but we are more than happy to stay in touch to make sure that your members are fully informed about what happens next.</p> <p>Once we've had a final response from the auditors, we'll be discussing in Board whether to go to consultation. We'll be deciding today whether to recommend that to board, subject to the auditors' report.</p> <p>That consultation is going to be so important in hearing what everyone who lives, works or studies in our region has to say. There's only so much talking we can do here – we need to hear from the wider public.</p> <p>Timings will depend on the speed of the other parts of the process running up to it, but were we to go ahead with consultation, it will need to follow the legislation requirements, as laid out in the 2017 bus services act. We will need online and in person engagement and briefing session and a set of accompanying document with the overview and the details. We'll need to balance the needs of getting all the technical detail out there with explaining the concept in a clear way.</p> <p>I know members of this committee are always very keen to ensure that consultation is proactive, reaches as many people as possible and goes beyond the usual suspects. If you have any suggestions from your members as to how we might reach different audiences, please do get in touch.</p> <p>.</p> |

Question 2 – from Rod Hart, Secretary, on behalf of Peterborough Climate Action Coalition (CPCAC).

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| To | Transport and Infrastructure Committee |
| Question: | <p>Bus services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are currently in a perilous position. Despite goodwill from across our region, the essential missing piece is funding.</p> |

The 2023-24 mayoral precept provided a stop-gap, preventing the loss of local bus routes, at least for now. But our current bus infrastructure and quality of service continues to disappoint local people and discourage any increase in ridership.

The evidence is clear that a shift from private car use to public and active transport must form part of a transition to net zero. Indeed CPCA's current Climate Action Plan sets out the goal to "Electrify transport and shift travel from the private car to greater levels of homeworking, active travel and mass transport solution". This clearly is not being achieved with business-as-usual bus funding.

This is an awful situation to be in. We now seem to have lost the option for parking levies or "congestion charges". The lack of political will to support these measures leaves no source of future funding to improve bus services. The ideal solution, of transport polluters funding greener transport, is no longer available to us.

Central government also continues to disappoint us and provides no other funding option for our buses. Unfortunately, it appears that the only way out of this perilous situation is via this Combined Authority. We will continue to lose bus routes if we have no mayoral precept. Our current routes and service levels *might* remain static if a 2024-25 mayoral precept is agreed at the level of last year (£12). If we want franchising, new routes, improved bus stops, increased services or transferable ticketing, we will need a larger mayoral precept.

The members seated at this meeting today represent councils that all have tools to support their residents who find paying council tax an extreme hardship. A mayoral precept is just one element of a council tax bill. Robust council tax discounts can ensure that the most vulnerable residents are protected from increases.

Therefore, my question is this:

Given that truly equitable solutions to fund our buses are no longer available to us, will this Transport Committee commit to supporting an increased mayoral levy in the 2024-25 Combined Authority budget?

Response:

Thank you so much for this question. I need to say to start with that this committee doesn't make the decision on the precept – it will be discussed at Board so that we, as board members can make a recommendation to Mayor Nik. What this committee has done consistently is give its view on the importance of better buses. In fact the agreement across the region on the importance of our buses is really striking. We might not always agree on how to fund them, but we have a much greater level of agreement on the importance of public transport, and improved buses as a part of that.

And that's the same whether you are in a city, looking to improve frequency or timings, or in a town or village where those without a car are dependent on lifts or taxis. The current situation requires immediate and effective action to ensure the sustainability and improvement of our bus services. Without it, I fear we are looking, in the longer term, at managed decline.

Last year, our precept of £1 a month for band D saved 23 bus routes wholly or partially cut by Stagecoach. This year we are proposing an extra £2 a month to secure our network. IT should bring over £7 million for bus improvements, improvements which will give people so much more choice and independence and reduce our carbon footprint too.

No-one takes any rise in council tax lightly, but this rise, if supported, will provide much-needed investment in our services.

However, it's also important that we continue to engage central government on funding. The Combined Authority core funding is not linked to inflation, so we get less and less each year in real terms. We estimate we've lost over £14 million through lack of inflation uplift since the Combined Authority was set up. And the East of England is one of the lowest funded regions in the country for public transport. We appreciate the money that we do receive from central government, such as the commitment to £2 single fares, but this needs to be reinforced with a levelled up, longer term transport funding settlement to our area.

Question 3 – from Chris Pointon, Cambridge Resident

To Transport and Infrastructure Committee

Question:

[A10 Corridor Project](#)

Given the findings of the Combined Authority's Independent Climate Commission, and increasing global temperatures due to climate change, great weight must be given to the carbon burden of this project. The public benefit of this scheme demonstrably does NOT outweigh the scale of newly embedded carbon that would be created through this infrastructure project.

If road building cannot be avoided, a secondary objective must be the prioritisation of public transport and car sharing. Provision of bus lanes and lanes dedicated to vehicles with multiple occupants is clearly preferable to the standard design of current A roads.

Therefore,

How does the Combined Authority propose to undertake the A10 Corridor Project while staying within the Authority's financed carbon emission reduction objectives and climate action plan?

Response:

The provision of low carbon and sustainable transportation is a priority in order for the Combined Authority to meet the recommendations of the Independent Climate Commission. Decarbonisation is a strategic priority for Department for Transport and central to DfT's business case requirements. As a significant infrastructure investment, the A10 Corridor Study must assess and manage carbon impacts in order to demonstrate a robust business case and maximise the value of this investment in tackling climate change at a critical window for action.

During the development of any potential options, due consideration will continue to be given to the overarching objectives of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, inclusive of the climate and environment. In addition, to meet the requirements of the Green Book and the DfT's expectation the Combined Authority will need to demonstrate how any preferred schemes meets national and regional objectives.

This study has adopted a carbon-led approach. This approach has been adopted throughout the Strategic Outline Business Case addendum stage and is continuing during the preparation of the Outline Business Case stage (OBC). This approach recognises that consideration of carbon impacts at the early stage offers the opportunity to maximise sustainability in the option sifting and selection process. This is in line with the PAS 2080 aim of maximising whole life carbon reduction, recognising there is greater scope to reduce emissions during early project development. As outlined earlier, the work also reflects carbon reduction targets established locally within existing, new, and emerging policies applicable to the study area (including the Local Transport Plan (LTP), Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) and Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)).

The selection of options early in the OBC preparation stage considers carbon reduction as a priority alongside other scheme objectives. Consideration is also given to climate resilience, including adapting to the foreseeable impacts of climate change, as part of the option selection and design processes. In addition, a more detailed carbon quantification is to be completed based on updated designs and traffic modelling, to inform the OBC. It is the Combined Authority's stated ambition that, where practical, whole life carbon reduction is achieved to be compatible with the net zero carbon transition

At present, there is no single preferred option for the next stage of public engagement and the Combined Authority, and the County Council are currently examining the emerging themes and possible options that could potentially be outlined to Members and public in due course. The options will include sustainable transport and active travel measures (in part or in full) thereby addressing some of the environmental concerns along the corridor.

Question 4 – from Paul Hollinghurst, Secretary, Cambridgeshire Resident

To Transport and Infrastructure Committee

Question:

The Review of 'Ting' demand responsive transport paints a picture of a service which has been run with unclear objectives, a limited service specification, minimal key performance indicators and a poorly thought-out service zone. The operator described little incentive to build and refine the service based on feedback and performance. The recommendations suggest a restructuring of the service area including the partial use of a semi-flexible service which I believe could increase loadings and make the service more useful for getting to work and education.

So the Ting service needs significant change to address these issues, then time to assess the effect of the changes if the lessons from Ting are to be incorporated in the four proposed new pilot schemes described in the "Future role of DRT in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough" report.

What timescales are envisaged to incorporate recommended changes into Ting, assess the results, then procure the proposed four new pilot schemes, and how much flexibility will there be in the pilot scheme contracts to support the possibility of substantial ongoing changes to these linked to reviews and analysis by CPCA?

Response:

Officers are currently considering the recommendations from the recent Ting report and developing a model for future Demand Responsive Transport that incorporates lessons learnt as well as best practice from across the country.

This will likely result in a different approach to the technology and operation of future Demand Responsive service trials with the CPCA taking more direct control over the technology provider. This allows benefits such as regular data of journey patterns, utilisation of vehicles and the flexibility to better consider new 'virtual' bus stop requests

The intention is to link further into communities and engage with residents on the size and scope of operating zones for the service as well as linking into the excellent Community Transport and Dial A Ride sector. Finally, officers will also consider existing and potential fixed bus routes in the areas identified to ensure there is no duplication of service and integration on the transport network