

better



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transport

Welcome to Cambridgeshire County Council's

Beacon Newsletter

Issue Two: July 2005

Cambridgeshire County Council is one of five authorities awarded Beacon Status for 'Better Local Public Transport'. In addition we have recently been awarded 'Centre of Excellence' for improved transport choices in towns and cities. This newsletter is aimed at sharing ideas and projects on which the County Council is currently working. We are enthusiastic about sharing information and experiences with other authorities: we have much to learn as well as to share! Please get in touch with us if you would like to find out any more. Contact details are on the back page.



City Centre set for further transport improvements

The County Council has been consulting on the fourth stage of Cambridge's award winning Core Traffic Scheme. Plans for Stage 4 include further restrictions of cars in the city centre but also a much-needed re-design of the area around Drummer Street bus station.

"The bus station in Cambridge is a very small area, it is a real challenge to ensure the ever increasing number of bus services can access the Drummer Street and Emmanuel Street area efficiently", said Richard Preston, Cambridge Projects

Manager, "The new design will include improved shelters and waiting areas, real time information as well as changes to bus layover facilities and a new onsite management office. We will see a real improvement in efficiency when these changes are introduced."

Part of the plans for Stage 4 include developing a quality bus partnership that operators using the core area would be required to sign.

The Core Traffic Scheme started in 1997 with the aim of removing through traffic and improving conditions for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians. The first three stages of the scheme saw closures to three other streets using rising bollards to control access. Reducing traffic congestion and

improving bus services in a key goal for the County Council in order to minimise pollution and preserve the unique character of the historic city centre.

The scheme clearly has a large impact on city centre users and consultation is an essential stage in the project. Cambridge Projects Communications Manager, Helen Green said, "The consultation is a real opportunity to engage with residents, local businesses and all city centre users. We have organised a number of exhibitions around the city where the public can meet the project team to ask questions and raise any concerns."

If approved, the Stage 4 will become a reality over the next 3 years, finishing in 2008.



2004-2005
Better Local Public Transport



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Rural services lead the way

On 17 March 2005, Cambridgeshire County Council opened its doors to transport professionals from across the Country.

The day was the second open day following the County Council's Beacon Award in the theme 'Better Local Public Transport'. The day was focused on the challenges of providing transport in rural locations.

Head of Passenger Transport, Basil Jackson said, "We decided to focus on transport in rural areas because increasing accessibility with limited resources is an issue for every authority."

The day was set in context by a keynote speech from David Farmer (Department for

Transport) who explained the current and future funding arrangements offered by the department as well as the new accessibility requirements. Basil Jackson then explained the growth context within which Cambridgeshire operates.

The case studies were an opportunity for delegates hear details about three different projects and engage in discussion. Ouse Valley Dial a Ride is a very successful community transport operation where membership has grown rapidly. Delegates also learned about Cambridge's taxicard scheme, an unusual scheme where residents get subsidized use of taxis. Delegates had the opportunity to hear the County Council's and the bus operator's perspective of the North Hunts Network, a bus network in a rural Cambridgeshire where patronage has increased significantly.

The day was a learning experience for everyone involved. One delegate said, "It has been very interesting to hear about experiences in Cambridgeshire, it has been great to meet such enthusiastic people." Many other delegates commented on the opportunity to network with transport officers from other authorities. Officers from Cambridgeshire found the day equally valuable, Paul Nelson (Local Passenger Transport Manager) said, "It is really interesting to hear other authorities' experiences, and it's a good opportunity to consider the way we do things ourselves".

All presentations from the open day can be viewed at

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/beacon

March Open day



Partnership paves the way for improved punctuality

Cambridgeshire County Council is embarking on an innovative project with Stagecoach to try and improve the punctuality of bus services in the city centre.

The 'Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership' is a genuine commitment for the two organisations to work closely to combat the difficulties of keeping buses to timetable. Head of Passenger Transport, Basil Jackson said, "A great deal of progress has been made to improve punctuality in Cambridge with the Core Traffic Scheme (restriction of traffic in the centre of the city) and bus priority measures, however, we can still do more to ensure buses run on time'. The overall aim of the partnership is to

improve services and attract new passengers. The partnership has agreed aspects to be monitored and how performance will be measured. Monitoring will identify congestion spots which are leading to regular delays. The County Council will then have a defined time to investigate both the cause of the congestion and suggested solutions. The Partnership will also involve an agreed media strategy and joint targets for improvement.

Punctuality Improvement Plans have been championed by the Department for Transport (DfT) as a method of improving performance on the punctuality targets set by the Traffic Commissioner. Currently, approximately 74% of buses meet the conditions of arriving 1 minute early and 5 minutes late.

visit our website:
www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/beacon

Cambridge is a Centre of Excellence for Transport

- **Cambridgeshire has been hailed as a national centre of excellence for improving transport choice in towns and cities.**

The Department of Transport was impressed with Cambridgeshire's track record and awards that include the National Transport Local Authority of the Year, five Chartermarks awards, and a European Public Transport Award for the delivery of difficult schemes, in addition to being a Beacon authority.

Major factors in securing the award were:

- Cambridgeshire's development of its Park and Ride service
- Increasing bus patronage by more than 20 per cent in the past five years against a national background outside London of a decline in bus use
- Reducing unnecessary through traffic in Cambridge City Centre
- Improving transport choice including better access for pedestrians and cyclists
- Innovative methods of highway maintenance across Cambridgeshire as well as partnership working to improve traffic flows and road safety.



Cambridgeshire County Councillor, John Reynolds, said: "I am absolutely delighted that Government recognises the hard work we and our partners have been carrying out to improve transport in Cambridgeshire. Keeping the County on the move, especially with thousands of homes due to be built over the next decade is a tremendous challenge for the Council. This new status will mean that Cambridgeshire can not only look at further ways of improving transport but also pass on our expertise to other authorities."

The Department of Transport has awarded Centres of Excellence to 17 Local Transport Authorities.



Major Milestones for Cambridgeshire Guided Busway Project

- **Cambridgeshire County Council's Guided Busway project has reached its latest milestone since the end of the public inquiry into the scheme last December.**

The Council issued its Invitation to Tender (ITT) at the beginning of May and at four volumes the tender is certainly a weighty read.

Bob Menzies, Head of Delivery for Guided Busway said, "The Guided Busway is one of the County Council's biggest ever projects and this is one of the biggest single tenders that we've produced for capital works."

The aim of the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway (CGB) is to provide a high quality, reliable and frequent public transport service along a highly congested, rural and urban corridor. Making use of disused railway lines, the 23 kilometres of guideway will offer a segregated route for buses to travel on away from busy and unreliable trunk and local roads.

By 2016 the County Council expects more than 20,000 trips a day to be made on the busway.

Following its application for powers to build the CGB under the Transport and Works Act, the County Council is awaiting a decision from the Secretary of State.

"The Government asked us to take forward the plans for the CGB back in 2002 based on the outcome of a multi modal study. Since then we have been running a number of processes simultaneously on the project to ensure that we can deliver this high quality public transport solution to the people of Cambridgeshire as quickly as possible. Issuing the tender documents is an important milestone for all of the project team and we've also made good progress with much of the survey work that needs to be done. We're expecting a decision from the Secretary of State by summer this year and assuming this is positive, we'll be in a position to let the contract and start works at the end of 2005," added Bob Menzies.

Council staff have worked with WS Atkins, Arup and Ardent since last October to produce the thousands of pages of tender documents and drawings.

The Council will be meeting with tenderers over coming months and are expecting to receive final tender prices in September.



The capital costs are being met by the County Council, and the annual operating costs by the operators, though the County Council will be responsible for annual maintenance of real time displays at bus stops. In the longer term, it is hoped to gain commercial sponsorship to help meet the costs of maintaining the on street displays.

Trials will be started in mid 2005. Implementation in Cambridge City and the Huntingdon-St Ives areas will commence later in the year. While the visible aspects of the system are the on-street displays, some of the key benefits will be gained behind the scenes. Operators will be able to track vehicles and optimise fleet deployment and performance, and to use real time data to accurately identify where there are consistent problems with maintaining schedules, so that action can be taken to eliminate bottlenecks.

Another addition to information provision is the supply of bus timetable information by text message, now available for every bus stop in the county. Following a successful trial last year, the service will be formally launched in September in partnership with Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils. The service will be free to users for at least the first year and commercial sponsorship will be sought in the long term to sustain a free service. As routes become real-time enabled, the SMS service will also include real time information.

The text improvement to information provision

- ■ The County is on the brink of embarking on an exciting step forward in public transport information provision. RealTime Bus information will be an on street reality, with rollout commencing in late 2005.

The project is being taken forward in partnership with Peterborough City Council and Bedfordshire County Council to deliver purchasing cost economies and to ensure seamless cross-border transition. In the last month, the contract for the supply of the system has been awarded to ACIS, who will provide the computing and telecommunications infrastructure, on-bus equipment, street signs and traffic light priority units.

A key part of the project has been to engage with operators. Passenger Transport Business Manager Jim Milne said, "It has been essential to keep operators involved and gain their support at every step of this project. Without operator commitment, the project will not be sustainable in the long term."

Although the Beacon year comes to a close in July 2005, Cambridgeshire County Council will continue to share best practice through Centre of Excellence.



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If you would like a copy of this leaflet on audio cassette, or in Braille, large print or other languages, please contact Carrie Pollard on: 01223 718498