



<b>Combined Authority Board</b>		Agenda Item
<b>29 November 2023</b>		<b>5</b>
Title:	Public Questions	
Public Report:	Yes	

**Question 1 – from Paul Hollinghurst, Secretary of Rail Future, East Anglia**

To	CA Board
	<p>In response to an earlier public question at the CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee about reopening the railway to Haverhill it was stated that "we are concerned about transport to and from Haverhill and if there are ways that we can assist and input into the work the GCP's doing then we will".</p> <p>Subsequently the GCP's plans to build a bus road along the A1307 corridor have been paused at their executive board meeting on 28th September 2023 so there is no longer an active plan for public transport in this area. Regarding the railway their Transport Director stated that "at the moment the rail industry has no plans to invest and no plans to reintroduce that rail line" indicating the GCP believes the reopening proposals should be left to the rail industry. In practice rail reopenings are driven forward by enlightened local authorities.</p> <p>We therefore suggest that the GCP needs urgent help from the CPCA, so the CPCA can apply their experience and contacts from the Wisbech reopening to the work for Haverhill. Can the CPCA pledge to proactively work with the GCP on exploring the possibility of reopening the railway to Haverhill, and initially organise a meeting bringing together all the interested parties including GCP, DfT's Restoring Your Railway Team, Network Rail, and local MPs to explore a way forward.</p>
	<p><i>The Combined Authority are continuously examining potential improvements to the transport offer for the people of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. At the present time there are no plans to develop and reintroduce a rail line between Haverhill and Cambridge; however, we are committed to improving the transport links between these two conurbations. As part of this process the Combined Authority will continue to work with partners, including the GCP, the County Council and the two Sub National Transport Bodies of Transport East and England's Economic Heartland to come forward with feasible, realistic, and deliverable options in the short, medium and longer term.</i></p>

## Question 2 – from Simon Martin

To CA Board

On 15th of November 2023, during the agenda item on Bus Review, a member of the Transport and Infrastructure Committee said:

"We really need to communicate with people of Hampton that it's a case of use it or lose it" in relation to the "29" service.

The catchy "use it or lose it" was also picked up by the local press.

I feel it's a shame that the councillor didn't simply stop at "We really need to communicate with people", because as a member of the public I feel this is what is needed more than people facing the uncertainty and fear of "losing it" when it comes to any bus service. Further more, "losing" a bus service would be a backwards step taking the Combined Authority in the wrong direction, against the desire for modal change and the CA's strategic objectives.

I'd like to remind members of the Board that one of those routes has a cost per passenger of £124.83, and one of the routes in the Review is said to have carried only 312 passengers in 2022/23 at a cost of £59.41 per passenger - yet has no route map in the Review document, seemingly no route map available online, and doesn't appear to be on any of the online journey planners either.

If this Combined Authority wants to "take back control of buses" in future Bus Reform, then I urge the Combined Authority to show it's possible to turn around these existing 19 Tendered routes. I believe the Combined Authority must do more to make people aware of the routes which it funds, to make them successful, and to ensure those routes provide the high quality service people need.

Therefore my question to all members of the Board, is:

Will the Board commit to the Combined Authority "communicating with the people" in the local catchment areas covered by these 19 routes (not just on the CPCA website or social media that may only be seen by few people that happen to regularly follow CPCA accounts), with an aim of increasing passenger numbers, in part due to increased awareness that these routes exist, and as an outcome of such increase in ridership on each and every one of the 19 targeted routes, reducing the cost per passenger journey?

*Thank you for raising this important issue. We recognise the vital role that effective communication plays in enhancing public transport services and appreciate the concerns expressed regarding the need for increased awareness of our bus routes. The 29 is one of a number of services which need to be improved to provide value for money and we are committed to making improvements to bus services we fund, including the promotion of those services. If through these efforts the services do not attract people to use them, the Board has committed to consider reinvesting the funding to support other services.*

*The Board is committed to exploring ways to improve public engagement and awareness of our transport services. We understand the importance of ensuring that our communities are well-informed about the transport options available to them. It is indeed crucial that we consider all avenues to enhance the visibility and accessibility of our bus services, particularly those routes that are currently underused.*

*We acknowledge the suggestion to broaden the communication methods. It's essential to reach a diverse range of our community members, and we are open to considering various channels to achieve this. We are keen that local councillors and parish councils are able to support the promotion of their local bus services.*

*Regarding the specific proposal to commit the Board to a targeted communication strategy aimed at increasing ridership and reducing cost per passenger journey, we are taking decisions to both secure the bus network and then support this with proactive communication. We are in agreement with the need for better communication and public awareness of our bus services. We look forward to engaging in further discussions on how best to achieve this in a manner that aligns with our strategic objectives, available funding and serves the best interest of our community.*

## Question 3 – from John Stannage, Campaign Group Member for WWCA and Wansford Resident

To	CA Board
	<p>The Wittering, Wansford, Castor and Ailsworth (WWCA)Bus Campaign Group thank the CPCA for it's support given to our request for a regular, reliable bus service for our villages and respectfully ask that support continues. Once the bus service is agreed, would the CPCA ensure a marketing plan follows and the WWCA Campaign Group be involved with that marketing plan? Thank-you</p>
	<p><i>Thank you for your question. Marketing is essential for bus services to create awareness, compete effectively, increase ridership, generate revenue, engage with the community, promote sustainability, drive service improvements, and shape public perception. It plays a pivotal role in ensuring the success and viability of our transport network.</i></p> <p><i>The Combined Authority will be promoting services to complement those undertaken by operators across the region and as part of this we will seek to actively engaging with the Wittering, Wansford, Castor and Ailsworth Bus Campaign Group.</i></p>