



Combined Authority Board

6 February 2025

Title:	Public and Member Questions
Public Report:	Yes

Question 1 – from Simon Martin, local resident

Section "5.4 Current Situation in CPCA" in the agenda pack, sets out the current involvement the Combined Authority has in bus services across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region, in areas where the CA already has some form of day to day control and say in what happens with the existing bus network.

The region has for recent decades been blighted with unwelcoming poor condition bus stops, has what appears to be an increasingly unreliable realtime passenger information system which doesn't always reflect the true running status of buses, lacks an easily available affordable single ticket to be used across all operators and routes, has bus journeys badly impacted by traffic and roadworks, and doesn't appear to be doing anywhere near enough to actively increase awareness of the bus routes across the network that actually does exist right now in the region - not even to the catchment areas of those routes receiving £15 million - so as to improve ridership levels on those services, both now and in the years ahead to contribute to their chance of sustainable long term success as the region transforms in to the chosen method of Bus Reform.

The report further outlines at 5.2, that bus passenger numbers locally and nationally have been declining for many years - even long before Covid. With £15.046 million being invested in the vitally important 'socially necessary bus services' in this financial year alone, we as a region risk continuing this downward trend with further reductions in passenger numbers in the interim before the Combined Authority is able to have a more say and control, and such a continued fall in numbers could surely make services more unsustainable and costly to fund than they already are.

As a bus passenger, I very much welcome and look forward to improvement of the bus network in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. I'm hugely supportive of the overall aim that the Combined Authority has shown it wishes to achieve.

Please can the Combined Authority outline exactly what it is willing and able to do, in line with the region's adopted Bus Service Improvement Plan, Bus Strategy, and Vision for Better Buses, so as to further improve the day-to-day real life experience of bus passengers in the region, from today, covering the immediate short-term so as residents and visitors experience real noticeable improvements and avoid further bus network decline, right through the interim period until the time that the chosen model of Bus Reform has been completely implemented across the entire region fully operating as the model of Bus Reform that is chosen today.

Question 2 – from Sarah Hughes, Cambridgeshire Sustainable Travel Alliance

Cambridgeshire Sustainable Travel Alliance notes that on 24 January, the Combined Authority's Transport and Infrastructure Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Mayor choses franchising as the key to bus reform.

We were delighted to note that Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative members on the TIC joined the 63% of consultation respondents who supported franchising.

Our Alliance believes that franchising would give the Authority the powers it needs to establish the expanded, co-ordinated, attractive, high-quality bus network which our communities require, by bringing the bus network under local control, accountable to the mayor who is, in turn, accountable at the ballot-box.

An Enhanced Partnership, however, would be contingent on agreement by the current private operators with an effective veto available to the one dominant operator, potentially jeopardising effective reform, and perpetuating barriers to entry by other operators who might bid to provide our communities with innovative, high-quality services.

Whilst Franchising may bring risks and responsibilities, we ask the Board to consider the risks inherent in not proceeding. Post-deregulation, our bus network has shrunk drastically, leaving many rural communities with no public transport options. Recent research from the Institute of Transport Studies showed that between 2008 and 2023, bus services declined by 84% in Fenland, 75% in Peterborough and 71% in Huntingdonshire and East Cambs. This decline must be reversed.

A high-quality, affordable, accessible bus network is the cornerstone:

- of an effective public transport system;*
- of fulfilling the Authority's key ambitions, of economic growth, connectivity, and quality of life;*
- of our young people's access to college courses, training and jobs;*
- of access to shops, healthcare and a social life;*
- of stemming the seemingly inexorable rise in road congestion;*
- of the prosperity and wellbeing of our local communities.*

What will the Mayor do to provide Cambridgeshire and Peterborough with a bus network that is fit for the future?