

News from Other Guided Bus Schemes

Not many Cambridgeshire residents have ever seen a guided bus. So here are some experiences from other schemes.

The guideway in **Crawley** suffers from guidewheels snapping off as buses steer into the start of the guideway. Highly dangerous—the bus then bounces between the guideway walls while it is accelerating hard. Likely to be much more of a problem in Cambridgeshire, where buses would have to approach the guideway at a sharp turn and there are 20 breaks in the guideway for drivers to negotiate.

Riders say the guideway in **Leeds** is less comfortable than ordinary roads. At about 30mph buses start to oscillate unpleasantly.

The guideway in **Adelaide**, the only comparable rural guideway ever built, suffers from read-end collisions in fog. Actually Adelaide does not have much fog, whereas in Cambridgeshire the fog is both frequent and very patchy. Unlike trains, guided buses have no signals to protect them against colliding with a stationary bus ahead. Unlike ordinary buses, guided buses cannot take avoiding action if they spot a stationary bus ahead.

The guideway in **Essen** has to close every time it snows. Our Council says there is no need—they would send out men with shovels. On a 12 mile long guideway?

The guideway in **Ipswich** had to be completely relaid when a new set of buses were introduced—the Council was unable to buy replacement buses that were the right width for the guideway.

Plans to build a guideway in **Chester** were abandoned in 2002, even after receiving TWA planning consent from the government. The reason? There was a change of administration at County Hall and Councillors found out the real costs were much higher than 'estimated'. (Cambridgeshire's costs have so far risen £27M in just 18 months.)

Bedfordshire County Council has just voted to halt plans for guideway at **Luton**, days after their public consultation period ended. The reason? The government 'grant' turned out to be in fact 50% grant and the 50% borrowing by the Council. The finance costs would have meant a sharp rise in bus fares. (Cambridgeshire's £65M 'grant' is half borrowing also, but the Council has omitted the finance costs from its calculations.)

What does the Council really know about transport?

The Council insists that all of its guided bus plans have been drawn up by experts and audited by independent consultants. Here are some of their more obvious mistakes.

The Council has published journey times along the guideway. To meet these times, the Council says it expects buses to accelerate from 0 to 60mph in 5.5 seconds! That is as fast as a Ferrari. And the braking speed? 60-0 in 2.7 seconds. Almost like hitting a brick wall. These figures got through the audit!

The Council's application for government funding gives the cost of a new guided bus bridge under Hills Road as £2.5 million. Two weeks after funding was announced, the true cost was disclosed as £10 million. Why the increase? None of the experts had noticed that the entire cabling from Cambridge railway signal box would need to be rerouted for this bridge.

The same funding application says that Over Windmill Bridge could be used with minor modifications. Now the Council says it must be demolished and rebuilt. The problem? Too low and too narrow for the guideway.

The Council has also had to revise its planned guided bus service frequencies downwards. In the funding application it gave the service frequency to St Ives as 6 buses an hour, 18 hours a day. Now it says off the peak service will be only 3 buses an hour. Since commercial operators already run 5 buses an hour to St Ives via the A14, the Council has clearly lost confidence in the number of guided bus passengers.

The Council has shown its ignorance of rail as well as bus systems. Shona Johnstone, Council Cabinet Member responsible for Transport, explained that the CAST.IRON preferred route to Huntingdon was impossible because of "a gradient that a train couldn't manage". Hasn't she heard of embankments or cuttings? The steepest gradient in CAST.IRON's plans is 1:100—not as steep as either of the rail routes from London to Cambridge.

The Council gives its qualifications to run the guided bus as 'experience of building and running park and ride schemes'. The council advertises its park and ride buses as running every ten minutes. Shoppers frequently have to wait half an hour for a bus to come. What more damning evidence of how poorly the Council would make guided buses run through the City Centre?

CAST.IRON INFORMATION SHEET

Railway or Guided Bus? Have Your Say!

The Soaring Cost of Guided Bus

Cambridgeshire County Council wants to spend £101 million on a guided bus system. It claims this is a new high quality transport option that will entice people out of their cars.

Guided Buses Would Be Slow!

The 'guided' buses would not be guided through Cambridge, St Ives or Huntingdon. They would have to fight through the congested streets with all other traffic.



A guided bus would take 26 minutes from Addenbrookes to the Science Park—just the same as buses do today.

Even journeys along the guideway would be slow.

Buses run from Drummer St to St Ives faster today than a guided bus would do.

Guided Bus: Expensive White Elephant

The guided buses would not only be slower than today's conventional buses. The Council says they would also be more expensive to ride on!

Over 60% of the passengers that the Council claim would ride on a guided bus can make the same journey today on an existing bus route.

For most passengers, the guided bus would be a slower, dearer option. So that means:

- far fewer passengers would use the guided buses than the Council says
- higher Council Tax bills to meet the costs of running this white elephant.

Improve Existing Bus Services Instead!

The Council's own studies show that new express bus services along an upgraded A14 (now given the go-ahead) would

- remove just as many cars from the A14 as the guided bus scheme
- be nearly £100 million cheaper

Rail - the Lower Cost Alternative

Costings from rail industry experts show a railway can be built:

- from Cambridge to St Ives for £30 million, in time for the Northstowe development
- from Cambridge to Huntingdon for under £50 million
- including land purchase and all the same Park and Ride facilities

That's just half the price of the guided bus!

Rail will make a real difference

Rail will get passengers through Cambridge without running a single extra bus into the city centre. Council figures say:

- less than half of potential guided bus riders would get off in the city centre
- nearly all of these are served by existing bus routes anyway

Only rail can cater for cross-city journeys:

- Cambridge Station to the Science Park in 5 minutes by rail
- Compare with 20 minutes by guided bus via Drummer Street

Rail - the only strategic solution for the A14

The guided bus is designed only for local journeys. It would remove as little as 2% of traffic from the A14.

Since the guided bus was proposed, expansion at Stansted has been announced. Stansted expansion means:

- more people using Stansted than today use Heathrow
- over 120,000 extra air passengers travelling to Stansted every day
- improved rail services will be essential to avoid severe traffic build-up on the A14.

Building the guided bus would destroy the only strategic transport option Cambridgeshire has for the A14.



Rail encourages cycling

Government figures say a rail system will attract large numbers of cyclists.

By carrying bicycles, rail reaches out to commuters further away from its stations than a guided bus could from its bus stops.

Guided buses would not carry bicycles—commuters from the next village would have to drive to the nearest Park and Ride.

Support the Cambridge to Huntingdon Railway. Join CAST.IRON Now!

Complete the application form at

www.castiron.org.uk

or send this form to

Name.....	Subscription Rates:
Business/Organisation.....	[] Individual £10
.....	[] Household £20
Address.....	[] Pensioners, Unwaged £5
.....	[] Corporate £40
Postcode.....	[] Non-corporate £30
Telephone.....	<i>Parish Councils, environmental groups etc.</i>
E-mail.....	Donation £.....
What skills, experience or professional input can you provide?	Cheque total enclosed £.....
.....	<i>Cheques payable to CAST.IRON</i>
.....	

CAST.IRON

St Francis House
10 Newmarket Road
Cambridge
CB5 8DT

This form will fit in a standard window envelope. A photocopy is acceptable.

Have your say!

The Council has applied for a Transport and Works Act Order (the equivalent of planning permission) to build the guided bus system and to make compulsory purchases of land. The public now has 42 days to say what it thinks.

The Council has only applied for permission to build the out-of-town bus guideways—the expensive part of its scheme, costing £95 million.

Council transport officials do not intend to reveal details of bus routes or priority measures in Cambridge city until after they have got permission for the out-of-town guideways.

The on-road parts of the 'guided' bus route is where nearly all its problem are. The Council should be made to resubmit their application with full details of all compulsory purchase, priority measures and bus stops in Cambridge from end to end of the route.

If you wish to object to the Guided Bus scheme, you must send your objection in writing to: Secretary of State for Transport, Department for Transport, TWA Orders Unit, Zone 3/11, Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DR.

Your objection must include your name and address and arrive by 2 April 2004.

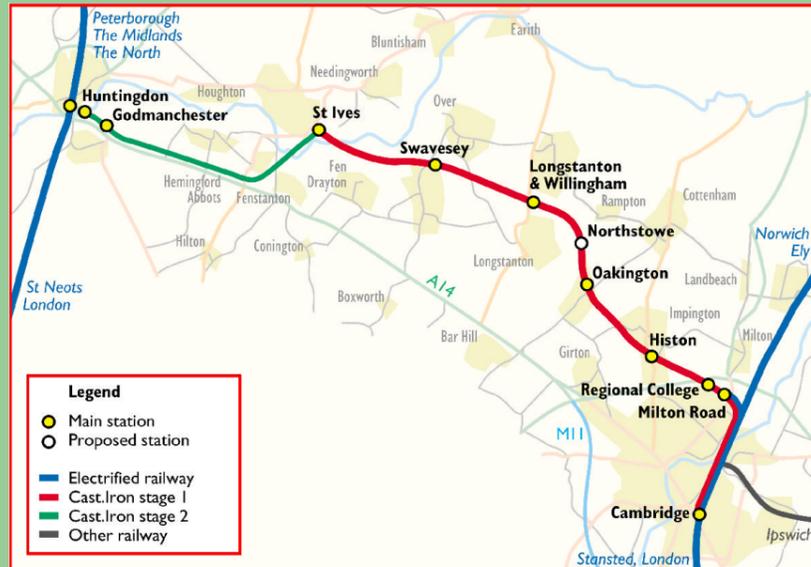
Your voice counts!

CAST.IRON says the Council should promote both improved bus services and improved rail services.

- buses should run on the roads
- the old railway line should be used for rail services.

A combination of express buses and new rail services is the best way to solve local transport problems. And it requires much less taxpayers' money.

The CAST.IRON Rail System



CAST.IRON has costed out full plans to construct and operate a commuter railway from Cambridge to Huntingdon, in two major stages:

Stage 1: Cambridge - St Ives

Stage 1 will see reintroduction of a rail service along the former Cambridge to St Ives railway line. Track is still in place along 87% of the route.

CAST.IRON will run trains from St Ives to the Science Park and through to central Cambridge. The rail link from central Cambridge to the Science Park will be electrified, allowing trains from London to serve the Science Park directly.

The total costs for Stage 1 are £30M. For this amount, CAST.IRON will build a modern commuter railway with 70mph running speeds on completely new track, fully automated road crossings and new, high specification station platforms. The costs include land purchase and the same Park and Ride facilities as in the guided bus plans.

Figures from Cambridgeshire County Council put demand for the Stage 1 railway system at 7,000 passengers per day—this is more than 3 times the level required to run the railway economically.

These Council figures do not include cyclists. The CHUMMS study showed that a rail system would generate an additional 28% passengers by accommodating cyclists. CAST.IRON's trains have been specially designed to carry a large number of bicycles. This will also significantly reduce the amount of parking space needed along the line.

Stage 2: Cambridge - Huntingdon

Stage 2 will see the CAST.IRON system extended to Huntingdon. Of multiple possible route options to Huntingdon,

CAST.IRON recommends using a carriageway from the current A14, once the upgraded A14 has been built.

This means that 91% of the CAST.IRON route will run along land already designated for transport use.

The total additional costs for Stage 2 are £20M. Figures from the County Council and the CHUMMS study put the expected use at 12,000 passengers per day.

Timescales

Construction of the Stage 1 system can be carried out in 18 months. Half way through this period, CAST.IRON would introduce a pilot service along part of the Stage 1 route, from Swavesey as far as the Science Park.

The timescale for Stage 2 depends on the exact route chosen and also on when the new A14 section is completed. After that, construction will take 12 months.

The Stage 1 system is financially self-sustaining. It will make a significant contribution to reduction in car use during the time Stage 2 is being planned and constructed. It will provide a quality transport service to meet the new demands from Northstowe.

Huntingdon and Alconbury

The completion of Stage 2 will see a high quality rapid transport system serving destinations from Cambridge to Huntingdon. The final goal is then a link onto the main line at Huntingdon integrating the CAST.IRON route into the national transport infrastructure.

This link will complete the strategic transport infrastructure that Cambridgeshire needs—an additional rail link to Alconbury and a solution to the increasing traffic flows from Stansted.

Guided Bus—the Slow Transport Option

Cambridgeshire County Council wants to spend around £100M of public money laying a concrete guideway along disused railway lines into Cambridge. The Council hopes that local bus operators will then pay extra access charges to run bus services along the guideway.

Buses that use the guideway will have to be modified by fitting small 'guide wheels'. Otherwise they will be standard buses. This is important because much of their journey time will be on ordinary roads, not on a guideway. For example, a bus from Cambridge to Huntingdon will use the guideway only from the Science Park to St Ives. All the way from Cambridge City Centre to the Science Park and from St Ives to Huntingdon it will share the same congested roads with other road traffic.

For 2007, Council service plans show 2 buses an hour running from Addenbrookes to Cambridge and 3 per hour from Cambridge to St Ives along the guideway. So this is how a guided bus service would compare with today's bus services.

Route	Current Bus Services		2007 Guided Bus	
	Frequency	Journey time	Frequency	Journey time
Cambridge (Drummer St) to St Ives	5 per hour	30 minutes	3 per hour	33 minutes
Cambridge to Huntingdon	5 per hour	51 minutes	3 per hour	54 minutes
Cambridge to Fenstanton	2 per hour	25 minutes	1 per hour	44 minutes
Addenbrookes to Science Park	6 per hour	26 minutes	2 per hour	26 minutes

(Sources: timings along the guideway are from published Council estimates; timings along public roads are from current bus timetables.)

This table shows that running buses along a rural concrete guideway will make no improvement to your journey time. Bus guideways through congested town and city centres might reduce journey times, but the Council does not plan to build any of these type of guideway, because there is no room for them!

The Council hopes to reduce bus journey times by introducing bus priority measures where the 'guided' buses have to share ordinary roads. Of course such priority measures would speed up all buses using those roads, not just buses coming off the guideway. So why not simply implement these priority measures? — it would produce just as good a result for the passenger, at a saving of around £100M.

Remember that this table compares the guided bus with today's bus journey times. The government has given the go-ahead for an upgrade to the A14. This will include a new local distributor road running parallel to the A14, which buses will use. The Council says that the improvements to the A14 will reduce peak hour journey times by up to 20% in 2016, so that by 2016 guided bus journey times will compare even more unfavourably with existing bus routes.

What about all the other possible guided bus routes? One of great benefits claimed for the guided bus is that it can leave the guideway part way along and run into local villages. For example CHUMMS suggested a feeder route from Fenstanton. As the table shows, this feeder route produces the most ridiculous journey time of all!

As the guided bus would be slower and dearer than existing bus services, why does the Council call it a new high quality transport option? Could it be the 'real time information system' promised for guided buses? Well the Council is committed to rolling out real time information systems on existing bus routes, starting this year, so that can't be it.

Guided Bus—costs out of control

The Council told government its guided bus scheme would cost £74 million. Every month it has gone up, now as far as £101 million. And the Council has hidden £15 million of guided bus costs in other budgets, to make the total look smaller. It still says its costs are only estimates.

The Council has said it can give a full breakdown of the guided bus costs to anyone who asks for them. Many people have asked. All have been refused. Public distrust is now so great that the Council should be made to resubmit their Transport and Works Act Order application with a full cost breakdown.

Guided Bus—bad for the Environment

The guided system comes out a very poor second to rail on environmental grounds. First there are the [n] acres of concrete track. This is not just a scar on the landscape. Concrete production has a major cost in CO₂ emission.

The guided bus would also need much more agricultural land than rail, because of the access track that has to run along it.

Then, throughout the life of the system, there would be emissions from buses as they move slowly through City congestion.

CHUMMS—A Flawed Study

The Council relies on the CHUMMS study for its repeated claims that rail is an expensive option. Yet the CHUMMS rail assessment is flawed from start to finish.

CHUMMS first stated that it was not possible to run a railway along the A14 corridor from St Ives to Huntingdon—even though it recommended this corridor should be used for a new public transport system. This corridor would have been the ideal route to serve commuters; CAST.IRON's engineering studies have shown that such a rail route is perfectly possible.

Having discounted the best rail route completely, CHUMMS went on instead to study a completely different route to Huntingdon. 38% of the former trackbed—by far the most cost-effective place to run a new rail link—was not even going to be used. The route was significantly longer than CAST.IRON's recommended route. 51% of the route, or 19km, would have been on green field sites. That compares to just 9% as recommended by CAST.IRON. The route even bypassed St Ives completely!

The CHUMMS rail route bypassed key population centres—so CHUMMS said rail would not attract many passengers.

The CHUMMS rail route made heavy use of green field sites—so CHUMMS said rail would be less environmentally friendly.

The CHUMMS rail route failed to use much of the former trackbed—so CHUMMS said rail would be too expensive.

CHUMMS then predicted that many more people would use a guided bus than rail. But 5,000 of the passengers they counted for guided bus were simply passengers they predicted would transfer from existing A14 bus services. In fact, the number of new users for public transport would be the same for guided bus and rail.

CHUMMS predicted that the construction cost for a guided bus would be £40M. So far the total project cost is estimated by the Council at £101M—and that is still only an estimate!

CHUMMS gave the construction cost for its contrived rail route as £109M, whereas the

No Timetable for Guided Buses

The Council says that it cannot say how many buses will run along its guideways—but it has just halved its estimates to 3/hour.

It claims the guideway is flexible, because buses could leave the guideway half way along and run into nearby villages - but its published plans simply talk of passengers changing buses at St Ives and Longstanton.

If the Council is so certain passengers will use the guided bus, it should publish a timetable and undertake to stick to it.

Why is Rail So Much Less Expensive?

The main reason is that there is already a railway trackbed along most of the route. It was used as a double track railway for more than 140 years; the civil engineering works are still in place along over half of the route. Experts from the railway construction industry have surveyed the trackbed and pronounced it in good condition for laying new, high speed track.

In contrast, the civil engineering and construction costs to lay the environmentally unfriendly concrete track required for a bus guideway are much higher.

The railway trackbed is, of course, the right width for building a railway! In contrast a guided bus system needs a much wider track. That means demolishing and rebuilding the road bridge in Over and it means building wider bridges over tens of rivers, streams and culverts. It means buying up lots of agricultural land and laying concrete tracks on it.

The concrete tracks of the guided bus system are also a flood hazard—so the Council will have to buy up more land and dig out large ponds.

The Council wants to close all the vehicle tracks that cross the guideway route. Otherwise it has to keep breaking the guideway. Buses would have to slow down to 15mph each time, making guided buses even slower than they are going to be already. So the Council has to buy up yet more rural land and build new access road on it.

So why is rail so much less expensive? Largely because will fit into the existing trackbed without all of these problems!

Addenbrookes Guideway—the Biggest White Elephant of All

One of the most expensive sections of the guided busway is the southern section to Addenbrookes. The Council says that since Addenbrookes is the area's largest employer, this is a vital part of the scheme.

How many staff does Addenbrookes employ? Over 5,000. How many passengers does the Council say would travel to Addenbrookes in the peak hour by guided bus? Just 103.

Hardly a ringing endorsement of the Council's 'high quality transport option'. These 103 passengers will not make a difference to Cambridge's traffic problems. Their half-hourly service does not justify the £30M this part of the scheme would cost.

The Council already runs buses from the City centre to Addenbrookes every 10 minutes. If a new high quality southern transport route is needed, by far the most cost-effective solution is to build a new rail spur down the old Bedford trackbed and run CAST.IRON's trains down it.