

Guided Bus Newsletter

Newsletter 1, November 2003



Dear Resident
You're reading the first of a series of newsletters we will be dropping through your door to keep you updated on the exciting project to give your area a new, high quality public transport system – Guided Bus.

It's an innovative idea and it's understandable that there has been some misunderstanding about the details of the scheme. The aim of the newsletters will be to provide you with clear, accurate information about Guided Bus. I firmly believe a rapid transit system using Guided Bus technology is the best way to bring back into use the old St Ives-Cambridge railway corridor to create an efficient, reliable and comfortable alternative to travelling on the A14.

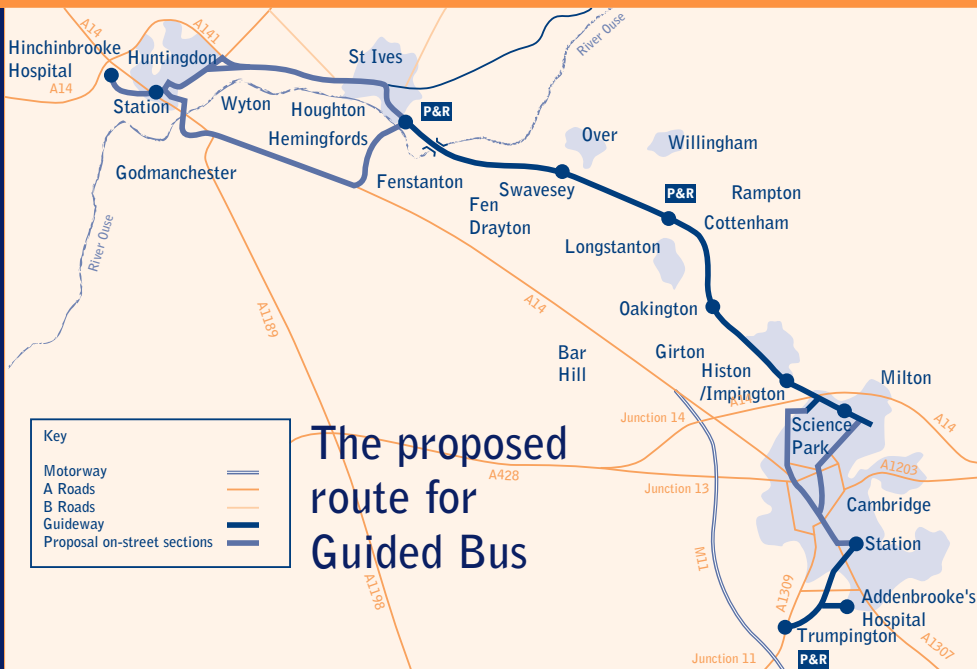
You may have been one of the 2000 plus people who responded to our consultation on Guided Bus in the summer. Since then we have been working closely with Parish Councils, villages and individuals along the route to address issues raised during the consultation. We have also progressed work on the engineering details of the route and we are due to finish this by the end of the year.

You may have seen proposals advocating re-opening the line as a railway. We don't think this is the best option for this route. The rail option is not supported by the rail industry or the Government which means Government money is not available for it. We don't think it is deliverable either in the timescale or in a form that offers the benefits of Guided Bus which we talk about in more detail later.

If you have any questions please call the number at the back of the newsletter and one of the Guided Bus team will be happy to talk to you in more detail about the scheme.

Shona Johnstone

Shona Johnstone
Cambridgeshire County Council Cabinet
Member for Environment and Transport



Why guided bus?

As you may know, Guided Bus is an innovative new transport system which uses a dedicated guideway to take buses along a fixed route with small guidewheels keeping the bus within the guideway. The buses operate as normal on the road when they leave the guideway.

For much of the route this means that the buses will not need to run on crowded roads providing a much more reliable alternative to congested and unreliable routes such as the A14. The buses can join the guideway at either end or at several entry points along it.

How could Guided Bus change the way I travel?

You will be able to catch a service close to your home which will then join the guideway taking you into Cambridge, St Ives or Trumpington and then joining the roads again to get you close to your destination. Or you will be able to park at one of two proposed Park and Rides at St Ives and the new settlement of Northstowe near Longstanton and Oakington or use a drop-off point at Swavesey. We estimate that at peak times around six services per hour will travel in each direction initially building up to around 20 per hour as Northstowe takes shape. By 2016 around 20,000 journeys are expected to be made every day.

Quality of service will be a top priority and only bus companies that provide high quality services will be able to use the route.

Capacity can be easily and cheaply increased on a Guided Bus system simply by providing more buses.

The aim of Guided Bus is to make your journey:

- **Faster** - the dedicated track will mean buses don't have to fight their way through traffic
- **More Reliable** – services will be able to run despite congestion problems on surrounding roads as priority measures such as bus lanes and responsive traffic lights will assist buses
- **Convenient** – stops will be close to residential areas and work places and real time information will tell passengers when their next service is due
- **Accessible** – a direct service which takes you to where you want to go without having to change to other modes of transport
- **High Quality** – we expect buses to be low-floor, air-conditioned, provide next stop information and comfortable. It is proposed that stops will have real time bus information systems, ticket machines, covered shelters, seats, security and other facilities.

Keeping you up to date on an exciting new public transport system between Cambridge and Huntingdon

What's the route and what areas will be served?

The route planned runs from Hinchbrook Hospital in Huntingdon to Trumpington Park and Ride and Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge.

Two sections will be guided:

- St Ives to North Cambridge
- Cambridge Railway Station to Trumpington Park and Ride and Addenbrooke's

Buses will be able to join and leave the guide way at several points so there will be many communities in and around the route whose bus services can link up with the guide way. This means it can serve many other communities as well as those right on the route.

Cambridge city centre will have new bus stops and bus priority measures including more bus lanes in Milton Road to ensure that Guided Buses and other public transport have as easy a journey as possible through the city.

Crossings between the guide way and the roads will be controlled by traffic lights which will result in fewer delays to traffic than level crossings which would be a necessary part of any rail system.



This photo shows a Guided Bus system which has been running in Leeds since 1994.

What's the timescale?

The first buses should be running along the route in 2007. However, a legal process has to take place before work can begin and the County Council hope to start this early in the New Year by applying for legal powers under the Transport and Works Act to go ahead with the scheme. Once our application goes in you will have 42 days to express your views on the scheme directly to the Government (we'll tell you how in a future newsletter). A Public Inquiry is likely to be held in September.

What has happened since the consultation?

We consulted you in July this year and made a number of changes to the scheme following your comments. These are:

- Amended proposals for the Histon/Impington stop to minimise impact on local residents and businesses
- Proposals for parking at the Histon/Impington stop
- Improved proposals for the on-street sections of the route to double-check their benefits.
- A separate crossing of the rail line to access Addenbrooke's.

Estimated Typical Journey Times

Huntingdon - Cambridge city centre	42 mins
St Ives - Cambridge Science Park	18 mins
Longstanton - Cambridge Science Park	9 mins
Longstanton - Addenbrooke's	35 mins
Trumpington Park and Ride - Addenbrooke's	3 mins

Why not use trams or re-open the railway?

Tram and rail systems have been considered for the route and you may have seen proposals from an organisation called Cast Iron who would like to see the St Ives-Cambridge line opened for rail. Significant questions hang over these. Perhaps most crucially the railway industry does not support the reopening of the line. There are important questions over how such a service would be funded, the ongoing subsidy it would require and how long it would actually take to deliver. Rail and tram are also expensive options both to build and run and the Government has said it will only consider funding Guided Bus. Capacity is difficult and expensive to increase on railways whereas with a Guided Bus system it is simply a case of providing more buses which is much less costly.

The quality of services that could be provided from Cast Iron's proposals and their destination are also in question. The proposal to run a service from Swavesey to North Cambridge would leave passengers having to change to buses to get to most destinations. There would be no provision of Park and Ride and frequencies would be less than those provided by Guided Bus. In contrast Guided Bus will provide a direct link from Hinchbrook, Huntingdon, St Ives and intermediate villages to Cambridge City centre, the station and Addenbrooke's. In short, Guided Buses will go where people want to go – right into the heart of their communities and close to their workplaces – something rail can never provide.

Is this Supercam? No. The Supercam scheme would have allowed only one bus operator to use the guide way which would have restricted services. The County Council wanted a more open, flexible scheme which can be used by any operator who meets strict criteria. This makes for a much more accessible scheme as bus operators already providing services to many communities will be able to link those services into the guide way.

How can I find out more?

You can contact the Guided Bus team at the County Council by email at transport.plan@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or phone 01223 716972. You can find out more about the project on the County Council's website at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk under Council Services – Planning – Projects and Studies.

Look out for your next newsletter on Guided Bus in December.

If you or someone you know would like this newsletter in large print, audio, Braille or another language please contact us on 01223 716972.



Cambridgeshire
County Council