



Cambridge Area Bus Users

Working for bus passengers in and around Cambridge

Cambridge Area Bus Users Executive Committee Meeting with Andy Campbell **Thursday, 9 August 2018**

Clare Wilson (Chair) Richard Wood (Secretary) Richard Cushing (Treasurer) John Simpson and Wendy Blythe attended on behalf of the Cambridge Area Bus Users Executive Committee.

Ross Barton, acting operations manager whilst the incumbent is on maternity leave, minuted on behalf of Cambus.

We introduced ourselves and outlined the formation of the group, recalling precursor meetings attended by Daniel Zeichner and by Cllr Ian Bates.

AC outlined a little history of his arrival at Cambus in 2004, when they were 60 drivers short, a situation which was improved by negotiating changed shift patterns and improved pay/conditions.

Recruitment/retention is still difficult today. Factors being Cambridges housing prices and the frustration of driving in Cambridge's congested traffic, finding it difficult to keep your bus on time.

An example of the effect of congestion is that citi1 journey now takes 19% longer end-to-end than on inauguration of the network. Part of this is Hills Road operation at over-capacity for traffic.

The City centre - railway station - Addenbrooke's spine is the worst for delays.

Service reductions (eg alternate Addenbrooke's/Sainsbury's on citi2 and Whitehill/Fison Road on citi3) had been necessary to avoid allocating extra vehicles and drivers thereby pushing up costs.

Many later evening and Sunday workings ended when Cambridgeshire County Council grants were cut in 2010. Nearly all Cambus's operations are now purely commercial. Many of the tenders being offered for non-commercial services are so short-term (eg six months) that Stagecoach wonders if it is worthwhile tendering. Services with no definite future are unlikely to attract regular users, and there is the problem of recruiting staff for short-term work.

AC aired his well-known opposition to bus service franchising under the Bus Services Act 2017. The same objectives could, he said, be met through a statutory Quality Bus Partnership. London is, in some areas, 'overbused' in AC's opinion. Cambridgeshire County Councillors in charge of franchising would be the same people who lost Cambus 15% of their P&R passengers through the 'reverse congestion charge' of £1 on parking.

Cambus's survey showed that 80% of P&R users are otherwise non-users of buses.

Good points about what TfL is doing, potentially applicable to Cambridge, include congestion charging, residents' parking, red routes (where obstructing vehicles are removed and impounded) and ultra-low emission zones.

Residents' parking is important because too many commuters are driving as near as possible to their city destinations and parking free. Congestion 'churn' created by drivers entering and exiting side streets in search of parking was also mentioned.

Stagecoach will be retrofitting the Cambus fleet with ticket machine communication equipment. Amongst other functions, this can detect late-running vehicles and communicate with traffic lights to give preferential sequencing.

AC's vision would be of services which could run to time on routes which are not congested. As a consequence, vehicles could travel further in the same time, reducing costs per mile, enabling three-zone ticketing to be implemented as no revenue loss and no cost to the public purse.

Action on air quality is important. Low emission vehicles are also part of AC's vision, although more expensive to purchase. Fully-electric vehicles are 'not quite there yet'. Route termini opportunity-charging would mostly require an extra vehicle per route to allow for layover, pushing up operating costs. Hybrid vehicles are a viable option with geo-fencing ensuring electric operation in selected areas.

Money for improved services, to assist in the purchase of low emission vehicles, and discounted fares for young people/students/apprentices might be found from congestion charging.

AC outlined the difficulties of rural services. the more villages which a service visited, the slower the end-to-end journey time. Some places were inherently difficult to serve because of poor planning for public transport (Bar Hill, Cambourne). Others – Northstowe, Waterbeach – should be better as these issues are being actively addressed.

Stagecoach Cambus are in discussions with Papworth about services to their new location and with AstraZeneca. The latter would like to offer fares of £1/journey to employees.

In AC's view, people who we ought to be meeting (in addition to those we have met or are planning to meet, including the chair and deputy of Greater Cambridge Partnership) would be Rachel Stoppard and Peter Blake of Greater Cambridge Partnership and representatives of AstraZeneca.