



Department
for Transport

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5th
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Dear *Anthony*

Thank you for your letter of 12 January, about road charging in relation to Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA)'s Bus Service Improvement Plan funding.

I can confirm that bus funding has never been linked to road charging. Furthermore, road charging has never been a requirement of either the NBS or BSIP guidance. It was not one of the criteria used to assess BSIPs, and its exclusion did not influence the allocation of BSIP funding in any way. The Department assessed BSIPs based on the quality of information provided and the types of schemes and projects proposed, as per the requirements set out in the BSIP guidance.

It was particularly disturbing to read your report that CPCA reported, without any corroborating evidence, that the reason they were rejected for further BSIP funding was due to their "insufficient commitment to road charging" to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. This statement clearly came from someone who had either been misled themselves and was ignorant of the criteria surrounding funding or was being made by someone themselves attempting to be deliberately misleading.

Our National Bus Strategy (NBS) and subsequent guidance to Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) states that the key to making buses more attractive is making them faster and more reliable. The guidance also notes that bus journeys are not made in isolation but form part of an overall journey package that can include park and ride, walking, cycling, or light rail and BSIPs should be developed in this context. A BSIP should consider these whole journeys so that buses can form an integral and attractive part of them.

Road charging is wholly a matter for local authorities, such as Cambridge City Council and CPCA to take forward at their discretion.

The Department has provided written feedback to CPCA on its original BSIP. Officials met with colleagues at the Authority in April 2022 to discuss the BSIP and ways of developing it further. Monthly meetings have been in place since October 2022 to maintain engagement around plans for franchising local bus services and to discuss any other key developments or concerns. CPCA has now sent us an addendum to the BSIP, on 9 December 2022, and we look forward to a full update in the Spring.

With regards to funding, CPCA have been awarded £880,116 by the Department to strengthen their in-house capacity to help deliver their BSIP.

Since March 2020, CPCA have also been allocated a total of approximately £1.7m in recovery funding, including the Covid Bus Service Support Grant and the Bus Recovery Grant, in addition to £409,030 annually, to support socially necessary bus services.

Best wishes,



RICHARD HOLDEN MP

MINISTER FOR ROADS AND LOCAL TRANSPORT

P.S. Thank you for bringing this to my attention. I will be raising this matter further with officials.

Richard

