

Bus Reform Consultation

FAQs

Why is this consultation taking place?

The Combined Authority believes it needs to change the way local buses are run to achieve our ambitions for better buses in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Buses play a vital role in getting people to places, connecting our communities, and shaping our economy. But evidence shows passengers face challenges, resulting in fewer people choosing to travel by bus. Residents have said they want to see services improve. However, the way that buses are currently run gives the Combined Authority limited ability to change this.

The consultation will inform a decision by the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough on whether or not to introduce bus franchising, as a different way to run buses across the area. This is a formal consultation as required by the Transport Act 2000 as amended by the Bus Services Act 2017 ('the Act')

The Combined Authority has conducted an assessment ('the Assessment') of options to run buses within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough – this compares two bus reform options, the Proposed Franchising Scheme and an Enhanced Partnership (EP) to how buses are currently run.

Following an assessment of the options and independent audit of this, our preferred option is the Proposed Franchising Scheme. Before a final decision is made, we are required by law to seek views from the statutory consultees on the Proposed Franchising Scheme and the conclusions of the Assessment. We also want to hear the views of the public on our plans.

What is bus reform?

Bus reform is the process of changing the way in which buses are run, with the aim of improving services and the passenger experience, for the benefit of the people of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough more broadly. The Transport Act 2000 sets out the statutory powers that Local Transport Authorities, like the Combined Authority, have to reform buses. This includes Franchising or Enhanced Partnerships. More details about these options are in the Consultation Document.

What is Franchising?

Franchising is a legal model where buses are under the control of a local authority (in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough this would be the Combined Authority). The Franchising model has been in operation in London since 1984 and was introduced in Greater Manchester in September 2023.

Under franchising, the Combined Authority would set the routes, frequency, fares and overall standards of buses. The existing commercially-led market would be replaced, with private bus operators no longer able to run most services independently. Bus services would instead be operated under franchise contracts, where bus operators would bid to run the services through a competitive procurement process managed by the Combined Authority.

What is an Enhanced Partnership?

An Enhanced Partnership is a legal model under which private bus operators and local authorities make a statutory plan and scheme(s) which set out a shared vision, targets, and make specific commitments

about how they will work together to improve local buses. Under an Enhanced Partnership, local bus services remain privately owned and operated ('deregulated') and bus operators continue to take revenue from fares and make their own decisions about how bus services are run.

Where can I find out more about what Bus Franchising would mean in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough?

Our proposals are shown in more detail by clicking the following link. Here you can look through all the consultation materials, including the Proposed Franchising Scheme.

<https://cpca-yourvoice.co.uk/bus-franchising-consultation/>

What would it cost the Combined Authority to introduce the Proposed Franchising Scheme?

A move to Franchising would require an initial, one-off investment by the Combined Authority estimated at £1.42 million over 3-4 years (transition cost). This would cover things like consultancy, legal and procurement fees. There would also be additional staff and IT costs of £1.4 million per annum, in order to manage the future planning, design, operation and monitoring of bus services.

Beyond the initial costs to introduce Franchising, funding sources for the ongoing delivery of the Proposed Franchising Scheme include:

- Farebox revenue – the money collected from fare-paying passengers.
- The Transport Levy – an existing fund made up of contributions from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough local authorities.
- Mayoral precept - funding raised through a charge on council taxpayers across the area of the Combined Authority.
- Government funding and grants - for bus service provision and development.
- Bus Services Operator Grant – a government grant paid to operators and community transport organisations to help them recover some of their fuel costs.

Where can I find out more about what an Enhanced Partnership would mean in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough?

Details of how an Enhanced Partnership might work can be found in Section 4 of the Consultation Document.

<https://cpca-yourvoice.co.uk/bus-franchising-consultation/>

What would it cost the Combined Authority to introduce an Enhanced Partnership?

Moving to an Enhanced Partnership would require an increase in staffing levels within the Combined Authority. Additional running costs are estimated at £600,000 per year. More detail of this included on Page 98 of the Consultation Document.

Beyond the initial costs to introduce the Enhanced Partnership, ongoing funding sources include:

- The Transport Levy – an existing fund made up of contributions from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough local authorities.

- Government funding and grants – for bus service provision and development.
- Bus Services Operator Grant (for financially-supported services) – a government grant paid to operators and community transport organisations to help them recover some of their fuel costs.
- Revenue from tendered supported services (some of which are let on a gross cost contract basis).

What is the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Bus Strategy and Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)?

Our Bus Strategy sets out a vision for significant improvements in bus services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, to support the aim of reducing car mileage and doubling bus use. It is available at: [Bus Strategy | Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority \(cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)

The BSIP sets out our ambitions to deliver the Government's National Bus Strategy. It is a document that has been developed in collaboration with bus operators and takes account of views expressed by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough residents and local interest groups on how we can improve our bus services, and the interventions we need to implement to achieve this. It is available at:

<https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s709/Appendix%20A%20-%20CPCA%20BSIP%202024%20Refresh%20Draft%20V5.1%20after%20DfT%20submission.pdf>

Who runs buses in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough now?

Private bus companies run bus services across the area and are responsible for setting the majority of routes, timetables, fare and the standards for buses. The Combined Authority does not run any of the buses, but it does contract local bus companies to run socially necessary services (those which are important to people but don't make much money) and extending otherwise commercial services.

What is the Combined Authority and what does it do?

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority was established in 2017 as a Mayoral Combined Authority for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area. The mission of the Combined Authority is to make life better, healthier, and fairer for all.

The Combined Authority works with our local councils, the Business Board, local public services, Government departments and agencies, universities and businesses to grow the local and national economy. It is made up of a directly elected Mayor and the following seven local authorities (referred to as the Constituent Councils) and the Business Board (Local Enterprise Partnership):

- Cambridge City Council
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- East Cambridgeshire District Council
- Fenland District Council
- Huntingdonshire District Council
- Peterborough City Council
- South Cambridgeshire District Council

What is the Combined Authority doing for buses?

Significant improvements include the introduction of 30 new bus services and route improvements across the entire region– many of which were suggested by residents who took part in a survey in December

2023. The work is being paid for by the Mayoral precept added to council tax this year after 70% of residents said they were prepared to pay more tax to improve the buses. Additional improvements that will benefit South Cambridgeshire residents include a £1 fare for everyone under 25 which began in June 2024. The Combined Authority has also introduced the Tiger Network which is new branding for the buses across the region and it is also investing in improvements to bus shelters in dire need of repair. This followed an audit which identified almost 3,000 bus stops around the region.

The improvements follow the adoption of a five-point vision for the bus network where the Combined Authority agreed to:

- Add more buses to the network
- Provide bus users with better information
- More reliability across the network
- Nicer, better quality buses
- Better value for money for users

Consultation FAQs

When can I take part?

The public consultation is open from 14 August until 20 November 2024.

Who can take part in the public consultation? Can I let other people know about it?

Anyone can take part. Please tell your friends and family about it. Please share the link with anyone you think would be interested in taking part in the public consultation.

You can submit a joint response on behalf of a group or organisation - please do so by emailing consultations@cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk. Please also share the link with your colleagues or members so they have the opportunity to provide an individual response, should they wish to do so.

How do I respond?

We would like you to fill in a questionnaire. The short version contains 10 questions, and the long version contains 31 questions. You can answer either version of the questionnaire and you do not have to answer all the questions. You can complete and submit our questionnaire <https://cpca-yourvoice.co.uk/bus-franchising-consultation/>

To complete the short survey, it is recommended that you read sections 1-6 of the Consultation Document.

To answer the longer questionnaire, it is recommended that you read Sections 1-5 and 7 of the Consultation Document.

If you cannot fill in the questionnaire online, you can fill in a paper copy at one of our events. Your completed paper copy can then be handed in at the event or sent to: 2nd Floor, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN

What is the difference between the short and long survey?

We have created the short questionnaire mainly for you to use in response to the consultation, focusing on the key areas we need your views on. The longer questionnaire is mainly for stakeholders and statutory consultees with a good level of knowledge and interest in the bus market and how it runs. You are welcome to fill out whichever questionnaire you wish.

Will I be able to attend an in-person event?

We are hosting a number of events. Our team will be available to answer your questions and support you.

Our events will be listed here: <https://cpca-yourvoice.co.uk/bus-franchising-consultation/>

How will my feedback be used and when will we find out the results?

All responses will be considered as part of the consultation process when making any decision on whether to introduce the Proposed Franchising Scheme. This decision is currently expected in early 2025. However, it is subject to change, depending on the progress and outcome of the consultation and any subsequent decision-making processes.

Will you keep me updated on progress?

You can follow any updates here: <https://cpca-yourvoice.co.uk/bus-franchising-consultation/>

What will the personal information I provide be used for?

All personal information (such as age, postcode, gender) you provide will be treated confidentially and only used for analysis of the key findings and trends in this consultation. When we look at the feedback, we separate it by things like age and gender, which helps us to understand how ideas may affect different groups of people. This helps us to develop our ideas. You can read our Privacy Notice by clicking here: <https://cpca-yourvoice.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Privacy-notice.pdf>

How can I contact you?

You can contact us via email at consultations@cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk or call us on 01480 277180.

What happens if I don't submit my response in time?

The deadline for responses is 20 November 2024. If you want to respond, please make sure you do so before this time as we cannot guarantee that late responses will be accepted.

How do I get an accessible or translated version of the consultation document and questionnaire?

The consultation document and questionnaire are all accessible and are compatible with most translation software. You can access them <https://cpca-yourvoice.co.uk/bus-franchising-consultation/>

If you need to respond in a different way, or require consultation materials in a different format or language, you can contact us at:

Email: consultations@cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk
Telephone: 01480 277180
Post: 2nd Floor, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN

I need help filling out the questionnaire

If you need assistance with filling out the questionnaire, you can come along to one of our local events, which are listed on our main page, where a member of our team will be able to help you fill out the questionnaire.

You can also call us (01480 277180) and leave your name and contact details – one of our team will get back to you as soon as possible.

What happens next?

All responses will be received and processed by the Combined Authority and shared with Walnut Unlimited and Westco Communications Ltd to be analysed as part of the consultation process.

Once the responses are analysed and the report of findings has been considered by the Combined Authority and the Mayor, the Combined Authority will publish a report setting out its response to the consultation and the Mayor's decision on whether to make the Proposed Franchising Scheme.

This decision is currently expected in early 2025. However, this may be subject to change depending on the progress and outcome of the consultation, as well as other matters relating to the Combined Authority's business.

Once the consultation closes, the Act allows the Combined Authority to make changes to the Proposed Franchising Scheme. This could mean that modifications that reflect more recent changes in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's buses (including the bus network) or changes which reflect consultation responses are made to the Proposed Franchising Scheme.

Accessibility and Contact information

If you have any questions, need to respond in a different way, require consultation materials in a different format, or would like to make a complaint, you can get in touch with us via:

Email: consultations@cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk
Telephone: 01480 277180
Post: 2nd Floor, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN

Where can I read a paper copy of the Consultation Document?

Copies of the consultation document can be viewed at the following locations across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough:

Libraries and Council Offices

Note: More locations and venues may be added to this list. For an up-to-date list of all locations where hard copies are available, please visit:

<https://cpca-yourvoice.co.uk/bus-franchising-consultation/>

Drop In Events

We are hosting the following drop in events:

<https://cpca-yourvoice.co.uk/bus-franchising-consultation/>