

BULLETIN

The Cambridgeshire Guided Busway (CGB)

The College confirmed earlier in the summer that it was to discontinue its Bus Routes 8 and 10 when the CGB was fully up and running. We have been working with the Bus Providers and parents over the last few weeks so as to make sure that you are fully aware of the new travel arrangements to CRC for 2011/12 now that the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway is successfully open and running.

The College has intended for the last few years to discontinue its two bus services that come in from Huntingdonshire – former CRC Bus Routes 8 and 10 – as soon as the Guided Busway was running and operational. We have been delayed in that intention by the well publicised delays in that project. The College only funds (at a cost to the College of over £250,000p.a.) and operates dedicated buses to the College where the public transport links are wholly inadequate, travel times would be too long, and learner numbers are appreciable. The College is unusual in running its own bus network to supplement the public transport network and has done so at significant cost so as to widen access to Further Education.

Although the Guided Busway does not directly service every village on which the College buses used to collect, it will provide a faster and more flexible route for the majority of our students and given the level of public investment in this service the College cannot justify running 2 bus routes directly parallel to its route. The opening of the Guided Busway was confirmed late in the summer, and buses have now been running down this route since early August. Therefore, the College finally confirmed with Joining Instructions and Bus Pass Forms that were sent out in August that Bus Routes 8 and 10 had been ceased.

This bulletin gives the College the opportunity to pass on a lot of information about the Guided Busway and its routes, timetables and prices, and how the County Council or the College might be able to provide financial support for the cost of travelling to CRC. For students returning next week to the College, having been to CRC last year, we don't want you to be financially disadvantaged or put off by having to come on the Guided Busway:

1. For students travelling on the Guided Busway there is clearly no College bus or bus pass available. There is a County Council bus pass that they can apply for at a cost of £600 (for use on Stagecoach services) for the full year and they may again be eligible for a free bus pass if they meet the criteria below. Parents can obtain an application form using the contact details stated below, if they are on Income Based benefits or have a Family Income of £15,860 p.a. or lower.

Exemption from charges may be available to full-time students aged under 19 living in Cambridgeshire by applying to Cambridgeshire County Council. Applications can be made as follows:

Social and Education Transport Team (SETT), Cambridgeshire County Council
Box Number CC1301, Castle Court, Shire Hall, Cambridge, CB3 0AP

Telephone: 0345 045 5208

Facsimile: 01223 475948

Email: edtransport@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Website: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/education/transport

It is important to note that the County Council will only provide this support to the nearest FE College offering the course you wish to do. Clearly, Huntingdonshire Regional College (HRC) will be your nearest College, so it is important to check they do not offer the course you are doing and to make that clear on the application form. If this presents a problem for a returning student then please do talk to our Finance Team, and we will help resolve this for you.

2. If you have tried this and the County Council have rejected your application then please send a copy of the correspondence and pass to Charlotte Skinner (Head of Finance) or Lamorna Poulton (Finance) to assess if the Council have made an objective decision and if there are grounds for appeal. This will be followed up by Finance. It might well be that the College can direct you to support from Learner Support Funds (LSF) that the College has available, and these can be used to support all or part of these costs for students whose household family income is below £25,000p.a

3. If you are not entitled to a free (or subsidised) bus pass it is worth noting the following:

Although we cannot promote any individual service provider on the Guided Busway Whippet Coaches do provide a weekly discounted ticket for students at a price of £15. If the student was to attend college for 30 weeks of the year (most courses are between 30 and 34 weeks long) then the annual cost would be £450, this being only £5 higher than a College bus pass, plus there is the benefit of paying for this on a weekly basis. The College is also pleased to announce that it has negotiated a £2per week discount with Stagecoach, so that a weekly Megarider ticket with them purchased from the College will cost only £19.50 per week.

It should be noted that these costs are also likely to be cheaper than the £600 pass the County Council are offering for the Stagecoach service. It should also be noted that the College is in negotiation with Stagecoach and Whippet to see if they can offer any further assistance.

4. In terms of the routes and services it is worth noting that:

There are 2 stops directly adjacent to the College Campus. One is called "Cambridge Regional College" and stops at the south-east corner of our Campus, the other is called "Orchard Park East" and stops at the western end of our Campus. Both are only tens of yards away from main entrances or gates on to our Campus. I am specifically pointing this out because some of the Stagecoach Route B services that start in Huntingdon drop off at Orchard Park East, which might not immediately be associated with CRC.

The journey time on the Guided Busway from St Ives to CRC appears to be just under 20 minutes. The CRC buses were taking at least 50 minutes to do the same journey. Therefore, depending on how long it takes to get to a Guided Busway stop, a student may have a noticeably quicker journey to College in both directions.

Christopher Lang
Vice Principal – Finance and Resources