

## Parents on the march to save bus

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**Parents and children protest against the decision to cut free buses from September.**

EDUCATION chiefs have been bombarded with complaints about plans to scrap free school transport.

A bus from Rampton to Cottenham Primary School faces the axe, and free travel is being withdrawn for Impington Village College students who live in parts of Girton and Oakington.

Cambridgeshire County Council has received 41 complaints about the plans, and 25 official appeals have been lodged.

The deadline for appeals against the plans is today (Friday, 11 April).

About 40 campaigners held a protest march along the route from Rampton to Cottenham school yesterday (Thursday, 10 April), complaining about the safety of children as young as four walking on the 1.5 mile route.

The council's decision to axe the bus and yet provide £38,000 to save a bus service for 40 traveller children from Smithy Fen came under fire from angry parents.

Trish Jones, 39, whose nine-year-old daughter Holly attends the school, said: "We have no malice against the travellers, but it's not right they get to keep their bus and we don't. It's just not fair."

Mark Henderson, protesting against the scrapping of free places for Impington students, said: "The decision to withdraw the free school bus is based on a seriously flawed road safety assessment.

"The assessor shows very little knowledge of the route - it mentions no accidents despite records showing 53 in total for the whole of the route, including two fatalities.

"All accidents are relevant since cars and lorries are only a kerbstone away and have the potential to kill or seriously injure a child."

Howard Griffiths, spokesman for the Girton Oakington Safely Home campaign, believes the move will lead to more parents travelling to the school by car, increasing traffic in the congested village.

A free bus from Pampisford to the Bellbird Primary School in Sawston is also being withdrawn, but a council spokesman said it had not received any objections to this proposal.

He added: "The safety of children is of paramount importance to Cambridgeshire County Council."