
TRANSPORT SCOTLAND CONSULTATION ON CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL 2017

Report by Service Director Regulatory Services EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

21 November 2017

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report advises Members of a consultation currently in circulation on concessionary travel commissioned by Transport Scotland. The closing date for responses is 17th November 2017 however Scottish Borders Council have been given a special dispensation by Transport Scotland to submit a response after this paper has been discussed by Elected members.
- 1.2 A copy of the full consultation is attached as Appendix 1 and officers recommended responses to the consultation questions are provided in Appendix 2. The main points within the body of the consultation relate to:
- the increase of the qualifying age for women travellers to 65 to bring this in line with the State Pension qualifying age
 - Free travel for Modern Apprentices
 - Introduction of companion cards for disabled children under 5 years of age

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that the Executive Committee**
- (a) agrees to include within the response to the Consultation that companion concessions for blind persons be included in the revised future concessionary travel scheme;**
 - (b) And approves the responses as detailed in Appendix 2 as the Council's submission to the Consultation.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The current concessionary travel scheme for older and disabled people provides free bus travel within Scotland and to Carlisle and Berwick-upon-Tweed on any registered bus service to anyone who lives in Scotland, who is aged 60 and over or meets certain disability criteria, and who has applied for and received a National Entitlement Card (or "bus pass").
- 3.2 One of the stated objectives of the Scheme when it was set up in 2006 was to allow older and disabled people improved access to services, facilities and social networks by free scheduled bus services; and so promote social inclusion.
- 3.3 Since the Scheme was introduced there have been minor modifications, such as simplifying the application process for eligible armed forces veterans in 2012 and changes in 2013 to include people receiving the new Personal Independence Payments (PIP).
- 3.4 In addition, between 2014 and 2016 new bus passes were issued to replace all existing ones. This was to ensure that they would be smart enabled in order to take advantage of the advances in technology since 2006. The new "**saltirecard**" branded bus passes ensure that card holders are able to make greater use of smart technology.
- 3.5 Bus pass holders travel for free. Travel through the national scheme is paid for directly by the Scottish Government. It is a principle of the Scheme that operators should be no better and no worse off as a result of their participation.
- 3.6 The Scottish Government reimburses bus operators for carrying bus pass holders at an agreed rate negotiated with representatives of the bus industry. This is called the reimbursement rate. In 2006-7 the rate was set at 73.6% of the adult single fare for each concessionary journey and, thanks largely to refinements in the economic model used to calculate the rate, has since gradually reduced to 56.9% of the adult single fare in 2017-18.
- 3.7 For every journey made on a bus by a bus pass holder under the Scheme, the bus service operator is currently paid 56.9% of the adult single fare for that journey by the Scottish Government.

4 POINTS OF NOTE

- 4.1 The consultation includes questions on rising the qualifying age for a bus pass (in one go or gradually) to bring it into line with the State Pension age, which will be equalised for men and women in 2018.
- 4.2 The Scottish Government is proposing free bus travel for young Modern Apprentices and we have suggested this might be targeted at those under age 21.
- 4.3 Children under 5 generally travel for free on the bus. As a result access to a disabled bus pass starts at age 5. However, this means that the parents and carers of otherwise eligible disabled children under 5s have to pay for their bus travel when at age 5 the disabled child may qualify for a companion card or bus pass. A companion bus pass is given for someone to accompany a person who is not able to safely travel on their own and allows the companion also to travel free of charge. The Scottish Government is proposing to fix this anomaly by providing disabled under 5s with access to a companion bus pass where this is needed.
- 4.4 It should be noted that the companion entitlement for blind persons on buses has been in place since 1999 however free travel for blind persons

companions on trains is not included in any scheme. Officers consider this to be an opportunity to redress that anomaly. A separate report on the introduction of a local scheme providing blind persons concession is currently being prepared by officers.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no financial implications arising from responding to this consultation. The financial implications of any changes to existing national schemes will become evident in due course.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

There are no risks arising from responding to this consultation.

5.3 Equalities

The responses provided to this consultation are intended to enhance accessibility for elderly and disabled persons.

5.4 Acting Sustainably

There are no sustainability issues arising from this report.

5.5 Carbon Management

By improving access to public transport and reducing dependency on cars it is anticipated this will have a positive impact in terms of carbon management.

5.6 Rural Proofing

The report has no implications for rural proofing.

5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation are required as a result of the recommendations in this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Corporate Transformation & Services Director, Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Service Director Strategy and Policy, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk the Chief Officer HR and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

Approved by

Brian Frater
Service Director Regulatory Services

Signature

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Background Papers: None

Previous Minute Reference: None

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jacqueline Whitelaw can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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