
REPORT TO:	FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 14
DATE OF MEETING:	19 FEBRUARY 2008	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	CHRIS SWAIN (ext 5812)	DOC:
SUBJECT:	NATIONAL CONCESSIONARY BUS TRAVEL SCHEME	REF: cjs/190208
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE:

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Members note the updated information provided in the report.
- 1.2 That the Council approves amendments to the existing Derbyshire Concessionary Travel Scheme (DCTS) for Elderly and Disabled People from the 1st April 2008, in order that the scheme meets the statutory minimum concessionary travel requirements set out by the Government and that all local concessions are discontinued from that date.
- 1.3 That the cost of replacing a pass under the national scheme from 1st April 2008 is increased from £1 to £5 per pass to reflect the increased cost of the smartcard now specified by the Government.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To update members on the issuing of the new National Concessionary Bus Passes.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 Preparations for the new pass issue are progressing well. The first batch of data has been loaded to the new database and was sent to the card production facility during week commencing 17th December 2007. The remainder was worked on with a view to the majority being included on a further upload in mid January 2008. The final batch was sent in early February 2008 and also included passes issued to persons who qualify by virtue of one of the specified disabled categories rather than age.

- 3.2 **People Eligible for a National Concessionary Travel Pass from 1st April 2008:**

People over 60 years of age

and

the following seven categories of disabled person including any person who:

- Is blind or partially sighted
- Is profoundly or severely deaf
- Is without speech
- Has a disability or has suffered an injury which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to walk
- Does not have arms or has long term loss of the use of both arms
- Has a learning disability, that is, a state of arrested or incomplete development of mind which includes significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning
- Would if they applied for the grant of a licence to drive a motor vehicle under part III of the Road Traffic Act 1988, have their application refused pursuant to section 92 of the Act (physical fitness) otherwise than on the ground of persistent misuse of drugs or alcohol.

This introduces three additional classes of eligibility compared to the current DCTS:

- People without speech
- People who are severely deaf.
- People who do not have arms or have long term loss of the use of both arms.

3.3 However there are some current “Gold Card” holders who will no longer qualify under the national scheme by virtue of the DCTS being more generous than the former specifications of the transport Acts 1985 and 2000. There are four categories of disabled people who currently receive a Derbyshire Gold Card and who are not included in the national scheme:

- People with enduring mental illness supported by community services.
- People who have a disabled parking badge.

These are currently able to travel on buses free in the Derbyshire travel area after 09.30 am Monday to Friday and at all times Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays and for half fare at all times on trains in the Derbyshire travel area.

and

- People in receipt of attendance allowance.
- People in receipt of the middle/higher rate care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

These are currently able to travel free on buses and trains at all times in the Derbyshire travel area. Under the terms of the 2008 statutory concessionary fares scheme DCTS could not issue a ‘national pass’ to any people who fall into these categories or give the same level of concession (free travel at all times).

3.4 There are also some additional concessions which will no longer be available under the national scheme:

- Half fare travel on trains within Derbyshire and on some local cross border routes. This affects all current gold card holders
- Free travel at all times on buses and trains in Derbyshire, including some cross border routes, for the larger two disabled categories.

- 3.5 Other than in respect of the rail travel concession, the majority of persons affected by the above changes are likely to be entitled to a new national pass under some other category, for example those currently in receipt of a gold card by virtue of being in receipt of attendance allowance are by definition over 60 and would be entitled to a national pass in any case. There will however be no free rail travel and free travel will be restricted to off peak times. In the other 3 categories all current recipients of a gold card were contacted with details of the new scheme and invited to apply if they meet the new criteria. There is, however, a more stringent certification of entitlement criteria.
- 3.6 It is inevitable however that there will be a number who cannot meet any of the criteria for a new national pass and in some cases where a national pass is issued the new concession may be seen as inferior to that offered by the gold card.
- 3.7 Derbyshire County Council instigated a review of the affordability and sustainability of the additional concessions included in the Derbyshire scheme over and above the provisions of the national statutory scheme, in particular:
- the provision of half fare travel during peak times
 - the inclusion of rail travel within the County
 - Eligibility to certain groups of disabled people who are not covered by the national scheme.
- 3.8 The conclusion of this is that maintaining these additional concessions on bus travel would be extremely difficult at this time, involving a totally separate pass system, significant extra costs and two different reimbursement methods with operators. The report therefore reluctantly recommends that the participating members of the DCTS implement the statutory national scheme only at this time, but considers the potential in the future of the smartcard features of the new card for providing flexibility in local concessions at a later date if individual Councils wish to fund this.
- 3.9 There is currently a £1 charge for replacement of lost passes. From 1st April 2008 the cost of purchasing and issuing a new smartcard will be some £5 per card and it is recommended that this replacement charge be set at this level.
- 3.10 However, it is pleasing to note that the reverse of the national pass will be labelled as a Gold Card and the existing concessions that are available (i.e. discounts at various shops and cafes) will be retained for the residents of Derbyshire.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The provision of the statutory concessionary travel scheme became the responsibility of District and Unitary Councils from 2001/02. As a consequence of this funding through the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) was transferred from the County to the District Block in that year's grant settlement. It was decided at that time to retain the Derbyshire Scheme intact along with the extra statutory concessions and in view of this the County Council continued their 50% funding of the original scheme after taking into account the additional grant paid to the Districts and the City Councils. The County Council continued also to fund the overall control of the scheme including negotiations with operators, audit of recharges and co-ordination of payment to operators whilst the District and City Councils funded the administration of pass issue.
- 4.2 Along with the introduction of the new national scheme and the recommendation that this now replaces the DCTS, the District and City Councils will now be totally

responsible for the cost of the scheme and receive all the specific grant and RSG relating to this responsibility. The County Council will however continue to co-ordinate the scheme as a county wide “product” by carrying out the negotiations and liaison with the bus operators and the Department for Transport (DfT) and will fund some of the additional artwork on the passes to retain the “Gold Card” brand and discount facilities.

- 4.3 The County Council will also meet 50% of any additional reimbursements to operators for 2007/08 which result from the outstanding appeals which are still to be heard by the independent adjudicator nominated by the DfT. Appeals have been lodged by operators who account for 53% of passenger journeys and in 2007/08 it will only be these operators who must be paid for any additional reimbursements resulting from the appeals.

5.0 Corporate Implications

- 5.1 The Council is currently the statutory Authority for the provision of concessionary bus travel and is charged with providing the national scheme from April 2008.
- 5.2 The provision of Concessionary Fare passes contributes to Theme 5.5 in the Corporate Plan 2007/10: Improving public transport in rural areas.

6.0 Community Implications

- 6.1 The new national travel concession is a Government initiative that provides benefits to residents of the Council through the wider usage of the concession and potentially the provision of an increased customer base for local bus services which will ensure their continued viability and provision.
- 6.2 However, there will be a number of residents who no longer qualify for a travel concession and there will be implications for those individuals.

7.0 Background Papers

- 7.1 Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007
Various circulars from the DfT
Derbyshire County Council Cabinet report 27th November 2007
The national framework agreement contracts for provision and issue of passes
The ITSO technical specification for pass issue