

CONSULTATION ON FREE BUS TRAVEL FOR OLDER AND DISABLED PEOPLE AND MODERN APPRENTICES

Response by Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation, Scottish Policy Forum

The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (“CIHT”) is a membership organisation representing over 14,000 people who work in the highways and transportation sector. CIHT members plan, design, build, operate and maintain best-in-class transport systems and infrastructure, whilst respecting the imperatives improving safety, ensuring economic competitiveness and minimising environmental impact.

CIHT Scotland embraces both public and private sectors across the whole geography of the nation and welcomes the opportunity to comment on this consultation which seeks views on the concessionary travel scheme. We welcome the opportunity to respond and offer our comments on each of the questions below.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Annex B Part 2 – Questions on options

1. Do you think that we should retain the existing age eligibility criteria for the Scheme?

No.

The increasing costs combined with tight budgets combine to add pressure to the scheme. The existing scheme arguably does not target expenditure towards those most in need in that it includes some people who are still in work. Aligning with the state pension age makes sense and maximises ease of administration. However, that would still mean that people in (full/part-time) paid employment could be in receipt of a concessionary pass, but we suspect the potential administrative burden of tracking those people moving in and out of work would outweigh any savings.

2. Are you in favour of raising age eligibility to female State Pension age in this way?

Yes.

As stated in response to Q1 there is substantial budget pressure building on the scheme.

3. Are you in favour of raising age eligibility to female State Pension age gradually over time? At what rate?

Yes.

By 1 year per year. This provides a phased transition to avoid major detriment and provides significant savings in reasonably early course. There will likely be debates about social equity but there is practical merit in conveying the simpler message of “1 year per year”.

4. Are you in favour of providing free bus travel to Modern Apprentices?

Yes.

The question of provision for modern apprenticeships is primarily an employment issue but promoting economic growth and social inclusion are important elements of the High Level Objectives of the National Transport Strategy.

Should this be targeted at Modern Apprentices under Age 21?

Yes.

This supports cross-cutting policy measures as the provision of free bus travel should encourage use of public transport and mode shift in an age group that is still forming habits.

Is there a better way to provide support to help with the travel costs of Modern Apprentices?

No, We don't think so.

As proposed it would be easy to comprehend for potential users and simpler to administer when it relates only to public transport.

5. Are you in favour of providing a companion card for disabled under 5s where this is needed?

Yes, on grounds of fairness and to maximise opportunity for disabled children.

6. Do you have any other comments about any of the issues raised in this consultation?

No.

Part 3 – Assessing impact

Equality: Are there any likely impacts the proposals contained within this Consultation may have on particular groups of people, with reference to the ‘protected characteristics’ listed above? Please be as specific as possible.

No comment.

Children and young people: Do you think the proposals contained within this Consultation may have any additional implications on the safety of children and young people?

No comment.

Business: Do you think the proposals contained in this Consultation are likely to increase or reduce the costs and burdens placed on any sector? Please be as specific as possible.

Expect neutral impact. Travel to work for employees is a personal cost and the extent of concessionary usage for business travel is unknown.

Privacy: Are there any likely impacts the proposals contained in this Consultation may have upon the privacy of individuals? Please be as specific as possible.

No comment.

Annex C - Options not favoured by the Scottish Government:

Our comments:

1 Requiring card holders to make a small financial contribution towards the cost of each concessionary journey.

Agreed that a fixed contribution under current technology would be more trouble than it would be worth.

2 Levying an annual charge for access to free bus travel.

A fixed annual fee seems a reasonable way to overcome the practical difficulties and delays that would occur with Option 1. However, the additional administrative effort to collect an annual (renewal) fee, would not seem to be insurmountable nor publicly unacceptable if the charge is modest as suggested.

3 Restricting use of a bus pass during peak travel times.

The suggested rationale against this option seems over-stated given it is thought that much of the peak-hour travel could be discretionary. The savings may well be less likely to accrue from adjusted travel times but over-crowding in peak times could force essential commuter travel to be diverted to private car, and exacerbate other policy objectives. Disagreements over peak/off-peak journeys is not a major issue and is already dealt with

routinely on the rail system. More compelling may be the issue of equitable treatment for travellers regardless of their journey purpose or a better analysis of peak hour concession carryings and their impact on peak vehicle fleet requirements.

4 Having a cap on the value of individual journeys which can be free.

An annual cap again sounds a reasonable concept but would require improved ticketing systems. It could be reconsidered as part of a future upgrade of the national concession smart card.