

Committee: Environment

Agenda Item

Date: June 19 2008

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Title: CONCESSIONARY FARES

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Summary

- 1 Customer feedback has been sought to gauge users views of the new national travel scheme for concessionary fares. This report summarizes the scheme, what other authorities are doing, it highlights implications for the council and residents.

Recommendations

- 2 That Members consider adding to the National Scheme and funding a further 30 minutes to allow travel to commence at 9am, for those holding passes that were issued by Uttlesford District Council.
- 3 that any future new routes established from Stansted Airport would not qualify for concessionary travel without a decision of this committee.

Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report.
 - Concessionary Travel: Report to Environment Committee 22 Jan. 2008.

Impact

5.

Communication/Consultation	Members have been asked to forward any related contributions from the community. Public have been invited by way of press coverage to contribute. Officers in the service have collected comments from the community.
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Finance	There will be a cost implication however this is judged to be small.

Human Rights	None
Legal implications	None
Sustainability	There is benefit where people choose to use a bus rather than a car.
Ward-specific impacts	All.
Workforce/Workplace	Concessionary fares officer will manage the interface with customers and notify Scheme Contractors MCL who will liaise with bus operators of any change.

Situation/Update

6. Commencing 1 April 2008 the Government introduced the New National Travel Scheme permitting persons aged 60 or over and eligible disabled people to apply for a free travel pass for use on local scheduled bus routes anywhere in England between the hours of 09:30 am – 11.30 pm. The cost of this travel is met by the authority within which any particular bus journey commences.
7. This scheme followed on from the free Essex pass, which ran between 09:00 – 11:30, Essex Authorities paying for the extra half hour, cost being met by the Authority who issued the pass and it is the residents who held these passes who considered the new scheme to be a reduced opportunity.
8. Uttlesford has issued approximately 6,500 of the new passes; the growing number can be attributed to the attractiveness of the scheme permitting free travel within the Government statutory minimum of 9.30am to 11pm and travel outside of the district which also includes park and ride schemes.
9. The Essex Authorities were of the opinion that Government funding for the National Scheme was not sufficient and if Authorities were still agreeable to funding the 09:00 – 09:30 slot it could weaken their argument for more funding, it was agreed by all bar one authority to return to the statutory minimum of 9.30am. However, to avoid leaving people isolated by this arrangement, adjustment was made in areas where the only service available departs before 9.30am.
10. Nationally some authorities have chosen to vary the scheme and permit travel passes to commence at 9am some also have unlimited travel. A small number of Essex Authorities have already returned to a 9am start.
11. In 2007/8 the cost of concessionary fares was £276,771.
12. The estimated cost for concessionary travel for 2008/09 has been put at £350,824, and invoices are received on a monthly basis @ £28,468 per

month from Essex County Council, the Co-Coordinating Authority, three payments have already been made. Government Funding for the scheme is received through the Revenue Support Grant, an additional concessionary special grant of £452,428 to fund the extra cost of the new concessions will be received in quarterly payments spread over the next three years:-

2008-09			
36,676	37,080	37,080	36,273
2009-10			
37,541	37,954	37,954	37,129
2010-11			
38,579	39,003	39,003	38,156

12. This fund permits the Essex countywide scheme's contractors MCL to release payments to bus operators to reflect journeys taken.
13. Whilst there is no particular concern about the impact of Stansted Airport upon this scheme (all scheduled routes were accommodated in the old scheme). If any new routes were established in the future from Stansted Airport that took people either into London or more distant destinations this would have a significant impact upon costs

14. Responses from the community

Over 50 emails and letters were received from individuals and organizations.

The majority of contributions came from people who used their passes to attend hospital or doctors' appointments and either had to purchase a ticket for the early part of their journey or book later appointments.

Most letters gave examples of the timings of buses and the infrequency of service.

15. Other comments included:

- Boarding at one bus stop and paying as the bus arrived before 09:30 or walking quite a way to the next stop to catch the same bus as it arrived at 09:30 for free.
- Retired people like to get up and out early.
- Limited time at their destination before having to commence return journey.
- The 9am buses are now empty.

- Connecting buses are missed.
- Highlighting the limitations of the public transport system in our district.
- Need to get bus to work before 9.30am
- The passes are an assistance to the disadvantaged.
- GPs surgery finishes at 10am
- Rural nature of the district needs to be treated differently from cities.

Risk Analysis

16.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the scheme may exceed budget provision.	2	3	Close monitoring of budget as the actual costs become known. Keep scheme under review.
That Community continue to express their dissatisfaction with a 9.30am start.	2	2	Uttlesford life article on concessionary fares arrangements.
That any challenges UDC may have with Government over the funding will be weakened.	2	3	Provide evidence of this consultation exercise.
That new scheduled routes will be introduced from Stansted Airport to London or further away	2	2	Any new scheduled routes established from Stansted Airport would not qualify for concessionary travel without a decision from this committee

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary,

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

