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Consultation on Free Bus Travel for Older and Disabled People and Modern Apprentices

Easy Read Version

October 2017

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Introduction

Concessionary travel means that some people travel for free on buses. The Scottish Government wants to know what you think about the National Concessionary Travel Scheme for older and disabled people. We will call this “the Scheme” in this consultation.

This scheme gives older and disabled people better access to the services they need. It also means they can take part in family and other social activities that they would not be able to afford otherwise. This gives independence to people who need to travel by bus.

The Scottish Government wants to keep giving free bus travel to people who need it most. We want to look at ways to keep the scheme going and working well in the future.

We also know about the challenges of younger people and will be asking for your views on free bus travel for Modern Apprentices and how that might work.

We also want free companion travel for disabled children under five who are not already covered by the Scheme.

Whatever changes are made to the scheme, **if you already have a bus pass, or get one before any changes are made, you will not lose it!** If you qualify to get a free bus pass now, you will still qualify for one after we make the changes.

We want to hear what you think about our ideas.

1. About this consultation

A Consultation is how we ask the public for their thoughts and ideas before we make changes to the law. This Consultation sets out the issues we are thinking about and asks you questions about what we want to do.

We look at your answers and use them to help us make future rules and guidance on the National Concessionary Travel Scheme in Scotland.

The Consultation closes at midnight on **17 November 2017**.

To help as many people take part as possible, there are a number of ways for you to give your answers. You can do this online, by email or by post.

Online: www.consult.scotland.gov.uk/

Email: concessionarytravelconsultation@transport.gov.scot

By Post: Send your response to:
Concessionary Travel Policy Team
Transport Scotland
Area 2D-North
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Please include the Respondent Information Form, which is at the end of the consultation.

The Consultation will also be available in alternative formats on request, including Large Print, Braille, and Gaelic.

We have also produced an information leaflet which can be downloaded from the Transport Scotland website:

www.transport.gov.scot/concessionary-travel/

2. Free bus travel for older and disabled people

Everyone living in Scotland who is 60 or over and people with disabilities can apply for a free bus pass.

This lets them travel for free within Scotland and to Carlisle and Berwick-upon-Tweed at any time of day, for any number of journeys, on local and long distance bus services.

As well as this, bus pass holders who live on Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles can get 2 free return ferry journeys to the mainland each year.

The cost of the scheme has gone up to just over £190 million in 2016-17. Around 70,000 of us reach age 60 each year and that number is expected to rise to 76,000 by 2021.

This means the costs will keep rising faster and we need to think about how to pay for the Scheme and keep it running.

What could we do?

We have come up with three options for how things could go forward.

Option 1: No change.

We could keep the age of eligibility at 60. This will mean the scheme gets more and more expensive, which will make it more difficult to keep running in the future.

Even if your first choice is to make no changes to age eligibility at this time, please look at options 2 and 3, and let us know what you think about them.

Question 1:

Do you think the age eligibility for the Scheme should stay at 60?

Yes

No

Please tell us why you think this in the box below.

Option 2: Raise the age of eligibility for men and women to the female State Pension age in one step

The State Pension age for women is being made the same as for men.

The State Pension age for both will be 65 from November 2018. Then the age for men and women will go up to 66 by 2020 and to 67 between 2026 and 2028.

We suggest that the age of eligibility for free bus travel should be the same as for female State Pension age from 2018.

This would save around £10 million in the first year, going up to a saving of around £65 million by 2022-23. In 2023-24, this would save around £83 million each year, going up to a saving of around £111 million in 2026-27.

Question 2:

Do you think we should raise age eligibility to female State Pension age in this way?

Yes

No

Please tell us why you think this in the box below.

Option 3: Raise the age of eligibility to the female State Pension age over a number of years

This would be like option 2, but it would happen over several years instead of in one step.

Age eligibility could go up either:-

- by one year per year; or
- by six months per year

Bringing the change in more slowly might mean that people affected by the change in the early years would get their bus passes after age 60 but before the female State Pension age.

Raising age eligibility from April 2018 by one year per year to female State Pension age would save around £11 million in the first year. This would go up to a saving of around £40 million by 2022-23.

Raising age eligibility from April 2018 by six months per year to female State Pension age would save around £5 million in the first year. This would go up to a saving of around £27 million by 2022-23.

Question 3:

Do you think we should raise age eligibility to female State Pension age gradually over time?

Yes

No

At what rate?

One year per year

Six months per year

Please tell us why you think this in the box below.

3. Bus travel for modern apprentices

Modern Apprenticeships are a great way for young people to get new skills, experience and a qualification while working. They let people earn money while they learn and are good for the economy. The Scottish Government has promised to make 30,000 new Modern Apprenticeship opportunities each year by 2020.

We know that starting work can involve a lot of costs for young people who do not have a lot of money. Free bus travel would take one of those worries away for young apprentices.

The Scottish Government wants to give free bus travel to young Modern Apprentices aged under age 21. We believe this will make the Modern Apprenticeships more attractive to young people and employers.

It would cost about £8 million per year to give free bus travel to Modern Apprentices under 21. Giving it to all Modern Apprentices would roughly double that cost.

Question 4:

Do you think we should give free bus travel to Modern Apprentices?

Yes

No

Should this be for Modern Apprentices under Age 21?

Yes

No

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

Yes

No

Please tell us about this in the box below.

4. Companion Cards for Disabled Children under Age Five

All children under 5 generally travel for free on the bus. Because of this, they don't get a disabled bus pass until they are 5 years old.

When they are 5 the disabled child can get a companion card if they are not able to travel safely by themselves. With a companion card, the person with the child can also travel for free.

This means that parents and carers have to pay to travel with a disabled child until the child is 5. We think we should fix this by letting disabled under-5s have companion cards if they need them.

We believe there are around 3,210 disabled children under 5 who might benefit from a companion card. This will cost just over £600,000 per year.

Question 5:

Do you think we should give a companion card to disabled under 5s if they need one?

Yes No

Please tell us why you think this in the box below.

Is there anything else you want to tell us about that is not mentioned above?

The Scottish Government welcomes any more comments or ideas you have on the Scheme and how it might be made better.

Please tell us about these in the box below.

Question 6:

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

Yes No

Please tell us about this in the box below.

Respondent Information Form

PLEASE NOTE THIS FORM MUST BE RETURNED WITH YOUR ANSWERS.

Are you answering as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
- Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

Phone number

Address

Postcode

Email

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your Consultation answers. Please tell us what you'd like us to do:-

- Publish my answers with my name
- Publish my answers without my name (anonymous)
- Do not publish my answers

We will share your answers with other Scottish Government departments who may be looking at the issues you tell us about. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we need your permission to do this. Are you happy for the Scottish Government to contact you again to ask about this Consultation?

- Yes
- No



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Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to us at info@transport.gov.scot

This document is also available on the Transport Scotland website: www.transport.gov.scot
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