



Concessionary Travel Unit – Update on Performance

Date of meeting 30 September 2022

Date of report 14 September 2022

1. Object of report

The object of this report is to update the Committee on concessionary travel unit performance and to provide a summary of proposed changes to the national concessionary travel scheme which may impact the local Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme (SCTS) and the planned support to the Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme (U22's).

2. Background

The update at the previous Committee on 18 March 2022 provided insight to proposed digital solutions designed to improve administrative task efficiencies. SPT continues to develop these digital solutions and work with external partners at The Improvement Service (IS) and National Entitlement Card Programme Office (NECPO) to further improve them. Efforts to improve the replacement card process are underway, with assistance from the current Card Management System (CMS).

There have been gains on the efficiency of the Contact Centre service by giving generic information within the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) menu, though progress can still be made by giving contextualised responses to callers. Efforts continue to drive this forward.

Since the previous update to the Committee, the concessionary travel unit team have been operating a hybrid system of working in the office balanced equally with home working with full access to all telephony and support systems. This ensures that there is always a resource presence within the office. This has assisted with maintaining enquiries received by post and the progression of cross-skilling all team members to support with concessionary travel and the MyBus service.

3. Current Position

3.1 Digital Update

The previous update to the Committee confirmed the Contact Centre remained within Phase One of the Noble system solutions, due to inability to interact with the previous CMS and lack of data sharing agreements. The new CMS launch was on 8 November 2021.

Phase Two of the Noble project has begun with the recent approval of the data sharing agreement between SPT and partner authorities. The new CMS permits full integration of an application programming interface (API) to enable cardholders self-serve functionality, for example replacement card requests. This API also enables

contextualised responses within the IVR menu, delivering specific information relating to cardholders. The project for delivering this API has now began and will improve the speed of response to card holders and reduce administration within the Contact Centre. The impact will be monitored with a view to maximising the benefits to customers and will be reported to a future Committee.

As part of the Phase Two Noble project, the team continue to investigate the suitability of webforms to handle general enquiries. This can auto-respond to “how to” enquiries and provide contextualised responses on follow up enquiries - again improving the interaction with customers.

Getyournec.scot has now been fully launched with all 32 councils within Scotland signed up. SPT continues to work with IS and NECPO to promote this service as the main facility for any National Entitlement Card (NEC). SPT online guidance, IVR messaging and email auto-responses continue to guide cardholders to this service as an option.

It is important to note that whilst digital solutions provide benefits to many customers and drive administration efficiencies, they do not provide benefits to all and the Contact Centre will continue to provide routes to services for all customers including those with restricted or no access to digital means.

3.2 Young Persons’ Free Bus Travel Scheme (U22’s)

The Contact Centre has been requested by IS to support the marketing campaign launched on 20 September 2022 to increase the take up of ‘U22’ cards.

This has led to the Contact Centre developing an overflow service for eligible Local Authorities from across Scotland that require assistance with expected inbound volumes. In effect this has meant creating from scratch an additional contact centre (18 FTE staff) at Buchanan Bus Station for the duration of the campaign (expected to be 10-12 weeks). As well as staff recruitment, this has involved developing our existing Contact Centre system to support the calls, resourcing the necessary IT equipment and providing the management input to the creation of this support service. This development is funded in full by The Improvement Service.

3.3 Performance Results

- Admin Processing
 - Customer demand has increased since restrictions have been lifted, seeing pent-up demand from cardholders who chose not to renew or request replacement cards during lockdown.
 - SPT’s aim is to significantly reduce admin volumes before the next energy price increase in October 2022, recognising the potential impact on customers which will drive a desire for quicker responses to both new applications and renewals. Steps taken to achieve this include a focus on processing admin received as quickly as possible although efforts to boost admin productivity may impact telephony performance for a short period.
 - Further development of digital solutions and progression of Phase Two of the Noble Systems project will help to manage demand and reduce processing times as efficiency gains are achieved.

- Call Handling Performance

- Call volumes and demand continue to build, however remain at 65% of pre-lockdown levels. Growth was expected to continue from the previous report to Committee, although benefits from digital solutions have prevented volumes from being unmanageable. Call queues are actively managed in real-time to move resource from admin tasks to calls as required.
- As we progress through Phase Two of the Noble Systems project, further efficiencies are expected. Customers are currently self-serving through the IVR for card replacement requests. The development of the API will automate this process, further reducing the manual effort required. This will result in improvements to call handling performance.

4. Next steps

The previous update to Committee advised the next phase for the project is to integrate with the National Entitlement Card Management System data to enable further automation and reduce the need for manual intervention. As the new CMS launch was successful in November 2021, the implementation of the API will see this phase completed.

Consideration is still being given to the development of webforms which will enable general enquiries to be structured in a way that will allow them to be handled more efficiently. Specific webform enquiries will be directed to suitable channels which may include Getyournec.scot or to SPT's concessionary travel telephone line.

5. Committee action

The Committee is asked to note:

- (i) the contents of this paper;
- (ii) the progress made with digital enhancements;
- (iii) further future integration to improve the service further; and
- (iv) the developments in support of the 'U22' marketing campaign.

6. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>Improved customer experience achieved via efficiency gains and performance improvements.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>Mitigations to minimise the risk to card holders.</i>

Climate Change, Adaptation &
Carbon consequences

None directly.

Name Neil Wylie
Title **Treasurer/Secretary**

For further information, please contact *Neil Wylie, Treasurer on 0141 333 3380.*