

Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme Joint Committee



Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme – New Fare Structure – Financial Year 2022/23

Date of meeting 17 September 2021

Date of report 1 September 2021

Report by Treasurer

1. Object of report

To update the Committee on the implementation of the new Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme fare structure from financial year 2022/23.

2. Background

- 2.1 Further to earlier reports, members will recall that at its meeting on 12 March 2021¹, and following the recommendations of an independent review of the Scheme during financial year 2021/22, the Committee approved the introduction of a new Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme fares structure. This action was deemed necessary in order to safeguard the future of the Scheme in light of on-going budget pressures, and a risk to the short-to-medium term sustainability of the Scheme.
- 2.2 Members are reminded that, in recent years, the Scheme has been subject to a number of necessary changes including fare increases, change to the operator reimbursement formula, and the introduction of evening peak travel restrictions. However, the implementation of the new fare structure presents a significant change, moving for the first time away from a basic concessionary fare to a new half fare, and with a maximum fare cap applied for concessionary rural zone rail trips and for all ferry trips. This new structure will be introduced in financial year 2022/23.
- 2.3 Given the significance of change, it will be necessary to ensure appropriate steps are taken with regard to preparing for and then introducing the new fare structure in 2022/23, including communications with users and communities and liaising with participating operators with a particular focus on ticketing/technology aspects of the change.

3. Progress Update

- 3.1 Further to the above, SPT has held initial informal discussions with a number of participating operators including ScotRail, CalMac and SPT Subway. The focus of these meetings has been first and foremost to ensure operator awareness of the new fare structure but also to help understand and address any questions or concerns. Members are asked to note that letters will be issued to participating

¹ https://www.spt.co.uk/media/xdflr2mw/sctsjc120321_agenda5.pdf

operators over the coming weeks formally notifying them of the new fare structure, as well as offering an opportunity for further discussions in advance of the new fare being introduced.

- 3.2 Liaison with operators has been important in order to understand potential implications with regard to ticketing systems. However, feedback received has so far been positive in this regard and suggests that existing systems across all modes can adapt to the new fare structure.
- 3.3 It is important to be clear that the new fare structure will mean that, in most cases, fares will increase. As such, a key aspect highlighted by operators is around communication of the changes to customers. Emphasis has been placed on the importance of early messaging and to ensure that, where possible, customer awareness is communicated effectively, well in advance of the changes being implemented. This should also help mitigate any potential issues that may arise for frontline operational staff with regard to point of ticket sales.
- 3.4 Over the coming weeks, SPT officers will prepare a communication strategy and will continue to liaise with participating operators accordingly. It is expected that internet and social media channels will provide the main source of communications and key messaging to customers. However, being mindful that not all customers will have access to digital technology, all other forms of communication will be considered and adopted as necessary such as press releases, adverts, and on-site posters.
- 3.5 Members will be aware that, arising from local press interest, correspondence has already been received concerning Scheme changes, including the independent review process and reasons for the decisions. Levels of correspondence and media coverage remain relatively low at this stage; but we expect that communication activity will increase in the lead up to the Scheme changes being introduced. SPT will continue to monitor closely all communications received and will respond accordingly.

4. Conclusions

The new fare structure being implemented in financial year 2022/23 seeks to balance the need for maintaining an affordable fare for customers while ensuring the Scheme remains financially sustainable in the short to medium term. Acknowledging that the changes are the most significant for some years, SPT is undertaking significant liaison and communication activity with customers and operators well in advance of their implementation. Officers will continue to update the Committee on any issues arising from the new fare structure, including monitoring its effectiveness.

5. Committee Action

The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

6. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>In line with the Regional Transport Strategy.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None at present</i>
Financial consequences	<i>The new fare structure will help to ensure the short to medium term sustainability of the Scheme.</i>

Personnel consequences	<i>None at present</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>Impacts of the new fare structure on equalities groups will be monitored.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>The short to medium term future of the Scheme would be at risk if the new fare structure was not implemented.</i>

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