

# Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 6 October 2022

## Concessionary Travel on Edinburgh Trams for Young People (Under 22)

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive All
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### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 It is recommended that Transport and Environment Committee:
  - 1.1.1 Note the national arrangements for free bus travel for older and disabled people and for young people under 22;
  - 1.1.2 Note the arrangements currently in place for free travel on Edinburgh Trams for older, disabled and young people with a National Entitlement Card;
  - 1.1.3 Note the proposal to meet the costs incurred by Edinburgh Trams for the scheme up to 31 March 2023 from funding held within reserves;
  - 1.1.4 Refer this report to the Council to agree the use of reserves to meet the costs incurred by Edinburgh Trams up to 31 March 2023;
  - 1.1.5 Agree not to continue with the scheme for free travel on Edinburgh Trams for young people under 22 beyond 31 March 2023;
  - 1.1.6 Note the Scottish Government intend to carry out a Fair Fares Review in 2022/23; and
  - 1.1.7 Agree that Council officers should continue to discuss concessionary fares on tram with Transport Scotland, highlighting the policy benefits of integrated ticketing and routing across multi-modes of transport and to respond to the Fair Fares Review on the same basis at the appropriate time.

**Paul Lawrence**

Executive Director of Place

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## Concessionary Travel on Edinburgh Trams for Young People (Under 22)

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report updates Committee on the Scottish Government's Young Persons (under 22s) free bus travel scheme and outlines the impact of this on Edinburgh Trams and seeks agreement not to introduce a scheme of further concessionary fares on Edinburgh Trams until the Scottish Government's Fair Fares Review is complete, due to the financial impact that this would have on the Council.

### 3. Background

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#### **National Bus Travel Scheme for Older and Disabled People**

- 3.1 On 1 April 2006, the Scottish Government introduced the National Bus Travel Scheme for Older and Disabled People.
- 3.2 The aim of the scheme is to provide free bus travel throughout Scotland for those aged 60 or over and to people who have an impairment that severely affects their mobility and ability to carry out day to day activities. The scheme also allows for free travel for companions where required by eligible disabled people.
- 3.3 Local authorities are responsible for administering the National Entitlement Card which provides evidence of eligibility to travel for free through the scheme.
- 3.4 The National Entitlement Card also provides cardholders living in Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles to receive two free return ferry journeys to the Scottish mainland each year.
- 3.5 The current terms of the scheme have been in place since 2019, with the Scottish Government reimbursing operators at an agreed rate.

#### **Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme**

- 3.6 On 31 January 2022, the Scottish Government introduced the Young Persons' (Under 22s) Free Bus Travel Scheme.
- 3.7 This scheme is open to all young people and children aged 5 – 21 years. To travel for free, the young person must hold a National Entitlement Card or a Young Scot National Entitlement Card.

- 3.8 Asylum seekers and refugees aged between 5 and 21 can also access the scheme, with the appropriate Entitlement Card.
- 3.9 As with the concessionary scheme for older and disabled people, the Scottish Government reimburses operators for this scheme.

### **Concessionary Travel on Edinburgh Trams**

- 3.10 The Scottish Government concessionary travel schemes apply to bus travel but do not apply to other modes of public transport, except the ferry travel exception noted above. This means that scheme does not enable free travel for older, disabled or young people on, for example, Edinburgh Trams and the Glasgow Subway.
- 3.11 Following the introduction of the National Travel Scheme for Older and Disabled People, the Council set aside £500,000 per annum to replicate the National Bus Travel Scheme for Older and Disabled People on Edinburgh Trams. This means that, with the appropriate Entitlement Card, Edinburgh residents can access free public transport on both bus and tram.

## **4. Main report**

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### **Current Provision**

- 4.1 From 31 January 2022, Edinburgh Trams has offered free travel to young people under 22 who hold a National Entitlement or Young Scot National Entitlement card issued by the City of Edinburgh Council.
- 4.2 From 31 January 2022 to 13 August 2022, the cost of this was £109,000.
- 4.3 The cost of this is currently being met by Edinburgh Trams, with the expectation that this will be reimbursed by the Council from the funding which is held in reserves or as part of the B share arrangements.
- 4.4 Going forward, if Edinburgh Trams continue to offer free travel to young people under the age of 22, the cost is initially expected to be in the region of £25,000 per month. This is likely to increase as take up of the National Entitlement Card increases and with the opening of the tram line to Newhaven. If the scheme were to be extended to the end of the financial year it is considered that an allowance of £30,000 per month should be made, resulting in a total allowance of £304,000.

### **Fair Fares Review**

- 4.5 Since the policy was first proposed, the Chief Executive of Transport for Edinburgh has regularly engaged with Transport Scotland and Scottish Government on concessionary travel on trams.
- 4.6 Council officers met with officers from Transport Scotland in June 2022 to discuss concessionary travel on public transport.
- 4.7 Transport Scotland confirmed that, while the current concessionary schemes only apply on bus, it is intended to carry out a Fair Fares Review during 2022/23.

- 4.8 The Review will consider the cost and availability of public transport services, both to the passenger and the taxpayer, looking at existing discounts and concessionary schemes, fare integration across modes and will consider options for change that are designed to:
- Deliver greater fairness to society in general as well as public transport users;
  - Support the long term viability of our public transport system; and
  - Take into account changes in the relative cost of travel across all modes and by private car.
- 4.9 The review is expected to conclude in 2023.
- 4.10 Transport Scotland officers have confirmed that they will engage with stakeholders and delivery partners as the review progresses.

### **Conclusion**

- 4.11 While recognising the challenges which applying different concessionary arrangements on bus and tram presents, Council officers recommend not replicating the Scottish Government's Young Persons' Free Bus Travel scheme on Edinburgh Trams at this time.
- 4.12 This conclusion is based on the current and future estimated costs of doing so in the context of the financial challenges faced by the Council in 2022/23 and beyond.
- 4.13 Council officers would, however, continue to engage with Transport Scotland on the associated challenges and would respond to the upcoming Fair Fares Review highlighting the policy benefits of integrated ticketing and routing across multi-modes of transport.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 If Committee approve the recommendations of this report, Council officers will:
- 5.1.1 Engage with Edinburgh Trams to ensure that the costs incurred by providing free travel on the tram for young people under 22 until 31 March 2023 are met;
  - 5.1.2 Work closely with Edinburgh Trams on the changes this will mean for concessionary travel arrangements for young people under the age of 22, including ensuring that appropriate communication plans are put in place;
  - 5.1.3 Continue to engage with Transport Scotland on the Fair Fares Review, highlighting the policy benefits of integrated ticketing and routing across public transport modes; and

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 As noted in paragraph 3.11, the Council has allocated £500,000 per annum to allow Edinburgh residents to travel for free on Edinburgh Trams.

- 6.2 In anticipation of the introduction of a Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme for under 18s, the Council agreed to invest £500,000 in 2021/22 to enable the scheme to be rolled out for young people travelling on Edinburgh Trams. This funding was not utilised and £400,000 of this funding was carried forward into 2022/23 within a Place-specific reserve.
- 6.3 The proposed Revenue Budget Framework for 2022/23 which was considered by Finance and Resources Committee on 3 February 2022 and the Council on [24 February 2022](#) proposed funding for concessionary fares for young people on Edinburgh Trams of £1.5m (increasing the overall allocation for concessionary travel to £2m). The report also noted that a further increase of £1.0m in 2023/24 and thereafter £1.5m was expected to be required on the opening of the tram line to Newhaven.
- 6.4 The Council agreed to remove an allocation of £2m for Tram Under 22 Concessions and to put that money into the corporate reserves (Minute of the City of Edinburgh Council meeting on [24 February 2022](#)).

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

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- 7.1 At present, concessionary travel is offered to older, disabled and young people on Edinburgh Trams in line with the Scottish Government Schemes for Free Bus Travel in Scotland.
- 7.2 Ceasing free for young people on Edinburgh Trams will have an impact for both the young person and for patronage numbers. Council officers will work closely with Edinburgh Trams to ensure that the impact of this change is recognised and that appropriate arrangements are put in place for communicating this change to passengers.
- 7.3 Officers will continue to engage with the Scottish Government through Transport Scotland to ensure that the challenges of this current arrangement for integrated ticketing and routing (including the environmental impact) are recognised.
- 7.4 Officers will prepare a response to the Fair Fares Review at the appropriate time.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

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- 8.1 None.

## **9. Appendices**

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- 9.1 None.