

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 18 May 2023

Under 22 concessionary travel on trams

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive All
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Transport and Environment Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 Note the decision of the Edinburgh Trams board to continue to offer free concessionary travel for people under the age of 22 on trams until 31 December 2023; and
 - 1.1.2 Refer this report to Finance and Resources Committee for information.

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Report

Under 22 concessionary travel on trams

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The board of Edinburgh Trams have resolved to carry under 22s for free on trams for the remainder of their financial year (to 31 December 2023) to allow the Scottish Government's Fair Fares review to complete. Committee is asked to note the decision of Edinburgh Trams board.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Scottish Government introduced the Young Persons (Under 22s) Free Bus Travel scheme on 31 January 2022. This scheme allowed young people access to free bus travel in Scotland, on presentation of a National Entitlement Card or Young Scot National Entitlement Card. The scheme only applies to bus and ferry (in limited circumstances), but not to other forms of public transport such as trams.
- 3.2 Since the commencement of the Young Persons (Under 22s) Free Bus Travel scheme, Edinburgh Trams have offered free tram travel to under 22s who live in Edinburgh on presentation of a City of Edinburgh National Entitlement Card. The cost of this (from 31 January 2022–31 March 2023) has been reimbursed by the Council on the same reimbursement rate as received for bus travel. This aligns with the approach taken to the concessionary travel scheme for over 60's.
- 3.3 The approved Council budget for 2023/2024 does not make provision for on-going financial support from the Council for under 22s concessionary travel on trams in Edinburgh.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The Board of Edinburgh Trams have considered and agreed to continue to support free travel for under 22s (in possession of a City of Edinburgh National Entitlement Card) in the absence of any reimbursement from the Council or Transport Scotland. The Board have asked the Council to note their decision.
- 4.2 The decision of the Edinburgh Trams board is only for their current financial year (to 31 December 2023). They will continue to carry under 22s until this date to provide continuity to passengers while the Scottish Government's Fair Fares review

concludes, noting that Scottish Government may consider that the Young Persons (Under 22s) Free Bus Travel scheme should be expanded to include trams.

- 4.3 The basis for the Edinburgh Trams board's decision was that they considered that continuing to carry under 22s for free assists with behaviour setting and staff welfare, and also aligns with sustainability objectives. They were also of the view that modal shift to bus could result in a requirement for additional buses on routes which could lead to additional congestion. Edinburgh Trams carrying under 22s for free aligns with the Council's objective to ensure that ticketing is integrated across public transport operators. This promotes transfer across mode and enables travel across the city. This fits in with the integrated ticketing project which is already underway between Edinburgh Trams and Lothian Buses.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Edinburgh Trams will continue to offer free travel on trams for passengers under the age of 22 (in possession of a City of Edinburgh National Entitlement Card) until 31 December 2023.
- 5.2 Council officers and Transport for Edinburgh will continue to engage with Transport Scotland on the Fair Fares review, in line with the motion approved by Transport and Environment Committee on 6 October 2022.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There is no additional cost for Edinburgh Trams to carry passengers under the age of 22 for free. Edinburgh Trams did not budget for any reimbursement from the Council for revenue foregone arising from the under 22 scheme and therefore there is not anticipated to be any additional budgetary pressure in the 2023 financial year arising from Edinburgh Trams carrying passengers under the age of 22 for free.
- 6.2 Since the introduction of the Scottish Government's Concessionary Travel scheme for bus passengers for under 22s, Edinburgh Tram has offered also offered free travel on the tram. The fare income lost to Edinburgh Trams was reimbursed by the Council on the same reimbursement basis as the Scottish Government scheme.
- 6.3 Transport and Environment Committee on 6 October 2022 confirmed that this arrangement would remain in place until 31 March 2023, but that any future support would be considered as part of the Council budget setting process for 2023/2024.
- 6.4 On 23 February 2023, the Council approved its budget for 2023/2024. No provision was made to provide any funding to Edinburgh Trams to reimburse any lost income associated with free tram travel for under 22s in 2023/2024.
- 6.5 The board of Edinburgh Trams have taken the decision to continue to offer free travel on the tram for passengers under the age of 22 (with a City of Edinburgh National Entitlement Card) until 31 December 2023.

- 6.6 The budget approved by the Edinburgh Trams board for operations in 2023 assumes that there are no additional costs associated with offering free tram travel for under 22s and no income anticipated from under 22 fares. Therefore, they consider that concessionary travel for under 22s will have no impact on their budget projections.
- 6.7 Committee is asked to note that the Revenue Budget Framework approved by Council in [February 2022](#) included £7m in relation to the opening of the line to Newhaven. This aligned with the update to the Final Business Case presented to members in October 2020. An update to this reserves position was provided to members in [February 2023](#).
- 6.8 There is an impact to the Transport for Edinburgh Group of the loss of income to Lothian Buses from the Scottish Government's Young Persons (Under 22s) Free Bus Travel scheme. While this income was not assumed in the Lothian Buses budget (as Lothian Buses have assumed that Edinburgh Trams will continue to carry under 22s for free), it represents a loss of opportunity in that Lothian Buses could increase its revenue for investment. For the existing tram line, it is estimated that income to Lothian Buses would be in the region of £0.3m if Edinburgh Trams does not carry under 22s free of charge. For the line to Newhaven, it is not possible to accurately estimate the income to Lothian Buses if Edinburgh Trams does not carry under 22s free of charge. Council officers consider that the total lost income could be in the region of up to £1m per annum.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 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 The Board of Edinburgh Trams have agreed to continue this until 31 December 2023.
- 7.3 Council officers and Transport for Edinburgh 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 At the appropriate time, the Council will prepare a response to the Fair Fares Review.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 Minute of the City of Edinburgh Council – [23 February 2023](#).
- 8.2 Minute of Transport and Environment Committee - [6 October 2022](#).

9. Appendices

9.1 None.