



**TRANSPORT
SCOTLAND**
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

Fair Fares Review

Main Report

Contents

Ministerial Foreword	3
Rationale for Intervention	6
Inception of the Fair Fares Review	12
Strategic Context.....	13
The scope of the Fair Fares Review and our approach	15
A Fairer Public Transport System for Scotland.....	18
Covid-19 and Cost of Living Crisis: Public Transport Patronage Recovery and Transition, costs of using public transport relative to the costs of using the private car.....	20
Financial sustainability and Equity of access to Concessionary Travel Schemes .	21
Long term decline in bus network and patronage pre-dating Covid-19.....	23
Unintended consequences of existing fares structures on public transport landscape	24
Recommendations and Actions.....	27
Immediate to Short-term Actions	27
Medium to Long-term Recommendations and Actions	29
Supporting Papers	32
Paper 1: Public Transport System Analysis	32
Paper 2: Case for Change - Problems, Issues, Opportunities and Constraints...	32
Paper 3: Poverty Alliance Research Report	32
Paper 4: International Benchmarking	32
Annex A – Options not being progressed.....	33

Ministerial Foreword

I am pleased to present the Fair Fares Review, setting out recommendations and actions for both the immediate to short term, and longer term, to advance an available, affordable and accessible public transport system which enables people to make positive and proactive choices to use public transport.

Scotland's public transport system is a key enabler for growth and opportunity, providing vital links between where people live, learn, earn and socialise. We know that access to affordable and reliable public transport services help people and communities unlock opportunities to connect to jobs, education, retail, public services, leisure, recreation, social and family networks. A sustainable and viable public transport system is also vital in achieving our ambitions on Net Zero as well as our target to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030.

The Review was established in the context of the [National Transport Strategy](#) which sets out a 20 year plan to support our priorities on **reducing inequalities, taking climate action, helping to deliver inclusive economic growth and improving our health and wellbeing**.

Scotland's transport system needs to develop in support of this agenda and the Fair Fares Review recommendations and actions set out my focus for public transport in Scotland:

Our geography means that we rely on the integrated connection of bus, rail, road and ferries and therefore integration of ticket and route connection will be central, as well as travel hubs for connections from rural and semi-rural areas to rail and bus. **We will develop a national integrated ticketing system, integrated travel hubs and develop proposals for an all age national travel scheme and fare structure.**

Taking Climate Action demands that we support people to encourage that shift to use their car less and use public transport more and so the public transport system needs to be affordable, accessible and readily available with a fare system to match.

Decarbonising rail, bus, ferry and Highlands and Islands aviation will be part of this.

However in recognition that fares may be a barrier for some, **we will develop a proposal for a bus flat fares pilot for an area-based scheme to provide flat fares on bus travel, or reduced fares on zonal integrated travel for consideration in future budgets**, to increase competitiveness of bus and attract modal shift from car.

Reducing inequalities means we need to support those in our community - particularly older people, young people and people with disabilities – more, and continue to be at the forefront and go further than other countries in having an extensive concessionary bus system which is free for passengers. Therefore, **we will maintain the existing free Young Persons and Older and Disabled Persons bus pass eligibility.**

Inclusive economic growth means a fare system that supports people all over the country to access good and better paid jobs and to support economic growth in our towns and cities with easy access to retail, hospitality, culture, sport, entertainment and tourism. As such, **we will work with public transport operators and delivery partners to encourage the continued growth of weekend and evening public transport for travel for retail and leisure, working with transport and business partners.**

Improving our health and wellbeing means making public transport attractive, as a public transport journey is an active journey. Ultimately, the fares system needs to act as an incentive for people to reduce car use and demonstrate to people that public transport is **cheaper to use**. While the current financial challenges and constraints of devolution will restrict our ability to deliver what we would like in this area and much of this will be for local transport authorities to determine. **We recognise that to achieve this, the cost of motoring relative to public transport needs to be addressed. The forthcoming route map to 20% car kilometre reduction will aim to set out our approach to support this objective.**

Of course, our starting point matters. The current system is complex with different means of operation and ownership in different sectors: our public bus networks operate primarily under private ownership and control, whilst ScotRail and Caledonian Sleeper are under public ownership. Ferry services are run by a number of operators including local authorities, private operators, and in the case of the Clyde and Hebrides Islands and Northern Isles networks, by operators - CalMac and Serco NorthLink - who are managed by the Scottish Government under tendered contracts.

As a government, we provided over £1 billion of additional financial support to ensure our public transport services were protected for those that needed them most throughout the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic. We have since seen a strong recovery across our public transport network and we must continue to strive towards our vision and aims for our transport system.

The Review recognises that the impact of concessionary travel schemes upon the outcomes we seek are dependent on the ready **availability** of public transport services. The investment by this government has seen many successes, which we should rightly celebrate, but we must also prioritise measures to grow bus patronage and farebox revenue from fare paying passengers in the 22-60 year old age range to help enable the growth of bus networks across Scotland. We must strengthen this by taking forward the measures to improve integrated services and ticketing, making public transport more attractive and ultimately strengthening public transport to ensure it is the natural choice for everyday journeys.

It is also important that we recalibrate government funding to better target priority groups and increase **accessibility** to our public transport services. However, we have limited room for manoeuvre given the extent of funding required to maintain the safe and efficient operation of our networks amidst the challenging fiscal climate.

In recognition of the current **affordability** challenges presented by the cost of living crisis, the Review has determined that there is a continuing need for a National Concessionary Travel Scheme to provide free bus travel for those groups that are currently eligible. We are therefore maintaining existing eligibility to the National Concessionary Travel Schemes for those groups who currently benefit, which comprise over 2.3 million people all across Scotland. Indeed we are going further by developing policy to consider the best way to deliver free bus travel for people seeking asylum and we will develop the feasibility of a pilot project to extend free travel on rail services for companions accompanying eligible Blind Persons Concessionary Travel Card holders. In addition, we will develop the proposals to provide free foot passenger travel on inter-island ferries for under 22 year old island residents within the Outer Hebrides, Orkney, and Shetland Island groups and extend the existing National Ferry Concessionary Scheme to under 22 year old island residents.

Whilst the Review has included some very useful international comparators of services and fares to draw upon and help shape potential future policy, we need to deliver services and fare structures which reflects Scotland's own experience, not least the geographical and structural context and indeed within the defined powers of devolution.

There are many initiatives which have already been implemented across our public transport system which demonstrate the characteristics of our vision for the future of public transport. These initiatives, illustrated in this report's case studies, improve the accessibility, availability, affordability and quality of public transport. The recommendations and actions of the Review build on these to set out a pathway towards a public transport system which is financially sustainable in the long term and which provides affordable, frequent, and integrated services that are responsive to the needs of people and communities across Scotland, improving accessibility to employment, services and activities for lower income households.

It will, therefore, take time and sustained commitment and collaboration by government and all our delivery partners and operators to deliver on the recommendations and actions that we have set out.

We will continue to work tirelessly with stakeholders across the public transport sector as we progress the Review's recommendations and actions to ensure we deliver a public transport system that is more accessible, more available and more affordable for people all across Scotland.

Fiona Hyslop MSP

Cabinet Secretary for Transport

22 March 2024

Rationale for Intervention

Our public transport system connects people and communities to the opportunities and services that they need in order to thrive. Jobs, education, retail, public services, leisure, recreation and social and family networks.

This is why the Scottish Government currently provides a range of financial support to help operators run services and enable specific eligible groups, such as younger, older and disabled people, to be able to access public transport.

In terms of transport operators, the Scottish Government provides grant funding and subsidies such as the Network Support Grant (NSG) which enables bus operators to continue to provide services that may not otherwise be commercially viable. Maintaining bus services, which are often more heavily relied upon by lower income groups, helps people to continue to access jobs, education and public services.

Scottish Ministers subsidise CalMac Ferries Ltd to provide ferry services on the Clyde and Hebrides network and Serco NorthLink Ferries to provide ferry services between the mainland and Orkney and Shetland, both currently under tendered contracts. In addition Scottish Ministers are the sole shareholders in Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (CMAL), which owns the majority of ferries, ports and harbours and infrastructure necessary for lifeline Scottish ferry services. Furthermore, four local authorities operate ferry services with support from the Scottish Government.

The Scottish Government provides over £1.6 billion per year to operate Scotland's railway with both ScotRail Trains Limited and Caledonian Sleeper Ltd now under public ownership and controlled by Scottish Ministers through Scottish Rail Holdings Ltd which is wholly owned by the Scottish Government.

In addition to this financial support, further funding is provided directly to local authorities for bus services. The Community Bus Fund also supports local transport authorities to improve local public transport in their areas.

In the case of support for individuals to access public transport, this is currently largely delivered through our National Concessionary Travel Schemes (NCTS). The Young Persons' Scheme (YPS) provides free bus travel for those under the age of 22 while the Older and Disabled Persons Scheme (ODPS) provides free travel for those aged 60 and over and those with an eligible disability. The Scottish Government also provides vouchers for four ferry journeys per year for island residents aged 16-18 with a commitment that this be expanded to include all those island residents aged up to 22.

Case Study: Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme



The Scottish Government has taken significant action to deliver our vision for Public Transport. In January 2022 the Government introduced free national bus travel for all residents aged under 22. Since then more than 116 million free bus journeys have been made under the scheme.

The scheme aims to encourage more sustainable travel and tackle issues related to transport poverty by:

- embedding positive sustainable travel behaviours.
- opening up social, education, employment and leisure opportunities.
- reducing household outgoings to aid children, particularly those living in poverty.

[Evaluation of the scheme](#) shows progress against each of those objectives, with increasing numbers of young people travelling by bus and families reporting cost savings and reduced worry and anxiety relating to travel.

By implementing initiatives to improve accessibility, availability and affordability such as the ones highlighted, we work towards increasing the attractiveness of travelling by public transport and delivering our vision for the future of public transport in Scotland.

In addition to the NCTS, there are some local concessionary travel schemes which offer discounted travel to certain groups of people on other forms of transport such as rail and ferry. However decisions on whether to provide such local schemes rest with the relevant local authorities and it is therefore the case that such local schemes only exist in certain parts of the country. Similarly some public transport operators may operate particular discount schemes for targeted groups or frequent travellers but the decision on whether to provide such a discount is generally a commercial consideration for the operator.

Case Study: Road Equivalent Tariff – Increasing affordability of Clyde and

On the ferry network, the introduction of the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) scheme on the Clyde and Hebrides network has helped support island businesses and extend the tourist season.

RET is a distance based fares structure, calculated by a combination of a fixed element (intended to help ensure services remain sustainable and to contribute towards fixed costs such as maintaining harbour infrastructure and vessels) and a rate per mile (calculated by Transport Scotland analysts using contemporary independent research by the RAC).

An independent evaluation of the scheme, which focused on the islands which received cheaper fares in 2015, shows a number of positive findings including around 25% of island residents made more ferry trips as a result of RET and around 40% of businesses reported an increase in turnover. RET has helped to grow the 'visiting friends & relatives' market, whilst also making it easier for island residents to access mainland goods and services. Across the wider Clyde and Hebrides network, there is clear evidence of an extension of the tourism season for most islands.

The costs of providing the cheaper fares that are delivered by RET are borne by government subsidy.

However, despite the financial support from government outlined, our public transport system continues to face a number of challenges which have either emerged or become exacerbated since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

These include:-

- Changes in how and when people travel, for example due to the growth of working from home. Reduced passenger numbers result in a reduction in revenue flowing to public transport operators which can then impact on the financial viability of some public transport services.
- Rising costs borne by public transport operators in providing public transport services. Such rising costs can lead to a pressure on operators to increase fares, thereby reducing the attractiveness of public transport to people, or result in requests for additional government subsidy to support the continued provision of services.
- Financial pressures faced by individuals and households following the emergence of the cost of living crisis in 2021/22, further impacting on the demand for public transport. These financial pressures are particularly pronounced for people living in poverty for whom public transport fares account for a greater proportion of their disposable income.
- Levels of public and user satisfaction with public transport. [The most recent Scottish Household Survey](#), an annual survey of the general population in Scotland, which aims to collect reliable and up-to-date information on a range of topics, through a random sample of people in private residences, reported that satisfaction levels with public transport have fallen from 68% in 2019 to 58% in 2022 and with almost a quarter (23%) of respondents reporting being dissatisfied with public transport.

As well as these challenges that are specific to public transport, the sector also faces a number of external challenges.

Demographic changes impact on the amount of government that is funding that is required to support the running of and access to our public transport system. For example, as already highlighted, the NCTS provides free bus travel to all those aged 60 and above. The Scottish Government reimburses bus operators for an agreed proportion of the standard single fare for each journey made under the scheme. The scheme terms are agreed with industry through the Confederation of Passenger Transport each year with the aim of ensuring bus operators are “no better and no worse off” by participating in the scheme.

However, it is [projected](#) that the proportion of the population of pensionable age people in Scotland will increase. By mid-2043, it is projected that 22.9% of the population will be of pensionable age, compared to 19.0% in mid-2018. As the proportion of Scotland's pensionable age population grows, the proportions of both Scotland's working age and child population are projected to fall.

The ageing population of Scotland means that additional funding will likely be required to maintain the Older & Disabled Persons` NCTS scheme in the years ahead assuming cardholders continue to travel by bus at their current rates.

In addition, and significantly, given the importance of government funding to support our public transport system, the financial situation facing the Scottish Government is, by far, the most challenging since devolution. The shocks of over a decade of austerity, a hard Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the war in Ukraine are placing extreme inflationary pressure on public finances.

The funding available to the Scottish Government, with the exception of demand-led social security expenditure, is projected to fall in real terms by 2026/27 due to decisions taken by the UK Government. It is therefore more important than ever to prioritise support to those that need it most, and ensure value for money in our public services.

The timescales necessary to make changes to some aspects of financial support provided to the sector and passengers present a further challenge. For example, the individual schemes within NCTS have a statutory basis which means that any changes to the schemes require amendments to legislation and associated processes to be followed on public consultation and securing Parliament`s approval to make the desired changes. This means that it may be some time before changes and their associated benefits can be realised.

In the absence of any policy intervention, these issues could have significant detrimental impacts on our public transport system and on the communities, individuals and businesses who rely on it, as well as on achievement of the Scottish Government`s broader strategic objectives on tackling inequalities and taking action on climate change.

For example, the inflationary pressures highlighted could have disproportionate adverse impacts on low income groups who could be excluded from public transport services – and hence access to jobs / public services on affordability and cost grounds. These impacts could be exacerbated if operators reduced public transport services as a response to their rising costs leaving vulnerable households and individuals without a means of accessing the jobs, education and services that they need to live their life.

Consequently the Fair Fares Review is part of a broader package of work, referred to as the Future of Public Transport, being undertaken by Transport Scotland to support the recovery of public transport and to ensure the long term viability of the public transport sector as we progress beyond the Covid-19 pandemic and address the challenges outlined above.

This is a particularly urgent agenda given the commitment in the Scottish Government's [Covid-19 Recovery Strategy](#) to address the systemic inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic, the extent to which lower income households are dependent upon public transport to access jobs, education, retail, public and other services, leisure and social networks, and the role that the public transport system has in supporting attainment of our target to reduce private car kilometres by 20% by 2030.

Inception of the Fair Fares Review

On 20 August 2021, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Party entered into the [Bute House Agreement \(BHA\)](#), a shared policy programme spanning five years to build a green economic recovery from Covid-19, respond to the climate emergency and create a fairer country.

Amongst other policy commitments, and in recognition of the issues highlighted above, the BHA confirmed that the Scottish Government would “*commission a Fair Fares Review to ensure a sustainable and integrated approach to public transport fares. This will look at the range of discounts and concessionary schemes which are available on all modes including bus, rail and ferry. The review will consider options against a background where the costs of car travel are declining and public transport costs are increasing, exacerbating the impact on those living in poverty.*”

Due to the continuing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Fair Fares Review commenced in Spring 2022.

Strategic Context

Our public transport services and networks connect people and communities to opportunities, services and amenities – for example providing access to college, universities, jobs, family and friends. Without our public transport services, such access might not be possible and therefore public transport is vital in delivering on our vision for a fairer Scotland.

A sustainable and viable public transport system is also vital in achieving our ambitious targets on climate change mitigation as well as our target to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030.

Scotland's [National Transport Strategy \(NTS2\)](#) sets out a vision that:- *“We will have a sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system, helping deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors.”*

This vision is underpinned by four priorities and three outcomes against each priority area as follows:

The infographic consists of four horizontal bars, each with a distinct color and icon. Each bar contains a title and a list of three bullet points.

- Promotes equality** (Icon: Scales of justice)
 - Will provide fair access to services we need
 - Will be easy to use for all
 - Will be affordable for all
- Takes climate action** (Icon: Leaf)
 - Will adapt to the effects of climate change
 - Will help deliver our net-zero target
 - Will promote greener, cleaner choices
- Helps our economy prosper** (Icon: Bar chart with upward arrow)
 - Will get us where we need to get to
 - Will be reliable, efficient and high quality
 - Will use beneficial innovation
- Improves our health and wellbeing** (Icon: Heart with pulse line)
 - Will be safe and secure for all
 - Will enable us to make healthy travel choices
 - Will help make our communities great places to live

In addition to this policy direction laid out in the National Transport Strategy, the [First Minister's Policy Prospectus, Equality, Opportunity, Community: New leadership - A fresh start](#), published in April 2023, sets out a commitment that by 2026 we will have advanced towards making our public transport system more accessible, available and affordable, with the costs of transport more fairly shared across government, business and society.

Given this strategic policy context, central and local government provides targeted support to provide free or discounted public transport for certain groups of people through both national and local concessionary travel schemes in order to promote a range of social, health and economic outcomes and to support modal shift from private car to public transport and active travel.

However some stakeholders have expressed views that entitlement to and the extent of existing schemes can be confusing and not consistent with scheme objectives. For example, the existing National Concessionary Travel Schemes (universal Scotland-wide free bus travel for under 22's, Older & Disabled People) are predominantly limited to bus only and therefore it has been argued that communities with limited access to the bus network are disadvantaged in comparison to other communities which enjoy better connectivity to the bus network.

Moreover, whilst some local authorities fund concessionary travel on rail, tram, ferry and subway for their residents others do not, creating what some stakeholders have referred to as a "postcode lottery" of access to free or/discounted public transport for those most in need.

In addition, the Scottish Government, in September 2022, made a [commitment](#) that the question of potentially extending the national free bus scheme to include all residents of Scotland aged under 26 would be considered as part of the Fair Fares Review. The Fair Fares Review therefore has included a review of existing national and local concessionary travel schemes within Scotland.

The Fair Fares Review has taken into account the implications of the [Verity House Agreement](#) between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). This agreement sets out how both parties will work together to:

- tackle poverty, particularly child poverty, in recognition of the joint national mission to tackle child poverty;
- transform our economy through a just transition to deliver net zero, recognising climate change as one of the biggest threats to communities across Scotland, and
- deliver sustainable person-centred public services recognising the fiscal challenges, ageing demography and opportunities to innovate.

The scope of the Fair Fares Review and our approach

The Review has considered both the cost and availability of public transport services and the range of discounts and concessionary schemes which are available on all modes including bus, rail and ferry to ensure a sustainable and integrated approach to public transport fares that that supports the future long term viability of our public transport system.

It has considered the costs of providing public transport services by operators, the costs of supporting public transport services to government, and the costs of accessing public transport services incurred by passengers.

The availability element of the Review`s work includes consideration of options to improve integration of public transport services and fares. Importantly it does not include a review of infrastructure provision as [The second Strategic Transport Projects Review](#) sets out the Government`s investment priorities for the strategic transport network.

Options have been considered under the Review for implementation from 2024/25 and beyond.

Transport Scotland has undertaken focused engagement with a range of stakeholders in identifying and developing options for change as part of the Review. This includes transport operators, delivery partners such as Regional Transport Partnerships, passenger and advocacy groups including the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) and the Poverty Alliance, and campaigning groups such as Transform Scotland.

As part of the engagement with the Poverty Alliance a series of workshops were held with individuals with lived experience of poverty from communities across Scotland to explore the impacts that issues related to access to public transport have on their lives and to identify recommendations that the Scottish Government should consider as part of the Review.

We have gathered information on the totality of government funding for public transport, disaggregated by individual modes of transport, as well as monitoring and assessing the latest data on public transport patronage, taking particular cognisance of any changes that have become embedded since the onset of the pandemic.

We have also gathered and assessed evidence on public transport policy interventions adopted in other parts of the United Kingdom and the rest of the world

that have recently been introduced either to drive modal shift from car to public transport or in response to inflationary pressures facing operators and passengers. Additional evidence has been compiled in relation to specific cities or regions in other parts of the United Kingdom or the rest of the world that stakeholders have highlighted as demonstrating best practice in relation to the funding, delivery, provision and integration of public transport services.

The final element of the Review relates to work that has been undertaken to identify and develop potential Pathfinder Pilot schemes that take action on the cost and availability of public transport services, specifically by meeting a number of the following objectives:

- Lower the cost of transport on a targeted basis for specific lower income groups.
- Address rail fares anomalies.
- Test alternative fares structures that reflect the changed patterns in public transport usage since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Address ferry fares anomalies and make more efficient use of vehicle deck capacity on the busiest routes at peak times.
- Enable multi-modal journeys to be made more seamlessly between different modes / operators without financial penalty to the passenger.
- Simplify and cap single journey fares across modes.
- Demonstrate a more targeted approach to concessionary travel schemes.
- Reduce the cost to operators of providing public transport services and where such reductions in costs can be repurposed to either the taxpayer and / or passenger.
- Address gaps in the existing public transport network that inhibit communities' access to jobs, education, public services, retail and social and leisure opportunities.

The first such pilot scheme to be implemented is the pilot project to provide all day off-peak rail fares from ScotRail services for a temporary period from October 2023 for six months, since extended until June 2024. The emerging findings from this pilot have helped inform the recommendations of the Review.

A long list of potential policy options was developed, either drawn from pre-existing commitments made by Ministers, options that Ministers have requested are assessed, are in response to representations from stakeholders, or otherwise informed by the Initial Appraisal of the Problems, Opportunities, Issues and Constraints in relation to the costs and availability of public transport.

An initial appraisal was undertaken whereby options were assessed under an overarching multi-criteria analysis framework for decision making against National Transport Strategy (NTS) priorities and the First Minister Policy Prospectus priorities

for public transport (more available, affordable and accessible). A further assessment of options was then undertaken to provide a more detailed assessment of the feasibility of options, timescales to implement, and to identify the risks and sensitivities of options.

The assessment found that there were a number of policy options deemed unsuitable for progression as they would not deliver the strategic objectives in relation to the long term financial sustainability of concessionary travel schemes, the viability of wider support for public transport and consequently, would not help advance the availability, accessibility and affordability of the public transport system in Scotland. **Annex A** provides a summary of those options not progressed.

A Fairer Public Transport System for Scotland

Our [National Transport Strategy](#) outlines four priorities for our transport system: that it reduces inequalities; takes climate action; helps deliver inclusive economic growth; and improves our health and wellbeing.

This strategic direction has influenced the Scottish Government's programme for transport infrastructure investment during the period 2022 – 2042, as set out in [The second Strategic Transport Projects Review \(STPR2\)](#), which prioritises projects that significantly contribute to the following objectives:

- A sustainable strategic transport system that contributes significantly to the Scottish Government's net-zero emissions target.
- An inclusive strategic transport system that improves the affordability and accessibility of public transport.
- A cohesive strategic transport system that enhances communities as places, supporting health and wellbeing.
- An integrated strategic transport system that contributes towards sustainable inclusive growth in Scotland.
- A reliable and resilient strategic transport system that is safe and secure for users.
- Align well with National Transport Strategy 2 priorities.
- Can be delivered or significantly progressed within the short term.
- Performed best against COVID-19 recovery priorities.

Our public transport networks are integral to ensuring that our strategic aspirations for the transport system as a whole are met. In addition, the [First Minister's Policy Prospectus, Equality, opportunity, community: New leadership – a fresh start](#), published in April 2023, that by 2026 we will have advanced towards making our public transport system more accessible, available, and affordable, with the costs of transport more fairly shared across government, business and society.

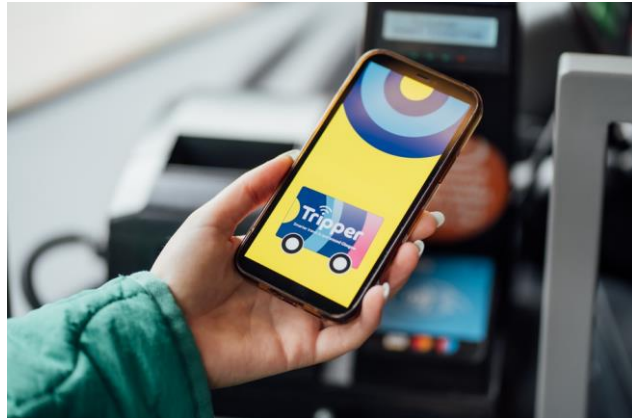
While our public transport system faces a number of challenges which impact upon its efficiency and financial sustainability, there are also opportunities which can be seized upon to help ensure the long term viability of the system. These are outlined in greater detail in the Case for Change but in summary the main thematic issues arising are:-

- Long term decline in bus network and patronage predating Covid-19.
- Covid-19: Public Transport Patronage Recovery and Transition.
- Costs of using public transport relative to the costs of using the private car.
- Cost of living crisis.
- Equity of access to Concessionary Travel Schemes.

- Concessionary Travel Schemes – Financial sustainability.
- Unintended consequences of existing fares structures on public transport landscape.

Case Study: Glasgow Tripper Ticket

Initially launched in 2017, the Glasgow Tripper ticket is a multi-bus ticket that can be used across the majority of bus operators on routes in Greater Glasgow and its surrounding towns, providing unlimited bus travel in and around the area for £6.10 per day or £24.60 per week.



This saves money for those passengers whose journeys require a transfer between routes operated by different bus operators, and adds convenience by providing a single ticket valid for all the journeys across all the operators.

With the original proposition, Tripper tickets were only available on a smartcard platform, the card had to be pre-ordered, and then tickets could either be purchased online or daily tickets could be purchased onboard certain buses on the day.

However, in 2023, a digital Tripper ticket was launched through some of the larger bus operator's own mobile apps which resulted in a 500% increase in sales over the subsequent couple of months, demonstrating the demand for a multi-bus ticketing, the popularity of digital tickets, and the convenience of simple retail via established apps.

This scheme has been made possible by collaborative working amongst a number of bus operators in the Glasgow area including First Glasgow, McGill's, West Coast Motors, Stagecoach West and Whitelaws.

Covid-19 and Cost of Living Crisis: Public Transport Patronage Recovery and Transition, costs of using public transport relative to the costs of using the private car

Public Transport patronage has still not fully recovered since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic with particularly slower rates of recovery noted in traditional commuter markets and in journeys made by older and disabled people.

The future prospects for patronage recovery relative to pre-pandemic levels still remain unclear due to uncertainties around the extent to which wider societal changes and the extent of working from home, which affect demand for travel, may remain embedded in the medium and longer term. There is a likely demand for further subsidy to maintain current service levels in the face of reduced farebox revenue and commercial viability of services.

Scottish Ministers have already taken significant action and made significant investment to support public transport fares and to support public transport recovery as people have been encouraged to return to public transport.

We invest £300 million annually to deliver free bus travel for all children and young people under 22, as well as for eligible disabled people and everyone aged 60 and over. This means Scotland has the most generous concessionary fare scheme in the UK, with more than 2.3 million people eligible for free bus travel – encouraging more people to choose to take the bus and helping us meet our net zero ambitions by encouraging a shift away from cars.

Since 31 January 2022 when the under 22s scheme launched, over 116 million free bus journeys have been made by young people across Scotland, enhancing patronage to levels where local services can be maintained and extended. In addition the Scottish Government provided £223 million in emergency funding to support bus services during the pandemic and continued to provide additional funding through the Network Support Grant Plus in 2022/2023.

Following the introduction of Road Equivalent Tariff on Clyde & Hebrides ferry services and fare reductions in the Northern Isles, we froze all ferry fares in 2023/24 to help with the cost of living crisis.

We froze rail fares for 18 months from January 2022 and when a fares increase was finally applied in July, it was well below both inflation and the increase applied elsewhere in the UK.

However, these actions alone will not result in a sustainable and integrated approach to public transport fares that supports the long term viability of public transport.

Financial sustainability and Equity of access to Concessionary Travel Schemes

The financial sustainability and affordability of concessionary travel schemes, amidst a context of increasing pressure of public finances, and a reduction in funding from the UK Government, is a challenge to both central and local government scheme funders.

Overall the concessionary travel budget accounts for around 21% of Transport Scotland's total 2023/24 revenue budget. With forecasts for concessionary travel increasing substantially in subsequent years up to the end of 2026/27, that proportion will increase as a result in the years beyond 2023/24.

Meanwhile a number of local authorities have withdrawn their local concessionary travel schemes in recent years due to affordability concerns, further exacerbating geographical anomalies in access to schemes across Scotland.

There is also uncertainty around how public transport networks may change in the coming months and how that will impact upon individuals' ability to access the NCTS.

There are some geographical inconsistencies and anomalies in relation to eligibility for and access to existing concessionary travel schemes. Moreover, existing schemes are targeted at specific groups who satisfy age and age and health related criteria and with no provision for those who may otherwise need financial support to access bus services (e.g. low income) but do not meet age or health related criteria.

While the NCTS provides nationwide free access to bus services for those who are eligible, the extent to which individuals can use their entitlement is dependent on the availability of bus services within their community serving the places to which they want to go. There are therefore geographical variances in the extent to which people have access to bus services in which to exercise their entitlement for the NCTS.

Therefore there are some questions in terms of whether existing concessionary travel schemes most efficiently target support for those who need it most and in a fair and consistent manner particularly given the current universal eligibility for those who meet the age or disability related criteria regardless of their personal financial circumstances.

Case Study: m.connect app

The m.connect app delivered by Moray Council enables the successful provision of demand responsive bus services across the council area.

The service focuses on increasing the number of people accessing public transport to get to and from rural areas to work, education and leisure. It looks to simplify fares, improve ticketing systems and introduce electric vehicles to the operational fleet to complement the existing public transport fleet.



This is the first demand responsive bus service in Scotland to offer a service across the entire local authority area, covering five zones and offering substantially enhanced hours of operation.

The m.connect on-demand service is bookable via a dedicated m.connect app, developed by Liftango in partnership with HITRANS and Moray Council, enabling passengers to book, pay and manage journeys up to an hour from their preferred time of travel. The app allows passengers to track their journey in real-time and as an added benefit, service / customer communications are enhanced through live information feeds, enabling the service to be more responsive to customers' needs by updating them on their booking and journey in real-time via automated, individual and mass messaging and notification functions.

The system has also helped yield efficiencies in scheduling by reducing mileage and increasing the availability of booking slots for customers. Route planning and incident management reaction is also more efficient, timely and effective.

With work underway to collaborate with major employers in the region to provide services that meet the transport needs of employees working shifts, and plans to introduce group booking options for community groups, families and employers the service is proving successful and looking to expand.

This initiative has been successful in providing services to largely isolated routes and has assisted in linking customers to the rail network for onward connections too. The project has surpassed annual targets for journey growth and the reduction of carbon emissions within the first six months of delivery. The next phase being introduced in May 2024 will see service expansion into weekend operations.

Long term decline in bus network and patronage pre-dating Covid-19

Significant decline in bus patronage and services became embedded in the decade prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is in contrast to rail which saw steady increases in passengers in the years leading up to the pandemic.

Bus passenger numbers had reduced by 21% in the ten years leading up to 2019/20 and service network coverage and number of vehicles registered as passenger services has also significantly declined in recent years (from 5,400 in 2007 to 3,700 in 2022).

The Review covers all modes of transport but it is the bus system which is the most vulnerable, following increased operating costs and reduced passenger numbers after the pandemic. It is an objective, but not a duty, of the concessionary travel schemes to ensure that operators are no better or worse off for carrying concessionary passengers than if the schemes were not in operation. With bus operator income dependent on patronage levels and passengers fares in a reduced market with the unreliability and vulnerability of services, there needs to be a more comprehensive system change.

The bus network in many parts of the country faces serious challenges with operators prioritising their investment in more commercially viable routes and services in order to ensure a sustainable operating model and with Councils increasingly unable to restore socially necessary services which reduces the benefit of free bus travel.

The new bus powers to run services, develop bus improvement partnerships and develop franchises can and will provide alternative models but the challenge of public finance subsidy is likely to remain regardless of the system.

We need to stabilise the bus system and take action to develop potential options to:

- Provide more equity and distribution of concessions to meet the needs of the financially poorest in society.
- Help ensure that there is a sustainable and available network of buses across the country, particularly in rural and semi-rural areas.
- Set the foundation to help our efforts to tackle climate change with reliable and sustainable bus services to allow more people to increase their bus use and travel less by private car.

Implementation of the Review's recommendations and actions will need to strike a careful balance between these objectives. Existing concessionary travel schemes

have been specifically designed to support modal shift from private cars to public transport. Any reductions in eligibility to target the poorest in society, who are least likely to own a car, would need to be carefully balanced with action to encourage further modal shift.

Unintended consequences of existing fares structures on public transport landscape

Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) is a distance based fares structure which was introduced on selected CHFS routes from 2008 before being introduced across the entire CHIFS network in 2015 in order to introduce simplicity, transparency, comparability and consistency on fares.

Under RET the same fare is charged in both the summer and winter periods and the same fare applies for islander and non-islanders.

Whilst RET has streamlined fares the formula has significantly increased demand for vehicular traffic, particularly cars and motorhomes, which constrains available deck capacity. These pressures on demand are particularly pronounced during the peak tourist season and can cause difficulties for islanders trying to travel between their home and the mainland as deck capacity can often be fully exhausted some time in advance on certain routes at certain times.

The demand challenges impact on the operator's ability to provide a lifeline service for island communities whilst also absorbing the volume of tourist traffic induced by vehicular fares that are perceived as being very inexpensive particularly in comparison to other ferry operations in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Rail fares are extremely complex with a range of products (sometimes as many as ten fare types for one journey depending on where and when the journey is being made). To illustrate the complexity, in the fares system there are in excess of 150,000 origin/destination pairings, each with several ticket types that are priced by ScotRail as Lead Operator.

In addition to this, the fares structure is complex and there is no standardisation in the fares offered, the restrictions, the relationships between fares, or the fares themselves (in terms of a pence per mile measurement).

Passenger research has shown that confusion over buying the right ticket type is acting as a barrier to encouraging modal shift from car to rail.

To address these key issues, and provide a fairer public transport system for Scotland, our actions will focus on the following principles:

Access for All

To improve the equality of physical accessibility to public transport for all in Scotland

Availability

To improve the availability of public transport services

Affordability

To improve the affordability of public transport services

Quality

To improve the reliability of and integration between public transport services

Case Study: SPT Smartcards

SPT has benefited from the introduction of interoperable smartcards. Since 2019, people across Scotland can use just one smartcard for most journeys across multiple modes of transport and multiple transport operators; for example, a ScotRail smart ticket can be loaded onto a Stagecoach smartcard. This has reduced the number of paper tickets and plastic smartcards being produced.

On SPT Subway, more than 36,000 new customers have used third party (non-Subway) smartcards for Subway travel, and in 2022/23, more than 780,000 subway journeys were made using third-party smartcards. Further details on smart ticketing can be found on the [smarttravel.scot](https://www.smarttravel.scot) website which promotes the benefits of multi-modal, multi-operator smart ticketing, as well as other forms of smart ticketing and payments.

SPT has also modernised Subway concessionary travel. Concessionary passengers are eligible for a reduced fare and previously were required to purchase a discounted paper ticket.

As a result of the smartcard interoperability programme, Pay As You Go credit can be loaded onto National Entitlement Cards to provide tap in tap out discounted concessionary travel. Around 80% of concession Subway journeys are now made in this way. In 2022/23, more than 598,000 concessionary Subway journeys were made using a smartcard, eliminating the use of an estimated 350,000 disposable tickets.

Case Study: ScotRail – multi-modal ticket offers & Peak Fares Removal Trial

Our Rail network offers many initiatives to encourage multi-modal ticketing and integration including RailBus tickets to key destinations beyond the rail network such as Glasgow and Edinburgh Airports, and St Andrews. ScotRail also participates in third-party products such as Zonecards, allowing bus, rail and selected ferry travel across the SPT area; and in the PlusBus product, which allows unlimited travel by bus around main towns and cities across Scotland.



There are numerous benefits of multimodal ticketing options for customers, some of these include cost and times savings by buying one ticket for multi modal journeys, helping to ensure that journeys are simplified by having one ticket and creating hassle free travel between modes.

The ScotRail Spirit of Scotland Rover ticket demonstrates integrated transport, collaborative and partnership working between multimodal transport partners. Offering unlimited rail combined with selected coach travel in one ticket over a period of one or two weeks, it delivers the reassurance of convenience and connectivity along with the appeal of sustainable travel by public transport.

Working in partnership with various transport partners; from Stagecoach and West Coast Motors to Glasgow Subway and Edinburgh Trams, the Rover allows customers to pick and choose where and when they want to travel, with the security of knowing they can simply show their pass and hop on board. The introduction of an M-Pass variant has helped to drive an uptake in the product with sales more than doubling since 2016.

A six-month trial to assess the benefits of removing ScotRail peak-time rail fares started on 2 October 2023. The trial aims to encourage people to ditch the car and travel by train by making public transport more accessible and affordable.

It has since been announced that the trial has been extended for an additional three months, ending 28 June 2024. This three-month extension will allow for more data to be collected on any change to travel patterns, which will help to inform the final evaluation. This trial is an exciting and unique opportunity to encourage more people to choose a safe, reliable, and green form of public transport.

Recommendations and Actions

The review presents immediate to short term, and medium to long-term recommendations and actions. The recommendations and actions do not constitute the full Scottish Government transport investment programme. They will be considered alongside the overall Government spending commitments on transport within Scottish Government budgets and will require demonstration of the benefits and impacts of the proposal through the usual business case and appraisal process required for investment of public funds.

These actions and next steps towards delivering our vision of making public transport more available, accessible and affordable include:

Immediate to Short-term Actions

Action 1 – Bus

We will develop a proposal for a bus flat fares pilot for an area-based scheme to provide flat fares on bus travel, or reduced fares on zonal integrated travel for consideration in future budgets.

We will continue to develop policy to consider the best way to provide free bus travel to people seeking asylum, including delivery of the one year £2 million funding commitment for 2024-25 that was announced in October 2023.

Also, continue on the recommendations made in January 2023 in the Drug Deaths Taskforce Response: Cross Government Approach, to explore the feasibility of expanding concessionary travel to people with substance dependency. We will develop a proposal for a short term pilot of a non-statutory support scheme, with funding provided for distribution by local services, to remove the barrier of transport costs, for people with substance dependency, when accessing treatment.

Action 2 – Concessions on other modes

Within our existing concessionary travel schemes, we will develop the feasibility of a pilot project to extend free travel on rail services for companions accompanying eligible Blind Persons Concessionary Travel cardholders.

We will develop the proposal to provide free foot passenger travel on inter-island ferries for under 22-year-old island residents within the Outer Hebrides, Orkney, and Shetland Island groups.

We will develop the proposal to extend the existing National Ferry Concessionary Scheme to under-22-year-old island residents.

Action 3 - Rail

We expect ScotRail to deliver increased sales of intermodal tickets to pre-pandemic levels in 2024.

We will monitor and evaluate the ScotRail Peak Fares Removal Pilot which has been extended until June 2024, to inform medium to longer term rail fares reform.

We expect ScotRail and CalMac to develop a partnership agreement that will deliver a number of benefits for passengers including joint timetable development, and explore a future digital solution for 'Rail & Sail' tickets and improved collaborative working especially during disruption.

Action 4 - Ferries

As set out in the [Islands Connectivity Plan](#), we will take forward detailed consideration of proposals to:

- Retain Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) for island residents and consider fares for non-islanders, particularly vehicle fares during the summer timetable period.
- Review and update the RET formulae as a key element of the above work.

Medium to Long-term Recommendations and Actions

Action 5 – Governance

Transport Governance Review to be recommenced with specific action on identifying changes to support improved public transport.

Consider establishing a National Forum on the Future of Public Transport, to co-ordinate improvement of delivery of a quality, accessible, available and affordable integrated public transport system.

Receive advice from National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board on the strategic development of smart ticketing in Scotland, including advice on the national technological standard to improve smart ticketing integration between modes, as well as advising on schemes.

Action 6 – Fares and Ticketing

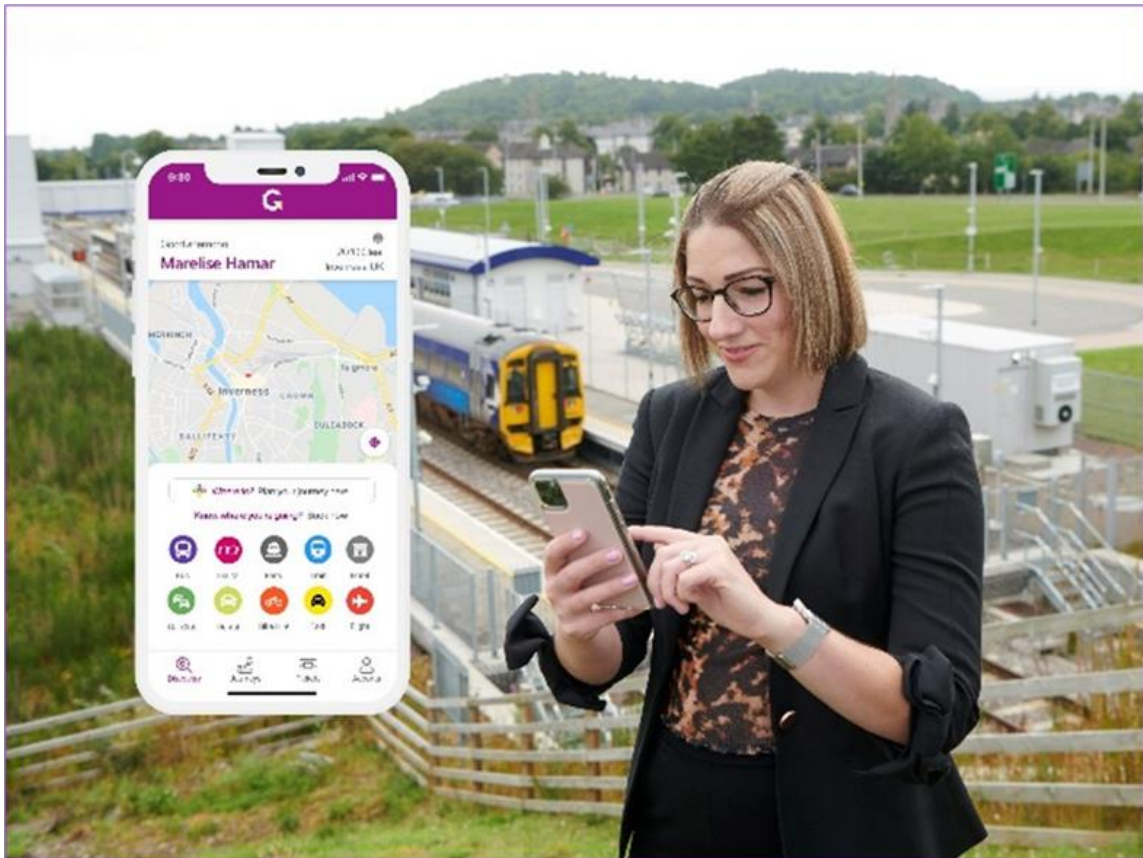
Consider options and develop the business case for introducing a national and/or regional integrated ticket and fare structure.

Publication of the refreshed Smart & Integrated Ticketing Strategy Delivery Plan in early 2024 and progression of its associated actions and policy deliverables.

Action 7 – Rebalancing Cost of Travel

The Scottish Government is committed to finding ways to make sustainable travel modes more attractive, and supporting people to take fewer journeys by car. We recognise that to achieve this, the cost of motoring relative to public transport needs to be addressed. The forthcoming route map to 20% car kilometre reduction will aim to set out our approach to support this recommendation.

Case Study: Go-Hi app



The free-to-use Go-Hi app, launched in 2021 by the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) integrates multiple transport and travel options into one platform, providing more reliable journey planning capabilities, easier access to travel information, in-app ticketing and a hassle-free payment system for residents, tourists and business travellers in Scotland's Highlands and Islands and beyond.

Go-Hi has integrated API data feeds to enable passengers to plan book and pay for travel by air, bus, coach, car club, ferry, folding bike, eBike and train.

The success of the app has been recognised in 2023 with awards for innovation at the Transport Times Scottish Transport Awards, SCDI Business Awards and CiTTi Magazine awards.

Action 8 – Improving Efficiency and Integration

To increase stability in the bus system, Transport Scotland, working with local government, industry and other stakeholders, will develop a bus service improvement plan and delivery framework over the next 18 months to improve future availability of bus services across Scotland.

Rail fare structures are inevitably complex, reflecting the scale and complexity of the passenger network and the different nature of travel patterns and tickets appropriate for those. The ability to change this is further hampered because the structure of rail fares is reserved to the UK Government under current railway legislation. We will continue to press for full devolution of responsibility for rail, including fares, to facilitate changes focused on the requirements of Scottish passengers.

Transport Scotland, working with partners, will develop proposals for a new fare offering aimed to encourage continued increase in rail market share, reflecting changing travel patterns and the needs of different markets for rail including commuting, business, leisure and tourism. This will inform considerations for a wider roll out of integrated ticketing, national/ regional fare structures across all modes in Scotland (see Action 6).

As set out in the [Islands Connectivity Plan](#), we will take forward detailed consideration of proposals to:

- Revisit the Freight Fares Review.
- Consider, based on evidence from the current Deck Space Reservation pilot project, whether a different approach to releasing vehicle space for booking will better facilitate island essential travel. This should allow greater opportunity for island communities and those who require to travel at shorter notice. If the pilot is successful then Transport Scotland and CalMac will discuss rolling this out further with individual communities.
- Undertake work to consider how to utilise dynamic pricing, within agreed parameters, in order to better manage demand and utilise capacity.

Action 9 – Concessionary Travel in Scotland

We will maintain existing eligibility to the National Concessionary Travel Schemes for those groups who currently benefit and the Review recommends that further policy development to consider better targeting of public funds towards supporting access to public transport for those who need it most, including consideration of concessionary travel support for those experiencing financial poverty.

Transport Scotland will consider options for national bus or multimodal travel scheme and fare structure which could encourage more people to use bus and the wider public transport system, particularly when commuting.

Supporting Papers

The Review is supported by four additional papers:

Paper 1: Public Transport System Analysis

This paper provides details of the extent of public transport investment and funding provided by Scottish Ministers that supports the use of public transport in Scotland. This paper also includes some commentary on public transport trends and comparisons for patronage, subsidy and revenue across modes.

Paper 2: Case for Change - Problems, Issues, Opportunities and Constraints

This paper provides an analysis of problems, issues, opportunities, and constraints in relation to public transport and considers the impact of emerging themes including Covid-19, the cost of living crisis, unintended consequences of current fares structures, long term decline in bus patronage and transport planning objectives.

Paper 3: Poverty Alliance Research Report

This paper provides evidence from research that was carried out by the Poverty Alliance Group in early 2023. A panel of citizens from both rural and urban areas, with lived experience of poverty and accessing public transport, were interviewed as part of this report. The paper outlines feedback received including the groups aspirations for public transport relating to various aspects including cost, availability, reliability, safety, public ownership, and concessionary travel schemes.

Paper 4: International Benchmarking

This paper reflects upon the public transport interventions implemented in response to the cost of living crisis and climate change/modal shift objectives. Examples of best practice adopted in other Countries in relation to the delivery, funding and integration of public transport services is provided. The paper also provides international city region and rural community case studies.

Annex A – Options not being progressed

A long list of potential policy options were developed, either drawn from pre-existing commitments made by Ministers, options that Ministers have requested are assessed, are in response to representations from stakeholders, or otherwise informed by the Initial Appraisal of the Problems, Opportunities, Issues and Constraints in relation to the costs and availability of public transport.

An appraisal was undertaken whereby options were assessed under an overarching multi-criteria analysis framework for decision making against National Transport Strategy (NTS) priorities and the First Minister Policy Prospectus priorities for public transport (more available, affordable and accessible), also feasibility of options, timescales to implement, and consideration of the risks and sensitivities of delivering the options.

This Annex provides a summary of each option assessed not to be suitable for progression at this time.

Option 1

Universal expansion of NCTS to rail, light rail, and ferry for those groups eligible for the existing NCTS.

Rationale for not progressing

Whilst this option scores well on most criteria it is a relatively untargeted policy measure to achieve government outcomes.

The NCTS scheme and reimbursement rate for operators is based on the current deregulated bus system (with a large number of private operators). Extending the scheme to other modes (at scale) would distort the existing system (reducing the impact in terms of overall efficiency and impacting potentially negatively on existing measures).

On this basis, the estimated cost of £200m per annum and increasing over time was rejected on VfM and affordability grounds.

Option 2

Expand eligibility for NCTS to CHFS and NIFS networks for all island residents aged under 22 (or full-time volunteers aged up to 26) on the same basis as the YPS for bus.

Rationale for not progressing

The option is neutral (or potentially slightly negative) in terms of climate change.

There are significant cost, implementation and affordability issues for full network roll out. The inter-island option being taken forward, see recommendations, is more comparable with local bus services to which the current eligibility applies.

Option 3

Expand eligibility for NCTS to rail/Scotrail train services

Rationale for not progressing

For much of the population, the bus network provides better general connectivity than rail, especially for shorter journeys. The NCTS scheme and reimbursement rate for operators is based on the current deregulated bus system (with a large number of private operators). Extending the scheme to other modes (at scale) would distort the existing system (reducing the impact in terms of overall efficiency and impacting potentially negatively on existing measures).

Where rail is a clear alternative to bus, extension of the NCTS to rail will impact negatively on the bus network with negative consequences for those who rely on it.

Estimated cost to include rail travel in existing NCTS is £65-135m per annum and is not considered financially sustainable in current SG fiscal environment so was also rejected on affordability grounds.

Option 4

Expand eligibility for NCTS reimbursement to services operated by Community Transport operators under a Section 19 permit.

Rationale for not progressing

Overall, our analysis has shown that the tweaks to expand NCTS to additional groups will not deliver the strategic policy objectives of the Fair Fares Review or help to address wider bus sector issues of availability, accessibility and affordability. In relation to community transport specifically, services are often not open to the general public and many do not charge a “fare” in the traditional sense. It would be inappropriate and complex to include them in a statutory and universal fares scheme and could fundamentally change the nature of community transport in Scotland.

Option 5

Expand eligibility for the YPS to everyone aged under 26 instead of under age 22 as at present.

Rationale for not progressing

Overall, our analysis has shown that the tweaks to expand NCTS to additional groups will not deliver the strategic policy objectives of the Fair Fares Review or help to address wider bus sector issues of availability, accessibility and affordability. In light of the ongoing challenging budgetary conditions and discussions relating to a focus on better targeting of services rather than further extension of universal provision, we do not recommend the YPS is extended in this way.

Option 6

Expand eligibility of NCTS to include unpaid carers

Rationale for not progressing

The complexity of defining eligibility for unpaid carers’ reduces the deliverability of this option. Overall, our analysis has shown that the tweaks to expand NCTS to additional groups will not deliver the strategic policy objectives of the Fair Fares Review or help to address wider bus sector issues of availability, accessibility and affordability. In light of the ongoing challenging budgetary conditions and discussions relating to a focus on better targeting of services rather than further extension of universal provision, we do not recommend that NCTS is extended in this way.

Option 7

Expand eligibility of NCTS to include students

Rationale for not progressing

Extending the NCTS in this way would not target those most in need of support. Additionally, many colleges and universities have their own hardship funds, disbursed to students based on need, including for travel costs. And many students qualify for the U22 scheme (for at least part of their studies). Setting up a scheme for the minority who do not is not a good use of resources in this context.

Overall, our analysis has shown that tweaks to expand NCTS to additional groups will not deliver the strategic policy objectives of the Fair Fares Review or help to address wider bus sector issues of availability, accessibility and affordability, such as the recent high-profile loss of services in Dunfermline and West Lothian. Therefore, our advice is that options which would expand eligibility to unpaid carers, community bus services, all those under 26, unpaid carers and students and apprentices are not taken forward.

Option 8

Access to half price bus and rail travel for students and apprentices

Rationale for not progressing

Extending the NCTS in this way would not target those most in need of support. Additionally, many colleges and universities have their own hardship funds, disbursed to students based on need, including for travel costs. And many students qualify for the U22 scheme (for at least part of their studies). Setting up a scheme for the minority who do not is not a good use of resources in this context.

Under 22's free bus travel provides free public transport option for most students and apprentices. Discounted rail fares are provided via the Young Scot card and through the 16-25 railcard (which is also available to students over 25). As such, the impact of this option would be relatively minimal with relatively high administration and processing costs.

Option 9

Expand coverage of NCTS to include rail, for all disabled card holders

Rationale for not progressing

This proposal would also likely provoke calls to extend free rail travel to all eligible NCTS cardholders such as over 60's and would further increase the proportion of the population who qualify for free rail & bus travel. Estimated cost of £5-15m per annum to extend free rail travel to eligible disabled NCTS cardholders is not considered financially sustainable in current SG fiscal environment.

Option 10

Expand NCTS to include SPT subway and Edinburgh Trams, also considered for U22s only

Rationale for not progressing

This option focuses support (£5m-£15m) within Edinburgh and Glasgow which have strong bus systems and so is not considered a good use of resources compared with other options as it would have a more marginal impact. In addition, Edinburgh Trams already provide concessionary travel to Edinburgh residents.

Option 11

Introduce a monthly/ annual fee to access NCTS

Rationale for not progressing

This option is not being progressed in favour of options that have been assessed as better options for delivering the strategic objectives of the Fair Fares review. This option would be operationally complex to deliver, carries significant risks and in general scored poorly against all objectives particularly as it would impact most negatively on low income groups.

Option 12

Introduce a financial cap for journeys that can be made under NCTS

Rationale for not progressing

This option which would place a limit on the number of journeys (based on cost) that users could make under the scheme is not being progressed in favour of options that have been assessed as better for delivering the strategic objectives of the Fair Fares review. This option would be extremely operationally complex to deliver, difficult to understand and manage for users, carries significant risks and in general scored poorly against all objectives.

Option 13

Introduce financial means testing for access to NCTS

Rationale for not progressing

This option would be operationally complex to deliver (both initially and as incomes of card-holders change over time), is likely to introduce unwelcome 'cliff-edge' effects and carries significant risks and in general scored poorly against all objectives. This option is not being progressed in favour of options that have been assessed as better options for delivering the strategic objectives of the Fair Fares Review.

Option 14

Removing use of NCTS at peak times

Rationale for not progressing

This option would be operationally complex to deliver, carries significant risks and in general scored poorly against all objectives. It would impact particularly negatively on the U22 component of the scheme (as U22s are more likely to need to travel at peak time) whilst potentially saving relatively little money through the ODPS component (as journeys could more likely be taken off peak). This option is not being progressed in favour of options that have been assessed as better options for delivering the strategic objectives of the Fair Fares Review.

Option 15

Increasing eligibility of NCTS Older persons scheme, to be in line with pension age.

Rationale for not progressing

This option would increase the costs of accessing bus services for those within this age cohort which is currently eligible to use the National Concessionary Travel Scheme (NCTS) at a time when they are already facing inflationary pressures due to the Cost of Living crisis. This could consequently impact on bus patronage and on individuals` ability to access bus services.

Option 16

Introducing a flat fare for NCTS.

Rationale for not progressing

This option would increase the costs of accessing bus services for those who are currently eligible to use the National Concessionary Travel Scheme (NCTS) at a time when they are already facing inflationary pressures due to the Cost of Living crisis. This could consequently impact on bus patronage and on individuals` ability to access bus services.



**TRANSPORT
SCOTLAND**

CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

© Crown copyright 2024

You may re-use this information (excluding logos and images) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence> or e-mail: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Further copies of this document are available, on request, in audio and visual formats and in community languages. Any enquiries regarding this document / publication should be sent to us at info@transport.gov.scot

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

Published by Transport Scotland, March 2024

Follow us:



transport.gov.scot