

GREATER MANCHESTER INTEGRATED TRANSPORT AUTHORITY
REPORT FOR INFORMATION

COMMITTEE: Bus Network and GMPTE Services Committee

DATE: 8 January 2010

SUBJECT: Concessionary Travel Update

REPORT OF: Customer Services Director, GMPTE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise the Committee of the current activity and project plans for the National Concessionary Travel Scheme 2009/10.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to note and comment as appropriate on the contents of this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Q & A's for Concessionary Travel Administrative Reforms pre budget announcement 9th December 2009.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NCTP RENEWALS 2009 – Project Overview and Success Factors

1.1 The Customer Service project to renew 22,000 NCTP (National Concessionary Travel Passes) for disabled applicants whose passes were expiring in 2009 has been a great success; **99.2 %** of eligible applicant travel passes have been renewed in the period January to November 2009 in total **17,559** travel passes.

1.2 Passes for disabled applicants have always been issued for a defined period of time. In the past the onus has always been on the pass holder to realise that their pass was about to expire and to take appropriate action to get the pass renewed.

1.3 The primary reason for adopting a new process to renew the NCTP was a lesson learnt from 2008 NCBTS (National Concessionary Bus Travel Scheme) project, when 30% of our customers had difficulties with the application process and were not able to provide basic information about themselves.

1.4 Customer Services have utilised the new card management database, which includes a photograph of the applicant to make the renewal process more straightforward for the applicant.

1.5 By involving Local Authorities (LA's) to automatically renew a travel pass for customers that are known to use their services, we believed this would significantly help the customer and the local authority in such that the applicant would not have to travel to the authority to have their form stamped, and the authority would not have to find the resource to deal with the customer in terms of renewing their expired travel pass.

1.6 The NCTP Renewals project objectives for 2009 were:

- To comply with the changed DfT (Department for Transport) guidelines – the maximum expiry date for new NCTP's is 5 years from the date of issue.
- To re-issue a NCTP at least two weeks before its expiry date.
- To provide a better customer service for existing pass holders,
- To develop positive and long-term relationship with LA's,
- To improve the customer database / system.
- To test the revised processes for one year and confirm whether it can be applied for future NCTP's disabled renewals.

2. Over 60 National Concessionary Travel Pass

2.1 In the period January to November 2009 **43,363** National Concessionary Travel Passes have been produced.

2.2 Of these 5,297 were replacements for lost or stolen passes, and it should be noted that a charge is levied for the replacement of such.

2.3 Concessionary Travel Projects Planned for 2010

Travel Voucher Card Holder Migration

2.3.1 We are in the process of writing to **10,000** active travel voucher users to advise them that we need them to re-apply for their Travel Voucher ID card, which will replace their card board pass with plastic ID cards in much the same way as an Over 60s concessionary card.

2.3.2 This will move the customer record onto the Card Management database which will allow us to implement a more secure method of voucher issue and profile customer usage.

2.3.3 Travel vouchers will be issued as paper vouchers, each with a unique serial number and barcode plus a photo of the customer. These will be linked to their ID card and the voucher serial numbers will be voucher number unique.

2.3.4 The benefit of printing the customer photo on the voucher itself is that the vouchers would become non-transferable and provide a quick check for the taxi driver to verify.

2.4. Under 16 Pass

2.4.1 It will be mandatory for anyone wishing to travel at the concessionary fare to carry an Under-16 pass. The Under-16 pass will be rebranded, and from the same date a charge of £5 will be made for the issue of the Under-16 pass to cover the costs of printing, issue and establishing, maintaining and managing a sophisticated database for an estimated 160,000 cardholders.

2.4.2 This pass allows travel by bus at the current concessionary fare which is 80p. The PTE will endeavour to work with the operators to develop advantageous ticket ranges for this age group. For example the PTE and the operators would like to work towards only students with a pre-paid ticket being able to use school buses – these services currently present a huge challenge in respect of collecting fares, this also impacts on the boarding times.

3. Proposed reforms package of Concessionary Travel

3.1 A package of reforms for concessionary bus travel in England was announced on the 9th December as part of the Pre-Budget Report. The package includes proposed changes to responsibilities for administering the concession following a consultation on this issue earlier this year. Also announced were plans to re-establish the link between the age of eligibility for free England-wide local bus travel and the state pension age as part of a wider package of changes to increase the age at which pensioner benefits can be received in line with pension age changes.

3.2 The proposed eligibility changes are that from 6th April 2010, the age of eligibility for concessionary travel for women will be pension age, and for men it will be the pensionable age of a woman born on the same day. The state pension age for women is rising by five years over a period of ten years. The age of eligibility will rise incrementally, that is, in stages, between 2010 and 2020. The earliest age for men and women to get bus passes will therefore rise gradually, from 60 on 6 April 2010 to 65 on 5 April 2020. These changes may have implications insofar as there will be an overall reduction in the numbers of pass-holders (and thus concessionary journeys), compared with previous assumptions, and these will need to be considered by the Authority in due course.

3.3 This change to administrative responsibilities will come into force from 1 April 2011.

3.4 The Department for Communities and Local Government will consult in 2010 on how the financial implications of the change will be taken forward as part of the next three year local government finance settlement.

4. Recommendations

4.1. Members are invited to note and comment as appropriate on the contents of this report.

Dean Nicholson,
Customer Services Director, GMPTE