



**Report to: Cabinet**

**Subject: New Concessionary Fares Scheme**

**Date: 3 April 2008**

**Author: Head of Customer Services and Organisational Development**

1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To advise Members of changes to the National Bus Concession from 1 April 2008

2. **BACKGROUND**

Presently any person who is over the age of 60 and eligible disabled persons are entitled to free off peak travel on all local buses in the area that they live. In Nottinghamshire the Scheme is delivered in partnership between the County, District and Borough Councils. The scheme in Nottinghamshire has been enhanced to provide additional benefits on the bus, the Nottingham tram and some local rail services.

3. **THE NEW NATIONAL TRAVEL CONCESSION**

From 1 April 2008 the National Bus Concession will enable eligible users to free off peak travel on all local buses anywhere in England. Nottinghamshire pass holders will still be entitled to the enhanced benefits that they receive for all journeys starting or finishing in the County (including the City).

4. **FUNDING**

Central Government has distributed £212 million of additional funding via specific grant following consultation. The District Councils have agreed a funding formula locally.

5. **OPERATOR NEGOTIATION AND REIMBURSEMENTS**

Agreement on reimbursement has been reached with most operators after long and detailed negotiations, with anticipated confirmation outstanding from Stagecoach East Midlands and Trent Barton. The negotiations, based on the “no better, no worse off” principle, have been difficult due to the new responsibility to pay for trips starting in Nottinghamshire that are made by residents from other local authority areas of England. An estimation of trip numbers has been made using current data for inclusion in the reimbursement methodology, which was formally notified to operators in the Scheme Notice issued on 3 March 2008.

The methodology used is similar to the “Reimbursement Analysis Tool” (RAT) issued as guidance by the Department for Transport (DfT). The RAT is the methodology to be used in the event of an appeal being lodged by an operator but is not mandated as the method to be used in local negotiations, especially where more relevant or appropriate data is available.

#### 6. **PUBLICITY AND PASS REPLACEMENT**

All existing Nottinghamshire pass holders have received a letter and leaflet explaining the new scheme. This additional process has also enabled data to be ‘cleansed’ before the pass re-issue.

The pass replacement project will deliver a new pass to all existing pass holders by 31 March 2008.

#### 7. **TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

A small number of new applicants may be issued a temporary paper pass for national travel should any technical issues arise close to 31 March deadline. This is a DfT agreed course of action with the temporary passes being supplied via the DfT.

#### 8. **AGREEMENTS**

Work is ongoing to issue formal three-year agreements with the Bus Operators, District and Borough Councils for the Scheme, with appropriate break clauses should funding or scheme requirements change.

## 9. **THE SCHEME**

**Statutory Element:** (Available to all English resident pass holders) Free off peak local bus travel for any journey within England between 0930 and 2300 Monday to Friday and all day on Saturday and Sundays and Bank holidays.

**Discretionary Elements:** (Only available to Nottinghamshire pass holders)

- Half fare bus travel before 0930 Monday to Friday.
- Free bus travel from 2300 until end of service Monday to Friday
- Half fare local rail travel at all times.
- Half fare travel on social car schemes and community transport at all times.
- Free tram travel all day at weekends and between the hours 0930 to 1600 and 1800 to the end of service Monday to Friday.
- Half fare tram travel before 0930 and between 1600 and 1800 Monday to Friday.
- Companion travel facility for some categories of disability.

All Discretionary elements are only available to Nottinghamshire residents and for journeys starting or finishing in the County (including the City).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.