

AGENDA ITEM NO: 11

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

AT A MEETING OF THE CONCESSIONARY FARES WORKING GROUP HELD AT WELLINGTON HOUSE ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2006

PRESENT: Councillor M Walker (Chair)
Councillors D Blackburn, J Jarosz and P McBride

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor B Hyde.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no personal or prejudicial interests declared by members at the meeting.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2006 be approved.

4. FIRST APPEAL

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the First Appeal against the West Yorkshire Concessionary Travel Scheme.

Members were advised that the DfT had requested further detailed information regarding the underlying assumptions used in all calculations relating to the Appeal. The information required was compiled with advice from Metro's legal advisors and a robust response was submitted to the DfT by their deadline of 4 September 2006. First had also provided the DfT with further information and a copy of their response had been received. It was reported that both parties had the opportunity to respond or add any further information to the submissions within 15 working days. The DfT had advised that a decision could be expected by the end of October 2006.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

5. CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL UPDATE

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive updating members on the concessionary travel scheme following the introduction of free travel for the over 60s and certain categories of disabled people following its implementation on 1 April 2006. The report also provided details of the proposals for a national free travel scheme to be introduced in 2008.

Members were advised that details of the new arrangements had been widely publicised and, following feedback from customers, a new information leaflet had been distributed regarding the use of cross boundary services.

It was noted that initial data from operators and surveys indicated that there had been a 20% increase in the number of journeys made by concessionary passengers since the introduction of free travel. A report would be prepared for a future meeting setting out any implications for Metro's 2006/07 concessionary travel budget and the adequacy of national funding for 2007/08.

It was noted that a household survey had been carried out prior to the introduction of the new scheme requesting travel information. The survey would be repeated in the near future and the results would be reported to a future meeting.

Members noted the summary of the 2008 scheme proposals outlined in the report. They were advised of a number of policy issues which the Authority would need to consider regarding contributions to LGA SIG and other representations. It was noted that the most significant issue was whether operator reimbursement would be managed locally or nationally and it was considered that the main risk would be that of under-funding if the revenue risk of reimbursement for the national arrangements fell to Metro.

It was noted that new concessionary permits would possibly need to be issued and consideration would have to be given to the financial and practical feasibility of introducing a national concessionary smartcard as a proof of entitlement permit. Members were advised that concessionary permits might have to be reissued in advance of 2008 and it may be necessary to lobby central Government to ensure that any additional costs were met. A report would be prepared for the next meeting of the Authority.

RESOLVED -

- (a)** That a report be prepared for a future meeting on the budgetary implications for concessionary travel.
- (b)** That a report on the 2008 scheme be prepared for the Authority.
- (c)** That the Authority be recommended to support lobbying for the revenue risks of post 2008 arrangements to lie with central Government.