

# AGENDA ITEM NO: 11a.

## WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

### AT A MEETING OF THE CONCESSIONARY FARES WORKING GROUP HELD AT WELLINGTON HOUSE ON 3 JANUARY 2007

**PRESENT:** Councillor M Walker (Chair)

Councillors D Blackburn, B Hyde, J Jarosz and P McBride

#### 6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

#### 7. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2006 be approved.

#### 8. CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL SCHEME UPDATE

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive updating them on the concessionary travel scheme following the introduction of free travel for men and women over 60 and certain categories of disabled people on 1 April 2006. The Working Group also considered the proposals to increase the standard concessionary fare for senior and disabled people on rail.

It was reported that following the introduction of the new scheme, there had been an additional 15,700 Concessionary Permits issued up to the end of November 2006. Data for the period April to September 2006 showed a 21% increase in the number of concessionary journeys made and it was expected that the numbers would continue to increase over the longer term. It was noted that Metro were assessing the impact of increased usage and the effects of fares increases and a report would be prepared for a future meeting.

The Working Group noted that the proposals to increase the concessionary rail fare in April 2006 had been deferred due to the introduction of free bus travel. It was proposed that consideration be given as part of the budget discussions for 2007/2008 to increase the concessionary rail fare to 50p. The Working Group was strongly opposed to any proposal to increase the concessionary rail fare in 2007/08 and said preparation for 2007/08 budget discussions should be made on the basis of a nil increase. This was because any increase would be at variance with the national initiative for pensioners, a 43% increase was unacceptable, increases had not been mentioned at the recent budget seminar, the saving was insignificant in the overall scheme of things and could be found

elsewhere, there was already public disquiet at the level of rail fare increases and that the history of this organisation was to meet its budget.

**RESOLVED** - That the report be noted along with a rejection of the proposal to consider any increase in the concessionary rail fare.

## **9. 2008 CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL PROPOSALS**

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive updating members on the proposals for a national free scheme for England from April 2008.

Members noted that the Concessionary Bus Travel Bill had had its Second Reading in the House of Lords in December 2006. It was confirmed that the proposals would apply to bus travel only and Concessionary Travel Authorities, which included Metro, would retain discretionary powers to extend local schemes to include other modes of transport such as rail and other groups (eg. children). The operators would continue to be reimbursed locally. The Bill also gave the Secretary of State for Transport powers to streamline the mechanisms for administering the national concession and reimbursing bus operators.

The Chancellor had announced that up to £250m per annum extra funding would be available although there was uncertainty surrounding the mechanism for distributing this. Until the final decision was taken on the mechanism, there was significant risk that insufficient funding would be available to fund the national scheme at a local level.

It was reported that the DfT had established a number of Task Groups to advise on the implementation of the new scheme and an Operations and Technology Task Group were considering various options regarding the issue and design of a new concessionary permit.

**RESOLVED** - That the report be noted.

## **10. 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 informed that the DfT had initially indicated that the outcome of all the appeals would be determined during October/November 2006. However these dates had been revised and to date only 12 appeals (all relating to small Concessionary Travel Authorities) had been determined. The DfT had advised that the remainder would be concluded by the end of January 2007. Although no details on the decisions already taken had been published, it was understood that eight small scale appeals had been determined in favour of the operators.

The Working Group discussed the financial implications if First were to win their appeal. Members stressed the need to inform all West Yorkshire MPs and ensure that they, and the District Leaders, were aware of the serious consequences if First were successful. Members requested details of what action had been taken regarding the lobbying and briefing of West Yorkshire MPs and District Leaders.

**RESOLVED** - That the report be noted.