

From the Chairman

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Gillian Merron MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
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Our Ref: TJB/112.8
Your Ref:

16th November 2006

Dear Gillian,

2008 Concessionary Fares Scheme

We have serious concerns about the proposed Bill to implement a Concessionary Fares scheme giving free travel to people with disabilities and those over 60 on English local bus network. Whilst we welcome this, we are very concerned that it is too narrowly focused on the bus as a mode of transport, rather than on the travel needs of individual users.

Currently the proposal would exclude the use of any Concessionary Bus Pass on Trams and other forms of transport, Whilst we accept that you propose to give discretion to local authorities to include other modes in their local concessionary fares schemes; in practice this will only probably only happen in a very piecemeal fashion. This will result in confusion as to where and when such passes may be used, and discrimination against those persons who because of the nature of their location or disability sometimes cannot use buses.

For example in our area,, Croydon Tramlink is regarded as part of the bus network, this is because when it was constructed it replaced a significant number of local bus services which were routes were abandoned, curtailed and or the frequency reduced. I realise that you, in conjunction with London Local Authorities, intend to preserve the benefits currently available under the Freedom Pass, however, in the case of many Surrey residents who view Croydon as their local shopping centre their pass will be valid on the feeder bus to the Tram interchange but not on the Tram for the major part of the journey. In other cases it may be that Community Transport or Dial-a-Ride services are more appropriate either because local bus services do not exist, the local bus stop is too far away for them to walk or the bus is not physically accessible, whereas virtually all tram and light rail systems are fully accessible. Under the new scheme it would be very odd that some people pass holders could use the tram free while others who lived a few yards down the same road could not.

Can I urge you to consider revising your proposals to widen the scope of the Concessionary Fares scheme to include Trams or similar quasi bus transport as well as buses themselves,. If you would like to meet to discuss this futher I would welcome the opportunity

Kind regards

Yours sincerely.

,dictated by Brian Cooke and signed in his absense

