

# Cabinet

13 June 2024

## Concessionary Travel - all day travel trial review

### Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the extension of the all-day travel trial until 31 March 2027.
2. Approves the retention of the current eligibility criteria, which provides access to the trial for people under the state retirement age who have a bus pass because of a qualifying disability.

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Cabinet took a decision on 18 April 2023 to trial all-day travel for holders of disabled person's bus passes below state retirement age to support access to education, employment, and training.
- 1.2 The trial started on 1 August 2023 and is due to end on 31 July 2024. It is funded within the current budget, offsetting some of the underused journey capacity since COVID.
- 1.3 Data from 1 August 2023 to 29 February 2024, combined with responses to a recent survey indicates that:
  - Between 20% and 30% of disabled person's pass holders benefitted from the increased travel times to access work, employment, or training.
  - The estimated cost of the scheme for a full year of the trial will be approximately £40k.
- 1.4 The approximate estimated cost of the scheme for a trial of one full year can be covered from within the existing Concessionary Travel budget for future years, based on current expected patronage and take-up.

### 2. Implementation of the trial

- 2.1 The aim of the trial is to increase access to education, employment, and training. To facilitate this aim, travel prior to 9.00am was made available to

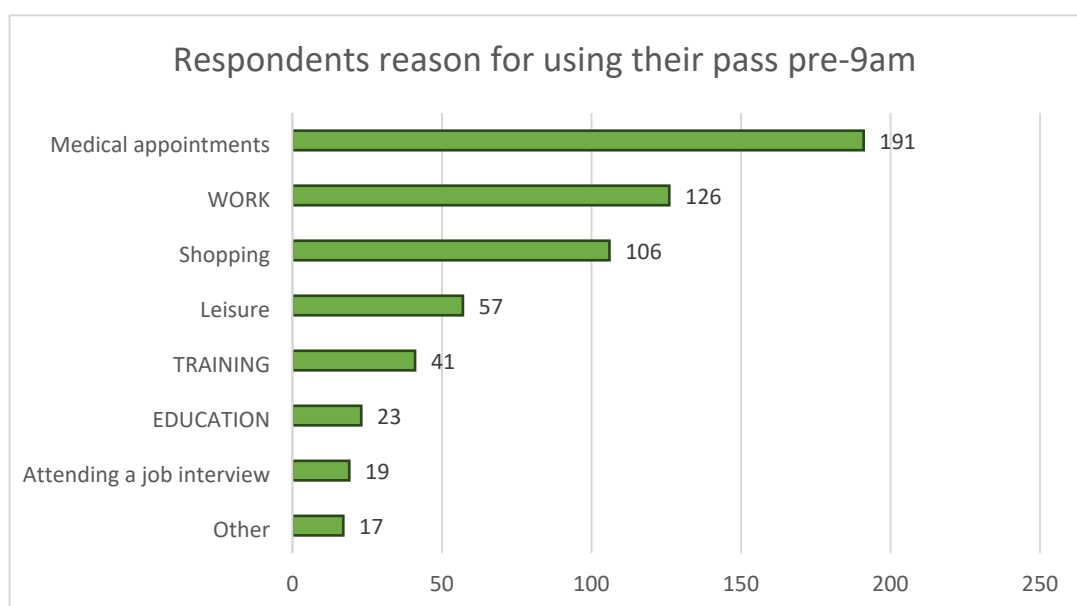
holders of a disabled person's pass aged between five years and state retirement age (currently 66).

- 2.2 Warwickshire only issues disabled person's passes to people until they reach state retirement age. After that they are issued with an older person's pass. Prior to the all-day travel trial there was no difference between the travel entitlement of the different passes.
- 2.3 Affected passholders were notified last summer of the trial as follows:
  - By email, where an email address was held on file (1406 passholders)
  - By SMS where there was no email address, but we did have a mobile number (1379 passholders)
  - By letter for the remaining passholders (1050).
  - Posters were provided for local bus operators to display on vehicles.
- 2.4 A small number of passes were reissued to people approaching retirement age to ensure that expiry dates matched entitlement to all-day travel during the trial.

### **3. Outcomes from the trial – members of the public**

- 3.1 Journey data was analysed for the first seven months that the trial operated, between August 2023 and February 2024. The data relates to journeys by holders of Warwickshire-issued disabled person's bus passes.
- 3.2 An analysis of the data shows that 875 different passes were used during the first seven months of the trial, on a total of over 12,400 journeys. This equates to around 22% of people with disabled person's passes.
- 3.3 The most-used pass was used 239 times. On average each pass was used 14 times. Seventy-five passes were used more than 50 times each. 135 passes were used only once.
- 3.4 In addition to the electronic journey data, a survey was sent via email to the 1471 disabled person's pass holders for whom we hold an email address. 443 responses were received which is a 28% response rate.
- 3.5 The full results of the survey are given in Appendix 1. These include the (anonymised) feedback left by respondents at the end of the survey, showing the value attached to the travel.
- 3.6 A summary of results is given in **Figure 1**. These are all respondents who used their pass for that reason during the trial. 63 respondents reported that they used their pass more than once a week. This is 14% of respondents. If this percentage was applied to all disabled person's passholders, it could be as many as 500 passholders using their pass at least once a week.

**Figure 1** Numbers of passholders and reasons for pre-9am use on weekdays.



- 3.7 It is noted that the most frequent use for passholders is for medical appointments but the use for getting to work is still quite high, representing 28.5% of respondents. If this percentage was applied to all the eligible passholders the figure could be as high as 1000 disabled person's pass holders using their pass before 9am to access work (out of the total 3530) with up to 500 using it more than once per week.
- 3.8 Over the twelve-month period from April 2024 to March 2025 it is expected to provide 2.77 million concessionary bus journeys across Warwickshire, and the uptake of the all-day travel trial is expected to represent less than 1% of the overall concessionary bus journeys.

#### **4. Outcomes from the trial – home to school transport**

- 4.1 The WCC Independent Travel Training (ITT) Team works with young people aged 16-25 who are entitled to free transport but who can learn to use public transport to get to and from school and college. Many of these young people (but not necessarily all, due to eligibility criteria) would qualify for a disabled person's pass.
- 4.2 Previously these young people were not able to use their pass to get to school or college as they could not use it before 9am.
- 4.3 The all-day travel trial ran from August to July to cover a full school year.
- 4.4 The ITT Team has been working with parents and carers of to enable them to apply for a concessionary bus pass where they are eligible.

4.5 Figures for ITT so far are as follows;

**Figure 2** – Home to school Transport – concessionary bus use

Academic year	2023-24	2024-25 (to end of April)
Passed ITT	22 young people (of which 16 had paid transport)	15 young people (of which 6 had paid transport)
Transport cost total for those young people with paid transport	£72, 971	£40, 970
Annual saving when ITT complete	£1,167,536,	£245,820

4.6 It is the ITT which represents the saving, rather than the use of the disabled person's pass, but it does mean that it is not necessary to purchase passes from commercial operators to enable travel, and it means that young people will have a pass for up to five years at a time rather than being issued a commercial pass every term.

4.7 In addition, for most young people gaining a pass at age 16-25 which can then be renewed every five years, means that they are more likely to develop into a bus user over the longer term and be able to maintain more independence as they get older.

## 5. Financial Implications

5.1 Analysis for the journey numbers so far indicates an expected cost of £40k for the twelve-month travel trial. This represents less than 1% of the £5.2m budget for reimbursement.

5.2 Based on the data available, if the trial is extended, then the costs for 2024-25, 2025-26 and 2026-27 are expected to remain around £40k per annum.

5.3 The Department for Transport has recently issued a new concessionary travel reimbursement calculator, which will increase the amount paid to operators per journey. This will partially offset the drop in concessionary patronage and the reduction in the bus network since COVID, but the long-term effects are not clear.

5.4 Current estimates for 2024-25 indicate a reduction in expenditure which will more than cover the costs of the trial. We are not expecting concessionary patronage to increase to pre-COVID levels due to the changes in the bus network (an estimated reduction of around 20%) and people's changing travel patterns.

- 5.5 The DfT has indicated that bus budgets should be maintained at current levels under the current BSIP+ (Bus Service Improvement Plan) arrangements, which means that any unspent concessionary travel funding would still need to be spent within public transport.
- 5.6 It is therefore recommended to extend the trial until 31 March 2027, when analysis based on a longer term take up and costs will be available to inform future decision-making.

## 6. Environmental Implications

- 6.1 We know that the trial facilitated just over 12,400 journeys before 9.00am between 1 August 2023 and 29 February 2024. Scaled up for the year that results in 21,250 journeys per annum.
- 6.2 If it is assumed that half of those passengers would have travelled at that time anyway, and paid a fare, that leaves 11,125 passengers who would either have not travelled or would have travelled by another means.
- 6.3 In 2023, Warwickshire County Council carried out a survey which asked all passholders what they would do if they were no longer able to travel between 9.00am and 9.30am. For access to work, 34.5% of passholders said they would use another means of travel.

6.4

**Figure 3: What would happen if respondents were unable to use their pass between 9am and 9.30am**

	Catch a bus after 9.30am	Would not travel	Pay the bus fare	Use another means of travel
<b>Medical</b>	21.7%	10.6%	15.1%	52.6%
<b>Shopping</b>	42.9%	16.2%	4.3%	36.7%
<b>Work</b>	11.2%	48.5%	5.8%	34.5%
<b>Social</b>	36.1%	20.0%	5.6%	38.2%
<b>Council services</b>	34.5%	27.2%	3.4%	34.9%

- 6.5 If it is assumed that the other means of travel is likely to be a car and use that percentage to estimate the number of disabled person's passholders who might travel by bus whilst they can use their pass before 9.00am, then that is potentially 7,331 local car journeys avoided over the year.
- 6.6 The average local journey length for bus travel in Warwickshire is 5.48 miles, so that is a potential 41,173 miles, or 64,278 km. At a CO2 saving of 61g per km (based on Statista.com 'Carbon footprint of selected modes of transportation in the United Kingdom in 2023') that is a potential saving of 3.92 tonnes of CO2 per annum.

## 7. Social implications

7.1 The percentage of journeys prior to 9.00am broadly aligns with the percentage of passholders with each qualifying disability, but with a higher proportion of journeys made by people who are registered blind or partially sighted, and fewer journeys made by people with a reduced ability to walk.

### 7.2 Figure 4

Qualifying disability	% of passholders	% of pre-9am journeys
a. Blind or Partially sighted	9%	13%
b. Profoundly or Severely Deaf	3%	5%
c. Without speech	1%	0%
d. Ability to walk	40%	31%
e. Unable to use arms	0%	0%
f. Learning disability	24%	26%
g. Would be refused a driving licence	24%	25%

7.3 A few disabled people who became eligible for the older person's pass either before the trial started, or during the trial said they are unhappy that they are not able to access free travel before 9.00am after they reached retirement age. We don't have exact numbers because this has generally been in conversation rather than via the formal complaints process or a representation against policy.

7.4 An equality impact assessment has been completed. This is Appendix 2 to this report.

7.5 Disabled person's passholders represent around 4.25% of all passholders. If the trial was extended to all passholders the cost would likely be upwards of 20 times the current estimate at around £800k per annum, which is not affordable within the current budget.

7.6 It is, therefore, recommended to retain the existing operation of the trial, i.e. to provide free bus travel within Warwickshire for passholders below state retirement age with a qualifying disability.

## 8. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

8.1 The current trial is due to end on 31 July 2024

8.2 Communication with eligible passholders will be required to advise whether the trial is extended.

8.3 Warwickshire bus operators will be notified during June 2024. Passholders will be notified during June and July 2024.

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): N/A – This is a countywide matter.

Other members: Councillors Jeff Clarke, Jonathan Chilvers, Sarah Feeney, and Jenny Fradgley