



**Community  
Transport  
Association**

**Response to the  
Department for Transport consultation on  
Possible changes to the administration of  
concessionary travel**

Closing Date: 21<sup>st</sup> July 2009  
Community Transport Association UK

## **About the CTA**

The CTA is a national charity giving voice and providing leadership, learning and enterprise support to member organisations, which are delivering innovative transport solutions to achieve social change. CTA UK promotes excellence through providing training, publications, advice and information on voluntary, accessible and community transport.

Voluntary and community transport exists to meet the travel and social needs of people to whom these would otherwise be denied, providing accessible and affordable transport to achieve social inclusion. The CTA is the representative body for third sector passenger transport operators in the UK. CTA member organisations are actively involved in the provision of transport, especially accessible services.

The CTA is the UK's largest provider of training, advice and information on accessible, voluntary and community transport provision. The CTA is part-funded by the Department for Transport, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Department for Regional Development (Northern Ireland).

## **CTA's response to the consultation**

The CTA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to Department for Transport's consultation process. Having considered the consultation we have provided our views using the DfT response form supplied. We would be happy to expand on any of the points below if required.

## **Contact details**

Any queries regarding this response should be directed to:

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## CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

### CONSULTATION ON POSSIBLE CHANGES TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL

#### PART 1 - Information about you

Name	Brian Shawdale
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Company Name or Organisation (if applicable)	Community Transport Association UK
Please tick one box from the list below that best describes you /your company or organisation.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Small to Medium Enterprise (up to 50 employees)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Large Company
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Representative Organisation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade Union
<input type="checkbox"/>	Interest Group
<input type="checkbox"/>	Local Government
<input type="checkbox"/>	Central Government
<input type="checkbox"/>	Police
<input type="checkbox"/>	Member of the public
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please describe):
If you are responding on behalf of an organisation or interest group how many members do you have and how did you obtain the views of your members:  CTA UK has 1400 member organisations. We emailed members to ask for views, placed a draft of this consultation response on our web site, discussed the content of this response with our Board of Trustees, incorporated member comments into the draft response and then placed a copy of the final response on our web site.	
If you would like your response or personal details to be treated <b>confidentially</b> please explain why:  N/A	

**PART 2 - Your Comments**

1. Are there other problems, stemming from current administrative arrangements, that are not covered by this list?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your reasons and add any additional comments you wish to make:

There is a lack of consistency in interpretation of current arrangements at a local level. Furthermore, the current administrative arrangements assume that reimbursement to transport operators must be carried out by the same body as assesses passenger eligibility, but there is no evidential case made for this.

2. Do you think that the current level of administration is the most appropriate?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your reasons and add any additional comments you wish to make:

CTA broadly agrees with the assessment of difficulties highlighted in paragraphs 6.2 to 6.14 of the consultation document. Inconsistency of approach in administering concessionary travel is exacerbated by inconsistency of approach to engaging with community transport. This picture across England is patchy at best and is made even worse by the large number of TCAs that currently exist at the current level.

3. Do you think a system of 'higher-tier' administration would be the most appropriate?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your reasons and add any additional comments you wish to make:

Achieving the most efficient administration mechanism is important for concessionary travellers. However, it is even more important that that a system is devised which ensures that all eligible passengers can access the concession to which they are entitled. CTA believes that administration at the 'higher tier' County/ITA level is the most appropriate model for achieving a balance between maximising efficiency gains (with local political control), delivery of national policy and ensuring access to concessionary travel.

However, it is of paramount importance that entitled passengers who are currently being excluded from accessing concessionary travel are afforded this access. To this end, it is vital that efficiency savings are ploughed back into transport delivery in order to help put an end to the current discrimination which exists.

Administering schemes at a higher level provides more realistic opportunities for 'levelling up' to good or best practice. In moving to this level of administration, it should be required that discretionary schemes that currently exist should not suffer. TCAs under the new arrangements should be required to demonstrate that they are delivering concessionary travel to 100% of entitled passenger. If they cannot do this through registered local bus services, they must be required to use alternative providers. CTA believes that higher tier authorities are better skilled and experienced to be able to devise and administer schemes

which make increased use of community and other transport services to achieve this. To allow TCAs not to ensure all entitled passengers can travel is discrimination! This view accords with the DfT's own strategic objective to '*Promote greater equality of opportunity*'. Both the DfT (in designing a system) and the TCAs (in implementing it) should be required to demonstrate positively how they will ensure the promotion of greater equality and how they will ensure discrimination will not take place.

Firm estimates of the costs of increasing the use of other providers to address the current discrimination are not readily available. However, the best figures that have been provided to date by the DfT are that concessionary travel spend in England in 2008/09 is likely to be in the region of £1 billion. It has been further estimated that extending reimbursement to appropriate community transport could cost up to £25 million. This represents an additional 2.5% which would be more than covered by the projected net benefits which are set out in the 'Draft impact assessment for policy option 2' which is provided in the appropriate Appendix to the DfT consultation document.

The impact assessment does not, however, take account of the additional cost to TCAs and or central government of discrimination claims which are likely to result if the current exclusion of some entitled passengers continues.

4. Do you think a centrally administered statutory minimum concession would be most appropriate at this time?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your reasons and add any additional comments you wish to make:

The CTA believes that there is merit to such a model in that it would ensure national consistency and deliver improved efficiencies. As such, it would not rule it out. However, despite the need for minimum standards to be increased in terms of which services are reimbursed for concessionary travel provision, it will still be important for local TCA's to be able to react flexibly to requirements in their area. We do not believe that this model would be best suited to engaging with service providers (ie community transport operators) transportig those travellers who are most excluded and discriminated against. However, it may be a viable model if reimbursement and enforcement are the functions delivered centrally, with managing passes and assessing eligibility being controlled at a higher tier county/ITA level.

5. Do you think a regional tier of administration might ultimately be most appropriate?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your reasons and add any additional comments you wish to make:

There is a lack of experiemnce and knowledge of concessionary travel objectives, implementation and administration at regional level. Regional objectives are more focussed on economic activity and do not have sufficient focus on social policy. CTA believe there is insufficient engagement & accountability of regional agencies to deliver concessionary travel effectively. This option would presumably require the introduction of

legislation, which would incur additional delays.

<b>6.</b> Are there other options for administering the statutory minimum concession that are missing from this list?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your reasons and add any additional comments you wish to make:

There are no other models that CTA believe would offer a better alternative to 'higher tier' administration.

<b>7.</b> Should all local authorities retain the ability to establish discretionary travel concessions using powers under the 1985 Transport Act as now?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your reasons and add any additional comments you wish to make:

There may always be lower level local conditions which are best addressed through additional discretionary arrangements. It is vital, however, that the level of discretion is reduced and that the mandatory reimbursement of an increased range of community and other providers (where concessions cannot be delivered by registered local bus services) is implemented. In particular, all community based services run under Section 19 Small Bus Permits for individual passengers paying separate fares should be entitled to remibusement, in the same way as those run under Section 22 Community Bus Permits.

It may be preferable to insist that such schemes, although funded by the lower level authority, should be delivered through the administrative mechanisms of the upper level authority's scheme.

<b>8.</b> Should the ability to establish discretionary travel concessions using powers under the 1985 Transport Act be limited to upper tier authorities only?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Please explain your reasons and add any additional comments you wish to make:

Discretionary powers should still be available to upper tier authorities to improve schemes but there may be limited occasions (see Q7 above) where lower level authorities need to implement additional arrangements.

<b>9.</b> Should lower tier authorities ability to establish discretionary travel concessions using powers under the 1985 Transport Act be limited to circumstances where they had to act jointly with upper tier authorities only?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Please explain your reasons and add any additional comments you wish to make:  In order to ensure consistency of administrative procedure and appropriate integration with the local transport planning process, additional lower tier concessions should be implemented jointly with the higher tier authority, and administered by that authority.		

<b>10.</b> Do you have any relevant data that could inform the cost/benefit estimates that will be used in the final Impact Assessment?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please explain your reasons and add any additional comments you wish to make:  N/A		

<b>11.</b> Bearing in mind that there would be a separate consultation on the funding implications of any changes to the administration of concessionary fares, are there any other issues around funding that are not considered here?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Please explain your reasons and add any additional comments you wish to make:  CTA believes that using community transport , particularly Section 19 dial-a-ride services delivered at separate fares is a viable and effective way of reducing discrimination and increasing mobility. This is particularly true in view of the relatively low percentage increase in expenditure required to achieve it (as set out in our response to Question 3 above).		

If you have any other general comment that you would like to make concerning this consultation, please give them here:

Moving to a higher level of administration is, by definition, likely to result in an increased level of consistency across England. However, it is vital that this is not achieved by adopting the 'lowest common denominator'. Otherwise, the changes will demonstrably result in a reduced level of service to current users and a failure to address the discrimination that already exists. Entitled users must have the right to determine trip purpose and destination. The administrative requirements of schemes devised by TCAs must not be allowed to adversely affect these decisions.

Passengers represented by CTA members need a commitment to increase the level of service currently provided under discretionary arrangements and to see reimbursement of their fares moved to a mandatory footing. County/ITA TCAs must not be allowed to simply devise and implement best solution for administrators, unless it can be shown to deliver this improved service to users while protecting the improvements that have already been implemented under discretionary arrangements. In devising their schemes, TCA's should be required to have regard to their Local Transport Plan(s) and local community transport strategies/networks. In cases where community (eg Dial-A-Ride and some DRT) or other services are excluded from schemes, the TCA should be required to state explicitly why the exclusion exists and justify it on service level and social inclusion grounds.

CTA would like to make it clear that the removal of discrimination in concessionary travel by including services such as Section 19 Dial-A-Ride should be delivered through reimbursement for travel undertaken. We do not wish to see new grant funding established to cover the delivery of concessionary travel in England through community transport and we are not urging Government to implement new support specifically for the community transport sector. Our desire is to build a system which is more effective in tackling the discrimination that still exists in many areas of the public transport network.

With significant change to the administration of complex systems such as concessionary travel reimbursement, and the funding allocations that go with it, there is also significant opportunity for unintended negative consequences to occur. CTA is aware that a number of current TCAs utilise a portion of their concessionary travel allocation to maximise equality by funding discretionary concessions on Dial-A-Ride and other community transport services. However, the move to County or higher level administration will mean the aggregation of districts' budgets for administration by the higher level authority. While this may make sense and deliver greater efficiencies, it could result in a reduction in the level of funding applied to community transport services for entitled passengers in a number of areas (particularly rural areas). A key mechanism in mitigating against this and ensuring that spend is focussed on those passengers that need it most, would be to extend mandatory reimbursement to Section 19 Dial-A-Ride services operated for separate fares. Furthermore, government should ensure that the efficiencies it seeks through the planned changes in administration are rigorously 'proofed' against its own strategic objective to *'Promote greater equality of opportunity'* to ensure that none of the consequences (intended or otherwise) create barriers to achieving it.