

Scottish Government submission of 6 June 2023

PE1928/H: Provide free rail travel for disabled people who meet the qualifications for free bus travel

Thank you for your letter dated 10 May 2023 seeking information following the meeting of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on 3 May 2023 where the petition “PE1928: Provide free rail travel for disabled people who meet the qualifications for free bus travel” was considered.

Transport Scotland officials have provided an update on the following areas, attached as Appendix A to this letter:

- to ask what consideration it has given to introducing a national policy for companion rail travel
- to ask it to confirm that the Fair Fares Review will consider the option of extending the National Entitlement Card scheme to provide free rail as well as bus travel for people with disabilities

I hope this information is helpful.

Appendix A

The Scottish Government continues to progress its Fair Fares Review to ensure a sustainable and integrated approach to public transport fares that supports the future long-term viability of a public transport system that is accessible, available and affordable for people throughout Scotland. The review is considering both the cost and availability of services and the range of discounts and concessionary schemes which are available on all modes including bus, rail and ferry to ensure our public transport system is more accessible, available, and affordable, with the costs of transport more fairly shared across government, business, and society.

I can confirm that this remit includes consideration of the scope and extent of existing concessionary travel schemes in Scotland, including

provision for disabled people and their companions travelling by rail, and assessment of potential options for change that deliver on the objectives set out above within the broader context of affordability.

I would like to highlight a change to the timescale previously advised to the Committee for completion of the Fair Fares Review and the reasons for this.

As part of the Fair Fares Review, a pilot for the removal of ScotRail peak-time rail fares will run for six months starting October 2023. This will make rail a more attractive proposition for travellers and support modal shift from car. It will also provide us with an opportunity to test new fares structures in response to the changes in travel patterns that have emerged since the onset of the Covid pandemic.

The Fair Fares Review advice will report by the end of 2023, taking into account emerging findings from the removal of Scotrail Peak-time rail fares pilot, and will recommend a package of measures which can be considered for implementation from 2024-25 and onwards. These will provide opportunities to address the wider issues for the cost and availability of public transport services across all modes of public transport.