

CONCESSIONARY BUS TRAVEL – BULLETIN #12

Appeals

To date 102 appeals have been received in respect of Travel Concession Schemes for the financial year 2007-08. Of these, 23 were subsequently withdrawn. The Department strongly encourages continued dialogue and local resolution where possible.

The independent adjudicator appointed last year has made 46 determinations to date which have been notified to the applicant and the relevant authority. In a significant number of cases it had been necessary to request further information from both parties before a determination could be reached. This has caused some delay. However, the over-riding consideration is that the appeals are carefully considered and determined fairly.

A second independent adjudicator was appointed in order to help to clear the remaining appeals casework. The majority of the remaining cases are currently being considered by the adjudicators, and it is hoped that determinations will be issued soon.

Reimbursement Workshops

In Bulletin #11 we announced a series of reimbursement workshops open to all TCAs. The workshops provide a walk-through of the guidance and the Reimbursement Analysis Tool. These have proved to be very successful, both in terms of the number of TCAs that have expressed an interest and the feedback we've had from those attending. Demand has been so great that we have added extra dates.

Currently there are some spaces left on the workshop on 25 March. This will run from 10:30 -15:30 at the Department's offices in London. If you have yet to book and are still interested please email us at:

concessionaryfares@dft.gsi.gov.uk

We will shortly commence running separate workshops for operators. All operators interested in attending should express an interest to the above email address.

Eligibility Guidance

Unfortunately publication of the guidance on assessing the eligibility of disabled people has been slightly delayed. We hope to publish the guidance later this week.

Implementation of the new 2008 statutory concession

Days until 1 April 2008: 42

Funding

The Special Grant report on the £212m grant to be paid to TCAs to cover the costs of the improvement in the statutory minimum concession will be laid before the House of Commons today. The report will be the subject of debate in the House in early March.

We have also today published a summary of responses to the consultation on the special grant. This is attached and will be available on the DfT website shortly.

Passes

Pass production has now started in earnest. So far over 1 million passes have been produced by a number of different pass producers and the number is rising daily.

To ensure that pass production can continue at full rate we would urge TCAs to ensure that they supply any outstanding data on their concessionaires to their pass producers as soon as possible and that they give any necessary approvals to design etc as soon as they are asked.

We are aware that there has recently been some publicity suggesting that there are delays in the process of ITSO encoding and that a logjam has developed.

We are aware that one supplier has experienced difficulties in integrating with the ITSO Services Ltd's (ISL's) HOPS. This is due to the unique way in which it operates its ISAMs in a production environment. This has resulted in the supplier not being able to produce as many passes per day as originally intended. ISL is working hard with this supplier to resolve the issues and is continuing to provide ongoing support to them on a daily basis.

The Framework supplier and other TCA pass providers continue to be able to produce passes at the rate they expected and they are able to operate at full capacity with the ISL HOPS.

If any TCA is concerned that its passes will not be produced by 1 April, it should contact its pass supplier.

Issuing passes to concessionaires

As passes are now being produced, we would strongly advise TCAs **not** to give them out to concessionaires before the middle of March. This is in order to reduce confusion as some users are likely to believe that, as soon as they receive their new pass, they can use it for concessionary travel nationally.

Using a Bespoke Card Management Database

All TCAs have done a lot of work over the last year to get their databases of concessionary and disabled passholder details up-to-date and we would encourage them to continue this practice. This is particularly important for TCAs who may want to have more control over their concessionary travel schemes. One way to do this is to use a bespoke card management database. This can help a TCA issue their own cards, manage their cardholder data and can also be used by contact centre staff.

This is just a reminder that a Framework Agreement exists with four suppliers who can provide a robust card management system to TCAs. Details of the suppliers was provided in Bulletin #7 published on 5 September.

Transitional arrangements

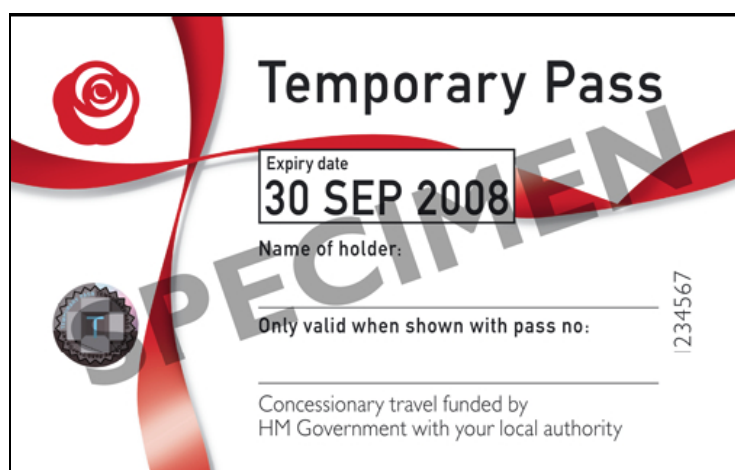
On 12 February, we issued a note to all TCAs about transitional arrangements for the period from 1 April to 30 September 2008. This explained that existing passes would continue to be eligible for local travel during this period. This

provision was included in the Commencement Order for the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007 and was mentioned in Bulletin #8 published on 5 October.

The note also said that TCAs may issue temporary passes to a concessionaire who has not received his or her smartcard passes by 1 April and who wishes to travel outside his or her local area. Temporary passes are only valid if used alongside an existing local pass and are valid only until 30 September 2008.

These transitional arrangements were first agreed with our working groups last summer. The temporary pass was designed in June last year and St Ives was commissioned in July to produce the temporary passes and its related holograms.

Each Temporary Pass has a unique number and includes a specially designed hologram. They look like this:



If a TCA wishes to order temporary passes it should fill in the order form available at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/buses/concessionary/temporarypasses.doc>

and e-mail it to the Department at: concessionaryfares@dft.gsi.gov.uk

TCAs should order **only** the number of temporary passes they consider they are likely to require and will need to give the Department valid reasons for ordering more than a minimum number. TCAs will need to provide monthly

monitoring returns to the Department about the issue of temporary passes. A form is available for this purpose at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/buses/concessionary/reporttempmpass.doc>

Integrity Network

Bulletin #11 gave details of an initial meeting of the new "Integrity Network". We have had a good response so far, but there is still time to sign up. It will be at Great Minster House in London on 29 February. Nominations for the integrity network, or inquiries about the initial meeting, should be sent to concessionaryfares@dft.gsi.gov.uk and should list the name, email and contact telephone number of the nominee, along with which TCA(s) they are representing. Ideally, we are looking for representatives from all English TCAs and a significant number of operators.

Passes Regulations

The Regulations that will make the national design of the pass a legal requirement will be laid very soon. We will send all TCAs a copy as soon as they have been laid.

Recent and future communications from DfT

As preparations for the new concession continue the Department has issued, and is likely to continue to issue, a number of important communications to TCAs. These either take the form of a direct letter to TCAs, or information included in a bulletin. To ensure that all TCAs are aware of all of these communications a list of key recent and future communications is provided below. Likely future communications are in italics and dates are indicative only at this stage.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Format</u>	<u>Key content</u>
5 April 07	Bulletin #5	Detailed information about the data that TCAs need to collect in order to be able to produce passes
25 May 07	Passes Consultation Paper (closed on 20 July)	Outlines the Department's initial proposals for the design and specification of the national passes and asks for comments

<u>Date</u>	<u>Format</u>	<u>Key content</u>
27 June 07	Ministerial letter to TCAs about passes	A letter from Gillian Merron about the passes project
29 June 07	Bulletin #6	Information about the framework agreements including a worked example of an order form for Lot 1. Extensive Q&A about all aspects of the national concession
5 July 07	Grant explanation letter	An explanation of how the grant to cover reasonable new burdens associated with passes will be calculated
31 July 07	Plain English Guide to ITSO	A basic, easy to understand introduction to ITSO smartcards
29 August 07	1 st Tranche Grant Determination	A breakdown of how much each TCA received for the first tranche of the passes grant
5 September 07	Bulletin #7	Details of the framework providers for all 4 lots and details of mentor authorities
18 September 07	Press release about the pass design	The official announcement about the final pass design
19 September 07	Letter about the Framework Agreements	Further information about the framework agreement and pricing schedules
28 September 07	Funding Consultation Paper (closed 23 November)	Invites comments on options for distributing additional funding for the 2008 national concession via special grant
1 October 07	Letter about second tranche of grant	Confirms the second grant payment will be made on 14 November and requests a signed declaration of the number of passes in circulation, which must be received before the second tranche can be paid
3 October 07	Letter about ITSO services Ltd	Explains the services that ITSO Services Ltd will provide to non-smart TCAs and provides a letter for TCAs to "sign up"
3 October 07	Passes Consultation Response Document	Summarises the responses received to the consultation and sets out the Department's plans for the design and specifications of the national pass
5 October	Bulletin #8	Reporting the outcome of the consultation on pass design and providing information about data to be encoded on passes

<u>Date</u>	<u>Format</u>	<u>Key content</u>
13 November	Bulletin #9	Providing advice on producing and formatting passes including how to allocate unique reference numbers and how to protect holograms and pass design artwork.
12 December	Bulletin #10	Providing information about the Special Grant funding for 2008, adding companions to Concessionary Passes and an updated list of OIDs and CPICCs
18 January	Bulletin #11	Providing information about the Reimbursement Analysis Tool and reimbursement workshops, ITSO's pass validation service, the pass Regulations and an initial meeting of the integrity network.
13 February	e-mail to TCAs	Providing information about transitional arrangements, including the use of temporary passes.
19 February	Funding consultation	Summary of responses to funding consultation
<i>Shortly</i>	<i>Statutory Guidance</i>	<i>Guidance on assessing eligibility of disabled people.</i>

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