

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet

**MEETING DATE:** 14 January 2014

**BY:** Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services)

**SUBJECT:** Concessionary Rail Travel

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval to change the current Concessionary Rail Travel Scheme to operate only during off-peak times for National Entitlement Card holders.

## **2 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the current Concessionary Rail Travel Scheme be changed to operate only during off-peak times for National Entitlement Card holders. Off peak travel is between 09.15 - 16.43 and 18.10 - 24.00. (Mon – Fri). Off peak also includes weekends and Public holidays.
- 2.2 That the resultant savings (approx £76.5k) be used to offset the annual overspend of £169k on supported bus routes.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Since 1996, East Lothian Council has adopted the policy of the former Lothian Regional Council in allowing eligible passengers (currently those with a National Entitlement Card, NEC), i.e. those over 60 or visually impaired, to travel at a discounted rate of 50% on rail journeys within the boundary of the previous Lothian Region which start or terminate at a station within East Lothian. This is a local scheme primarily for eligible East Lothian residents.
- 3.2 The National Scheme which allows visually impaired NEC card holds to travel free of charge in Scotland is also further enhanced in East Lothian by allowing the companion of a visually impaired passenger to travel on rail services for 5p per journey. Companions to the visually impaired are not covered by the National Scheme.

#### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Following a change to the current policy a new agreement would be required with First Scotrail. The existing agreement requires a 60 day period for change to the scheme and First Scotrail have confirmed that the earliest implementation date would be 1<sup>st</sup> May 2014 to suit their quarterly review/change in fare structure.

#### **5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 A combined impact assessment has been carried out and some negative consequences are acknowledged. These particularly affect National Entitlement Card holders who are in employment and may require the card to travel during peak time.

#### **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Financial - Financial application of the 50% discounted rate to eligible passengers to date has resulted in a cost of £126,948 over 80,700 journeys. Application of the 5p discounted rate to the companion of visually impaired passengers has a cost of £500 over 133 journeys.

In 12/13 the Local Scheme cost was £176.731.00.

- 6.2 Personnel - None

- 6.3 Other - None

#### **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 None

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