

**Forward plan of Key Decisions to be made:** Case of Special Urgency Notice – Summer Concessionary Travel Proposals

**Date Published:** 21 July 2021

Article 11 of The Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017 requires 28 days' notice of Sheffield City Region Mayoral Combined Authorities intention to make a key decision.

Article 12 allows that if it is impracticable for the authority to give the required 28 days' notice, the decision may still be made if the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been given notice in writing of the matter about which the decision is to be made, a copy of the notice is made available for inspection by the public and is published on the authority's website, and at least 5 clear days have elapsed following the day on which the notice is made available for inspection by the public.

Article 13 allows cases (or decisions) of special urgency to be made when compliance with Article 12 is impracticable. The decision may only be made where the decision maker has obtained agreement from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and as soon as reasonably practicable after the decision maker has obtained agreement, a notice of the decision explaining the urgency and why it cannot reasonably be deferred must be published on the authority's website.

Notice is hereby given of the authority's intention for the Mayoral Combined Authority Board to make the key decisions specified on this notice. The reason why publication in accordance with Article 11 of The Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017 was impracticable in these cases is as follows:

COVID-19 has had a sustained and significant impact on the South Yorkshire economy and in this context bus/tram patronage has fallen to crisis levels.

With the reduction of Covid restrictions but uncertainty about the continued level of government emergency funding, there is an urgent need to start getting people back using public transport. However, there has been considerable uncertainty about when the Government would actually ease lockdown restrictions such that the decision could not be taken until we had such certainty. The removal of restrictions was finally implemented on 19<sup>th</sup> July (until actual implementation there had remained uncertainty).

Given the impact of Covid restrictions on public transport usage, town centre economies and on our lowest income families, the need to take some action to address these impacts is imperative. Although the relaxation of restrictions that started in April has seen an increase in the number of passengers using public transport, overall, passenger numbers are still around 50% of pre-COVID levels and looks to remain flat over the coming weeks, with no significant change since the announcement of all restrictions lifting on 12 July.

Given that the school holidays are now starting, and the policy proposal is designed in particular to assist families during the school holidays the price reduction cannot wait until the September MCA.

There is also an urgent need to support our town centre economies during this period and this policy will encourage and facilitate families into those centres during the holiday season.

Introducing this measure now, such that its full benefits will be in place for the return to work period after the school holidays will also encourage workers to use public transport for work related journeys.

Additionally, there is a need to immediately build confidence in the use of public transport and increase patronage to improve future commercial viability given the likely reductions in the Government subsidy that has been provided during the pandemic. The announcement of extended support for Light Rail systems by DfT on 16 July makes clear that this will be the last tranche of funding, emphasising the urgency to promote patronage return. This will mitigate the risks of loss of network once that funding reduces and eventually ceases.

These proposed summer concessions are designed to encourage greater bus/tram patronage and support the broader economic recovery effort during what is predicted to be a summer lull this year that will be accentuated by the continuing uncertainty around the restrictions despite the arrival of 'freedom day'.

By offering discounted travel to all passengers over the summer we can encourage passengers back onto our local transport network and, at the same time, support the recovery of our local economy.

Councillor Colin Ross  
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Decision to be made:	What is the decision?	Planned Decision Date	Decision maker's name (or name of the board) & title:	Lead Officer name and contact details	Documentation for consideration & other relevant documents	Prohibitions/ Restrictions/ Exemptions
Proposal for concessionary travel on buses/trams	A proposal for summer concessions designed to encourage greater bus/tram patronage and support the broader economic recovery effort	26/07/21	MCA - Mayoral Combined Authority Board	Stephen Edwards Executive Director - SYPTE  stephen.edwards@sypte.co.uk	Board Paper	Open