

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure

DATE 07th September 2010

DIRECTOR Gordon McIntosh

TITLE OF REPORT Aberdeen City Multi Operator Travelcard

REPORT NUMBER EPI/10/208

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to advise members of discussions with First Aberdeen, Stagecoach Bluebird, Bains Coaches and Aberdeenshire Council in relation to a voluntary Multi-Operator Travelcard for bus services within Aberdeen City and seek approval to introduce the scheme.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee agrees,

- (a) To introduce the Multi-Operator Travelcard with an adult day ticket fare of £5.00.
- (b) That the scheme be reviewed after 3 months and the results are reported back to this Committee.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The introduction of a ticketing arrangement would incur start up costs for marketing and publicity, which could be covered from within existing budgets and jointly funded with operators.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

A key aim of the Community Plan is to ensure that all citizens have access to a range of transport options that reflect differing needs of age, gender, disability and income. The Single Outcome Agreement items 1,2,10, 12 and 14 also set a priority of delivering local and regional transport strategy objectives that improve the public transport network.

The Vibrant, Dynamic & Forward Looking document sets out a commitment to work to improve public transport in and to our city and to improve access.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Should the Council agree to administer any ticketing arrangement, an administrative and technical resource will be required to manage the scheme, and these can be met from existing resources.

6. REPORT

Background

Within Aberdeen the two major Bus operators are First Aberdeen and Stagecoach Bluebird. A further six companies operate local bus journeys within or into Aberdeen, with the majority of these journeys operating under contract to one of the Councils. Under normal circumstances, purchasing a bus ticket in Aberdeen allows you to travel on only the service provided by one operator. To travel on another operator's service would require the purchase of a second ticket. For many people this can be a barrier, an inconvenience or a financial disincentive to use the bus.

Discussions in 2009 with management at First Aberdeen and Stagecoach Bluebird highlighted an opportunity to develop multi-operator ticketing for the Aberdeen City area.

A report before the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee on 23rd February 2010 set out proposals for the introduction of a voluntary Multi-Operator Travelcard for bus travel Aberdeen City and detailed plans to introduce a similar arrangement to radial routes in Aberdeenshire.

The proposals put forward to the Committee highlighted that this would allow the travelling public to purchase one ticket to travel on the entire City network. The ticket would offer unlimited travel on all bus services within Aberdeen City and a variety of tickets could be purchased, e.g. Day, Weekly, Monthly. As specified in competition legislation, the prices of travelcards provided in a voluntary agreement should be set by the operators, not local authorities. Aberdeen City Council would act as the scheme's administrator and would chair the management committee. Reimbursement would be based upon registered service mileage within the Aberdeen City boundary, as permitted by competition legislation.

The Committee agreed, in principle, to the establishment of a voluntary multi operator ticketing arrangement subject to a more detailed report on the operation of the scheme being submitted to the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee in due course; and to instruct the Director of Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure to progress the negotiations on ticketing schemes as set out in the report.

Officers reported back to Committee in May 2010 to update members that agreements were reaching a conclusion and the Aberdeen City Multi-Operator Travelcard would be introduced on Monday 16th August 2010, branded as the "Granite Connexion", offering adult and child day and weekly tickets. A fare had not been set at this point but discussions had highlighted that this would not exceed £4.50 for an adult day ticket.

The Ticketing Arrangement

A secret vote was held in June 2010 to set the Travelcard prices initially resulting in a tie. Following negotiations to resolve the tied vote, it was agreed by the operators to sell adult day tickets at £5.00. Under the terms of the agreement, ticket prices are subject to review after three months operation. The vote resulted in the following prices being set:

- Adult Weekly - £20.00 (not to be introduced initially)
- Child Weekly - £10.00 (not to be introduced initially)

- Adult Day - £5.00
- Child Day - £3.50

First Aberdeen at this stage advised of their unwillingness to sell weekly tickets at the introduction of the scheme, noting that this position would be reviewed at a later date. Officers from Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Nestrans all noted their disappointment at these arrangements, highlighting that the proposed £5.00 fare and the omission of weekly tickets was not in line with what had been discussed and agreed previously. Aberdeen City Council made strong representations that support for the scheme from the Council may not be forthcoming as it would be extremely difficult to market a product of £5.00.

Council officers have since made numerous attempts to negotiate on the adult day ticket fare; however First Aberdeen has indicated that they are not prepared to take the commercial risk of selling the ticket at a lower price. Indeed, on 2 August 2010 the company increased the cost of their own adult day tickets to £4.20 (all-day) and £3.50 (off-peak).

It is considered that the proposed multi-operator adult day ticket is priced too high to have any real benefit to the travelling public and is therefore unlikely to be popular. This negates the possibility to test the market, with a view to introducing similar products on cross-boundary corridors into Aberdeenshire.

Aberdeen City Council has withdrawn the offer to administer the Travelcard from 16th August 2010 pending Committee consideration of this report and has notified all operators that continued involvement will be subject to committee approval.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None