



## Equality Relevance Assessment

1. Details of proposal	
Policy title	PT1 Passenger Transport
Lead officer	Jim Jack – Head of Operational Services
Date relevance considered	09/06/2015 – assessed in part on 04/09/2013
2. Does the council have control over how this policy will be implemented?	
YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do you have evidence or reason to believe that this policy will, or may potentially:	
General Duties	Impact on equality (Yes or No)
Reduce or increase discrimination, victimisation or harassment against people covered by the equality protected characteristics?	Yes
Reduce or increase equality of opportunity between people who share an equality protected characteristic and those who do not?	Yes
Provide opportunity to improve good relations between those who share an equality protected characteristic and those who do not?	No
4. Equality impact assessment required? (Two Yes above = full assessment necessary)	
YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Decision rationale	
<p>The proposed public transport strategy and subsequent changes to services and concessions may potentially impact upon those people within the protected characteristics of age, disability and gender and as such should be subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment.</p>	

- No assessment required – process ends
- Assessment required – continue to next section

## 1. Details of proposal

Details of others involved

Jim Jack – Head of Operational Services  
Kenny Selbie – Equalities Officer  
Ian Forbes – Public Transport Manager  
Lorna Kemp – Equalities Analyst

Date assessment conducted

09/06/15

## 2. Aims of the proposed change to council policy or resources

The proposed savings options have been developed on the principle of minimising the impact on the savings required from the local bus service network. This will enable the council to continue to offer a service for a large number of people who otherwise would not be able to access the employment, education, shopping and personal business locations that they rely upon.

There is a need to revise the current provision of passenger transport in order to make cost savings as part of the Modernising Services and Managing our Workforce budget measures. The options proposed are:

- Increasing passenger charges for users of the West Lothian rail concessionary travel scheme, which currently allows flat-fare travel per single journey within West Lothian to stations in Edinburgh, Falkirk and North Lanarkshire, with half-fare to Glasgow and East Lothian
- Withdrawal of West Lothian Taxicard scheme
- Review of 'small vehicle' services
- Review of 'large vehicle' services

Alternative combinations could be developed but any reduction in the saving from an option would require a balancing figure from the local bus service budget and the council seeks to provide accessibility for as many people as possible to locations at which social needs can reasonably be met.

## 3. What equality data, research or other evidence has been used to inform this assessment?

Evidence was gathered from the Scottish Government's reviews and audits of equality data; from the UK Government's High Level Summary of Equality Statistics; and from the service usage data collected by the council.

## 4. Details of consultation and involvement

Officers are preparing a stakeholder engagement and communication plan in order that information regarding scheme changes will be made widely available. As the proposal affects particularly the elderly and disabled the membership of the Senior Peoples' and Disability forums will be contacted and their views as to how best to communicate the change will be taken into account.

A number of comments and suggestions related to these proposals were highlighted via the Delivering Better Outcomes consultation in 2014 and those have assisted to inform this assessment.

## 5. Issues identified and 'protected characteristics' impact

(Covering: age; disability; gender; gender identity; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief and sexual orientation equality)

### Increasing passenger charges for users of the West Lothian rail concessionary travel scheme

Evidence suggests that there is very little difference between men and women in the usage of train services specifically, however, there is potential for older people to be impacted by an increase in the concessionary fare. Eighty-eight per cent of those aged 60 and over hold a concessionary pass (*Scottish Transport Statistics, 2013*). However, the Scottish Household Survey in 2005 suggests that pensioners are less likely to use train services than adults as a whole.

Those with disabilities could be impacted by any price increase of the concessionary fare. The Scottish Household Survey (2009/10) found that disabled people were less likely to be coping financially. Households that contain at least one person with a long-term illness or a disability are more likely to be 'not coping' (15%) than those that do not (10%). The High Level Summary of Equality Statistics (gov.uk) reports that, in Scotland in 2005, only eight percent of adults with a disability or long-term illness have used a train service in the previous month compared to 22% of adults with no disability or long-term illness but there is no difference in perception of train fare value for money between disabled and non-disabled service users (Scottish Government, Social Focus on Disability, 2004). Transport Scotland reports that, as of January 2012, 166,605 concessionary fare passes had been issued to disabled people (around 3% of the population) and 16,107 concessionary fare passes had been issued to visually impaired people (around 0.3%) (*Scottish Government Equality Outcomes: Disability Evidence Review*).

The increased concession fare is more expensive than the normal fare charged by ScotRail for some journeys within West Lothian, however ScotRail ticket issuing staff are instructed to provide passengers with the cheapest available ticket for their journey at the point of sale. Furthermore, many current users of the scheme would be eligible for a Senior Railcard. Provided by the rail industry (at no cost to West Lothian Council), anyone aged 60 or over is able to purchase a Senior Railcard for £30 per annum, which then entitles them to one-third off most rail fares. If fares were increased to £2.00 single, many scheme users would therefore be better off if they purchased a Senior Railcard. Additionally, people registered as blind or visually-impaired would remain eligible for the rail industry's concession scheme, which offers free travel.

There are no journeys between West Lothian rail stations that cannot be made by bus (for free by National Entitlement Card holders), so alternatives are available for people that are unable to afford the higher fare.

Feedback on this measure both through DBO consultation and discussions with the Disability Community Equality Forum and Mental Health Users Forum suggest that there is not significant concern over the implications of this measure as the cost of a concessionary fare would still be significantly cheaper than the full unsubsidised cost. Furthermore, any spend on the scheme reduces the Council's ability to support socially necessary bus services within West Lothian.

### Withdrawal of West Lothian Taxicard scheme

Nearly half (45%) of Taxicard holders are eligible for the scheme because they are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, a further 17% because they have a blue badge and 12% because of a medical assessment. The remaining 26% of card holders are eligible due to meeting one of the

ten other criteria. However, anecdotal information from other council areas has shown that many scheme users do not necessarily gain the full financial benefit of the discount available (as taxi operators are commonly willing to offer a negotiated discounted fare, particularly for regular users, which cannot be applied to the metered fare of Taxicard users). West Lothian Taxicard holders are eligible for free or discounted travel under the Council's rail concessions scheme, so some may object to withdrawal of their Taxicard as it would lose them that entitlement. However, almost all Taxicard holders will be eligible for a Senior Railcard or Disabled Persons Railcard which entitle them to discounted (although not free) rail travel with blind persons entitled to free rail travel. There will therefore be few, if any, people that are not able to access some specialist and subsidised transport were Taxicard to be withdrawn; alternative bus and Dial-a-Bus journeys will be available for most users.

### Review of 'small vehicle' services

West Lothian Council provides a complex mix of services utilising small passenger carrying vehicles (mostly using minibuses and taxis) targeted at individuals and groups that have specific travel requirements which means they cannot use conventional scheduled buses or trains. These services include:

- Free home to school transport (largely by taxi) for approximately 580 pupils that are considered unable to travel using other options on account of having additional support needs (ASN), a medical condition or are homeless.
- Eight permanent Taxibus services (a ninth is a trial service not taken account of here) which provide scheduled demand responsive public transport services in parts of West Lothian not served by scheduled buses. These use taxis or, in one case, a minibus and carry over 6,000 passenger journeys per annum. Users pay fares equivalent to bus fares for similar journey distances
- Support for Dial-a-Ride and Dial-a-Bus services. These services are available to people that are unable to use scheduled buses because they have limited mobility. Dial-a-Ride services provide door-to-door transport using minibuses wherever the passenger wishes to travel, whereas Dial-a-Bus services are semi-fixed routes using minibuses which take people living in a given area to town centres to provide access to shops and other services. Combined, they provide around 26,000 journeys per annum for residents of West Lothian, though the number of people that make use of the services is small, around 370 users per annum on Dial-a-Ride and 300 on Dial-a-Bus. Users pay a fare for their journey dependent on the type of service and journey.
- The council also operates its own Social Policy transport minibus fleet (largely providing transport to daycare centres) and funds small vehicle transport for some school pupils during the school day when pupils need to access specialist tuition. Social Policy also procures taxi services, typically at short notice, particularly for children in their care which, like ASN transport, change frequently depending on care needs.

The two core savings principles of this review are avoidance of service duplication and setting clear guidelines for service eligibility and standards. The review will also ensure that those who are unable to use scheduled buses or trains because of their disability; those who have specialist education needs; or are living in an area where no other transport provision is available, will retain access to 'small vehicle' services. No one entitled to transport would be left unserved and that specialist transport provision will remain available to all residents of West Lothian unable to use scheduled buses. All school children that are entitled to specialist transport provision will still be provided with free transport to their school. Everyone unable to use scheduled buses because of disability or because they live in an area unserved by scheduled services would continue to have

access to services which would regularly connect them to at least one of West Lothian's town centres.

However some users may face reduced choice of destination or more restricted choice of journey time. Some others may need to travel for longer in the vehicle as part of a combined contract, or a need to share a vehicle with other passengers when sole occupancy is the case at present. Clearly however some clients cannot be served other than by a sole-occupancy vehicle due to medical or behavioural condition and this will continue as a practice.

#### Review of 'large vehicle' services

Profitable, or "commercial", local bus services, which provided by bus operators at no cost to the council, account for about 80% of bus service mileage in West Lothian. Over and above this free market provision the council provides funding for services under contract using large and medium sized buses to provide local bus services not provided on a commercial basis and free home to catchment school transport for some pupils.

The vast majority of mainstream school transport and local bus services (excepting Taxibus services) are provided by large and medium sized buses. Complementary transport options using smaller vehicles (including taxis) is provided for some people that are unable to use these mainstream services and these were considered previously under the review of small vehicle services.

The proposal is to support a strong commercial local bus service network and exploit the potential for better vehicle utilisation on council contract services. Any changes to scheduled services would be made only if a more cost effective service results and if reasonable alternative transport services are available for most users.

The proposed change to service delivery will mean that some current school bus contracts will no longer be required resulting in an overall saving in the number of bus services operating on the road network and, significantly in some school locations, fewer bus movements at schools. The main change will be that some pupils currently travelling to school by mainstream school contract will, instead, travel on a local bus services amongst members of the public.

No equalities impact was identified for this proposal.

#### Local Bus Service

As previously mentioned, the proposed savings options have been developed on the principle of minimising the impact on the savings required from the local bus service network. Evidence suggests that public bus services are particularly important for several protected groups, for example, young people and older people. 19% of 17-25 year olds travel by bus with 54.5% using public or active travel to get to work and half of those aged 60-69 and 70-79 said they used the bus in the last month according to one survey. (Transport and Travel in Scotland, 2013). Around a third of bus journeys are undertaken by concessionary pass holders (Bus and Coach Statistics, 2011/12).

Adults with a disability or long-term illness are more likely to use a local bus service than those with no disability or long-term illness. In 2012, 43.3% of adults with a disability or long-term illness had used a bus service in the previous month compared to 39.5% of adults without a disability or long-term illness (Scottish Household Survey, 2012).

### Gender and Public Transport

Looking at public transport in a wider sense, the Scottish Government Gender Audit reviews evidence of gender differences in access to and usage of transport in Scotland, with data from 2004 and 2005. Overall, men are more likely than women to hold a driving licence and to live in households where a car is available for private use. They are also likely to drive more frequently and to travel greater distances. The Gender Audit suggests that differences between men and women in access to and use of transport are likely to reflect differences in gender roles, for example, the fact that men often tend to be the main earner and to be working full-time, while women are more likely to be secondary earners and to take the major responsibility for childcare, including escort journeys to school, and for domestic responsibilities such as food shopping. In general, women's poorer access to transport affects their access to training and employment opportunities, and to services such as hospitals, and to shopping and leisure facilities (*Scottish Government Equality Outcomes: Gender Evidence Review*).

### Conclusion

Public bus services in particular are utilised more often by younger people, older people and people with disabilities so any reduction to this service would impact negatively on these groups. In addition, individuals within these groups may not meet the criteria for alternative travel provision.

The proposed measures will enable the council to continue offer a service for a large number of people who otherwise would not be able to access the employment, education, shopping and personal business locations that they rely upon. The impact to older people and people with disabilities will be low given the alternatives available to them and any increase in cost to the customer will also be low.

The council has taken account of the cumulative impact of financial decisions for budget setting in this and previous financial years. The council will review its cumulative equality assessment over summer 2015 in order to take account of a range of financial decisions anticipated to be brought forward in June 2015 which may impact on the findings and recommendations related to cumulative impact.

### **6. What measures are in place to monitor the actual impact following implementation?**

The Delivering Better Outcomes projects are being monitored by the Modernisation Board during implementation and equality impact assessment is identified as a key enabler for projects.

### **7. Recommendation**

- Implement proposal with no amendments
- Implement proposal taking account of mitigating actions (as outlined below)
- Reject proposal due to disproportionate impact on equality

### **8. Mitigating actions and additional outputs**

Not applicable.

- **Equality impact assessment complete**