



Department
for Transport

Councillor Carole Pattison
Leader of Kirklees Council
By email: Carole.Pattison@kirklees.gov.uk

From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State
Simon Lightwood MP

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Dear Carole,

Thank you for your letter of 22 January, addressed to the Secretary of State, regarding concessionary bus travel. I am responding as the Minister for Roads and Buses.

I was very sorry to read of your concerns regarding access to bus travel for disabled people. As you will be aware, the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) provides free off-peak bus travel to those with eligible disabilities and those of state pension age between 9.30am and 11.00pm on weekdays and all day at weekends and on Bank Holidays. The duration of the concessionary period was set out in the Transport Act 2000. As I hope you will appreciate, the ENCTS costs around £795 million annually in reimbursement costs to operators. Any changes to the statutory obligations would therefore need to be carefully considered for its impact on the scheme's financial sustainability.

However, local authorities in England can choose to offer concessions in addition to their statutory obligations, for example, by extending the times travel passes can be used. This is the case in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority area, for example, where concessionary passholders can travel for free on local bus services at all hours. Similar schemes also exist in other parts of the country. These are additional local concessions provided and funded by local authorities from local resources.

The Government is investing in bus services long-term and has confirmed over £3 billion from 2026/27 to support local leaders and bus operators across the country to improve bus services for millions of passengers over the remainder of the spending review period. This includes multi-year allocations for local authorities under the Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG) totalling nearly £700 million per year, ending the short-term approach to bus funding and giving councils the certainty they need to plan ahead to improve services for local communities.

West Yorkshire Combined Authority will be allocated £103.8 million under the LABG from 2026/27 to 2028/29, in addition to the £36.4 million they are already receiving this year. Funding allocated to local authorities to improve services for passengers can be used in whichever way they wish, including extending the travel times for concessionary bus passes locally.

In regard to the accessibility of public transport more widely, accessible travel for disabled people is one of the Department's highest priorities. We also recognise the importance of receiving a consistently inclusive service when travelling in order to make journeys independently and with confidence. We are currently developing a plan for an Accessible Travel Charter which aims to empower disabled voices in establishing clear, unified principles that guide passengers, and assists operators and enforcement bodies in upholding accessibility standards. The Charter aims to set out what disabled travellers can expect from their journeys. Looking further ahead, accessibility will be a central consideration in our integrated national transport strategy which will set out our long-term vision for transport in England. We intend to publish this soon.

In the more immediate term, the Bus Services Act 2025 will introduce a new requirement for local authorities to develop 'Bus Network Accessibility Plans' assessing the current levels of accessibility of their networks and how they will improve them in future; measures to improve the consideration of accessibility within Enhanced Partnership schemes; and a requirement for local bus operator drivers and customer facing staff to complete both disability awareness and assistance training.

I know that too many journeys taken by disabled people continue to be more difficult than they should be. I am, however, determined that disabled people should be able to travel as easily as anybody else, and I hope I have reassured you, both of the progress we are making, but importantly also of our resolve to continue learning about remaining barriers and improving transport accessibility for all.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Simon Lightwood', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**SIMON LIGHTWOOD MP
MINISTER FOR ROADS AND BUSES**