

Free public transport pilot – Motion, as adjusted, approved.

19 Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Molyneux, moved that:-

"Council recognises the success of the free integrated travel card system for COP26 delegates in Glasgow; Council understands that many cities around the world operate an integrated, often ticketless, travel system, providing seamless changeover between bus, train, underground and other forms of transport; Council notes that Luxembourg introduced universal free public transport last year and that many cities around the world, including Manchester, now operate no-fare services; Council recognises and welcomes the impending roll out of Scottish Green Party proposals for free bus travel for under 22s and Scottish Government plans to bring the rail system back into public ownership.

Council recognises the work of Get Glasgow Moving, Free Our City and other campaigners, and agrees that Glasgow needs and deserves a more integrated, better funded and affordable public transport system. Council understands the pressing case for this to reduce carbon emissions and high levels of air pollution, make our streets safer and more appealing to walk and cycle on, and tackle the high levels of transport-related social and economic inequality.

Council notes its previous declaration of a climate and ecological emergency and draws attention to proposals in its Climate Action Plan for a free public transport pilot in Glasgow, echoing calls of the Just Transition Commission; Council recognises the success of already established schemes such as the National Entitlement Card and the veterans travel scheme, and believes the technology is already in place for universal roll out; Council instructs officers to work with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) and other relevant bodies to develop proposals for a universal free public transport pilot in Glasgow and produce a report within 6 months; Council asks the Leader of the Council to write to the Scottish Government Transport Secretary calling for support to undertake this pilot in Glasgow."

Councillor Richardson, seconded by Councillor Cunningham, moved as an amendment that:-

- (1) the following be inserted in the first paragraph after "Council recognises and welcomes the impending roll out of Scottish Green Party proposals..."
"by the Scottish Government";
- (2) the following be inserted in the first paragraph after "for free bus travel for under 22s ..."
"as an opportunity to reduce the cost of travel for children, families and young people as well as encouraging greater use of public transport;";
- (3) the following be inserted at the end of the second paragraph:

“Council acknowledges that the actions required to achieve these outcomes will be identified and delivered via the new set of transport strategies currently in development.”; and

- (4) the following be inserted in the third paragraph after “...and believes the technology is already in place for universal roll out...”:

“Council welcomes the Just Transition Commission’s recommendation:

“Partner with local authorities (at least one largely-urban and one rural authority) to pilot targeted expansion of access to free public transport in order to fully evaluate whether impacts on emissions and social inclusion would justify the cost of such a policy nationally.”,

and notes alignment with the Council’s draft Transport Strategy policy framework which states:

Policy 9:2: We will support and lobby partners to improve access to jobs and training for Glasgow residents by sustainable transport where possible, and at affordable prices.

- Action 9.A: We will work with partners to explore the feasibility of a targeted free public transport scheme, and subject to this, monitor and evaluate any pilot to inform thinking on the benefits and costs of free public transport. This should build on Transport Scotland’s free bus travel scheme for under 22s.”

Council notes that the policy framework has recently been out for consultation, and that the final framework will be reported to committee in early 2022. Council instructs officers to work with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport and other relevant bodies to develop proposals for a free public transport trial and produce a report by September 2022. Council asks the Leader of the Council to write to the Scottish Government Transport Secretary calling for support to undertake this pilot in Glasgow.”

Councillor Matt Kerr, seconded by Councillor McTernan, moved as an amendment that all after the first paragraph be deleted and replaced with the following:-

“Council recognises and welcomes the impending roll out of free bus travel for under 22s by the SNP-Green Scottish Government, following proposals by the Scottish Green Party and the Scottish Labour Party for free bus travel for the under 26s; notes with disappointment that the Scottish Government has refused to extend this provision to the Glasgow Subway despite unanimous support from this Council, with the result of undermining ambitions towards integrated, multi-modal public transport; and further welcomes the Scottish Government’s plans for a new public sector rail operator; but recognises and decries current proposals to cut the number of rail services compared to pre-pandemic levels.”

Bailie Thornton, seconded by Councillor Connelly, moved as an amendment that:-

- (a) the following be deleted in the first paragraph:
- (i) from “Council recognises...” to “...COP26 delegates in Glasgow;”; and
 - (ii) from “Council notes that Luxembourg” to “public ownership” and replaced with:

“Council believes it is long past overdue to drag Glasgow’s antiquated ticketing system into the 21st Century to ensure passengers pay the cheapest fares and are entitled to automatic refunds for delayed or cancelled journeys.”;

- (b) at the second paragraph delete “recognises” and replace with “notes”;
- (c) the final paragraph be deleted and replaced with the following:-

“Council recognises the success of already established ticketing schemes, such as the National Entitlement Card and veterans travel scheme, and believes that the technology to roll out integrated ticketing on a universal basis is widely available. Council therefore instructs the Leader of the Council to engage with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport and the Scottish Government in support of the aim to roll out integrated ticketing across Glasgow and asks that she write to the Scottish Government Transport Secretary outlining these wishes.”

Bailie Dr Bartos, seconded by Councillor Elspeth Kerr, moved as an amendment that:-

“Council recognises the success of the free integrated travel card system for COP 26 delegates in Glasgow; Council understands that many cities around the world operate an integrated, often ticketless, travel system, providing seamless cross modal public transport interchanging between bus, train, underground and other forms of transport.

Council agrees that public transport journey integration and affordability are both vital and affirms its belief in the need to transform the public transport network experience as well as tackle the high levels of transport-related social and economic inequality.

Council recognises the work, passion and dedication of Get Glasgow Moving, Free Our City and other campaigners, and agrees that Glasgow needs and deserves a more integrated, better funded and affordable public transport system. Council also recognises the importance which a more integrated, better funded and affordable public transport system would have for the wider economic benefit of the city and the public, private and third sector organisations who have their home here.

Council notes that Luxembourg (a country with a population smaller than Glasgow) introduced universal free public transport last year and that many cities

or regions around the world, including Manchester, now operate at least some no-fare services.

Council recognises the broad concerns across the political spectrum on transport affordability and the substantial support and funding by Scottish Government, under SNP and Labour administrations, involved with the national bus concession schemes. Council welcomes the impending roll out next year of the SNP-Green Scottish Government, free bus travel for under 22s following proposals by the Scottish Green Party. Council views this as an opportunity to reduce the cost of travel for children, families and young people as well as encouraging greater use of public transport. Council notes the aspirations for extensions of this expressed by politicians of various parties.

Council notes however that all transport carries financial and carbon costs relating to support and delivery and Council further notes that 'free' (at point of use) transport projects in many cities around the world are only achievable either by limited scope of available routes and/or by substantial publicly funded revenue support. Council notes the limited revenue resources at Scottish local authority and regional level which means that funding often requires national input but Council also notes the potential for unintended consequences of nationally targeted schemes (as was demonstrated with the over 60s bus concessionary travel scheme being linked to single bus fares set by commercial operators) and as may happen with the exclusion of local publicly owned transport operations (such as tram and subway) from the under 22s scheme. Council reaffirms its cross party support for funding and legal solutions to be found to support multimode concessionary travel schemes and observes that delivery of transport improvements by any national interventions can carry complex financial and network impacts which emerge at regional and local level. Council further notes with care that 'free-at-point-of-use' schemes elsewhere may have increased non-decarbonised public transport usage with little reduction in car mileage and potential reduction in cycle/active travel mileage, meaning that whilst this public transport initiative may be popular the necessary modal and travel patterns shifts and the necessary carbon savings may not be achieved without greater public transport transformation than simply mandating zero fares.

Council acknowledges that cross party desired transformative change in public transport, such as is necessary to deliver on the aspirations of the Climate Action Plan, to respond to the calls of the Just Transition Commission, and to provide a competitive economic environment, will only be achieved on a just and practical basis with careful analysis, trial and adjustment of arrangements.

Council believes that while the technical infrastructure may be largely in place to deliver universal free transport schemes (as well as measures which would be popular in a 'non-free at point of use system' such as supporting automated cancellation/delay refunds, fare caps etc), Council acknowledges that a long-term universal 'free at point of use' scheme will have profoundly different impacts to a short duration scheme. As such Council acknowledges it will require substantial effort involving work of regional, local and national government stakeholders as well as positive engagement with operators to address how such a network would be shaped for the public interest and how operators would be reimbursed.

Council acknowledges this sort of work can only be progressed through evolution of national strategy, as well as regional and local transport strategies under development. Council also believes that ongoing research and new ideas – such as a universal basic transport allowance – may have merit in achieving universal public transport access affordability for the public without breaking the bank or planet.

Council agrees to write to the Scottish Government Transport Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport, to seek their support for pilot work centred on Glasgow for new service delivery models such as universal free public transport as well as new arrangements for revenue funding and powers for network direction (reiterating Council's previous unanimous motion on transport and the importance of revenue and legal powers for public transport authorities).

Council agrees that in order to progress the potential for universal 'free at point of use' pilots and other transformative models of affordable and integrated transport, Council requires more information and therefore agrees to instruct officers to approach and work with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, Transport Scotland and any other public stakeholders to bring forward to elected members no later than the end of February 2022, a summary report outlining in preliminary terms any immediately evident practical operational issues, legal implications, initial cost estimates and passenger focussed matters which would need to be considered to deliver:

- (1) a universal free public transport system (including all modes) within the different boundaries of natural regional units (including as one option the Glasgow local authority area);
- (2) a universal zero-fare subway scheme (to be delivered whole or part week); and
- (3) a universal zero-fare bike-hire scheme within the boundaries of natural regional units (including as one option the Glasgow local authority area).

Officers are instructed to provide such a report as may be best prepared by the deadline in order that the report may be considered by elected members, public and stakeholders in advance of the local elections and officers are asked to note and record any estimates or barriers to information they have encountered in order to complete their analysis.

Finally, demonstrating that Council recognises the key role of operators, Council also agrees to write to the chair of the Glasgow Regional Bus Partnership to seek the views of local bus operators on the implications of any 'universal free public transport' scheme and to hear of any relevant work currently underway; Council agrees in similar terms to write to representatives of different public transport modes, including cycle schemes and taxi operators, operating within the region."

Councillor Young, with the approval of his seconder, accepted parts of the amendment by Councillor Richardson resulting in the following adjusted motion:-

“Council recognises the success of the free integrated travel card system for COP26 delegates in Glasgow; Council understands that many cities around the world operate an integrated, often ticketless, travel system, providing seamless changeover between bus, train, underground and other forms of transport; Council notes that Luxembourg introduced universal free public transport last year and that many cities around the world, including Manchester, now operate no-fare services; Council recognises and welcomes the impending roll out of Scottish Green Party proposals by the Scottish Government for free bus travel for under 22s as an opportunity to reduce the cost of travel for children, families and young people as well as encouraging greater use of public transport; and Scottish Government plans to bring the rail system back into public ownership.

Council recognises the work of Get Glasgow Moving, Free Our City and other campaigners, and agrees that Glasgow needs and deserves a more integrated, better funded and affordable public transport system. Council understands the pressing case for this to reduce carbon emissions and high levels of air pollution, make our streets safer and more appealing to walk, wheel and cycle on, and tackle the high levels of transport-related social and economic inequality. Council believes that actions required to achieve these outcomes will be progressed via the new set of transport strategies currently in development.

Council notes its previous declaration of a climate and ecological emergency and draws attention to proposals in its Climate Action Plan for a free public transport pilot in Glasgow; Council recognises the success of already established schemes such as the National Entitlement Card and the veterans travel scheme, and believes the technology is already in place for universal roll out;

Council welcomes the Just Transition Commission’s recommendation:

“Partner with local authorities (at least one largely-urban and one rural authority) to pilot targeted expansion of access to free public transport in order to fully evaluate whether impacts on emissions and social inclusion would justify the cost of such a policy nationally.”

and notes alignment with the Council’s draft Transport Strategy policy framework which states:

- Action 9.A: We will work with partners to explore the feasibility of a targeted free public transport scheme, and subject to this, monitor and evaluate any pilot to inform thinking on the benefits and costs of free public transport. This should build on Transport Scotland’s free bus travel scheme for under 22s.

Council notes that the policy framework has recently been out for consultation, and that the final framework will be reported to committee in early 2022. Council instructs officers to work with Strathclyde Passenger for Transport and other relevant bodies to develop proposals for a free public transport trial and produce a report by September 2022. Council asks the Leader of the Council to write to the Scottish Government Transport Secretary calling for support to undertake this pilot in Glasgow.”

On a vote being taken by calling the roll 28 members voted for the amendment by Councillor Matt Kerr, 5 for the amendment by Bailie Thornton, 3 for the amendment by Bailie Dr Bartos and 40 for the motion as adjusted, which was accordingly declared to be carried.