

# TravelWatch NORTHWEST

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***Winner of CILT award for best practice in passenger transport (2013)***

***promoting quality public transport.....***

## **English National Concessionary Travel Pass Survey 2015**



***(photo Colin Kennington)***

# ***English National Concessionary Travel Pass Survey 2015***

## **1. Introduction and Background**

1.1 TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) dates back to October 2003 when the Rail Passengers Committee for North Western England (RPC), using its powers under section 228 of the Transport Act 2000, set up the North West Public Transport Users Forum (NWPTUF). This legislation required, inter alia, the RPC to co-operate with other bodies representing the interests of users of all public transport services. The RPC, alongside the North West Regional Assembly, identified a gap in the representation of public transport users across the region and across modes. Similar forums, now also under the TravelWatch banner, have been established in South West England, the West Midlands, the East Midlands and Southern England. With the demise of the regional RPCs TWNW has become an independent Community Interest Company limited by guarantee.

1.2 This report updates a similar report we published in November 2014. We were asked to carry out the exercise again by Senior and NW Traffic Commissioner Beverley Bell.

1.3 Bus travel for Seniors is indisputably popular, as might be expected, but there have been long standing issues over funding allocations to reimburse the bus operator for revenue foregone. This short paper concentrates on the operation of the scheme in practice. There have been reports of confusion about the need to scan passes on ticket machines and the method used by different companies to accomplish this.

## **2. Methodology**

2.1 We asked that journey details be recorded in case there was a trend on certain routes for problems.

2.2 On boarding the bus, we set out to monitor how the presentation of a pass is handled by the driver and if the method of dealing with it is easily understood by the passenger.

2.3 We also sought to ascertain how drivers dealt with a pass that was rejected by the ticket machine.

2.4 If a ticket was issued we wanted to check the accuracy of the information printed on the ticket, especially boarding and alighting information.

2.5 During the summer of 2015 TWNW members who held concessionary passes travelled on 114 bus services in NW England and completed a questionnaire to record their experiences (Appendix). The bus companies and geographical locations were as follows –

County/Area	Operator	No. of journeys
Cheshire	Arriva North West	3
Cheshire	D&G Bus	2
Cheshire	GHA Coaches	4
Cheshire/Warrington	Network Warrington	1
Cumbria	Blueworks	1
Halton	Halton Transport	2
Greater Manchester	First	5
Greater Manchester	Go Goodwins	1
Greater Manchester	Manchester Community Transport	1
Greater Manchester	M Travel	1
Greater Manchester	Stagecoach	5
Greater Manchester	Stotts	1
Lancashire	Boomerang Travel	2
Lancashire	Dales Bus	1
Lancashire	First	2
Lancashire	Fishwicks	2
Lancashire	Kirkby Lonsdale Coach Hire	3
Lancashire	Preston Bus	9
Lancashire	Rosendale Transport	9
Lancashire	TransDev Burnley & Pendle	13
Lancashire	TransDev Lancs United & MainLine	4
North Lancashire/Cumbria	Stagecoach	39
Merseyside/Lancashire	Stagecoach	3

### 3. Analysis

3.1 Please note that in the following analysis 2014 figures are given in *italicised brackets* for comparison.

3.2 The surveyors stated their destination on 60 (52) occasions (52%) (80%). This is necessary in Lancashire where the reimbursement for concessionary travel is based on actual journeys made.

3.3 Inspection by the driver of the photo on the pass was observed on only 16 (11) occasions (14%) (17%). We are concerned that this could be subject to fraud by anyone who had found a pass and was tempted to use it. It is therefore disappointing that this figure has declined since the previous survey. The operators where an inspection took place were - Blueworks one journey out of one undertaken, GHA coaches two out of two, Stagecoach N. Lancashire/ Cumbria 12 out of 39, TransDev Burnley & Pendle one out of 13.

3.4 On 11 (9) occasions (10%) (14%) a successful scan did not take place -

- On three out of 4 journeys with GHA coaches tickets were issued manually.
- On one journey with D&G Bus no scan took place and the surveyor was told to sit down – other passes had been observed not to work.

- On the one journey with Go Goodwins no scanner was available and no ticket issued.
- On the one journey with M Travel there was no scanner on the bus and the ticket was issued manually.
- On the one journey with Stotts the driver waved the surveyor on board when he saw the pass and no ticket was issued.
- On one journey with Stagecoach in Manchester the surveyor was told to go along and sit down. No scan took place.
- On two journeys with First in Greater Manchester the driver waved the surveyor through, possibly to save time. On another journey the scan was unsuccessful.

3.5 On 77 (32) occasions (68%) (49%) no instructions on the ticket machine regarding the presentation of the pass were discernible or easily read. For example this applied to all of the 17 journeys made with TransDev. Stagecoach North Lancashire/ Cumbria did less well than last year in this regard (17 out of 39 journeys compared with 24 out of 29 journeys). On 4 occasions with this operator a sign was noticed on the front exterior of bus saying “Free travel for Holders of English Concession passes” followed by “instructions on the glass panel between passenger and driver” on three occasions. In 5 cases with the same operator the screen was difficult to read, being at a low angle. On two occasions again with Stagecoach N. Lancashire/Cumbria a general sign below the drivers window was noticed, stating “show your pass and state destination”

3.6 On 93 (56) occasions (82%) (86%) a ticket was issued. The other 21 occasions where a ticket was not issued were as follows –

- 5 journeys on Stagecoach Manchester
- 5 journeys with First in Manchester
- One journey with Stotts in Manchester
- One journey with Greater Manchester Community Transport
- One journey with Go Goodwins in Greater Manchester
- Two journeys with First in Lancashire (journeys starting in Greater Manchester)
- Three journeys with Arriva in Cheshire.
- Two journeys with Halton Transport
- One journey with Stagecoach in Merseyside.

3.7 Where tickets were issued there were 9 (8) occasions (8%) (17%) where it appeared that the destination was shown incorrectly. The two tickets issued on D & G Bus showed no journey information. In other cases the discrepancy was related to the location of fare stages and in one case there was a misunderstanding.

3.8 It is gratifying to record that on 102 (62) occasions (89%) (95%) the bus driver was pleasant and helpful.

3.9 On no (one) occasions was an inspector observed checking tickets.

3.10 On just 4 occasions the surveyor noted information displayed regarding the concessionary pass scheme (see 3.4 above).

#### **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

4.1 It is disappointing that the figure for inspection of the pass and photo has declined since the previous survey. We are not aware of any current evidence that there is a significant misuse of passes. However the current lack of pass examination is creating an environment which could be seen to facilitate misuse.

4.2 Local Transport Authorities and operators should increase measures to ensure drivers are more rigorous in inspecting photo card passes in order to prevent fraudulent use. A considerable number of passengers present their pass held within their purse or a wallet and it is scanned by the ticket machine and accepted without the driver even seeing either side of the card. TWNW accepts it would be time-consuming and possibly confrontational for drivers to check every pass but recommends that the requirement to present the pass, with the photo clearly visible, would be an additional deterrent against fraud.

4.3 Clearer instructions/ guidance on whether and how to present the pass to the ticket machine would be useful.

4.4 It was noticeable again that travelling bus inspectors appear to be non - existent.

4.5 More information generally about the scheme on the bus would be useful. There is little information on bus or bus stops about the need to show a pass or state a destination. We also recommend that every bus should have a general poster highlighting the need to show the pass, with the passenger's photo clearly visible, to the driver and state their destination.

4.6 The following points we made last year are still relevant. *Because of cuts to local authority spending imposed by government we are going through a period of severe pressure on the continued operation of locally supported buses especially in rural areas. We would make three points –*

- *Travel concessions are of no use if services do not exist.*
- *There is a concern that in some areas additional costs generated by ENCTS are not properly reimbursed both to the LTA and the operator and that this is a factor contributing to the erosion of bus services.*
- *The withdrawal of local bus services is leading to increased deprivation and isolation for many who do not have access to private transport, especially in rural areas.*

4.7 For more information about TravelWatch NorthWest contact John Moorhouse, Company Secretary, at the registered office address, or email - [admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk](mailto:admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk) or visit the website – [www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk](http://www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk) .

#### **TravelWatch NorthWest 12<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

**Appendix****TravelWatch NORTHWEST – E.N.C.T.S. Survey 2015**

Surveyor: ..... Date of journey: .....

Issuing Authority: ..... Operator: .....

Service Number: ..... Route: .....

Joining Point/Time: ..... @ .....

**On boarding the bus:**Did you state your destination? **Yes/No**Or, if not, did the driver ask for a destination **Yes/No**Did driver inspect photo on pass? **Yes/No**Was the pass scanned by the ticket machine? **Yes / No**Were the instructions on the ticket machine screen easily read? **Yes / No**Were these instructions clear? **Yes / No**If pass scanned, was the scan successful? **Yes / No**

If not successful or not scanned, what action did the driver take?

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Was a ticket issued? **Yes / No**Was the information on the ticket correct? **Yes / No**Was the driver pleasant / helpful? **Yes / No****On the bus:**Was your ticket checked by an Inspector? **Yes/No**Any information displayed regarding the concessionary ticket scheme? **Yes / No**

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Please write any other comments or observations in the space below or on the reverse of this form.