



PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01475

Name of petitioner

John Nelson on behalf of Hamilton Labour Party

Petition title

Bus fares and services

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review its policies on the funding of the Bus Service Operators Grant and concessionary bus travel and to consider the re-regulation of the bus industry to ensure that people across Scotland are provided with affordable and reliable local bus services.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

We spoke to local list MSP Siobhan McMahon, local constituency MSP Michael McMahon and several local councillors, who advised that a public petition was the most promising route for us to raise the issues and influence policy.

We therefore collected signatures from the general public, mostly in the street, and it is these signatures we are now bringing to the Committee.

As the signatures were being collected a correspondence was conducted in the local newspaper, the "Hamilton Advertiser", with the other local constituency MSP Christina McKelvie about the issues involved.

Petition background information

The petition arose following the decision of the Scottish Government in 2012 to reduce at short notice by 17% the Bus Service Operators Grant - previously the Fuel Duty Rebate, which defrays some of the running costs of public bus services - and to change the basis for calculating this grant from fuel consumption to mileage, so that operators in urban areas claimed the effective cut for them was nearer 40%. The overall cut was substantially more than the average reduction in Scottish Government spending and so was clearly the result of a specific policy decision on priorities rather than an unavoidable economic necessity. The immediate result was an increase in bus fares and a reduction in services in both urban and rural areas. We believe that this policy decision was wrong, and that local bus services deserve to be given a much higher priority in all such decisions.

The problem was exacerbated by the capping of funding for the concessionary fares scheme, which meant the bus operators bearing the full cost of free travel for the last several weeks of the financial year. This inevitably put further pressure on service levels and on fares for other passengers since operators had to meet the costs from somewhere. The funding is now to be cut even further over the next two years.

While there is ongoing debate on the structure and extent of the concessionary fares scheme in the future, we believe it is essential that the Scottish Government covers the full costs of whatever scheme is in force at any given moment and does not transfer these costs to the bus operators and so to bus users in the form of reduced services and increased fares.

Finally, we believe re-regulation of the bus industry is essential, to protect bus passengers from the effective monopolies that exist under the present system. Proper regulation would ensure that the interests of passengers come first.

We understand that an unsuccessful attempt was made in Parliament to amend the 2012-13 Budget item on the Bus Service Operators Grant, and various unsuccessful attempts have been made in Parliament to introduce legislation to strengthen regulation of the bus industry.

Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/busfares>

Related information for petition

Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

NO

How many signatures have you collected so far?

950

Closing date for collecting signatures online

N/A

Comments to stimulate online discussion