

Chris Hynd
Public Petitions Committee Assistant
Room T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

30 November 2015

Dear Chris

Public Petition PE1549 - Concessionary Travel Passes for War Veterans

I am writing in response to your letter dated 2 November 2015 with regards to my public petition PE1549 - concessionary travel passes for all war veterans (that are in receipt of a War Disablement Pension).

I have read the letter from Mike Brown, Commissioner of Transport for Transport for London dated 2 November 2015. I firstly, would like to thank the Public Petition Committee for writing to Transport for London for further information on their Veterans' Oyster photocard scheme and the Disabled Person's Freedom Pass.

In his letter Mr Brown explains that the Veterans' Oyster photocard is available for those veterans receiving ongoing payments under the War Pensions Scheme, as well as those receiving a Guaranteed Income Payment under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. He also confirms that applicants do not have to live in London to be eligible for the Veterans' Oyster photocard.

Furthermore, Mr Brown confirms that the Veterans' Oyster photocard scheme is used by around 8,000 veterans at present and to date they have not received any legal challenges regarding the Veterans' Oyster photocard from any groups representing the civilian disabled community.

These points made by TfL challenge the previous arguments made by the Scottish Government and Transport for Scotland, who have previously stated their opposition to the veteran's scheme due to cost and the potential for the scheme to be unfair to civilians with comparable disabilities who would not qualify.

The popularity of the Veterans' Oyster photocard and the lack of legal challenge demonstrates that the civilian population, including the disabled community, have no issue with the scheme as it currently operates and are happy for veterans to be in receipt of this subsidy. I think the people of our country realise that those who served in our armed forces need a little more help.

TfL have made a commitment to provide this service to all eligible veterans and they have shown how effectively the scheme can work. In order to alleviate the concerns of Transport for Scotland I would ask that the committee seek confirmation on the following from TfL in order that you may then test the robustness of the Scottish Government's position on the matter:

- What were the policy objectives that TfL was trying to address by bringing in the Veteran's Oyster Card?
- What was the financial modelling undertaken to support the Veteran's Oyster Card and has the implementation led to an increase in projected costs?
- Why did TfL agreed to open the scheme up to all UK Veterans rather than just those residing in London?
- Have they have encountered any legal policy challenges by the civilian disabled community?

London is dealing with large numbers of veterans and is both willing and able to support them. The evidence from TfL clearly shows the success of the scheme and I believe a similar scheme should be adopted in Scotland by changing the NCTS to include all war veterans that are in receipt of a war disablement pension. I understand this may not be possible until the NCTS is renewed in 2017, and believe that adoption of the same policy as TfL at this time would be a reasonable compromise for all parties.

As such I would encourage the Public Petition Committee to take forward my petition, to urge the Scottish Government to provide concessionary travel passes for all war veterans that are in receipt of a War Disablement Pension.

Your sincerely,

Alan Young