

Give commuters a tax break, Boris Johnson says

Rail and bus commuters should be given a tax break to cut the cost of their season tickets by hundreds of pounds a year, Boris Johnson has said.

By Steven Swinford, Senior Political Correspondent

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The Mayor of London said that commuters should be allowed to deduct the cost of their season ticket from their pre-tax income.

He called on Mr Osborne to adopt the policy to show support for the "hard-working people who are really turning the wheels of recovery".

In his Daily Telegraph column, Mr Johnson admitted that the Treasury would lose income, but said that the expense would be justified.

Mr Johnson said: "Yes, there would be a cost to the Treasury – but then every year the government spends huge sums trying to hold fares down. This scheme strikes me as one George should consider further.

"You would allow continued investment in transport, and you would target your help at exactly the people who need it – not the millionaires and the tourists and the casual shoppers, but the hardworking people who are really turning the wheels of recovery."

The cost of rail travel is likely to become an increasingly significant issue in the run up to the 2015 General Election, with all three parties are expected to pledge to reduce fares.

The cost of an average season ticket will rise by 4.1 per cent next year, the 11th year in a row that commuters will face above-inflation fare rises. Commuters in Brighton will have to pay £4,018 for their season ticket, a rise of £158.26.

Norman Baker, the Liberal Democrat transport minister, has said that the government would like to "end the era" of above inflation fare rises "as soon as possible".

Mr Johnson highlighted the example of London's buses, where almost 40 per cent of people – pensioners, children, veterans, the disabled and those in search of work – are entitled to travel free.

Mr Johnson said: "The result is that the entire burden of fare-paying is carried by the 60 per cent – and that includes the people who make this country work, the people on low or moderate incomes

who travel large distances every day and who to their places of employment and who have absolutely no choice in the matter. It is time we did something specifically to help them, and that something is to give tax relief on travel.”

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