



Report to: Full Authority  
 Date: 1 October 2024  
 Subject: Concessionary Travel  
 Author: Chief Executive  
 For: Decision

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**Introduction**

1. British Transport Police (BTP) have been pressing for a while for concessionary travel for officers and staff. Prior to the election, agreement was reached on a reasonable assessment of the costs of such a scheme. Department for Transport (DfT) have asked the British Transport Police Authority (BTPA) for a view on both the scope of any concessionary scheme and how the costs are to be accounted for. Rail Delivery Group (RDG) have expressed a willingness for the Board of Rail Staff Travel Ltd (RSTL) to consider a proposal once agreed by BTPA and the Force. This paper seeks decisions from Members so that a proposal can be put to RSTL this autumn.

**Issues to be Considered**

2. There are three sets of decisions to be made namely:
  - a. for which categories of employee should BTPA press for concessionary travel?
  - b. what level of concession should BTPA be pressing for (typically 75% or 100% discount)?
  - c. how should the potential lost income of each scheme be accounted for?
3. As a backdrop to these considerations, the table below summarises the likely costs (over and above what is currently provided) agreed by BTP and RDG earlier this year:

Staff Group	Travel to work	Leisure Travel	Travel on Duty	Totals
Officers and PCSOs	£174k	£634k		£807k
Specials		£55k		£55k
Staff	£2.3m	£295k	£166k	£2.76m

**Consideration**

4. To aid simplification, we have broken down the categories of BTPA employee into only two groups: Officers, PCSOs and Special Constables, and Police Staff (not including PCSOs).

## **Officers, PCSOs and Special Constables**

- a. Officers already benefit from free travel to work within 70 miles (in the former Network Southeast Area) or 8 miles elsewhere. They also benefit from a 75% discount for travel to work beyond those distances. Officers also have free leisure travel from Northern, Merseyrail and Transport for London (TfL) (TfL free leisure travel extends to some Police Staff too).
- b. We believe there is a strong case for Officers, PCSOs and Specials concessionary travel to be extended to cover all travel to work and leisure travel. This would be on the basis that they would be providing a service to the rail industry as they travel by virtue of their training and capability. This would be provided on production of a warrant card for police officers and Special Constables, or Identity Card for PCSOs, which they would be obliged to show to rail staff when travelling on or off-duty. When making use of this facility they would be fit for immediate operational duty as required. We know through rail staff surveys that the visibility and availability of warranted BTP officers and PCSOs is the most important factor in rail staff confidence, so this would be beneficial to boosting confidence in this area.
- c. Having more police officers and PCSOs travelling on the rail network would maximise opportunities for intervention and also create an informal neighbourhood policing environment. Officers and PCSOs would get to know staff and fellow passengers and take ownership of the environment when they travel. Many more incidents of disruption, anti-social behaviour and crime would be prevented or detected, leading to increased passenger and rail staff confidence, and reduced disruption.
- d. Although BTP's crime system does not have a facility for flagging the intervention of off-duty officers, a free text search shows that there are many crimes and incidents where an off-duty officer has intervened. These crimes cover a broad range of offences including staff assault, robbery and sexual assault. There will also be numerous occasions where an off-duty officer has intervened to de-escalate a situation or prevent a crime or incident occurring that will not have had to have been recorded. As well as making the railway generally a safer and more pleasant place to travel, this would also take demand away from BTP, allowing the force to respond to other incidents or carry out proactive reassurance.
- e. This proposal would have significant long-term benefits for maintaining officer and PCSO numbers across the network and supporting recruitment. The same would be true for Special Constables, if not more so.

### *Level of concession for officers, PCSOs and Special Constables*

- f. The typical discount across the rail industry is 75% off travel for different categories of employees. Informal discussions with rail industry leaders and with DfT have warned BTPA would need a strong justification for asking for a greater discount than 75% for any category of BTPA employees due to the potential impact on rail industrial relations. Nonetheless, we believe the additional benefit of having declared officers and PCSOs travelling is clear to all. They can use knowledge and training in resolving incidents to a far greater extent than a typical railway employee. Free travel for this group would not be a 'privilege' of being employed by the rail industry, rather it would be a device to make more declared police

assets available across the network. For that reason, our recommendation is we press for a 100% discount for this group on their leisure and other travel.

- g. In agreeing to this proposal, Members should note there may be some resistance within the industry and DfT to the notion of a 100% discount. Noting that to agree to a 75% discount only would require the additional administration of 'priv' tickets for officers by RSTL and would not result in officers and others needing to show their warrant cards as they travel.

*Accounting for free travel for officers, PCSOs and Special Constables*

- h. Free travel as proposed would result in £860k forgone revenue annually for the rail industry (£807k + £55k from the table above). The extra policing available via these officers etc showing their warrant/ID cards to access free travel is worth significantly more than £860k a year to the rail industry. £860k is approximately the cost of 13 full time officers for a year. For that same price, the industry would receive 3500 officers, PCSOs and Specials declaring themselves as they travelled throughout Great Britain. We should make a strong case to industry and DfT that no funds need to change hands to achieve this benefit. While some other police forces do make a contribution to the railway for free or subsidised travel for their officers, we should seek better terms for BTP officers on the basis of the extra utility to be had from BTP officers travelling on their own jurisdiction with their specialised knowledge.

**Police Staff**

- i. There is a strong view within BTP that we should also press for concessionary travel for police staff. This would be in respect of travel to work (which staff do not currently receive) and leisure travel. Concessionary travel would typically cover 75% of travel costs, in line with all other rail industry employees.
- j. Police staff perform vital roles within BTP to support the delivery of frontline policing, forensics, Scenes of Crime Officers, Dedicated Detention Officers, Armourers, victim and witness care and a range of other roles. Recruitment and retention of skilled and specialist roles is a challenge for BTP. Police staff pay has not been re-valorised since the current pay scales were introduced in 2010. Staff turnover is relatively high with an average of 15% across BTP in 2022-23 but with much higher levels in specialist departments and London. BTP is often competing with other organisations, in particular the rail sector, who offer better salary and benefits to their staff, often with free or subsidised travel being a major benefit, particularly those employed within the same railway sector. Were improved travel facilities made available to BTP police staff then this would significantly improve the benefits package BTP could offer, improving recruitment and retention and therefore the service provided to the travelling public, rail staff and the rail industry. As well as providing the benefits described above, adoption of measures for BTP police staff would have the added advantage of signalling that they are considered as much a part of the railway 'family' as other rail employees, and that DfT the RDG recognise the vital roles that they perform.

*Accounting for the potential lost income of concessionary travel for police staff*

- k. DfT have been clear that they expect BTPA to suggest a way in which to account for the foregone revenue from the proposal. They expect this to be agreed with RDG. Whereas, we have argued that there are strong reasons to push back against that in respect of the value

offered by officers, PCSOs and Special Constables travelling for free, there are different arguments in the case of concessionary travel for all police staff. DfT have stated that the industry will look to BTPA to contribute all or some of the funds, however the Chief Constable has had supportive discussions with the RDG Board and this was not raised as an issue and the view was that it would be dealt with in the same way as it currently is within the railway.

- l. The costs are estimated at £2.6m a year. (£2.76m less the £166k cost of staff work travel). Options for finding the money would include:
  - contributions from staff
  - cash saving efficiencies from BTP with the effect of lowering PSA charges to industry
  - increased charges to the industry.
  
- m. In the view of the BTPA Executive Team, it will be too much to ask the industry to support such a concessionary scheme and then ask for them to pay for it at the same time (via higher charges). That leaves two options (contributions from staff and/or reducing our charges commensurately). The BTPA Executive Team suggests these two options be left open as discussions with RSTL progress. BTP may, to the contrary, wish to press that the costs of this scheme be charged out to industry.

#### **Next Steps**

5. Should BTPA Members reach a settled position, the next step will be to take the proposal to RSTL and deal with any issues arising over the concept of this extension of concessionary travel, the groups of BTPA employees to be included, the levels of concession to be offered and how the financial impact is to be accounted for.
6. Should agreement be reached with RSTL, we would need clearance from DfT/His Majesty's Treasury but believe that would be relatively straightforward were we to present a united case from industry and BTPA.
7. We would then be left to resolve tax implications of the scheme we chose to implement. Our hope is that the concession for officers, PCSOs and Special Constables would be looked on favourably by HMRC as these employees would be providing a service to the rail industry by declaring themselves as they travel. For Police staff, this would look more clearly like a benefit in kind and need to be treated as per other rail employees for tax purposes.

#### **Recommendations**

8. Members are asked to agree that:
  - a. a proposal be put to RSTL for officers, PCSOs and Specials to be given free travel on the network on production of a warrant/ID card and that we argue that the £860k annual cost is more than met by the extra benefit delivered to the rail industry.

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- b. a proposal be put to RSTL for concessionary leisure and travel to work for police staff giving a 75% reduction. Costs to be met by either or both of staff contributions and a reduction in charges to industry.