

CPT warns of threat to local bus services in the South West

The Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT), the trade association that represents bus and coach operators, has warned the Department for Transport that unless it makes major changes to the draft concessionary fares reimbursement guidance, there will be a significant reduction in the provision of local bus services in the South West of England - the CPT states in a response to the consultation on the draft guidance that the proposed changes will pay so little for passengers on longer routes that bus operators will not find it economic to provide such services, unless there are a substantial number of fare-paying customers. The CPT considers that the draft guidance, if implemented, will seriously affect longer distance inter-urban routes and services in rural areas.

Public accounts committee criticises DfT failure to provide extra train capacity

The House of Commons public accounts committee has severely criticised the Department for Transport (DfT) for the failure to achieve any of the targets for providing extra capacity on trains. The committee stated that 'due to the missed targets, the already unacceptable levels of overcrowding on many train services will simply get worse and even more intolerable' The public accounts committee stated that the DfT had committed to providing more carriages and longer station platforms by March 2014, but had failed to even provide the capacity required to simply maintain overcrowding at existing levels. The committee considers that automatic passenger counting systems should be fitted to all trains and that all future rail franchises should have specific enforceable targets on the avoidance of overcrowding.

Transport select committee to investigate local bus services

The House of Commons transport select committee has launched an enquiry into the funding of local bus services in England (excepting Greater London), following the publication of the comprehensive spending review 2011-15 – the Committee will be focusing on the following specific issues:-

- i) the impact of the reduction in the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG)
- ii) the impact of the reduction of local authority financial support to local bus services
- iii) the impact of changes to the funding of local authority bus schemes and services by the Department for Transport (DfT)
- iv) the financial implications of 'free' off-peak travel for elderly and disabled people on nearly all local bus services in England
- v) how the views of passengers are taken into account in the planning of local bus services
- vi) the role of Passenger Focus in the provision and delivery of local bus services

The committee is seeking written evidence from bus users, operators, local authorities and other interested parties by Tuesday 4 January 2011.

Free upgrades for expectant women on South West Trains

Expectant mothers, who use standard class season tickets to travel on South West Trains services, will now benefit from a free upgrade to first class during the last five months of their pregnancy – the upgrade applies whenever standard class seating is not available and during both peak and off-peak periods.

People

Tony Clarke, a First Great Western train manager based at Exeter St Davids railway station, has retired after nearly fifty years service – Tony, the son of a train driver, started work as a junior porter at Exeter St Davids on 2 January 1961 at the age of fifteen.

And finally,

First Bristol has donated a number of FirstDay and FirstMonth bus tickets to the ‘Young Mums Project’ which is designed to incentivise teenage mothers to breastfeed their babies for longer – the free tickets will be given to those young mothers who reach specific breastfeeding milestones!