

Discussion Paper

TO:	Al Kingsley Members of the Employment and Skills Board	Chair – Employment and Skills Board
FROM:	Parminder Singh Garcha	Senior Responsible Officer -Adult Education
DATE:	19 October 2021	
TITLE:	Developing a Post 16 Travel Offer	

1. Purpose

- a) To seek the views of the Employment and Skills Board (ESB) for the design and implementation of a post-16 travel offer for young people aged 16-18.
- b) Views from members of the ESB will inform proposals for the co-design of the travel offer, being considered by the Combined Authority.

2. Background

During the Mayoral Election Campaign in April 2021, it was reported in the local press that Mayor Dr Nik Johnson had proposed the Combined Authority support a free travel offer for young people¹.

Over several years, Colleges in the region had highlighted their concerns and difficulties with public transport and students travelling to study and/or work or work-experience opportunities. This had culminated in colleges having to provide and fund dedicated coach services to get students into campus. The unintended consequence is that funding for teaching and learning is being used to provide transport.

A survey undertaken via the Combined Authority in July 2021, identified that £1.8m was spent by the colleges who responded on transport. Given the pressures on post-16 funding², the sustainability of the dedicated coach services provided by colleges is questionable. College Principals have escalated this serious concern to the County Council and to the Combined Authority, in its role as Transport Authority for the region.

Local councillors have also raised concerns about young people's choices being limited by inadequate travel options and therefore future career options being limited by transport issues.

3. Lessons from Other Combined Authority areas

- **Greater Manchester Combined Authority** have implemented "Our Pass"³ – this is a membership scheme for 16–18-year-olds and Care Leavers 19 - 22 who live in Greater

¹ <https://www.cambstimes.co.uk/news/nik-johnson-labour-candidate-mayoral-elections-7926074>

² The Association of Colleges reporting that Post 16 providers have received 30% real terms cut in their funding over the past decade, with the base-rate for 16-17 being frozen for a decade and funding for 18 year olds reduced.

³ <https://ourpass.co.uk/about-our-pass/>

Manchester. Those eligible have the chance to become a member and receive **free bus travel** across Greater Manchester. For a one-off £10 fee, members can travel on local buses, any day of the week, for free. Members also get half-price off-peak one day and weekend travelcards on Metrolink. Membership unlocks exclusive offers and experiences: discounts, special offers, free tickets, swimming and leisure passes, merchandise, taster sessions and more.

- **West Midlands Combined Authority** - provides a subsidised travel card scheme, 'SWIFT'⁴, for 16-18 year olds, getting cheaper travel to school, college or work with a 16-18 photocard. The photocard lets young people buy child-rate tickets - getting 50% off the adult rate.
- **West Of England Combined Authority** – are scoping a travel offer for young people aged 16-18 in their area – further details to be shared

4. Initial conversations with colleges

A focus group with colleges was held in September 2021 to understand the different transport solutions that are being provided, a consideration of risks and an opportunity to propose 'asks'. Colleges were enthusiastic about proposals for a 16-18 Travel Offer for young people being considered by the Combined Authority. They expressed that this would improve student choice and social mobility in the longer term. Some of the main points from the discussion were that:

- Three of the five colleges represented, ran their own dedicated bus services. One college reported that they provide a £400 subsidy per student towards the cost, which is a significant amount of funding for education being diverted into transport
- Not running these services would limit student choice, particularly in more rural areas.
- One college is reliant on public bus services and reported the inadequacies of current services. The college would welcome improved services during 'peak' times for students, given that many adult commuters would now be working from home
- One college raised concerns about the distances and times students had to travel and the impact this had on student's grades
- One college proposed that travel options that incorporated subsidies for train and bus would be preferential
- It was acknowledged that the rurality issues in this region compared to WMCA and GMCA added further complexity and a 'one-size' model may not work.

5. Emerging proposals

An options paper is being developed, following discussions with stakeholders and colleges. This needs to be considered in line with the Bus Improvement Plan, Transport Plan and on-going Bus Franchising discussions. The emerging thinking is that the Combined Authority could develop:

- A universal Travel Card for 16–18-year-olds in education, training, or employment. This could either be subsidised (like WMCA) or free (like GMCA)
- A targeted Travel Card for 16–18-year-old for specific groups of young people such as low-income, looked-after, care leavers etc.
- A voucher system administered by colleges, providing a central subsidy to colleges and training providers for running bus services and for public services

⁴ [Swift 16-18 Photocard | Transport for West Midlands \(tfwm.org.uk\)](https://www.tfwm.org.uk)

- Alongside the above - influencing bus operators to 're-configure' and improve services.

Cost modelling for Travel Cards and a Voucher System is underway to test affordability.

6. Care Leavers aged 19-22

A Care Leavers Bursary⁵ for those attending CPCA funded courses was introduced in September 2022. A means-tested Travel Offer for Care Leavers aged 19-22 attending CPCA courses is also being developed. Outcomes for Care Leavers in the region are lower than the national average. In 2019/20, less care leavers continued in education, employment or training across Cambridgeshire (44%) and Peterborough (43%) compared to the England average (51%) [source: DfE]

7. Conversations with employers

While the conversations with colleges have provided a rich input into our proposals, the views and experiences of employers would help to provide a deeper perspective for 16–18-year-olds in the workplace, such as apprentices and traineeships. This will help shape our recommendations.

- Do ESB members have a view on travel to work for young people in the Combined Authority area?
- What are the barriers from an employer perspective? For example, are you unable to recruit young people due to travel?
- Are there other issues that the Combined Authority needs to consider when developing proposals for a 16-18 travel offer?

⁵ The Care Leavers Bursary provides up to £1200 for Care Leavers in the care of Cambridgeshire County Council or Peterborough City Council, on-roll on a CPCA funded course.