

Consultation

on proposed changes
to transport



- Home to school transport for students at faith and voluntary aided schools
- Transport for students aged 16+
- Home to school transport to academies
- Home to school transport for students who change address during GCSE studies
- Concessionary travel



Budget pressures

Leicestershire County Council is facing a number of challenges. The funding we receive from national Government is reducing. At the same time demand for services, such as care for older people and waste disposal, is expected to go up.

We also have to deal with the impact of schools locally moving to academy status and coming out of council control. Because the Government will transfer funding from the council's budget to support the new academies, we have to deal with this additional implication of losing further significant funding.

All of this means we have to save more. Our financial plan has been rolled forward a year and now includes a total of £74 million in savings for the next four years. This is on top of the £24 million that we already achieved during 2011/12.

We are now looking at how we can achieve additional savings. In making decisions, we must target our resources at those with the greatest need. We will be undertaking an Equalities Impact Assessment on these proposals.

Your views

Last year we carried out extensive consultation on our four year financial plan.

Our budget plans for this year reflect what residents told us, and have been amended to take into account extra budget pressures that have arisen over the last 12 months.

We are now asking for your views about the detail of the council's proposals to make changes to the provision of transport. We hope to save £1.37m through changes to transport in the next four years.

About home to school transport

Leicestershire County Council has a duty to ensure that every child in the county has access to a school place.

Most parents send their children to the school in their catchment area, or to the nearest school. We normally provide free transport for Primary School children who live two miles or more from their school and for Secondary School children who live three miles away or more.

For children from families on low income, the distance is two miles or more, whether the children are primary or secondary school age. Families on low income are those in receipt of Working Tax Credit at the maximum level for the case or where the child is eligible for free school meals.



16+ transport

Students who continue in full time education, which is more than 16 hours per week, currently receive subsidised transport to their nearest college if it is over three miles from their home.

Around 4,500 students currently contribute £240 per year towards their travel. The full cost of providing each seat is £429 per year. Leicestershire County Council currently pays a

subsidy of £189 per seat, per year. This costs us £850,000 per year.

The council is considering withdrawing the subsidy for students aged 16+ and no longer providing transport, or charging the full cost.

This change would not apply to students aged 16+ with special educational needs.

Transport to faith and voluntary aided schools

For many years we have given help when children attend their nearest church school on denominational grounds. Currently, transport for some pupils is subsidised and for others it is free.

Students currently contribute £240 per year towards their travel. The full cost of providing each seat is £490 per year. Leicestershire County Council currently pays a subsidy of £250 per seat, per year for around 1,000 pupils. This costs us £250,000 per year.

Leicestershire County Council has a duty to take into account the wishes of parents on the grounds of religion or belief, but there is no duty to provide free or subsidised transport (except for children from qualifying low income families).

The council is considering withdrawing the subsidy for transport to faith and voluntary aided schools and no longer providing transport, or charging the full cost.

Students who change address during GCSE studies

Currently, if a student changes address when they are studying for GCSEs, Leicestershire County Council will continue to provide free transport to their existing school to minimise disruption for the student.

The council is considering withdrawing the facility, meaning that in these circumstances parents would have to make their own transport arrangements.



Schools with academy status

Once a school gains academy status, the rules about providing transport to catchment schools no longer apply, because the academies will decide their own admissions policy.

The council therefore has to make some decisions about which students will be offered free or subsidised transport.

To keep broadly in line with current policy and when a student's existing school converts to an academy, we are proposing to offer free transport to:

- Children of Primary School age who live more than two miles away to the nearest available academy or community school.
- Children of Secondary School age who live more than three miles away to the nearest available academy or community school.

There are some other things to consider:

- The nearest available school may still be the academy, but if there are no places available at that academy, it could be another academy or community school.
- We could choose only to apply the new policy to those students starting primary or secondary school, so that students already in primary or secondary education retain their current entitlement to free transport until age 11, 14 or 16 respectively.
- In some cases, students will be travelling to their existing school but, because of the change in catchment rules, they would not be entitled to free transport. This would therefore be likely to increase the cost of school transport provision. We are considering whether to make a charge of £300 per student per school year for primary age students and £400 for secondary age students.
- Farepaying rates per place per academic year, for students not entitled to free or subsidised transport, would in future reflect the average full cost of providing a place.

We are seeking your views on whether you think our proposed policy is appropriate, and whether or not we should make concessions for students until they next change schools.



About concessionary travel

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme entitles both qualifying older residents and disabled residents to free travel on local bus services between 9.30am and 11.00pm Monday to Friday and at any time at weekends and bank holidays.

Leicestershire County Council currently offers the following *additional* concessions:

- Free travel for disabled people before 9.30am and after 11.00pm on Monday to Friday
- Free travel after 11.00pm on Monday to Friday for older people.
- Vouchers, worth £33 per year, for disabled people who cannot use conventional bus services and for older people who live over 800 metres from an hourly bus.
- Half fare on Community Transport services (such as dial-a-ride and social car schemes).

Around 120,000 residents hold an older person's bus pass, and a further 8,500 hold a disabled person's bus pass.

The council is considering the withdrawal of these extra elements of the Leicestershire concessionary travel scheme.

Have your say

We would like to take into account the views of residents and partners in developing our final proposals.

Deadline for responses:
2nd April 2012

Please [Click here](#) to complete our online feedback form, or request a hard copy of the form:
tel 0116 305 0001 or
email stg@leics.gov.uk

What happens next?

Following the consultation period, responses to the survey will be considered by the Cabinet on 8th May 2012.

The outcomes of the consultation will be published on the website in April 2012.