

Carers of some under-22 bus pass holders should get free travel councillor argues

Free bus travel should be offered to carers and companions of some under-22 bus pass holders, an Edinburgh councillor has argued.

Kayleigh O'Neill, Green councillor for the Forth ward, hopes that it can make travel easier for some under-22s who find it difficult to travel by bus on their own.

She said: "I know that a barrier for some children in using their bus pass is the need to travel with a carer, for example a parent or guardian and that cost can be problematic.

"One family in Pilton told me about their children who are both autistic and need to travel with their mum or aunty to feel regulated and safe on public transport.

"They are really pleased that the children can get on for free to school, medical appointments and social activities but the tickets to travel with them creates a big dent in their finances.

"They used to have a car but struggled to keep up with payments and now rely on public transport.

"The idea would be that an under-22 pass user will have the option to apply for a "+1" to be added to their card like the companion and Disabled National Entitlement Card.

"It would be fantastic to further level the playing field when

it comes to accessing public transport, especially for those already struggling with costs of living and mobility.”

Cllr O'Neill, who said that Lothian Buses and Edinburgh Trams are already familiar with such a scheme, having introduced something similar to it for the disability National Entitlement Card.

The disability National Entitlement Card provides people with certain disability-related benefits, or who meet other criteria with free bus travel.

And, for those who are sight impaired, receive higher rates of certain benefits or get certain levels of War Pension, they are entitled to bring a carer or companion.

Under that scheme, the carer or companion does not have to be a specific named person. Instead, it can be anyone accompanying the card holder.

Cllr O'Neill said that this was a model she would want to see emulated with an under-22 bus pass carers and companions scheme.

By Joseph Sullivan Local Democracy Reporter