

# Progress in bid to expand free bus travel to carers

**Edinburgh Council will explore getting Scottish Government support to expand free bus travel to carers and companions of under-22 bus pass holders.**

A council motion at Thursday's Transport and Environment Committee Meeting called for carers and companions to be included under the bus pass scheme, in order to help families where children struggle to travel independently.

And councillors could look at funding the scheme themselves if there is no support from the Scottish Government.

The motion was put forward by Kayleigh O'Neill, Green councillor for the Forth ward, who previously 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."

The motion was passed, with an amendment to it requiring that transport convener, Labour councillor Stephen Jenkinson, write to Holyrood transport minister Fiona Hyslop to ask that carers and companions are added to the under-22 bus pass where pass holders require it.

No eligibility criteria were included in the motion, but it has been suggested that a doctor's note or some other proof of need could be used.

After the meeting Cllr O'Neill told the Local Democracy

Reporting Service: "I'm really pleased – we got cross party support. Every single party agreed that this is for people that genuinely should have more support.

"Wherever in the city you are, or whatever background you have, being able to take your kid on the bus and teach them about independent or active travel is really good for people's purses and the planet."

At present, young people can choose whether to apply for the under-22 bus pass or the disability National Entitlement Card (NEC), however the motion said that the disability NEC could be difficult to apply for due to the level of proof required.

The Scottish Government's response will be discussed at the next meeting of the Transport and Environment Committee after it is received.

If the response is not positive, the council could still explore funding carer and companion free bus travel on its own.

By Joseph Sullivan Local Democracy Reporter