

WHY CAN'T MORE HAVE CHEAPER BUS FARES?

(for immediate release)

BUS OPERATOR NATIONAL EXPRESS WEST MIDLANDS have been urged to give more users cheaper fares. Whilst welcoming the introduction of a “low fare zone” in the Sandwell and Dudley, West Midlands Campaign for Better Transport point out that its design means bus users in Bearwood, Great Barr and Smethwick travelling into Sandwell and Dudley will not benefit and still have to pay more¹.

WMCBT have also called on National Express West Midlands to consider a restructure of travelcards for users in Birmingham. Passengers living in the Black Country and Coventry can buy area travelcards, for use only on services running in those areas. Brummie bus users however have to buy a regional travelcard covering services in Birmingham, the Black Country, Coventry and Solihull, even if they only use routes within Birmingham². This does not seem particularly “fare”.

In an article in a local newspaper³, a National Express West Midlands claimed that:

“Bus travel patterns are different in different parts of the West Midlands.

“Data and feedback from our customers in the southern part of the Black Country tell us they don't always go into the same town, but travel to the various different towns. The journeys also tend to be shorter than in other parts of the region.

“So we wanted to make it easier for our Black Country passengers to 'pay local to stay local' and visit local shops and attractions using the bus.”

Kevin Chapman of West Midlands Campaign for Better Transport said he was **“Pleased that National Express West Midlands had launched the low fare zone, but it throws up a number of issues.”**

“Rather than the boundary in the Sandwell area being that of the council area, NXWM have decided it will be the M5 which cuts right through the middle of Sandwell. The result is that someone travelling from Wednesbury, Great Bridge or Rowley Regis into West Bromwich can benefit from the cheap fares whilst a passenger travelling from Bearwood, Smethwick or Great Barr to West Bromwich cannot. That does not seem right and someone with the special ticket, thinking they could use it across Sandwell could end up out of pocket with a £35 penalty fare!”

“It is also time there was a travelcard for Birmingham services only. The technology is there with the Swift smartcard and mobile apps on which lots of different products can be included. There are plenty of Brummie bus passengers who never set foot in the Black Country.”

¹ <http://nxbus.co.uk/paylocal>

² <http://nxbus.co.uk/west-midlands/tickets-prices/operating-area>

³ <http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/national-express-west-midlands-reduce-12623288>

“The low fare zone is a start. NXWM should be giving everyone in its operating area lots of fare deals and a wider ticket range. By doing that they would be boosting patronage and ultimately revenue”.

“If NXWM won’t review the system, perhaps the incoming Mayor might use the new powers available to them to force a fare deal for West Midlands bus users”.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Campaign for Better Transport is an organisation promoting the development of sustainable transport, including improved public transport services.
2. Powers for Metro Mayors to take more control of bus services in their areas are contained in the “Bus Services Bill”, currently going through Parliament and which should be on the statute book by the time they take office in May.
3. **For more information contact Kevin Chapman on (07746) 748349 or (01922) 629257.**