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Dear Dr Lloyd

Passenger Focus response to LCO (Transport) consultation

Passenger Focus, the independent consumer watchdog for Great Britain, welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the proposed National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence)(Transport)Order 2010.

The order relates to two distinct areas of transport policy. The proposals for the first of these, the learner travel element, relate to road vehicle safety, and, hence, fall outside our remit to represent rail passengers in Wales. That said, we would add that Passenger Focus is a member of several key rail safety bodies including the Railway Industry Advisory Committee (RIAC), the RSSB's Safety Advisory Body and the British Transport Police Authority. We will continue to represent the interests of passengers in Wales, including learners, through these forums.

Also in relation to learner travel, Passenger Focus has welcomed the introduction of the codes of behaviour that were introduced under the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. Although these have been largely oriented towards travel on school buses, such codes have been introduced on Arriva Train Wales (ATW) services that carry significant numbers of school students. Passenger Focus regularly measures passenger satisfaction with safety and security through the National Passenger Survey (NPS) with the latest results (Spring 2009) for ATW showing scores of 79% for safety/security on the train and 59% on the station. Our research has shown that anti-social behaviour is the biggest safety and security concern for passengers, so the learner behaviour codes will hopefully contribute to an improvement in these scores.

The second element of the proposed Order relates to concessionary travel. We welcome the fact that the scope of the proposed legislation includes rail travel. We have been involved with the evaluation of the rail pilot scheme, with our research finding a very high degree of passenger support for this initiative. While the scheme has been welcomed by passengers, it is also important to recognise that there have been some problems due to a lack of sufficient train capacity. This has resulted not only in overcrowding on some train journeys, but has also meant that the scheme had to be implemented for different periods on different lines and that, in



addition, some individual services have been excluded. This has caused some confusion and feelings of inequity among the target group. Passenger Focus's view is that where concessionary rail schemes are introduced, they should provide the same level of entitlement to all beneficiaries.

We note that the proposals would limit concessionary rail travel to those services within Wales operated under the franchise agreement managed by the Welsh Assembly. While recognising the need to consider financial implications of a concessionary rail travel scheme, our view is that this requirement may unnecessarily restrict the scheme by excluding the potential contribution of other franchised train operating companies (TOCs) operating within Wales as well as open access operators. Enabling these additional operators to participate in any schemes would increase the flexibility available to meet the needs of not only passengers, but also government. We note that widening the scope in this way is within the powers delegated to the National Assembly for Wales under the Railways Act 2005. This enables the Assembly Government to give financial assistance to any organisation for the purpose of developing Welsh Railways.

Finally, as it is relevant to both learner travel and concessionary travel, we would like to outline Passenger Focus's view for learner travel for students aged 16-19 years. Rail passengers between the ages of 5 and 15 are eligible for child-fares – currently set at half the adult fare. However, on turning 16, a full adult fare is payable irrespective of whether the person is still at school. Passenger Focus has long had concerns at this and took the opportunity to raise it in our response to the UK parliament's Transport Committee's 2007 inquiry *Ticketing on Public Transport*¹. We believe that all full-time pupils and students in the 16 to 19 age band should have affordable access between their homes and places of education, regardless of the length of journey, family income, or the number of local authority boundaries crossed to make that journey.

Given the National Assembly's interest in learner travel and concessionary travel, we trust that this is an issue that it may be able to examine in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Pickering
Passenger Link Manager (Wales)

²Passenger Focus: *Memorandum to the Transport Committee – Ticketing on Public Transport*, February 2007: para. 5.2.