

John Halligan TD, Minister of State with responsibility for Skills & Innovation,
Statement on the Review of the Concessionary Charges and Rules Element of the
School Transport Scheme

The Programme for Government committed to this review of the concessionary charges and rules element of the School Transport Scheme prior to Budget 2017. Pending this review, there was no planned programme of downsizing school buses in the current school year. There were route changes and variations in line with normal operational decisions that occur from year to year, and any impacts in terms of increases or decreases of available places nationally was marginal, in line with what occurs every year.

This review has been submitted to me and I have decided upon consideration of the review to continue with the current position regarding charges for concessionary transport. This decision is for the reasons outlined in the review and on the basis that those applying for concessionary transport are making a conscious decision to do so and understand the implications of this choice at the time of application.

Furthermore the detailed position with regard to the concessionary rules for school transport is clearly outlined in this review. Following consideration of this review and discussions with the Cross Party Group that I established to feed into the review process I have decided that there should be no planned programme of downsizing in the coming years except in line with normal operational decisions of the current scheme.

I have received a number of submissions from the Cross Party Group and I have reviewed these as part of this process. While a number of the submissions cannot be progressed because of the policy implications and the resultant impact on the budget of the scheme there are a number of areas where I have asked for a further examination to be made:

- Options on instances where errors occur in categorisation of eligibility
- Process around the refund of charges paid in cases where a ticket does not issue
- Options on the implementation of the minimum numbers required for the retention a service
- Review of the guidelines for the School Transport Appeals Board
- Options to improve customer service.

Ends