

## **D Beamish – Written Evidence (LBC0102)**

ALL PENSIONERS ARE EQUAL BUT SOME ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS  
– CONCESSIONARY FARES POINTS ABOUT THE RAIL ANOMALY

1. Pensioners (64+) living outside Greater London only have free 'bus travel, whereas Greater London over 60s have in addition free rail/underground/DLR/tram travel all over London (and to some stations outside – Swanley, Dartford, five stations to Epping and at least three to Watford) every day the trains are running. Regarding free travel from age 60 (not just from the women's pension age which rises every few months) in 2012 Boris Johnson said: "Hard-working people who have done the right thing and paid their taxes in expectation of free travel on retirement are right to be annoyed at those who seek to take that away." Aren't pensioners who live outside London hard-working people who have paid their taxes, too? Are Chislehurst pensioners more in need of free rail travel than Swanley pensioners? What about those who have been unemployed?

2. The mere presence of people on stations and in trains helps prevent vandalism and graffiti, both expensive to correct.

3. The hidden costs of climate change, asthma from pollution needing treatment, traffic congestion, road accidents, staff time analysing traffic figures, building new roads etc. should be weighed up with regard to free rail travel.

4. There is evidence that going out and about and feeling valued means less depression and less social and health problems, which would more than counteract any "cost" of free rail travel.

5. As travelling by 'bus as opposed to by train takes about three times as long, pensioners occupy seats on 'buses for three times as long as they would on trains, thus depriving paying 'bus passengers of seats for longer.

6. Pensioners outside London are likely to have to travel more and further e.g. with post offices and local shops closing.

7. The trains are running anyway and, apart from Zone 1 underground trains, with plenty of spare capacity. Twenty pensioners on a train are not noticeable, but twenty pensioners in twenty vehicles = a traffic jam. Concessionary fares are the cheaper option.

8. Greater London over 60s can go out on a cold day, not having to heat their homes, by train to central London, in normal times to go to a free museum or art gallery – pensioners who live outside London would struggle by 'bus to reach central London and return the same day (and waiting for 'buses is likely to be in a more exposed position than waiting for a train).

9. No account is taken of those pensioners living outside London who had railway season tickets when working and thus contributed to the income of the railways. London over 60s have free rail travel even if they have not previously contributed to the income of the railways.

10. In London the Freedom Passes are talked of as a lifeline for the over 60s, but to allow pensioners outside London free local rail travel is regarded as very expensive. Isn't it expensive in London, then? The comparable council tax in London boroughs (except Richmond and Kingston) is lower than Sevenoaks. London is given higher grants for social reasons, but instead the money is spent on vote-winning over 60s' free rail travel. A pensioner is the same person whether living in Eltham or Eynsford, but is not treated the same when travelling by rail.

### COMPROMISE

Free daily travel is not necessary. There should be a compromise of 100 days per annum of free countrywide local rail/'bus travel for all pensioners, no matter where they live. This would help pensioners who live outside London and would also demonstrate to those who feel that pensioners have not had to cut back that in fact they are cutting back.

This discrimination by place of residence has not been thought through thoroughly. The whole issue has never been explained in rational terms.

TIMELINE OF FARE CONCESSIONS FOR GREATER LONDON PENSIONERS:  
1973 free 'bus travel after 9.30 a.m. for women over 60 and men over 65.  
1983 free underground train travel added.  
1.4.1995 free former British Rail (now National Rail) train travel added.  
DLR and tram services added free for pensioners as they were built.  
1.4.2003 Men had free travel from age 60.  
2.1.2009 free travel for over 60s 24 hours, seven days a week on all Transport for London services (National Rail services remain not free until after 9.30 a.m. Mondays to Fridays).  
(From April 2010 the statutory free 'bus travel has been at the women's pension age, which rises regularly.)  
1.11.2012 free travel (via the Mayor's budget) within London for those aged 60 (not just from women's pension age as elsewhere in the country).

IN UTTER CONTRAST, timeline of statutory fare concessions in England for pensioners living outside Greater London:  
1.4.2006 free local 'bus travel after 9.30 a.m. within defined local area.  
1.4.2008 free 'bus travel after 9.30 a.m. throughout England.

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