

Dear Sirs,

Let me preface my observations and queries by pointing out that I retired from teaching over five years ago. I am living in the inner west. Having reached pension age several years ago I realized that:

- Without a car, I would be dependent on public transport.
- I live in an area with good access to both bus and ferry transport.
- As a pensioner I could use public transport with the pensioner discount, Gold Opal card.
- As a pensioner, running a car was no longer financially viable.

For the above reasons, and also for the environmentally correct action of taking my car off of the road, my wife and I have used public transport for nearly five years.

I now find that you are recommending increasing fares for both my wife and I by a significant percentage - 40%. Given that we use only public transport, your fare rise is a substantial financial blow for us.

1. In your Section 1.4 you state that you were asked to, "consider whether current concession arrangements support optimal use of the network." You then conclude that a 40% rise in fares, "will support optimal use of the network." Your conclusion is illogical. Your fare increases for Gold Card users will decrease the number of pensioners using public transport and it will decrease the number of trips pensioners will take, neither of which can be deemed "optimal" in the normal understanding of the term. Your actions will not lead to support of the network, but the opposite.

2. In your section at 2.8 you state that, "linking the Gold Card fare changes to other fare changes could improve the efficiency and fairness of fares." I worry about 'waffling' words like "could". The world "could" end tomorrow, but I'd like a bit more evidence than simply "could". In addition, your logic is questionable, e.g. you link 'fare increases' to "efficiency". Efficiency for whom? Is it your financial "efficiency" that you are concerned about, rather than the fairness of a 40% rise in fares for pensioners? Your "efficiency" seems to be an economic argument, not in a social fairness consideration. You correctly point out that Gold Cards are not "means tested". Is that our fault? Is that the fault of all of the pensioners on low incomes? Or is the failure to means test the Gold Card the failure of politicians? The latter, I think you would admit. If you lifted the access of the Gold Card from the age of 60 years to say 65 then all of those people who are still working and earning high incomes in their early 60's would be denied the access you seem to think is unfair. I fail to see why you did not argue to raise the age access (fair), rather than raising the rates for poorer pensioners (unfair).

3. In your Section 3.2 you argue that, "socially optimal fares encourage efficient use of public transport." Your language is sloppy at best and disingenuous at worst. Reducing patronage is not "optimal" and "efficiency" is not simply about raking in more money from those who can least afford it, i.e. pensioners.

4. Finally, I have read a number of articles in the media pointing out that your actions will lead to the increasing social isolation of pensioners, i.e. those who are struggling financially and who are older. Your 40% fare increases, according to many observers and social commentators will hurt those older people who need the support of society. Your actions thus seem an age punitive action that is based on an ethos that considers the economy more important than the society. Society should come before economy, in my opinion.

Thank you for your consideration.

Michael Davis