Stagecoach Gives Jobseekers Hope With Discounted Bus Travel Scheme

Thursday 5 September, 2013

50% travel discount on Stagecoach local bus services across UK
Nearly 20,000 journeys a month being made under ground-breaking initiative
Young people in England, Scotland and Wales benefitting from scheme
Transport Minister Norman Baker welcomes Stagecoach commitment

Stagecoach, one of the UK's biggest bus operators, today (5 September 2013) confirmed it was making permanent its ground-breaking discounted bus travel scheme for jobseekers.

The company launched the country's first long-term nationwide initiative as a six-month pilot in February 2013, giving thousands of job seekers across the UK a 50% discount on their bus travel to help them find employment.

New figures show jobseekers are making nearly 20,000 discounted bus journeys a month under the scheme, which is funded entirely on a commercial basis by Stagecoach without any public sector support.

The biggest use of the Stagecoach initiative has been in Scotland, where there are more than 3,000 trips a month, followed by the East Midlands, with around 2,700. More than 1,400 trips a month are being made by those seeking work in Wales.

Holders of a Jobcentreplus Travel Discount Card qualify for half-price single and return tickets on Stagecoach's 6,500 buses in the UK outside London. Stagecoach is already part of a Transport for London scheme which offers reduced bus, tram and train travel rates for jobseekers in the capital. More than 800,000 people who are out of work and claiming benefits currently qualify for a Jobcentreplus Travel Discount Card.

The boost for jobseekers comes after the latest figures released by the Office of National Statistics earlier this month show that UK unemployment remained unchanged at 7.8% with 2.51 million people without a job.

However, the number of young people who were unemployed rose by 15,000 in the period for April to June 2013, compared to the previous three months. It means the unemployment rate for those aged 16-24 is 21.4%.

Bus travel is the most popular mode of transport used by Britain's commuters, with 5.2 billion bus journeys in the UK each year. Stagecoach has twice been independently assessed as offering the lowest fares of any major bus operator in the UK.

Martin Griffiths, Stagecoach Group Chief Executive, said: "Buses are crucial in connecting people with employment and that is one reason why we have always been focused on making travel affordable.

"Youth unemployment remains a major issue for our country, with one in five 16 to 24-year-olds out of work. Tens of thousands of jobseekers have benefitted from our initiative and we hope that making the scheme permanent will help improve the chances of many more young people getting their first job or training place."

Transport Minister Norman Baker said: "Buses play an important role in boosting economic growth by helping people get to job interviews and get into work.

"This is good news and I am really pleased to see Stagecoach supporting job seekers during these tough economic times - I encourage other bus operators to do the same. Young people have a vital role to play in the future of the local bus industry and our economic recovery."

JobCentre PlusTravel Discount Cards are available through JobCentre Plus. Those eligible include people claiming Jobseekers' Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Employment and Support Allowance or Income Support and actively engaged with a Jobcentre Plus adviser in returning to employment.

Around 25% of households do not have access to a car and are completely reliant on the bus for many of

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their essential journeys. Buses are a major contributor to regional economies, helping connect people to jobs, leisure and the High Street as well as to education and training.

Research last year by the Institute for Transport Studies (ITS) at the University of Leeds found buses contribute £64 billion to the British economy every year. The study revealed 1 in 10 bus commuters would be forced to look for another job if they could no longer commute by bus. An estimated 400,000 people are in work or in a better job because of the availability of a bus service, according to the report.

Full details of the Stagecoach jobseekers discounted travel initiative are available at http://www.stagecoachbus.com/bkonboard.aspx

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Bus fares

Stagecoach has twice been independently assessed as offering the lowest fares of any major bus operator in the UK. The research was carried out by independent transport consultants TAS in 2009 and 2011. The 2011 study found weekly bus travel with Stagecoach was on average 17.5% cheaper than other bus operators and the difference could save passengers an average of nearly £150 a year. TAS analysed nearly 1,100 fares across different regions, area types and operators for its National Fares Survey 2011. The research covered Stagecoach, First, Go Ahead, Veolia Transdev, National Express, Arriva, independent operators, and municipal bus companies.

Stagecoach Group

Stagecoach Group is a leading international public transport group, with extensive operations in the UK, United States and Canada. The Group employs around 35,000 people, and operates bus, coach, train, and tram services. Stagecoach is one of UK's biggest bus and coach operators with around 8,000 buses and coaches. Around 2.5 million passengers travel on Stagecoach's buses every day on a network stretching from south-west England to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. The Group's business includes major city bus operations in London, Liverpool, Newcastle, Hull, Manchester, Oxford, Sheffield and Cambridge. Low-cost coach service, megabus.com, operates between around 60 towns and cities across the UK. Stagecoach is a major UK rail operator, running the South West Trains, Island Line and East Midlands Trains networks. It has a 49% shareholding in Virgin Rail Group, which operates the West Coast inter-city rail franchise. Stagecoach also operates the Supertram light rail network in Sheffield. In North America, Stagecoach operates around 2,900 buses and coaches in the United States and Canada. Megabus.com links around 130 key locations in North America. Stagecoach is also involved in operating commuter and transit services, contracted bus services, charters, sightseeing tours and a small number of school bus services.

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