



**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Minister Cullen - Over 40,000 Older People Avail of All-Ireland Free Travel Scheme Cards**

Minister for Social and Family Affairs, **Martin Cullen TD**, today (Tuesday 1 April 2008) welcomed confirmation that over 40,000 older people resident in the State have received Senior Smartpass cards in the first year of the **all-Ireland Free Travel Scheme**.

The all-Ireland Free Travel Scheme for seniors resident in all parts of the island, was introduced on foot of a commitment in the previous *Programme for Government* (2002-2007). The scheme enables seniors (over 66) resident in the Republic to travel free of charge on all bus and rail services in Northern Ireland (NI). Likewise, seniors (over 65) in NI can travel free of charge on bus, rail and ferry services participating in the Free Travel scheme in this State.

Speaking on the **eve of the first anniversary** of the scheme's 2007 launch, **Minister Martin Cullen TD said**: "This All-Ireland Free Travel initiative has opened up limitless travel opportunities for older people all over the island. To date, some 40,000 southern seniors have applied to the Department of Social and Family Affairs for their all-Ireland free travel pass which effectively provides this concession to travel without charge all over the island." Minister Martin Cullen TD added: "This scheme is delivering a very practical benefit to older residents on the island both North and South and I would encourage those eligible for the card to make use of this special all-island arrangement facilitating unrestricted free travel for older people."



## **Department of Social and Family Affairs**

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Also commenting today, **Chairman of CIE, Dr John Lynch** said: "The CIE group of companies are delighted with the success of the Department of Social and Family Affairs all-Ireland free travel facility, since its introduction last April. With even better trains and buses and ever increasing frequency there has never been a better time to avail of public transport."

The cost of operating the all-Ireland Free Travel scheme in 2007 amounted to some €360,000 and provision has been made for funding of up to €1 million in 2008.

### **Editor's note:**

Those wishing to apply for the all-Ireland Free Travel Scheme card may do so by requesting a form from the Department of Social and Family Affairs:

- LoCall line 1890 20 23 25 open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Or at a Social Welfare Local Office (details of which are listed on the green pages of the phone directory and also on the Department's website)

[www.welfare.ie/contact/index](http://www.welfare.ie/contact/index)

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