

Transport Scotland submission of 21 June 2023

PE1930/J: Ensure customers are always given information on cheapest possible fare in new Scotrail contract

Thank you for your letter of 19 May requesting information on a number of areas relating to future rail contracts.

Transport Scotland officials have provided an update on the following areas, attached as Appendix A to this letter:

1. advice it has received from the National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board
2. the anticipated timetable for the public consultation on the Draft Vision for Public Transport referred to in [the previous response to the Committee dated 25 January 2023](#)
3. what action the Scottish Government is taking to address issues of digital exclusion when purchasing rail tickets

I hope this information is helpful.

Appendix A

1. Advice it has received from the National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board

The National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board (NSTAB) is not yet established, and as such no advice has been issued. Secondary legislation on the establishment of NSTAB came into force in May 2023, and therefore we are now in a position to appoint members to the board. We anticipate the board to be operational by the end of 2023. The secondary legislation states that the board must publish any advice it provides to the Scottish Ministers, and any recommendations it makes to the Scottish Ministers, in such manner as it considers appropriate.

2. The anticipated timetable for the public consultation on the Draft Vision for Public Transport referred to in the previous response to the Committee dated 25 January 2023

The First Minister's Policy Prospectus, "Equality, Opportunity, Community: New leadership – A fresh start", published on 18 April 2023, sets out our commitment to make our public transport system more accessible, available, and affordable, with the costs of transport more fairly shared across government, business, and society. In launching his Policy Prospectus, the First Minister confirmed that as part of the Fair Fares Review, a Pathfinder Pilot scheme will be introduced for six months from October 2023 to remove peak rail fares from ScotRail services. This will make rail a more attractive proposition for travellers and support modal shift from car. It will also provide us with an opportunity to test new fares structures in response to the changes in travel patterns that have emerged since the onset of the Covid pandemic.

It is vital that the Fair Fares Review is informed by the most robust and up-to-date evidence therefore the Fair Fares Review's conclusions will now be published at the end of 2023 in order to take into account emerging findings from this Pathfinder Pilot. The Review advice will recommend a package of measures which can be considered for implementation from 2024-25 and onwards. These will provide opportunities to address the wider issues for the cost and availability of public transport services across all modes of public transport.

We will commence our public engagement on the Fair Fares Review and our Vision for the Future of Public Transport later this summer and this will help inform the findings of the review.

3. What action the Scottish Government is taking to address issues of digital exclusion when purchasing rail tickets

The Scottish Government is not currently planning to remove paper rail tickets. Paper tickets have recently been updated and now incorporate a QR code which can be scanned to validate the ticket. In April 2023, smart uptake was 32.9% (Smartcard 5.8%, m-tickets 27.1%) and so still a majority of users are using paper ticketing. As such, the removal of paper tickets would not be appropriate.

Super Off Peak Day Returns are only available as mobile “m-tickets” or on the smartcard, and Flexipass tickets are only available on the smartcard. Smartcards can be obtained free of charge online or via a paper form.

As technology and customer expectations evolve, any development of smart ticketing would be designed to enhance the passenger experience and supplement existing means of ticketing and payment. At the required time, an Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken to understand the impact of any new ticketing systems so passengers without access to digital technology are not disadvantaged and continue to be supported.

In terms of purchasing tickets without digital access, ticket offices and ticket vending machines (TVMs) continue to be vital. 39% of stations have a ticket office and 58% of stations have TVMs. At stations without these facilities passengers can purchase a ticket on the train. Opening hours for ticket offices in Scotland have largely remained unchanged in more than 30 years, with all key information captured in Schedule 17 of the Ticket and Settling Agreement which applies to all Train Operating Companies within the United Kingdom.

ScotRail conducted a comprehensive review of ticket offices using the relevant guidance on changes to ticket office operating hours, using data from 2019 which represented a period not impacted by the COVID pandemic (and the associated fall in customer numbers). Transport Focus ran a consultation (on behalf of ScotRail) in early 2022 to offer passengers and stakeholders the opportunity to comment on proposed ticket office opening hours. ScotRail accepted the recommendations that Transport Focus presented, and a briefing was presented to the previous Minister for Transport offering options to implement the proposals, this is still under review.