Action Plan for Information on Rail Fares & Ticketing

Department for Transport

Which?

Rail Delivery Group

National Rail

BRITAIN RUNS ON RAIL

transportfocus

ORR OFFICE OF RAIL AND ROAD

Foreword by Paul Maynard MP, Rail Minister

The Government has a clear mission to put the needs of the travelling public first, to improve the passenger experience.

That is why the Secretary of State has established a special project team, under senior leadership, to work with the industry and accelerate progress towards smart ticketing for both commuters and passengers that travel less frequently. We want to see real results for passengers in the next two years.

We also recognise that the fares system is complicated and hard to navigate, and the impact this has on people's trust in the railway.

This action plan sets out clear and agreed steps between Government, industry and consumer groups that will help passengers find and choose the best ticket for their journey. Alongside this plan there are many other steps being taken to improve the passenger experience, including accessibility and during periods of disruption.

This is a first step to improving the passenger experience of fares and ticketing, and there remains more to be done. The Department for Transport will continue to work with the industry to explore what further improvements can be made to simplify fares, including for upcoming franchise competitions, and exploring options for reform of existing regulations.

Action Plan

The Department for Transport (DfT), Rail Delivery Group (RDG), Which? and Transport Focus have worked together to identify actions that will improve fares and ticketing for passengers.

We have worked closely with the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to utilise their experience and expertise, and have also commissioned input from train companies, consumer groups and passenger representatives, technology firms, and ticket retailers.

Working together we have developed a set of stretching actions to drive real improvement for passengers in the next 12 months, organised in the following themes:

How you choose your ticket

We will take steps to improve the information passengers are offered so they can make an informed choice of ticket.

What you buy

We will enable innovative new ticket products to emerge in the retail market and ensure customers always get a simple explanation of their chosen ticket.

Where you buy your ticket

We will increase and improve the scope of where and the ways passengers can buy tickets.

How you buy your ticket

We will improve the process of buying a ticket to make it as simple as possible.

Successfully delivering on these actions should mean that we are able to build passenger trust in the railways and confidence in choosing the best ticket for their journey.

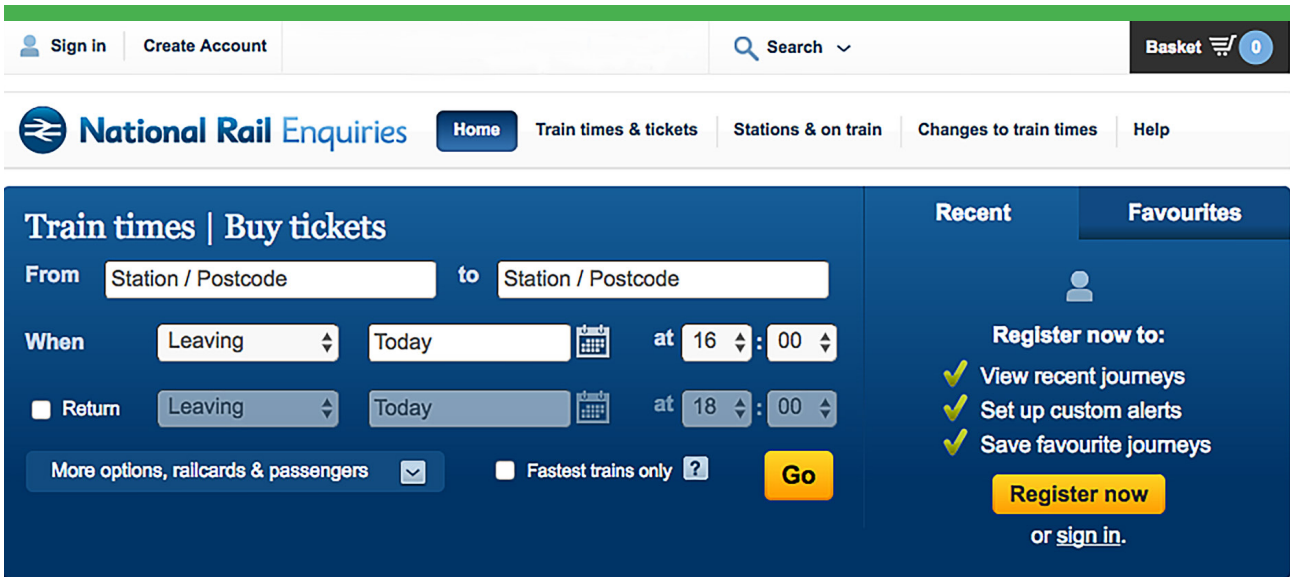
A working group will review progress against these actions on a monthly basis. We will publish an interim report on delivery against this plan in the ORR's Annual Consumer Report in July 2017, and will publish a final report in December 2017.

How you choose your ticket

What will we do for customers?	How will it happen?	Timescale	Owner
We will use less jargon on Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs), websites and tickets, and include easily available information to explain terminology.	We will provide clear names for tickets and definitions that passengers understand. We will remove terms such as "Any Permitted" and "London Terminals" except where they actively help customers understand a tickets validity and in such cases that they are properly explained. We will develop an online ticket restrictions look-up tool for customers.	First changes to be implemented from May 2017 and all actions to be complete by end-2017	RDG & train operating companies
Train operators will make information available to inform customers when Advance tickets for long distance operators are running low to ensure that customers don't miss out on the best price if there are only a few left.	Customers will be informed when there are fewer than nine Advance tickets available at a certain price.	April 2017	RDG & train operating companies
When purchasing a ticket, customers will be told if they could get a cheaper ticket by changing the time of travel.	All retailers to include options for finding the cheapest fare for online/app ticket purchases by May 2017. TVMs will tell customers when they are configured to sell off-peak tickets so that the customer will know that by waiting (e.g. in 15 minutes) they can purchase a cheaper ticket or by going to the ticket office.	May 2017	RDG & train operating companies

What you buy

What will we do for customers?	How will it happen?	Timescale	Owner
Online customers will get a plain English explanation of the ticket they have chosen before making final payment.	National Rail Enquiries will provide a link directly to the industry "What can I do with my ticket?" tool. Ticket retailers will embed this service in their online ticket purchase process.	August 2017	RDG & train operating companies
Customers will be able to purchase cheaper Advance tickets on the day of travel from longer distance operators (currently only possible for CrossCountry customers).	This will be available from six train companies and the rail industry will ensure that sale and use of Advance tickets is managed so that customers making last minute reservations do not impact on customers already using the booked service.	Adoption by four further train operating companies (TransPennine Express, Northern, Virgin Trains East Coast and Virgin Trains West Coast) by April 2017. East Midland Trains will adopt this by September 2017	RDG, train operating companies & DfT
The industry will run a small number of pilots, which can be quickly put in place, to test some key strategic principles that could form the basis of fares reform.	The pilots will be designed to address simplicity of information and clear value fares for the customer. The pilots will be monitored and assessed by the DfT, industry, and passenger and consumer groups.	May 2017	RDG & DfT



Where to buy your ticket

What will we do for customers?	How will it happen?	Timescale	Owner
We will provide better and more targeted information to website and app developers to enable them to develop new products and services for consumers. This information includes timetable and fares data and live running information.	The rail industry will ensure that more raw data is available to third party developers (e.g. retailers, CityMapper) so that they can create better and consistent consumer-facing products (e.g. information on how busy trains are, and on performance of individual routes). The industry will engage with other third parties to publicise this opportunity.	December 2017	RDG
We will take steps to open up the ticket retail market, enabling third party retailers to play a greater role, and removing barriers to entry for new market entrants. This should lead to increased competition, and better outcomes for consumers.	RDG to reform its governance, including implementing a new process for consulting third party retailers on decisions that will impact them. RDG will develop a transparent process to share board meeting outputs with third party retailers. Third party retailers will have access to all permanent fares and the data underpinning them. There will be improved oversight to ensure "temporary" fares meet existing regulations. DfT, RDG and recent market entrants will work together to identify regulatory changes to simplify framework and reduce barriers to entry for new entrants.	June 2017	DfT & RDG

How to buy your ticket

What will we do for customers?	How will it happen?	Timescale	Owner
Customers should have access to a clear and understandable choice of tickets when buying from vending machines, including information on relevant cheaper options that could be bought by waiting a short time or travelling on a different service.	RDG will produce a transparent roadmap of current capability to identify what can be done in the short term. This will include delivery of the 10 Point Plan which will make cheaper options clearer, and will include clearer information on when a ticket can be used. DfT and RDG will collaborate on a strategy to ensure a consistent high quality customer experience of TVMs, including the role of the TVM Design Guidelines and consider whether these contain principles which should form the basis for obligations in future franchise agreements.	July 2017	RDG, train operating companies, & DfT
Train operator websites will be reviewed against existing industry code of practice to ensure that they are fully compliant in meeting the required standards for customers.	ORR will carry out an audit of train company websites for compliance with the existing industry code of practice. The ORR will publish its findings together with any required action by train operating companies.	March 2017	ORR
Train operator websites will be monitored by the RDG, and best practice will be promoted to all train operating companies.	RDG will monitor train operating companies websites on an on-going basis and take steps to promote best practice.	Quarterly	RDG
Customers will have access to all relevant terms and conditions in a simple to understand format when choosing and buying ticket.	As well as clear access to relevant terms and conditions during the buying process retailers will have access to and signpost where to find any additional information. We will engage with passenger groups / focus groups to ensure these are understandable and accessible.	June 2017	RDG & DfT

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How to buy your ticket continued...

What will we do for customers?	How will it happen?	Timescale	Owner
Where a customer holding a valid Railcard forgets it at the time of travel, they will on the first occasion be able to claim back any additional expense, including the cost of any extra fare and any penalty fare issued.	In a similar manner as for when a Season Ticket left at home, customers will be able to provide proof of their Railcard online, by post or at the ticket office of the train company that they travelled with in order to obtain a refund or cancellation of additional charge, including the cost of any extra fare and any penalty fare issued.	February 2017	RDG
We will work with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) to assess what we can do to improve the experience for disabled and vulnerable passengers and build awareness of passenger rights, acting on research from Transport Focus, ORR and DfT, including through the franchising process.	We will build the evidence base (ORR, Transport Focus and DfT research is underway) and engage with passenger groups. DfT will use this as a case study for assessing how franchising can be used as a tool to drive change.	December 2017	DfT

Long Term Vision

The actions above should deliver some quick changes for passengers, but there is much more to be done to drive further simplification of the fares system, and to support the longer-term move to smarter ticketing. Through increased simplification and improved transparency, we will deliver the right fares and ticketing structure for passengers.

The DfT is committed to working with industry partners to explore what can be done to provide a clear, fair and consistent fares structure for passengers, which could include simplifying commuter fares. We will also explore options for moving to single-leg pricing for longer distance journeys, which would make it easier for passengers to get good value tickets when travelling at peak and off-peak times. These changes will take time to deliver, and we will seek to deliver any reforms through the franchising programme.

The complexity of the current fares system has developed over time, and it will take time to undo this in a way that doesn't carry significant costs for passengers or taxpayers. Any changes to the fares structure must strike a balance between protecting passengers from possible market abuse, allowing train operators scope for innovation, and managing possible cost pressures on the taxpayer.

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