

Fares and ticketing – information and complexity

June 2012



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Foreword

1. In March 2012 the government launched its command paper *Reforming our railways; putting the customer first*. This sets out its vision for British railways, and – as the title suggests – puts customers at the heart of reform. It is absolutely right that this should be the case. After all, the network was created to serve customers' needs – and there would be no rail industry without them.

2. As part of rail reform, the paper promises that Government will step away more and more from the daily detail – and instead ORR will be asked to look more closely at how customers' interests can be protected and promoted in future. Of course, this needs to be done in a balanced way that also serves the taxpayer's interests and gives the industry the space and incentives it needs to provide a good service.

3. Ticketing information and complexity is a classic example of where ORR is working hard with industry to improve the passenger experience. Our research shows that travellers are often confused and frustrated with the lack of available information about rail tickets – where and when to get the cheapest fares, how to get hold of them, and what the options are.

4. The inability to do this can create the impression that somehow the industry is 'unfair' and that people are not getting a good deal. Our research speaks for itself. Over 50% of passengers surveyed online agreed that 'it is a bit of a lottery as to whether you find the best price for a rail journey or not' and 45% said that the system is too complicated for them to understand, while 41% had previously purchased a ticket and later found out they could have made the journey on a cheaper ticket.

5. The answer lies in greater transparency, so the travelling public understands fully what an excellent value for money service our railways can provide. In an age of information technology, the demand for such knowledge has never been greater – while the excuses for not providing it grow increasingly thin. Customers need to know what choices are available to them.

6. I am therefore extremely pleased with the progress ORR has made with the Association of Train Operating Companies to grasp the nettle and I welcome the exciting range of initiatives set out in this report for raising the industry's game and making sure it is responding to customer demand.

7. For example, we will be encouraging train operating companies to make sure customers have more online information, can access the cheapest fares, are aware of alternative routes, understand the restrictions, and demystify the jargon around their product offer. We will also be asking them to explore how ticket vending machines can become more user-friendly and how ticket-collection can be made easier. Some train companies already provide the ability for passengers to print off their tickets at home, receive tickets on their mobile phones or collect their pre-paid tickets from dedicated Ticket on Departure



machines, just like they do when they fly. If other industries can do it and make it work, so should the rail industry.

8. It is an exciting time. A time for working together productively to promote the rail industry, making our customers aware of what's on offer – and making it as easy as possible for them to get it. I look forward to us making major strides ahead.

Anna Walker
ORR Chair

Executive summary

1. It is important that passengers have the information they need to make informed decisions when buying train tickets.

2. This is because it enables them to choose the right ticket and get the best deal for their journey and to make the most of their ticket.

3. Where passengers do not have the information they need, they can end up paying more than is necessary or find themselves being penalised for having the wrong ticket. Lack of clarity or certainty that they are getting the right ticket can also undermine their confidence and trust in the railways and their willingness to travel by rail.

4. While ORR is not responsible for setting the level of fares or deciding on the fares structure, as the regulator for the railways we want to see improvements in the experience of passengers. As an enforcer of consumer law we also want to ensure that passengers have the information they need to make informed decisions and are not misled.

5. This report highlights a number of areas where we have found that passengers have problems understanding or accessing information about the tickets they are buying. These include:

- Off-Peak tickets – a lack of understanding about when ‘off-peak’ is, and when they are permitted to travel;
- Advance tickets – a lack of understanding of their conditions, availability & benefits; and
- Ticket Vending Machines – concerns over choosing the most appropriate ticket and having confidence that the right ticket had been purchased.

6. For example, we found that 41% of those surveyed online said that they had previously purchased a ticket and later found out that they could have made the journey on a cheaper ticket. Lack of awareness of the peak and off-peak times was a key driver for this, with 5% of on-train interviewees travelling on an Anytime ticket saying that they could have travelled or were travelling off-peak but had not realised it would have been cheaper to have bought an Off-Peak ticket. Likewise, 70% of on-train interviewees were unaware that they could only travel on the specified train on an Advance ticket.

7. The response to our work from the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) recognises the problems we have identified and accepts that inadequate information is sometimes provided during and after the sales process. It also sets out a plan of initiatives aimed at addressing these problems, which is outlined later in this report and included in full in the attached Annex.

8. ATOC’s response also recognises that the passenger rail industry is composed of many individual entities (not just train companies but also third party retailers, systems’ suppliers and so on) and the benefits that competition can bring to the retailing market, driving innovation and providing choice to consumers.

9. The programme of initiatives proposed by ATOC and the train companies is not therefore prescriptive in setting uniform approaches to the provision of fares information or retailing of fares. Instead it seeks to ensure that the data provided to retailers and suppliers is accurate and useable; that where there are specified deliverables (printed tickets for instance) these are used to provide clear and relevant information; and that best practice is either embodied within the industry accreditation process or is disseminated, with suppliers and retailers strongly encouraged to adopt it.

10. We welcome the engagement we have had from ATOC and the train companies and the plans they have put in place.

11. It is likely that the retailing environment for train tickets will evolve over the coming years, with new products and retailing modes coming on line. In developing these, and in implementing solutions to current problems, it is important that they are properly tested with passengers, including the vulnerable, to ensure that they deliver the desired improvements.

12. We will continue to work with ATOC, individual train companies, and passenger bodies over the coming months to understand the extent to which the initiatives which ATOC and train companies have put in place will address the problems we have identified, to monitor their delivery and to consider what other action might be necessary.

13. While we hope that the initiatives outlined above will deliver improvements for passengers, we will take action to enforce consumer law if we find evidence that individual train companies are failing their passengers with regard to the information they provide.

14. Although we are not formally consulting on the work set out in this report, we would also welcome views, including from passengers, passenger and consumer bodies and train companies, on the issues raised in this report, the programme of initiatives that the industry has put in place and, indeed, whether there are other issues we should consider. Any such views would be welcome by the end of July 2012.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report presents the findings of the work we have been doing to examine the problems passengers have with the information that is provided to them in relation to fares and tickets, such as the restrictions that apply, and to understand how this impacts on their behaviour and perceptions of the fares and ticketing system.

1.2 Chapter 2 provides some background and context to our work sets out some of the areas where passengers have demonstrated particular difficulty understanding or accessing information about fares and tickets, such as:

- Peak/Off-Peak split – there is a lack of understanding about when ‘off-peak’ is and when passengers are permitted to travel;
- Advance tickets – there is a lack of understanding of their conditions, availability and benefits; and
- Ticket Vending Machines – there are concerns over choosing the most appropriate ticket and having confidence the right ticket has been purchased.

1.3 Chapter 3 describes how this difficulty can impact on passengers’ behaviour and their perceptions of the railways. For example, it can lead to them not getting the best deal or buying a more expensive ticket than they might require (buying an Anytime ticket instead of an Off-Peak ticket when travelling off-peak, or buying a walk-up ticket instead of buying an Advance ticket, even when they know their plans ahead of their journey and such tickets would have been available).

1.4 In responding to our work, the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) together with the train companies have accepted that some of the information provided to passengers is inadequate and recognise the need to make improvements. ATOC and the train companies had already developed a series of initiatives to address passenger concerns, and in response to our work, have drawn them together into an overall programme.

1.5 We welcome this positive response, which is outlined in Chapter 4 and attached in full at Annex A to this report.

2. What do passengers find complex?

2.1 Historically, there have been a number of reasons why passengers have found the system of fares and ticketing complicated or confusing. These include:

- the range of tickets available;
- the various restrictions that apply to ticket types and the transparency or availability of information about these restrictions; and/or
- what can sometime perceived as an irrational or counter intuitive fares structure.

2.2 Train companies sought to address the first of these, the confusing range of tickets available, through a programme of 'fares simplification' in 2008¹.

2.3 Implemented in two stages, in May and September 2008, rail fares (singles and returns, standard and first class), were grouped into three categories: Anytime; Off-peak; and Advance.

2.4 From 18 May 2008, all advance purchase fares (which previously covered a wide range of names including Leisure Advance, Business Advance, Value Advance, Super Advance, Apex, etc.), became known simply as **Advance**² and have common terms and conditions³. These include:

- tickets are valid ONLY on the date and train service(s) shown on the ticket(s);
- tickets may only be used on the services of the Train Company (or geographic route where applicable) shown next to 'Route' on the ticket;
- if the route is prefixed with a +, the ticket includes the cost of travelling across London on London Underground, Docklands Light Railway or First Capital Connect (Thameslink Route) services as appropriate to the journey;
- you may not start, break and resume, or end your journey at any intermediate station except to change to/from connecting trains as shown on the ticket(s) or other valid travel itinerary;
- your ticket is non-refundable; and
- if the train you purchased a ticket for is cancelled or delayed by more than 60 minutes, special arrangements will be made to accommodate you on another train (although a seat cannot be guaranteed). If, as a result, you decide not to travel, a refund will be offered on completely unused tickets and you will not be charged an administration fee.

¹ <http://www.atoc.org/media-centre/previous-press-releases/atoc-announces-simpler-rail-fares-100120>

² http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/times_fares/advance.html

³ http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/times_fares/advance_conditions.html

2.5 From 7 September 2008, 'walk-up' fares (i.e. tickets that passengers do not have to buy in advance) were grouped into two categories, Anytime and Off-Peak:

- **Anytime** fares (previously open singles and returns) can be purchased right up to the day and time of travel and used on any train without peak hour or any other restrictions;
- **Off-peak** tickets (previously Saver and Cheap Day Returns) are cheaper fares for traveling during periods when train services are generally less busy. They can be bought at any time, right up until the time of departure but they carry restrictions on the time or day of travel. In addition, where there are two Off-Peak fares, the cheaper fares are called Super Off-Peak (previously Super Saver tickets).

2.6 Given the work that the train companies have already undertaken to simplify the range of ticket types presented to passengers, and that this new structure is still relatively new, we did not focus in this work on the range of ticket types presented to passengers.

2.7 Nor did we focus, for the reasons set out below, on perceptions of irrationality or unfairness, such as the fact that a single ticket sometimes costs only slightly less than a return or that a longer distance journey is sometimes cheaper than a shorter distance one.

2.8 Such issues have previously been explored by Passenger Focus and are being considered as part of the Department for Transport's current consultation of fares and ticketing.

2.9 Instead, we focused on the information that is provided to passengers about tickets.

2.10 The reason for doing this is that this is the area which sits most closely with our role as an enforcer of consumer law⁴, which requires that companies provide consumers with the information they need to make informed purchasing decisions.

2.11 While passengers may not always understand, or may disagree with, the way in which fares are set, it is the information about how tickets can be used that is key to them being able to decide which ticket to buy.

2.12 Our work was conducted in two stages, the first of which involved a review of publicly available studies and reports covering ticket complexity issues⁵, after which we sought additional input from train companies and passenger bodies to fill the gaps and help us refine the scope of our work.

2.13 Having identified a number of areas where passengers' appeared to struggle, the second stage of our work was to commission our own research with the aim of better understanding why passengers find things complex and how this impacts on their behaviour and perceptions.

2.14 The results of this research, which were discussed at an industry workshop in October 2011, are published in full alongside this report⁶.

2.15 The research identified a number of areas where passengers have difficulties fully understanding the products and choices available to them. Not unsurprisingly, there is more confusion around those products with the most restrictions – such as Off-Peak tickets, but it has shown that there is some confusion or lack

⁴ See ORR's guidance on enforcing consumer law in services relating to the railways, http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/upload/pdf/guidance_on_our_consumer_law_role_310310.pdf

⁵ Such as those published by Passenger Focus and Which?

⁶ <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/upload/pdf/spaft-ticketing-passenger-perceptions.pdf>

of understanding about aspects of Advance fares as well. It also found that this confusion or lack of understanding was compounded when buying tickets at ticket vending machines.

Off-Peak restrictions

2.16 As mentioned above, one particular area of confusion for passengers relates to Off-Peak tickets.

2.17 Advance fares are valid on specific trains and have common terms and conditions and Anytime fares can be used on any train without peak or other restrictions. However, the restrictions attached to Off-Peak fares vary between train companies (and sometimes also between routes operated by the same train company), most significantly in terms of the time at which they are valid.

2.18 This is because, where fares are regulated, train companies can define the peak times for their services within a certain window. This window might be any time from the start of the morning service through to 10.30, with an additional afternoon/evening peak in some cases between 15.00 and 19.00.

2.19 Within these windows, or where fares are unregulated, train companies are free to set the peak on a commercial basis. For example, one train company might decide to set its peak times between 6.30 and 9.30, with no afternoon/evening peak, while another might set its peak times between 7.00 and 9.00, with an afternoon/evening peak between 16.00 and 18.30.

2.20 During our initial research, we asked train companies a number of questions relating to the time restrictions they apply and the basis on which they decide what time restrictions to apply.

2.21 According to the responses we received, when setting peak times train companies take account a number of factors, including:

- demand;
- capacity;
- timetable;
- requirements of regulation;
- interaction with other train companies/systems; and
- historical restrictions.

2.22 One way of reducing this complexity could be to harmonise off-peak restrictions across the network so that off-peak times are the same across all train companies and all routes. Although ORR is not responsible for fares regulation, we were interested to understand the issues and therefore asked train companies what they would see as the main advantages and disadvantages of such an approach.

2.23 The general view from the responses we received from train companies was that this would create a whole new set of problems for passengers, while at the same time reducing the industry's ability to respond to the market. For example, it could prevent market segmentation, increase crowding in some areas, lead to the introduction of unnecessarily restricted travel in other areas (e.g. in rural areas), and restrict competition, such disadvantages outweighing any benefits.

2.24 Additionally, the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) told us that while there are some uniform restrictions (notably around London/South East), full harmonisation is not a practical possibility

(and would work to the disadvantage of many passengers and train companies) but it accepted that "there may be opportunities to improve further the provision of information about Off-Peak restrictions to passengers."

2.25 Passenger Focus also recognised difficulties with harmonisation (e.g. that one size fits all may still be restrictive for some passengers) but said that its work also indicated that, "much more could be done to make information available" (particularly on the internet and at TVMs).

2.26 According to National Rail Enquiries⁷:

"The trains that you can catch and the times that you can travel with an Off-Peak ticket vary considerably depending on the journey being made, the day/date of travel and the train company that you are traveling with."

and:

"...these tickets may require you to travel at specific times of day, days of the week or on a specific route... ...The travel restrictions for your Off-Peak ticket will depend on the journey you are making and will be advised when you buy your ticket."⁸

2.27 However, our work found that while most passengers have a broad understanding of the concept of peak and off-peak services, specific time restrictions are less well known, and this is compounded by a lack of understanding of whether restrictions are based on the times trains depart a particular station or arrive at their terminus, and whether an afternoon or evening peak applies.

2.28 Only 26% of all those interviewed in our study were confident what the off-peak times were.

Other restrictions and validities

2.29 In addition to the difficulties arising from the availability and understanding of information about off-peak restrictions, concerns have also been expressed about the way in which information about other restrictions is communicated to passengers, such as:

- the route which may be used;
- the train company which may be used;
- or the ability to break a journey (to get on and off a train at a mid-point in the journey).

2.30 During our initial research we asked train companies what information concerning restrictions and validities they provide to customers and how they satisfy themselves that the information is accessible and easy to understand.

2.31 The responses from the train companies and ATOC indicate that, at least on the face of it, information regarding restrictions is provided at all points of sale, but it was accepted that, as with information about off-peak restrictions, there is room for improvement in terms of the level of information that is provided, the way in which information is provided and the clarity of information.

⁷ National Rail Enquiries is part of the Association of Train Operating Companies

⁸ http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/times_fares/offpeak.html

2.32 ATOC told us that various initiatives have already been undertaken at a national level to provide better information for customers, for example:

- National Rail Enquiries has introduced a series of improvements to its website, including:
 - a new ‘get to know your ticket’ facility providing information on each of the principal types of ticket in straightforward language;
 - only displaying fares that are valid for the journey selected by the customer and showing the cheapest fare in each case;
 - providing information on ticket restrictions at all relevant points during enquiries;
 - including fares’ information or providing an appropriate hyperlink on all pages where fares are displayed; and a possible further enhancement, that would allow a customer to see which other train services their chosen fare is valid for without undertaking further journey plans, is also being investigated.
- ATOC has also launched a new ‘Guide to Tickets’, which provides “comprehensive information on the range of tickets offered by train companies as well as a high level summary of passenger rights under the National Rail Conditions of Carriage and other legislation. This leaflet is now racked at all staffed stations...” (it is also available online⁹ on ATOC’s ‘Best Value Fares’ site¹⁰)

2.33 However, problems remain. Route descriptions such as ‘Any Permitted’ or ‘London Terminals’ are not in themselves immediately clear as to their meaning and what is permissible, making it difficult for passengers to properly understand what the ticket they are buying allows.

2.34 Likewise, the absence of clear information about break of journey restrictions can also be an issue. The National Rail Conditions of Carriage state that:

*“You may start, or break and resume, a journey (in either direction in the case of a return ticket) at any intermediate station, as long as the ticket you hold is valid for the trains you want to use. You may also end your journey (in either direction in the case of a return ticket) before the destination shown on the ticket. However, **these rights may not apply to some types of tickets for which a break of journey is prohibited, in which case the Ticket Seller must make this clear when you buy your ticket.**”¹¹*

2.35 While passengers can phone National Rail Enquiries (08457 48 49 50) to find out whether their ticket allows them to break their journey, the lack of clear information about this, particularly at ticket vending machines, can again make it difficult for passengers to properly understand what the ticket they are buying allows.

Ticket vending machines

2.36 Many of the problems highlighted above are exacerbated at ticket vending machines (TVMs). While additional, more detailed, information can be sought from and provided by staff at ticket offices, or even on websites, the information provided at TVMs is still inadequate in many instances.

⁹ <http://www.bestvaluefares.co.uk/guide-to-tickets.aspx>

¹⁰ <http://www.bestvaluefares.co.uk/>

¹¹ Condition 16, http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/times_fares/nrcc/

2.37 In its report on TVMs¹², Passenger Focus found that:

*“one of the key barriers to using TVMs was one of confidence. Even some passengers who were used to buying tickets through a TVM experienced difficulty when asked to find the correct ticket for an unfamiliar journey, especially when this was complex or expensive. **The main cause of this confusion was linked to questions over the validity of ticket types and the restrictions that apply.** Unlike buying tickets from staff or online, TVMs were often unable to provide the precise information or reassurance needed by the passenger. This potentially results in passengers buying the more expensive ticket, utilising a ‘better safe than sorry’ mentality, or taking a chance on the cheaper ticket and ‘hoping for the best’.”*

2.38 We asked train companies what information their TVMs provide to customers regarding the restrictions that apply to their ticket, whether their TVMs indicate that further information is available from other sources, and what types of ticket are not available from their TVMs.

2.39 With regard to the tickets offered by TVMs, the general view from train companies was that TVMs are most appropriate for buying tickets for the most simple or common journeys. For example, train companies told us that:

“TVMs are best suited to selling a limited range of frequently bought tickets, most of which are bought by customers who a) know what they want and b) are familiar with the railway environment.”

and,

“the primary purpose of the TVM is to allow customers to collect pre-paid tickets and to provide additional retail capacity for those purchasing walk up tickets for immediate travel.”

2.40 While they sell, at least by volume, the vast majority of the same tickets that are sold by ticket offices (for example, Anytime and Off-Peak singles and returns), there are some tickets that are not available from TVMs. These include:

- Advance purchase tickets (which require a reservation to be made which is a facility not offered by TVMs);
- Season tickets of greater than one week duration (which must be issued with a photocard and require a record to be maintained);
- Rovers (tickets that allow unlimited travel throughout a specified area for a set period of time);
- Group save (where three or four adults can travel for the price of just two);
- Tickets for travel on future dates and from any destination other than ‘here’ (are not available as TVMs are for walk-up fares only);
- New types of tickets created by other TOCs.

2.41 Another area where concerns have been expressed about TVMs is that they are not particularly easy to use. Passenger Focus has highlighted a number of problems in this regard, including:

- Screen Layout – one of the barriers to use is the way information is presented – the sheer volume of information at times was felt to be overwhelming and difficult to decode;

¹² <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document-search/document.asp?dsid=4460>

- Programme Sequence – Passenger Focus research found that more needed to be done to ease the passenger through the process of selecting and purchasing the correct ticket. There was a sense of the passenger rather than the machine having to do all the work to find the most appropriate ticket. When buying from a ticket office for instance, the clerk will ask some basic questions (about destination, day and time of travel and, where appropriate, about the choice of route/operator) and then offer the passenger a narrowed down range of options. In essence the ticket clerk navigates the passenger through the decision-making process. With TVMs on the other hand, passengers are left to work things out on their own;
- Information – even passengers who were used to buying tickets through a TVM sometimes experienced difficulty when asked to find the correct ticket for an unfamiliar journey, especially when this was complex or expensive. The main cause of this confusion was linked to questions over the validity of ticket types and the restrictions that apply. Unlike buying tickets from staff or online, TVMs were often unable to provide the precise information or reassurance needed by the passenger.

2.42 Many of these issues were borne out by our own study, which found, for example, that, while passengers felt that TVMs were a reasonable means of buying tickets where they knew had a good idea in advance what they wanted, they assumed a degree of prior knowledge and were easier to use by those with a very good understanding of fares structures and ticket terminology.

2.43 As mentioned above, the use of route descriptions and validities such as ‘Any Permitted’ or ‘London terminals’, or descriptors that sometimes appear on Off-Peak tickets, such as ‘Time restrictions apply’, without any additional information are meaningless to many passengers and prevent them making a fully informed decision when buying a ticket in such circumstances.

2.44 Which? has also found ticketing vending machines to be confusing and unclear¹³ and this is also highlighted in the Department for Transport’s current consultation on its fares and ticketing review and in its Command Paper on reforming the railways, which recognises the need for “a more user-friendly ticketing system that communicates fares information to passengers in a straightforward way, so that they can confidently select the most appropriate fare for their journey.”

Advance fares

2.45 The work we commissioned also highlighted issues around passengers’ understanding of Advance tickets, particularly in relation to their availability and restrictions on their use.

2.46 Advance tickets are tickets which, as their name implies are bought in advance (up to twelve weeks before the date of the journey). However, there can be some confusion here because the other ticket types, Anytime and Off-Peak, can also be bought in advance. The difference is that Anytime and Off-Peak tickets can also be bought on the day of travel, whereas Advance tickets cannot be.

2.47 Advance tickets are limited in the quantity in which they are offered (which is a commercial matter or the train company) and can offer significant savings (possibly up to 88%¹⁴) over walk-up fares but because of this they tend to sell out quickly.

2.48 Despite this, our study found that some passengers were not aware of the savings that can be made by buying these tickets and they did not know how far in advance it was best to buy. For example:

¹³ <http://www.which.co.uk/news/2012/01/train-station-ticket-machines-confusing-customers-277029/>

¹⁴ See Which? article, ‘Rail passengers ‘missing out’ on ticket discounts’, 4 May 2011, <http://www.which.co.uk/news/2011/05/rail-passengers-missing-out-on-ticket-discounts-252644/>

- Around 25% of on-train interviewees who knew of their journey in advance but did not buy tickets ahead of travelling did not know tickets were likely to be cheaper if bought in advance; and
- 7% of online interviewees expected ticket bought two months in advance to be the same price as tickets bought on the day of travel.

2.49 This is supported in an article by the consumer body Which?, which reports that “49% routinely miss out on the significant discounts they could make by booking in advance.”¹⁵

2.50 However, there is a trade-off between flexibility and price when buying Advance tickets. While Anytime tickets can be used to travel at any time, and Off-Peak tickets can be used to travel at any time within a more narrow window, Advance tickets are train-specific. That is, they are only valid on the specific train, and between the specific start and end points for which they are booked.

2.51 Our study found that there are issues with passengers’ awareness of the restrictions attached to Advance tickets, For example, it found that:

- Of all rail passengers interviewed on-train, 70% were unaware that you can only travel on the specified train on an Advance ticket;
- Even among those travelling on an Advance ticket, 37% of those interviewed did not realise that if they missed their train and travelled on a later train, they would normally have to buy a new ticket; and
- 64% of those who bought Advance tickets were not aware that they had to get off the train at the station named on the ticket.

¹⁵ See article at footnote 14

3. How does complexity impact on passengers?

3.1 Lack of clarity or uncertainty arising from poor quality of, or lack of access to, information can make it difficult for passengers to make informed decisions when buying tickets. This can impact on passengers in a number of ways.

3.2 It can lead to passengers not getting the best deal, buying a more expensive ticket than they might require. For example, buying an Anytime ticket instead of an Off-Peak ticket when travelling off-peak, or buying a walk-up ticket instead of buying an Advance ticket, even when they know their plans ahead of their journey and such tickets would have been available.

3.3 This can arise both because of a general lack of understanding of the system or products available or because of a specific information failure at the time of purchase, for example, at a TVM.

3.4 In our study, 41% of those surveyed online said that they had previously purchased a ticket and later found out that they could have made the journey on a cheaper ticket. Again, lack of awareness of the peak and off-peak times was a key driver for this, with 5% of on-train interviewees travelling on an Anytime ticket saying that they could have travelled or were travelling off-peak but had not realised it would have been cheaper to have bought an Off-Peak ticket.

3.5 Complexity can also lead to passengers buying the wrong ticket for their journey or using their ticket inappropriately, resulting in them having to buy a new ticket or having to pay a penalty or excess fare. Not surprisingly, passengers can feel harshly treated in such circumstances¹⁶.

3.6 Again, this can arise through a lack of, or poor quality, information relating to the restrictions and validities attached to different tickets, such as those relating to the time at which a ticket is valid, the route on which it is valid, or the ability to get on an off-peak a train at points between those indicated on the ticket.

3.7 Our study found that 15% of passengers had previously purchased a ticket that was not valid on the train they were taking and had had to purchase another ticket.

3.8 It can also lead to them not making the most of their ticket. For example, not knowing which stations a 'London terminals' ticket is valid at and perhaps getting on or off a train at one station, when another station would be more convenient.

3.9 Likewise, not having information about the ability to break a journey, to get on or off a train at a mid-point in their journey, could lead to passengers not being able to make the most of what their ticket offers (and possibly to them buying a different ticket, or tickets, instead).

¹⁶ <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document-search/document.asp?dsid=5549> and <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document-search/document.asp?dsid=5550>

3.10 In addition to direct the impact on passengers, in terms of them buying the wrong ticket or not making the most of their ticket, this can also have an impact on their perception of the railways, undermining their confidence and trust in fair treatment.

3.11 A lack of understanding around the benefits of certain tickets, such as the savings that can be made by buying Advance or Off-Peak tickets or the ability to break a journey, can mean that the range of tickets and the flexibility that train companies do offer is not fully appreciated by passengers, which can also be reflected in passengers' attitudes to value for money and willingness to travel by rail.

3.12 For example, 27% of passengers in our study felt that the complexity of the system had an impact on their likelihood to make journeys. While examination of these responses did not suggest that they necessarily made fewer journeys, it does indicate the depth of negative feeling that passengers can have towards fares and ticketing.

4. What is being done to address passengers' concerns

ATOC response to our research

4.1 We have worked closely with ATOC and train companies during the course of our work, including holding a stakeholder workshop in October 2011 to discuss the findings of our study and ATOC's and the train companies' initial response to the issues that we identified.

4.2 ATOC has accepted that the information provided to passengers during and after the sales process can be inadequate, particularly so in relation to those fares with more restrictions and at TVMs.

4.3 Its response to the issues outlined above is included in full at Annex A to this report. This includes initiatives aimed at improving the information that is presented to passengers on tickets as well as on websites and at TVMs, and sets out each issue, the action identified to address the issue and the timescale.

4.4 In the short term, the initiatives are focused around improving the quality of fares information available to retailers and customers, so that customers are provided with clear and comprehensive information. Many of these are already in place or are being trialed, or will be rolled out over this year. These initiatives include:

Tickets

- Redesigning train tickets to improve clarity of information – a new design of ticket to allow enhanced information on route, validity and restrictions to be included. The revised layout, font and text size will be designed to be easier to read and understand;
- Making general validity clear on tickets – creation of specific validity text for each ticket type in plain English;
- Providing restriction information on tickets – inclusion of ticket restriction information for Off-Peak tickets; where this will not fit, a direct web link to a site providing further information will be provided;
- Providing clear route information – the expanded route descriptions referred to in the TVM section (see below) will also be used in conjunction with printed tickets. This will remove shortened abbreviations and provide clear concise details of route and operator entitlements;
- New Advance ticket layout – Advance tickets are tied to specific itineraries so require less information about options but more information about which services should be used. ATOC is designing a separate, specific format for these tickets that will assist customers in using these tickets correctly, and reduce the need for separate coupons for reservation details.

TVMs

- Ensuring the correct range of appropriate destinations is offered – this is currently maintained locally by TOCs and their suppliers, resulting in new stations not always being added to TVMs and, in some cases, erroneous destinations being offered. The provision of this information is being transferred to ATOC/Rail Settlement Plan (RSP) to ensure that a correct up to date list is held by all machines;
- Improving presentation – a number of TOCs are progressing improvements to the customer interface and presentation of information on TVMs. Includes specific projects by East Coast, Virgin Trains, Southern, SWT, East Midlands Trains, Chiltern Railways, First Capital Connect, National Express and Northern;
- Better information about ticket choices – the additional information files being created by RSP will ensure that TVMs can provide expanded details of validity, restrictions and other relevant options when customers are choosing tickets;
- Ensuring that route information is made clear – expanded route descriptions are being created for use in retail systems – a new 140 character limit will apply (up from 15). In addition, the graphic route tool described in the websites section below will be offered to TVM suppliers;
- Ensuring that additional information can be printed off on request – a number of train companies are considering installing TVMs with separate receipt rolls that can be used for provision of additional information or services not printed on the travel ticket. Southern is piloting this initiative;
- Provision of enhanced journey information – Southern is piloting the provision of engineering work information on their TVMs;
- Providing a clear explanation of where ‘London Terminals’ tickets can be used – this will enable each TVM to use the data file being created for websites to show which ‘London Terminals’ are valid on tickets bought from that machine;
- Better choice of tickets – in some cases, popular tickets have not previously been offered on TVMs if they do not commence from the station at which the TVM is located – boundary zone fares are the most requested category. Southern are piloting the provision of these tickets on their machines.

Websites

- Ensuring customers can find the cheapest available fare for a particular journey – most websites and journey planners (including National Rail Enquiries and all TOC sites) now incorporate ‘Cheapest fare Finder’ ability to allow search for cheapest tickets;
- Providing better information about alternative route options – a database of route maps is being created so that route options can be shown on screen when passengers are planning their journey and choosing a ticket;
- Providing a clear explanation of where ‘London Terminals’ tickets can be used – a data file is being created for every station in Great Britain that will show which ‘London Terminals’ are valid on tickets from that station;
- Improving access to general information about rail products – the industry Retail Manual will be made available online to allow individuals and organisations full access to details of the range of products and services offered;
- Allowing customers to print their tickets at home, and instantly after purchase – already offered on CrossCountry, Virgin Trains and East Coast journeys booked through their own websites;

- Allowing customers to receive their ticket on their mobile phone – Chiltern and CrossCountry are already offering this on selected journeys and other TOCs are in the process of rolling it out;
- Ensuring customers can collect pre-paid tickets quickly – train companies including SWT, East Midlands Trains, Southern, First Capital Connect and National Express are providing dedicated Ticket on Departure machines at an increasing number of busy stations.

4.5 In the longer term, the programme is focused on the replacement of the existing industry fares database and associated fares distribution system over the next three years.

4.6 The contract for the current system, which is outsourced, is close to the end of its term and train companies are considering the case for its replacement. Subject to train companies reaching agreement, it will be replaced by an enhanced or new system (ATOC estimates that complete replacement of the system will require substantial investment of £5-£10m).

4.7 A new or enhanced system has the potential to deliver greater flexibility for train companies when setting prices and creating products, allied to improved processes and a better fares distribution system that will support improved information for customers.

4.8 Subject to train companies reaching agreement, it is anticipated that implementation of the new system will take place in mid-2014.

Department for Transport fares and ticketing review

4.9 The Department for Transport (DfT) is currently consulting on its review of fares and ticketing¹⁷, to which we will be responding separately (the consultation closes on 28 June 2012).

4.10 The DfT recognises that *“many passengers find the fares structure excessively complicated”* and that *“we must ensure information is communicated in a straightforward way, to enable passengers to take advantage of the choices on offer, without having to understand every nuance of the system.”*¹⁸

4.11 Its consultation includes Chapters on the principle of fares and ticketing regulation, fares and ticketing complexities and on buying tickets.

4.12 Many of the problems directly covered in this report (such as the confusion around peak and off-peak times and problems with ticketing vending machines) are discussed in the consultation, as are others, such as inconsistencies between fares.

4.13 The consultation also discusses current and future developments in smart ticketing.

4.14 As the DfT points out, new technology has the potential to deliver significant benefits for passengers, for example, improving speed and convenience and allowing greater flexibility or innovation in the products offered to passengers.

4.15 As with the programme of initiatives outlined above, it is important that such innovations are tested with passengers, including the more vulnerable, to ensure that they bring the improvements which passengers seek.

¹⁷ Rail Fares and Ticketing Review, Initial Consultation, <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-09/main-document.pdf>

¹⁸ Rail Fares and Ticketing Review, Initial Consultation, Introduction, paragraph 11

Annex – response from ATOC/train operating companies

Purpose

1. This paper describes how ATOC and Train Operating Companies (TOCs) are addressing the issues of fares and ticketing complexity for passengers. The programme of ATOC and TOC fares initiatives described in this paper has been in train for some time, and forms part of an ongoing process of identifying and addressing issues with rail fares and retailing. Together, the ATOC and TOC initiatives form an overall industry programme.

2. This existing and ongoing programme forms the basis of the ATOC/TOC response to the ORR's 'Consumer Programme' and in particular the issues identified by the ORR's consumer research (discussed at the multi-stakeholder workshop held by the ORR in October 2011).

3. Those elements of the programme which deal with retailing seek to establish an appropriate balance between standardising good practice and preserving the freedom to innovate in what is a highly competitive retailing environment.

4. The ATOC/TOC programme of initiatives is based on the premise that the current range of non-season ticket fares (which were introduced following fares simplification in 2008) provide the best currently achievable balance between simplicity and choice. The initiatives therefore focus on improvements that address specific passenger concerns, rather than fundamentally seeking to change the current structure of fares.

5. However, with regard to season tickets, it is worth noting that the planned extension of smart ticketing in the London and South East area includes the evaluation and possible implementation of new types of commuting fares and products that may eventually supplement or replace season tickets.

6. This project is at an early stage of development and so is not described within this paper. However, it is worth highlighting that one of the key aims of the planned extension is to make the process of ticket choice and purchase for passengers easier.

Areas of concern highlighted in the ORR research

7. The research commissioned by the ORR from SPA in 2011 set out to test passenger perceptions of complexity in relation to fares and ticketing, and the resultant report formed the basis of a workshop held with TOCs, the DfT, Transport Scotland and the ORR in October 2011.

8. In general, the most significant issues highlighted by the research were as follows:

- TVMs – concerns over choosing the most appropriate ticket; and having confidence that the right ticket had been purchased;

- Off-Peak tickets – perceived lack of understanding about when ‘off-peak’ is, and when passengers were permitted to travel;
- Advance tickets – perceived lack of understanding of the conditions, availability & benefits.

9. The research also identified the following specific issues as affecting customer confidence in the fares and ticketing process:

- Around 5% of surveyed passengers held Anytime tickets when they could have used an Off-Peak ticket; in almost all cases these were TVM purchases.
- The highest risk of buying a more expensive ticket occurred where an infrequent traveller made a longer or more complicated off-peak journey at short notice (i.e. with limited time to research options and/or book in advance).
- A majority of those being surveyed did not know how far in advance to buy a ticket to get the best rates.
- Passengers used terms such as ‘Advance’; ‘Off-Peak’; ‘Anytime’ but were not always aware of their exact meanings – and there was evidence of further confusion on occasions by use of terms such as ‘Super Off-Peak’ and special products such as ‘Weekender’.
- The availability of different routing options was sometimes a cause of confusion.
- Passengers were aware of the risk of financial penalty for ‘getting it wrong’, but the effect varied, from those that were happy to take a chance to those that would buy a more expensive ticket ‘just in case’ or leave the train to avoid confrontation.
- TVMs were perceived as assuming too much prior knowledge and contained jargon (e.g. ‘Any Permitted’; ‘Restrictions Apply’).
- Sometimes TVMs contained incorrect or potentially misleading information (generally by omission)
- The pressure to buy when there was a queue at the TVM could force errors in purchase.
- The issues identified were not confined to specific age groups but affected all demographic profiles.

10. In many areas the results of the ORR research are consistent with earlier research undertaken by Passenger Focus and ATOC’s own research in this area.

Summary of initiatives being undertaken by the industry to address these issues

11. The focus of ATOC’s work has been, in particular, on improving the information available to passengers, so that they are able to make a fully-informed choice when purchasing a rail ticket. Underlying this approach is the recognition that many current industry processes place too much reliance on the end retailing system correctly interpreting numerous overlapping data sources. This manifests itself through inadequate information being provided during and after the sale process, as well as a lack of consistency across retail channels.

12. The effect of this is felt most keenly in relation to those fares with more restrictions, and through sales via automated channels. This ties in with the output from the ORR research that Off-peak and Advance fares appear to drive more problems than Anytime tickets, and that sales through TVMs are also more likely to be problematic.

13. ATOC/TOCs are addressing this core issue through a series of short term initiatives to tackle the most urgent problems, together with evaluation of a more strategic programme based on replacement of the current industry fares database and related processes with more advanced systems, better able to meet provide the information required by passengers.

Short Term Initiatives

14. ATOC/TOC short-term initiatives are focused around improving the quality of fares information available to retailers and customers, so that customers are provided with clear and comprehensive information. Although the project was conceived and developed separately from the ORR work, it was motivated by many of the same concerns identified in the SPA research. There are two main components to this element of the programme:

- An overhaul of the source data for ticket routing, validity and restrictions so that this information can be delivered in a much more comprehensive, consistent and consumer friendly way;
- An overhaul of how this information is presented on tickets to ensure that as much relevant detail as possible is included (and irrelevant detail excluded).

15. Key issues that this will address include:

- Improving the currently limited provision of information regarding travel restrictions on use of Off-Peak tickets, both on TVMs and on tickets themselves.
- Reducing as far as is practicable the printing of Advance tickets on multiple coupons, and ensuring that the information printed on these tickets relates specifically to the journey being undertaken.
- Provision of simple, clear summaries of the relative benefits of each ticket where more than one option is offered as part of a ticket purchase. At the moment some retail channels are better than others at this, with weaknesses particularly identified around TVMs.
- Omitting extraneous unhelpful information (e.g. stating that a ticket is valid via 'Any Permitted' route when it is the only ticket offered for that journey).
- Working to avoid overloading customers with information when tickets are being purchased - but ensuring that further information is available on each aspect of the enquiry or purchase is required (e.g. the option to view graphical displays of routes diagrams to illustrate where you can use a ticket if more than one route option is offered).

Longer Term Strategy

16. The longer term strategic element of the programme is focused on the replacement of the existing industry fares database and associated fares distribution system over the next three years. The existing system is based around a mainframe architecture originally developed by British Rail in the 1980s, albeit substantially upgraded.

17. The contract for the current system, which is outsourced, is close to the end of its term and ATOC (through Rail Settlement Plan, which manages the fares system) and, subject to final business case analysis, will be replaced by an enhanced or new system. It ought to be emphasized that complete replacement of the system will require substantial investment (£5 – £10m).

18. A new or enhanced system has the potential to deliver greater flexibility for TOCs when setting prices and creating products, allied to improved processes and a better fares distribution system that will support improved information for customers. This would allow, for example, a move away from complex restriction

codes for longer distance fares and instead provide information tailored to the specific fare and journey being undertaken.

19. Subject to satisfactory approval of the business case evaluation, it is anticipated that implementation of the new system will take place in mid 2014.

Breakdown of Initiatives

20. A detailed breakdown of the specific initiatives within the ATOC/TOC programme has been set out in appendix A.

Accreditation and Best Practice

21. The 'Quick wins' and strategic elements of the programme are being supported by a significant enhancement of the industry accreditation process, which will mandate the use of the improved processes through industry retailing systems.

22. This will be supported by the dissemination of best practice through ATOC's Fares and Retail Group, which regularly discusses potential improvements (many of which are simple process issues such as 'locking' coupon collection trays on TVMs until all coupons have been printed to ensure that passengers do not walk away from the machine not having collected all their tickets).

Preserving Choice

23. The passenger rail industry is composed of many individual entities, not just train companies but third party retailers, systems' suppliers and so on. Whilst this presents challenges in ensuring that information is provided to customers consistently, it also has benefits. Competition in the retailing market drives innovation and provides choice to consumers.

24. The ATOC/TOC programme of initiatives is not, therefore, prescriptive in setting uniform approaches to the provision of fares information or retailing of fares provided that this meets the required accreditation standards. Instead the programme seeks to ensure that the data provided to retailers and suppliers is accurate and useable; that where there are specified deliverables (printed tickets for instance) these are used to provide clear and relevant information; and that best practice is either embodied within the industry accreditation process or is disseminated, with suppliers and retailers strongly encouraged to adopt it.

Measurement

25. Consideration is being given to how the success of the ATOC/TOC programme could be measured. One option is to use the Retailing Satisfaction/Mystery Shopping Survey commissioned by ATOC each year to comply with requirements of the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement. The DfT and TOCs will be consulted on this option and further evaluation of the suitability of this survey as a measurement device completed.

Conclusions

26. In summary the core principles being adopted by the ATOC/TOC programme are that:

- information on fares should be standardised and consistent;

- where information is provided in common, it should seek to be clear, comprehensive and relevant to passengers;
- subject to the above, innovation should be encouraged amongst retailers and suppliers;
- best practice should be identified and promoted, and, where appropriate, embodied in the industry accreditation process.

27. We believe the current programme of ATOC/TOC short term initiatives will drive concrete improvements for passengers but we also recognize that action beyond this will be necessary; partly through replacement of the existing fares system, but also through further research and monitoring and new initiatives to address the issues that emerge.

David Mapp, Commercial Director, ATOC

Appendix A – ATOC/TOC initiatives

WEBSITES		
Objective: To ensure that websites provide comprehensive, clear and consistent information about fare and ticket choices, whilst not stifling innovation.		
General initiative: The overhaul and enhancement of fares validity data and restrictions to ensure that clear, specific information regarding tickets is consistently provided		
Specific initiatives:	Action	Timescale
Ensuring customers can find the cheapest available fare for a particular journey	Most websites and journey planners (including National Rail Enquiries and all TOC sites) now incorporate 'Cheapest fare Finder' ability to allow search for cheapest tickets.	In place.
Providing better information about alternative route options	A database of route maps is being created so that route options can be shown on screen when passengers are planning their journey and choosing a ticket.	Planned for autumn 2012 on National Rail Enquiries; to be made available to other online retailers.
Providing a clear explanation of where 'London Terminals' tickets can be used	A data file is being created for every station in Great Britain that will show which 'London Terminals' are valid on tickets from that station.	Planned for a late spring 2012 on National Rail Enquiries; to be made available to other online retailers.
Improving access to general information about rail products	The industry Retail Manual will be made available online to allow individuals and organisations full access to details of the range of products and services offered.	This will be in place by 2013 at the latest.

Allowing customer to print their tickets at home instantly after purchase	Already offered on CrossCountry, Virgin Trains and East Coast journeys booked through their own websites.	Work on national standards being undertaken during 2012 - this will allow print at home ticketing to be offered on a much wider range of routes.
Allowing customer to receive their ticket on their mobile phone	Chiltern and CrossCountry are already offering this on selected journeys.	Work on national standards being undertaken during 2012 - this will allow mobile ticketing to be offered on a much wider range of routes.
Ensuring customers can collect pre-paid tickets quickly	Train Companies including SWT, East Midlands Trains, Southern, First Capital Connect and National Express are providing dedicated Ticket on Departure machines at an increasing number of busy stations.	This is an ongoing programme.

TVMs

Objective: To ensure that TVMs provide clear, consistent and relevant information to passengers, are easy to use, and have a lower incidence of passengers purchasing incorrect tickets.

General initiative: The overhaul of fares validity data and restrictions currently being undertaken is designed to ensure that TVMs have the tools to provide consistent and accurate data about fare options, validity and restrictions. This will be accompanied by accreditation standards that ensure their correct adoption and use. This is complemented by improvements to the presentation of information and reliability of TVMs.

Specific initiatives:	Action	Timescale
Ensuring that the correct range of appropriate destinations is offered	This is currently maintained locally by TOCs and their suppliers, resulting in new stations not always being added to TVMs and, in some cases, erroneous destinations being offered. The provision of this information is being transferred to ATOC/RSP to ensure that a correct up to date list is held by all machines.	By mid-2012

Improving presentation	A number of TOCs are progressing improvements to the customer interface and presentation of information on TVMs. Includes specific projects by East Coast, Virgin Trains, Southern, SWT, East Midlands Trains, Chiltern Railways, First Capital Connect, National Express and Northern.	The individual improvements are being reviewed and will be evaluated for inclusion in the new best practice and accreditation standards being drawn up in 2012.
Better information about ticket choices	The additional information files being created by RSP will ensure that TVMs can provide expanded details of validity, restrictions and other relevant options when customers are choosing tickets.	Testing is currently taking place of the expanded information fields. Rollout will commence in 2012, and will be completed nationally once contracts can be agreed with suppliers.
Ensuring that route information is made clear	Expanded route descriptions are being created for use in retail systems – a new 140 character limit will apply (up from 15). In addition, the graphic route tool described in the ‘websites’ section will be offered to TVM suppliers.	Testing is currently taking place of expanded route information fields. Rollout will commence in 2012, and will be completed nationally once contracts can be agreed with suppliers.
Ensuring that additional information can be printed off on request	A number of Train Companies are considering installing TVMs with separate receipt rolls that can be used for provision of additional information or services not printed on the travel ticket. Southern are piloting this initiative.	Installed on Southern TVMs in 2012. Rollout subject to evaluation an supplier contracts.
Provision of enhanced journey information	Southern are piloting the provision of engineering work information on their TVMs so the customers can make an informed choice about their travel plans.	Southern are rolling out in 2012. The experience will be used to influence retail standards.
Providing a clear explanation of where ‘London Terminals’ tickets can be used	This will enable each TVM to use the data file being created for websites to show which ‘London Terminals’ are valid on tickets bought from that machine.	Pilot planned for 2012 once data file is available.

Better choice of tickets	In some cases, popular tickets have not previously been offered on TVMs if they do not commence from the station at which the TVM is located – boundary zone fares are the most requested category. Southern are piloting the provision of these tickets on their machines.	Southern are rolling this out in 2012; it is expected that a number of other TOCs will follow suit.
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TICKETS

Objective: To ensure the information on and layout of tickets, regardless of the method of fulfillment, clearly set out the journey details, including entitlements and restrictions applicable to the journey purchased

General initiative: Revision of the industry standard ticket layout to provide information more clearly; this is being designed to accommodate different product types and embrace both traditional ticket styles as well as print at home and mobile fulfillment formats

Specific initiatives:	Action	Timescale
Redesigning train tickets to improve information and clarity	A new design of ticket – to allow enhanced information on route, validity and restrictions to be included. The revised layout, font and text size will be designed to be easier to read and understand.	Customer research of new designs is currently being carried out. New ticket layout to offered later in 2012, and rolled out as systems are updated.
Making general validity clear on tickets	Creation of specific validity text for each ticket type in plain English.	To be rolled out with new ticket print layout.
Providing restriction information on tickets	Inclusion of ticket restriction information for Off-Peak tickets; where this will not fit, a direct web link to a site providing further information will be provided. NOTE – in the short term it will not be possible to shorten every restriction text to fit on a ticket. However, the new fares system, if progressed, would allow ‘short’ restriction texts to be created for every ticket and would ensure that in every case this can be included on the ticket.	To be rolled out with new ticket print layout.

Providing clear route information	The expanded route descriptions referred to in the TVM section will also be used in conjunction with printed tickets. This will remove shortened abbreviations and provide clear concise details of route and operator entitlements.	Testing is currently taking place of expanded route information fields. Rollout will commence in 2012, and will be completed nationally once contracts can be agreed with suppliers.
New Advance ticket layout	Advance tickets are tied to specific itineraries so require less information about options but more information about which services should be used. We are designing a separate, specific format for these tickets that will assist customers in using these tickets correctly, and reduce the need for separate coupons for reservation details.	To be rolled out with new ticket print layout. Market research of new layout will inform final design.

LONGER TERM STRATEGY

Objective: To ensure that industry systems are capable of supporting retailers' and consumers' requirements now and in the foreseeable future

General initiative: Use the renewal of the fares contract to modernize the system to meet the current and anticipated business requirements of operators and retailers. This includes being capable of providing the highest standards of information in a consumer-friendly fashion

Specific initiatives:	Action	Timescale
Fares system replacement or enhancement	Replacement or enhancement of the existing system with one that meets operators' needs and is able to support future retailing and consumer requirements.	The business case will be formally considered in the first half of 2012; subject to acceptance, the new system will be brought on line in mid 2014.

<p>Ensuring that retail systems meet minimum standards of customer information and are encouraged to adopt best practice</p>	<p>Currently, all rail retail systems have to meet a technical accreditation process. This is being expanded to cover compliance with the enhanced information and ticket printing standards that are being established for rail products. The plan is that there will be a mandatory set of minimum standards requiring correct use of data sources and consistent retailing standards, and a set of enhanced standards that can be used by those sites & systems wishing to comply fully with best practice standards.</p>	<p>A draft of the new accreditation standard will be completed by Spring 2012. The plan is to introduce the standard later in the year. Full compliance is expected to take 18 months to 2 years.</p>
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