

7<sup>TH</sup> March 2007

**RESPONSE TO HOUSE OF COMMONS TRANSPORT COMMITTEE ON  
TICKETING ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

This response follows the questions asked by the Committee in its Press Notice of 8<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

***Integrated Ticketing:***

**1. Is ticketing sufficiently integrated across different modes of transport and between different geographical areas?**

Within Passenger Transport Executive (PTE) areas integrated ticketing is well established and relatively easy to use. When the ticket is of a standard design produced by the PTE it is easily recognised and accepted by staff of all operators. If a similar multi-modal and multi-operator ticket requires the issue of a ticket from a company machine which will bear the issuing company's logo, passengers often have problems convincing other operators staff that the ticket is valid on their services.

Whilst PTEs have usually managed to persuade operator consortia to take part in multi modal ticketing schemes this has often been at the cost of them being more expensive than operator's own multi journey tickets.

Outside PTE areas, integrated ticketing is virtually unknown with just a few isolated examples such as Derbyshire County Council's "Derbyshire Wayfarer" product. Integrated tickets are usually only available within a restricted area and do not extend into adjoining areas.

There is also a lack of integration within bus travel let alone across modes. In many instances it is not possible to turn up and buy a ticket for a through journey when it involves a change of bus. For example a journey from Milnthorpe in Cumbria to Morecambe in Lancashire (about 12 miles) requires change of bus at some point and two fares have to be purchased. This does not encourage the car to be left at home.

TravelWatch NorthWest's predecessor the North West Public Transport Users Forum (NWPTUF) produced a report in December 2005 on Multi Modal Ticketing which highlighted shortcomings with integrated ticketing as well as highlighting best practice. *This is attached.*

Pricing should also be considered. Outside metropolitan areas the perception of public transport is as an expensive mode compared to the car. In some areas a 10 minute return bus journey can be around £5. Contrast this with the cost of a journey across the breadth of Greater Manchester for about half the price. Until some national consistency on fares can be achieved and promoted bus travel will be unattractive to future generations in many rural areas where the convenience of the car will remain unchallenged.

## **2. Does the Government have an adequate strategy for developing the integration of ticketing systems?**

Government policy is ineffective and will continue to be so until the role of the Office of Fair Trading is revised to allow operators to discuss integration without the fear of prosecution. Such co-operation is vital and there can be no meaningful integration whilst this interference continues.

There is a need to look more acutely at the future. The whole marketplace for travel and consumerism will change in the next 10 years as the "baby boomers" (those born between 1945 and 1960) form the majority of the retired population. Post war attitudes to life that include the many conveniences enjoyed by this generation in contrast to the previous generation will bring a very different set of demands and standards. Unless public transport gets its act together, particularly for short distance travel, to meet the new expectations and demands, it will be in danger of dying of neglect and underuse.

## **3. Is the industry taking up modern smartcard technologies adequately and appropriately?**

With the exception of London and Scotland, smartcards are only being developed and used on very local schemes and are only introduced after long trials of the technology even though the technology has been used in other places for years.

## **4. Does the ITSO system cater for the needs of all passengers and travel provider?**

ITSO is overcomplex and delaying the progress of smartcard implementation. The trials of this system are over-long and the first large scale scheme is only just being rolled out in Lancashire. The Lancashire scheme is only dealing with the NoW (North West) card used by the over 60's for their concessionary journeys. It appears that other needs are still being "triated".

## **5. What can be learned from the experiences of areas such as London and Scotland where smartcard technology is already in place?**

Both schemes are now well established, but the London "Oyster" system (not ITSO compatible) shows the way forward for integrated ticketing throughout

the UK. Of course, the London ticket has the advantage of being operated in a regulated bus system, also an area where all forms of transport work well with each other and without the interference of the OFT.

***Revenue protection and the powers of ticket inspectors:***

**6. Is the legal framework within which ticket inspectors function appropriate?**

For buses there appears to be no national system to back the work of inspectors and many do not know the extent of their powers under the law.

On rail there are National Conditions of Carriage which are appropriate although a review of their passenger friendliness may be desirable.

**7. What appeals mechanisms exist for passengers, and are they adequate?**

The current mechanisms for dealing with bus passengers problems are:-

- London – London Travelwatch
- Scotland – Bus Users Complaint Tribunal
- Northern Ireland – The General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland
- England and Wales – The Bus Appeals Body

In London, Scotland and Northern Ireland these are statutory bodies with effective powers to deal with the complaints. In England and Wales, the Bus Appeals Body (BAB) is a non-statutory organisation run by Bus Users UK with funding from within the bus industry. There is no statutory power given to BAB and their decisions are not binding on any party allowing the operators to ignore their deliberations. TravelWatch considers that there should be a statutory appeals body for bus users in England and Wales.

Unlike the bus industry, Passenger Focus does have statutory powers to deal with complaints about rail services. Complaints handling is centralised and it has been commented that the organisation has lost the wealth of local knowledge that the former regional Rail Passenger Committees possessed.

**8. Are the rights of passengers and ticket inspectors well-balanced?**

There is often a conflict between the perceived rights of inspectors and the actual legal framework applicable. Ignorance of the rights of both parties is often to blame and more should be done to publicise these rights.

**9. Do operators of public transport take adequate measures to protect fares revenue?**

With bus services outside London, the fare is paid to the driver who also checks the validity of pre-paid tickets. Within London, the same applies in most cases, but when multi entrance vehicles are used, there is an increasing tendency to fares avoidance which is difficult to deal with.

On the continent it is common for passengers to be expected to cancel their own ticket before travel in machinery provided either at the station or on the train/tram/bus. It works there and would here. So why is it not in practice as it could assist revenue protection where human intervention is difficult.

The rail industry has a great loss of revenue by its' inability to collect the fares due from passengers. The open station principle and unstaffed stations mean that the onus is on the train staff to collect fares but this is frequently not happening. This is due to a variety of reasons ranging from inability to access the train when it is over-crowded to neglect of duty by the on-train staff.

### ***Concessionary fares – the right strategy?***

#### **10. Is the Government's concessionary fares strategy, including the proposed scheme for concessionary bus travel, adequate?**

The concessionary bus schemes are different for each country and there is no truly national scheme in operation or proposed. This leaves many passengers disadvantaged especially in border areas.

The provision of bus concessions is only of use to those who have bus services available and does not consider the growing number of people in rural areas with no access to any form of public transport.

Free rail concessions are available in PTE areas, but not in the Shire Counties and for long distance services. A Railcard is available from the rail industry at a price, but is subject to many restrictions.

*Attached is TravelWatch NorthWest's comments on the current Concessionary Bus Travel Bill.*

#### **11. Are concessionary fares schemes sufficiently integrated across different modes of transport and different geographical areas?**

With the exception of PTE areas, there is no integration across modes. The current scheme in England is fragmented and does not allow cross-boundary traffic in many areas. The new proposals will improve this, but may not allow full freedom throughout the UK.

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