

£18m project launched to develop tap and go contactless access on West Midlands public transport

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Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) is working with the UK's principal bus operators to launch a major fare capping project to offer passengers best value and greater convenience when using their credit or debit card on public transport.

Over the next two years, a system will be developed to allow passengers to use their contactless cards across a range of transport modes and operators, which will mean best value fares are applied automatically.

This will effectively enable any debit or credit card for multi operator travel offering people, including visitors, and those who are not regular public transport users the benefits of seamless travel by simply tapping on and off buses in the region.

This scheme is one of a number of innovations being delivered over the next two years after TfWM, which is part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), secured £18 million funding from the City Region

Sustainable Transport Settlement.

Although in future passengers will not need a Swift card to ensure best value – it will continue to be available for those either excluded from the banking system or unwilling to use their contactless card for travel, with flexible fares capped over one, three and seven days on offer.

After Oyster, Swift is the most popular smartcard scheme for travel payments in the UK with approximately 250,000 regular users making more than 60 million journeys per year.

The funding will also cover the costs of 60 new Swift card vending machines which will be installed at key locations across the West Midlands from early next year making it easier than ever to buy a Swift card.

And while many costs have risen, bus and tram travel remains great value. TfWM is working with operators and Government through the region's Bus Service Improvement Plan to further improve value for passengers.

Andy Street, mayor of the West Midlands, said: "Given the cost of living pressures facing local residents right across our region, the pay as you go options, flexible tickets and season passes offered via Swift have an important role to play in reducing household outgoings during these challenging times.

"Thanks to the operators we work closely with, the West Midlands has some of the lowest fares in the country. This is especially true on our excellent value bus network, with the daysaver held at its 2013 price – cheaper than recent daysaver fares announced in other parts of the UK – and further boosted by the news this week that the Department for Transport will cap single fares at £2 for a period.

"Over the longer term, our new investment into multi operator contactless ticketing will help to make public transport here even more convenient, even more cost efficient and even greater value for money in the future."

Cllr Ian Ward, WMCA portfolio holder for transport and leader of Birmingham City Council, said: "Swift is a national leader in smart ticketing and this investment will take it to the next level for passengers – offering everyone the lowest fare guaranteed on public transport with just a tap of their bank card.

"Offering better value and convenience is a key part of our plans to encourage more people to leave their cars at home and use public transport as we tackle the climate emergency, reduce traffic congestion, and improve the air we breathe.

"This is just part of the more than £1 billion investment we are putting in our transport over the next five years to revolutionise our bus, cycling, rail and tram networks and services better connecting people to the job and leisure opportunities across the region."

The multi operator contactless fare capping project being pioneered by TfWM and the national bus operators could also be rolled out further afield through partnerships with Midlands Connect meaning that the scheme could cover the wider region and nationally with Government and other transport operators' support. The tap and cap scheme would help commuters in the West Midlands go further afield for work

and leisure and go from bus to tram to train throughout the region for a daily cap.