

Avanti West Coast launch smartcard scheme

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Avanti West Coast customers are set to benefit from a new convenient way to travel after the long-distance operator launched its own smartcard scheme.

Following a successful trial, customers are now able to store tickets securely on one card, preventing issues around paper tickets being mixed up or damaged.

It works simply by customers purchasing a ticket online and then loading it on to their smartcard at a station using an enabled ticket vending machine (TVM), an automated gate or a hand-held device used by Avanti West Coast Customer Service Assistants. It can then be scanned at ticket barriers or by a train manager on board with ease. It can be ordered from the Avanti West Coast website free of charge.

Alongside digital tickets, which now accounts for 65% of Avanti West Coast customer journeys, the introduction of the smartcard will give rail users another option for moving away from traditional paper tickets, ensuring less waste.

Previously, those who ordered season tickets online would receive them in the post and in most cases a record needed to be kept in case a replacement or refund was needed. With the smartcard, the details are stored in the booking system making this process much more user friendly.

Avanti West Coast worked with Paragon ID, who produce and manufacture the cards, using Integrated Transport Smartcard Organisation (ITSO) technology – a system that electronically stores a travel ticket on a microchip and can be used for different journeys on other train operators. The company have previously worked with the train operator on staff ID cards.

Rail Minister, Chris Heaton-Harris, said: “The introduction of the smartcard scheme will allow passengers to choose a modern alternative to the paper ticket, providing simpler journeys and reducing time spent in stations.

“As we build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic, this Government is committed to smarter ticketing. Avanti West Coast’s scheme will allow for more convenient travel and will improve the passenger experience once it is safe to return to the railways.”

Sarah Copley, Executive Director, Commercial at Avanti West Coast said: “We are really pleased to be introducing this smartcard for our customers, especially those using season tickets, as a convenient way of travelling and saving time in the process.

“As we have seen with digital ticketing, the smartcard will enhance customer experience as well as remove the need for multiple paper tickets which has an obvious impact on sustainability. Traditional versions are also susceptible to damage which can make them unusable, so this will help solve that problem as well.”

Sarah McLaughlin, Account Director at Paragon ID, states: “We are delighted to build on our strong relationship with Avanti West Coast and work with them on this exciting new project to support the roll out of smart ticketing across its UK network.”

Photo credit: Avanti West Coast