

A collage of various British Rail train tickets, including STD, GSV, and RTN types, for different routes like London to Birmingham and London to Plymouth. The tickets are dated around 1983 and show fares, routes, and conditions of travel. The tickets are arranged in a grid-like fashion, with some overlapping. The colors are primarily white with black text, and some have orange or red borders. The text on the tickets includes route information, fares, and conditions of travel. Some tickets are for single journeys, while others are for return journeys. The routes mentioned include London to Birmingham, London to Plymouth, and London to Northampton. The fares are listed in pounds and pence. The conditions of travel are also specified on each ticket.

Railfuture had called for value for money fares which reflect journey quality and demand; clearly explained ticket choices which offer flexibility in time of travel, route, journey speed and journey quality; and smart ticketing which benefits the passenger by being pay-as-you-go, valid across operators, and cheaper than

paying cash, rather than just being an electronic ticket wallet.

It is essential that a simpler ticketing system does not reduce choice and flexibility. What passengers need is for that choice to be clearly explained at the point of purchase. The proposal recognises this need for flexibility, which can take the stress out of travelling.

The solution proposed by RDG is single leg pricing. There will be a base one-way price for each leg (or section) of a journey, which can be discounted algorithmically for travel at different times, booking in advance, or for certain types of traveller. The fare for the whole journey will then be the sum of the discounted prices for each leg, and the fare for outward and return journeys can be different. There will be a commitment that the passenger will always get the best value fare for the journey that they wish to make – this commitment is critical for the passenger to trust the system which calculates the fare, as there is no indication of whether the passenger will have any means of checking the calculation.

Single leg pricing should make split ticketing redundant, as effectively the passenger will be getting the split ticket price every time – although this may depend on how the legs are defined.

Smart ticketing is also key to the proposal – over time, more passengers will want to buy travel this way. In particular this will allow operators to offer better value to frequent travellers who may not travel at the same time every day, by setting a cap on the total fare for weekly travel in an area or for a journey, instead of the fixed price of a season ticket.

This will require a massive change to regulation, which clearly the Department for Transport is prepared for, but this must be done carefully to ensure that the protections that currently exist are replaced by new protections where necessary.

Clearly there will be winners and losers, both amongst passengers and operators. The cost neutral requirement from DfT is understandable – there should be no need for extra taxpayer support overall, but negotiations will be necessary with individual operators which will need more or less support. However the focus should be on providing new offers which passengers see as value for money, so increasing passenger numbers and driving revenue generation.

In addition to the change to regulation and the commercial negotiations with operators, a huge technology investment will be required to deliver these new fares and smart ticketing capabilities. The three – five year timescale for completion promised by RDG may be optimistic.

As ever, the devil will be in the detail of the implementation of this proposal. We wait to see commitment to delivery by the industry.

Read more at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Fares>