

Ticketing technology without borders

February 18, 2026



Steve Broadley is Lead, UK and Ireland, at ticketing specialist FAIRTIQ. He has worked in public transport since 2005, supporting digital projects across the UK, Europe, and worldwide.

Below, Steve discusses the benefits of digital pay as you go (DPAYG) - explaining how this "ticketing technology without borders" could make seamless, multimodal travel a reality in the UK.

The UK rail industry is preparing for what Heidi Alexander, Secretary of State for Transport, recently called its **"biggest transformation in 30 years."** A new, publicly owned company, Great British Railways (GBR), will bring track and train together - all with a view to creating a railway that better serves its passengers.

That means making it easier for customers to travel across the rail network, and providing simpler, better value-for-money ticketing options. In Europe, solutions like FAIRTIQ are already making this dream a reality - and now, our app is being trialled in the UK.

DPAYG for rail: Seamless travel

FAIRTIQ is a leading provider of digital pay as you go (DPAYG): app-based pay as you go ticketing that enables passengers to travel by swiping their smartphone once, at the beginning of their journey.

It's remarkably easy to use. With a single swipe, users can access a valid ticket; there's no need to enter a destination. If they change transport modes, the FAIRTIQ app recognises automatically, and continues to monitor their journey.

And when the passenger arrives at their destination, they can simply swipe again to end the session. If they forget to swipe, the app will notify them - or end the journey automatically.

Tickets can be displayed as QR codes, and scanned at gatelines or by ticket inspectors. The app calculates fares for users as they travel, crediting individual operators at the end of their journey.

A better experience for rail passengers

For passengers, the benefits of DPAYG are clear. They can travel freely and flexibly, changing routes - and transport modes - with ease. FAIRTIQ can be used on trains, trams and buses; in Switzerland, it's even accepted on ferries and cable cars. The user experience is always the same, whatever the transport mode.

And passengers can rest assured they are always travelling with the right ticket for the right price.

Finally, they don't run the risk of incurring a penalty fare for forgetting to tap out; FAIRTIQ can remind them to end their journey - or end it for them automatically. Another useful feature, Companion Mode, enables passengers to travel together in groups without each member of the party needing separate cards. One of our clients has enabled groups of up to 28 people to travel via the app, making school trips easier!

Benefits for operators and transport authorities

And there are significant benefits for the organisations that run and manage train services - including operators and mayoral combined authorities.

Firstly, DPAYG is easy to implement, and can be rolled out quickly. In December 2023, we signed a contract to deploy FAIRTIQ in Denmark. Less than a year later, in September 2024, it was launched across the whole country. Today, two thirds of all public transport journeys in Denmark are run and paid for through our app. The uptake has been brilliant, and it's in use on trains, trams, subways, ferries and buses.

Secondly, with no hardware or infrastructure to install, FAIRTIQ is a cost-effective solution. Operators and combined authorities can deploy it without fitting costly new gates or validators. And many UK railway stations are Grade II listed buildings: with FAIRTIQ, there's no need to worry about planning permissions or approvals.

The app has more far-reaching benefits, too. It can be used to send targeted notifications and promotions to passengers, incentivising them to travel and increasing ridership. With a card, customer engagement is limited, but an app gives you more opportunities to communicate with users directly.

But what about revenue protection? Our AI-powered systems can detect fraudulent behaviour – including late check-ins and early check-outs – in FAIRTIQ’s back office. We evaluate this data to review whether potentially fraudulent behaviour could be the result of simple user error. Most operators choose to warn passengers first – and if the behaviour persists, they are blocked from the app.

And, via FAIRTIQ’s back office, operators can access more invaluable data, establishing where passengers start their journeys, and which routes they take to reach their destinations. It shows the loading on certain routes and even the interchanges used.

This data can be used to support and inform service planning. When an interchange is being used frequently, for example, operators might opt to introduce a direct service instead. It’s all about serving passengers more effectively.

FAIRTIQ in the UK

Across Europe, countries are already embracing DPAYG – and the UK rail industry can learn from them. We’re now running a Department for Transport-funded trial between Sheffield and Doncaster via Rotherham. Currently limited to rail, this nine-month trial involves Northern, TransPennine Express and CrossCountry services.

We’re also in talks with mayoral combined authorities, working to establish how we can take DPAYG technology and deliver seamless, multimodal travel across their transport networks.

Because DPAYG is effectively ticketing technology without borders. In Europe, passengers are already using it to travel between cities and regions. Take Geneva, Switzerland, which has its own city-based system. Customers can check in with FAIRTIQ and travel around Geneva on this system, before catching a long-distance train to Zurich and exploring the city. Over the course of the day, FAIRTIQ will apply the city-based pricing schemes, calculating fares accordingly. It’s a seamless experience.

In the UK, this cross-border capability could enable passengers to travel easily between Scotland, Wales, England, and different mayoral regions. It removes the complexity, making for an easier, more enjoyable passenger experience – one of the rail industry’s current strategic priorities.

We’re using technology that is well-proven and developed; our app regularly receives five-star reviews, with over one million active monthly users. And DPAYG can be deployed in just a few months, with big schemes implemented for comparatively little cost. To be blunt, it’s a no brainer!