The Benefits of Smart Ticketing

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People think of the digital railway in terms of train control systems but a commercial revolution is also taking place as **smart ticketing** is adopted. FCP through its network of associates has in-depth expertise in the implementation of systems.

There are gains for operators and passengers as the opportunity to move from traditional tickets reduces the cost of the booking process, avoids queuing to buy tickets, and strengthens revenue protection. The continuing spread of smartphones and contactless payment cards allows seamless transactions to link with payment systems provided by train operators.

London Underground was an early adopter with the introduction of a gated network with simple to use oyster cards which is a propriety system. It has been estimated that ticketless travel fell from 7% to 2% as a result of the changes. The project was relatively easy to specify as fares are organised on a zonal basis and passengers are incentivised to click out so that the fare can be calculated by the deduction of a penalty for failure to do this.

National Rail smart ticketing

The scheme has been in the making for some time based on the ITSO (Integrated Transport Smartcard Organisation) specification which relies on ISAM's (ITSO Secure Application Modules) which are the equivalent of a mobile phone SIM card and reside in point of service terminals (POSTs). The system includes customer media (how the travel authority is held) and the host operator processing system (HOPS).

ITSO is a generic backbone which allows a community of public sector authorities, transport operators and equipment and solution suppliers to interface with each other in a secure environment subject to the terms of an operating licence to protect system integrity.

It is a non-profit making membership organisation. The Department for Transport, Transport Scotland, the Welsh Government and Transport for London are members of a board that includes sector directors representing public bodies, rail, bus, and suppliers. The board is supported by dedicated committees including a technical and security function and user groups that ensure development to keep pace with emerging technologies.

UK government invests in smart ticketing

Phase 1 and 2

The Department for Transport has been keen to speed-up the adoption of *smart ticketing* and launched the South East Flexible Ticketing programme covering five train operators; South West Trains, Govia Thameslink, c2c, Greater Anglia and South Eastern but a National Audit Office investigation has shown the take up has been low with only 8% of season tickets purchased on digital platforms in 2016/17 compared to a forecast of 50%, and 95% by 2020.

The back office established to support the programme has a utilisation of just 5% of capacity. The growth in the use of contactless bank cards has also changed the manner in which passengers wish to buy tickets illustrated by use on the London Underground where TfL recently reported that contactless pay as you go travel now accounts for 40% of receipts.

Elsewhere the Great Western Railway and Bristol City Council are funding a pilot scheme on the Severn Beach local line to an ITSO specification which will allow the purchase of weekly, monthly, and annual season tickets either through an on line account or ticket vending machine.

The vision is to develop an integrated transport system that includes the use of local bus services which will also aid the development of the future Travel West rail network.