

Email: London Assembly Transport Committee  
October meeting - follow up on fares



**From:** Neil Middleton (Railfuture)  
**Sent:** 22 October 2021 15:33  
**To:** Caroline Pidgeon; Luis Alvarado  
**Cc:** Paul Goodchild; Roger Blake (Railfuture)  
**Subject:** London Assembly Transport Committee October meeting - follow up on fares

Dear Caroline & Luis

Railfuture thanks the London Assembly Transport Committee for the opportunity to provide our views on how rail can best meet the needs of London and Londoners. During the session, we promised to provide our submission to the House of Lords Built Environment Committee's inquiry into the Williams Shapps rail fare reforms; this is enclosed (and is also available on our website: <https://railfuture.org.uk/dl2800>).

Since the session, it has become much more visible that the Department for Transport has started activity to expand National Rail Pay as You Go Ticketing in London & the South East (<https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Notice/019844-2021>); this specifically notes "...full contactless EMV based PAYG solution that will seamlessly integrate with the existing Transport for London (TfL) PAYG system..". On this, at a high level, we have the following general comments:

- Whilst the infrastructure behind Oyster may now be due for replacement, the ability of Oyster cards to provide ticketing and fares services to those who do not have bank accounts (or suitable cards, or available funds et al) is essential, and this service needs to continue to be available in some form.
- TfL's current service to National Rail for Contactless Card payment is structured around the same features as used by TfL for its fares – so a choice of peak and off-peak only, and no railcard support, and true single leg pricing. The first two of these are significant gaps in the service offering for National Rail travel and would need to be addressed if TfL's Contactless Card infrastructure was to form the basis of a more widespread deployment. On the positive side, the last, the establishment of true single leg pricing, is a key precedent. Therefore, for instance:
  - For the session on 12 October, I travelled using a Bank Contactless card – for the combination of travel in during the Monday to Friday morning peak and return off-peak, this offered the cheapest fare (£23.30, vs £27.00 – I don't currently hold any Thameslink Off-Peak Carnets – if I had, I could have saved 30p). My travel to City Hall cost me £13.50 – the equivalent National Rail single fare is £15.90.
  - At the weekend, the return Contactless fare is very substantially more - £19.60 vs £10.30 (£6.70 for Railcard holders).

National Rail Return fares have additional price points as compared to TfL's Peak and Off-Peak choice. These vary between routes; a typical example of what needs to be supported is for my line, where there are 4 price points, only the two most expensive being supported by Contactless:

- 1: Morning peak inward, return at any time
- 2: Post-morning peak inward, return at any time
- 3: Post-morning peak inward, return outside evening peak
- 4: Weekend return

The paper referred to above makes a number of other suggestions for short term improvements that are directly relevant to London and to TfL; these are as follows:

- Increase the visibility of the different contactless and National Rail ticket pricing options: There is no easy way (eg a website [such as those available for insurance, energy and broadband<sup>[2]</sup>]) to work out which combination of tickets can be used: the 11 examples set out in Appendix D of our fares paper shows how mix & match between Contactless and National Rail tickets can deliver the best price. Whilst return Contactless fare costs do match to specific National Rail fares, the differing approaches to single fares gives considerable complexity (fares paper, page 15).

- Provide mechanisms for cross London journeys to be on e-tickets (fares paper, page 15). There is a considerable challenge in that most relevant National Rail e-tickets are QR Code based, whereas TfL is contactless card based.
- Improve e-ticket usability, particularly during disruption (so, eg, when travelling on Thameslink, to be able to use the Underground to cross London during severe disruption) (fares paper, page 16).
- The provision of a Travelcard option for the Flexi-season. Although for many, a combination of a National Rail only Flexi-Season and PAYG on TfL is both cost effective and not a great imposition, for others, particularly those who need to make more than 2 TfL journeys each day or travel further, this is a significant gap (flexi-season paper, page 1).

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like any clarification or further detailing. We would welcome the opportunity to update the Committee on other topics as and when the Committee is collecting views.

📄 Eg for energy, see [ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households/switching-energy-tariff-or-supplier](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households/switching-energy-tariff-or-supplier)

Regards

Neil & Roger

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our websites: [www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk) | [railfuture.org.uk/London-and-South-East](http://railfuture.org.uk/London-and-South-East) | [railwatch.org.uk](http://railwatch.org.uk)

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