

Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme Joint Committee



Concessionary Subway Travel and Smart Ticketing

Date of meeting 6 March 2020

Date of report 17 February 2020

Report by Director of Finance

1. Object of report

To update the Joint Committee on improvements made by SPT to concession ticketing on the Subway.

2. Background

Changes to Subway concession ticketing were proposed by SPT and approved by the Joint Committee on 8th March 2019.

Previous arrangements: eligible customers showed their National Entitlement Card (NEC) to Subway staff at the ticket office and purchased a disposable Subway ticket at a concessionary rate.

New arrangements: eligible customers load Pay As You Go (PAYG) credit to their NEC at the Subway ticket office or ticket vending machine, and a concessionary fare is deducted from their PAYG value at the Subway entry gate.

The new arrangements offer increased convenience for customers and operational efficiencies for the Subway. For example – customers can pre-load PAYG credit for multiple journeys instead of having to buy a disposable ticket on each occasion they use the Subway.

There are also cost savings to SPT, and environmental benefits, to reducing the usage of disposable tickets.

3. Implementation

During 2019 SPT updated the Subway ticket gates to enable this feature, and then carried out the necessary testing using National Entitlement Cards provided by Transport Scotland.

The launch of these new arrangements coincided with the completion of a Transport Scotland-led project (which SPT were partners in) to enable the use of various smartcards on all forms of public transport ('interoperability').

Customer handling arrangements were established involving various SPT staff including at Subway stations, the Subway Smartcard Enquiries team, and the Travel Card Unit (TCU) – for example to handle enquiries about lost or faulty NECs with Subway PAYG credit loaded.

The project was started with a "soft launch" to concession customers, introducing the option to use PAYG credit without making this mandatory.

4. Results

Within a week of introduction more than 70% of concession Subway journeys were being made using PAYG credit on NEC, and less than 30% using disposable tickets.

For the month of January 2020, around 62% of Subway concession journeys were made using PAYG credit.

During December and January, PAYG concession travel avoided the usage of more than 62,000 disposable tickets with associated cost, operational and environmental benefits.

5. Technical issues

A range of ITSO smartcards can be used by customers on the Subway ticket gates. This includes the National Entitlement Card. The ITSO standard for transport smartcards is specifically intended to enable this.

A small number of National Entitlement Card users have encountered a technical problem at the Subway entry gates since smart concession travel on Subway was introduced. This problem is being managed by SPT both from an immediate customer service perspective, and in terms of resolving the underlying technical problem. A 'fix' has been identified and tested and is now in the process of being scheduled for roll out.

6. Summary and next steps

SPT have introduced smart concession travel on NEC for Subway customers.

This offers convenience for customers as well as cost savings and sustainability improvements for SPT (through reductions in the number of disposable tickets issued).

Further promotion of the benefits of smart concession travel will be planned by SPT.

7. Committee Action

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this paper.

8. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>Supports delivery of an excellent transport system.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None identified.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>Full reporting on concession Subway travel has been retained.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>Technical problems with 3rd party supplier have led to increased workload for SPT staff.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>Provides similar smart ticketing benefits to concessionary customers as Subway smartcard users.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>Ongoing technical problems may have a negative reputational impact for Subway and the Concessionary Travel Scheme.</i>

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