



Ticketing Update

Date of meeting 24 November 2023

Date of report 8 November 2023

Report by Director

1. Object of report

To provide an update about SPT's recent activities in relation to public transport ticketing.

2. Background to report

A previous Ticketing Update was presented to Strategy & Programmes Committee in February 2022. This paper seeks to provide an update on relevant issues where there is new information to present.

3. Outline of proposals

(i) Subway smart ticketing

The Subway smart ticketing system continues to provide a flexible range of good value travel options for customers including cash and card payments at ticket offices and ticket vending machines as well as online sales.

Customers can choose between single, return and all-day tickets, or benefit from the maximum flexibility of PAYG on smartcard with a £3.00 daily cap regardless of how many journeys are made. Over the past year more than £5.6 million in Subway PAYG topups have been loaded to customer smartcards. Season tickets from one week up to a year in length are also available.

As an indication of the ongoing popularity of smartcard ticketing, in the most recent 4-week period (ending 14 October 2023) there were 2,780 registered Subway smartcards issued and 1,410 anonymous Subway smartcards sold in stations. In total more than 137,000 registered Subway smartcards have now been issued.

(ii) Subway smart ticketing – auto topup and auto renewal

SPT continues to bring forward a range of innovative improvements to Subway smart ticketing and in 2023 customers have been offered the new opportunity to set up Auto TopUp of PAYG credit on smartcard. When the remaining PAYG value on a customer's smartcard drops below £6.00 they can opt to have it automatically topped up by a value up to £35.

Introduced in spring 2023 this function has steadily grown in popularity being used by 268 customers in the most recent 4-week period as shown below. A similar function for auto renewal of Subway season tickets is also available.

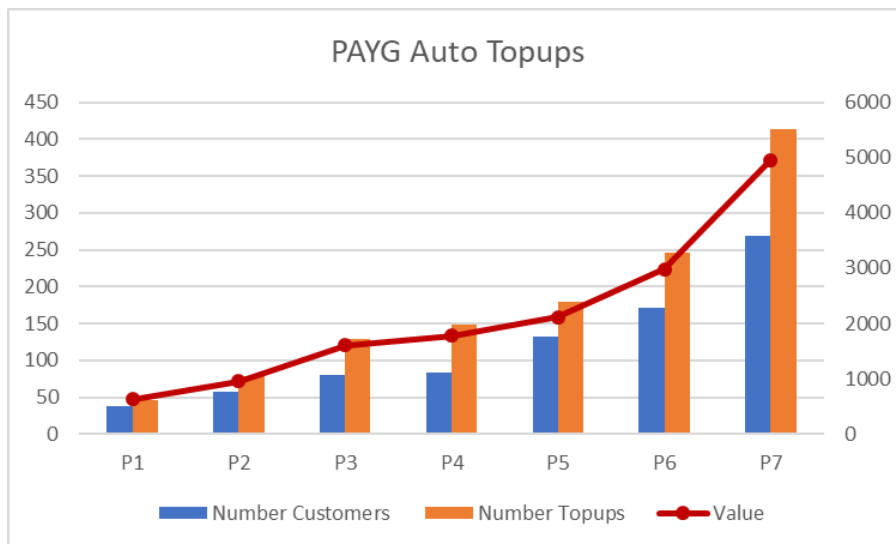


Figure 3.1 Subway smartcard PAYG Auto Topups

This enhancement streamlines the ticket purchase process for customers and removes the need to actively purchase a ticket at the station or through the website.

(iii) Subway smartcard interoperability

As well as the option to use a Subway smartcard, customers benefit from the option of loading Subway smart tickets onto a National Entitlement Card, ScotRail, McGill’s, Tripper or Stagecoach smartcard.

This provides the convenience of keeping all smart tickets (Subway, bus and rail) on a single smartcard.

So far in 2023/24 (to 14 October 2023) an average of 3,600 new third-party (non-Subway) smartcards have been used at Subway stations in each four-week period. The most commonly used third-party cards are National Entitlement Cards followed by ScotRail smartcards.

An average of more than 81,000 journeys have been made in each four-week period using third-party cards, with more than 100,000 in the most recent four-week period.

(iv) Subway Kids Go Free

During 2023 a series of Kids Go Free promotions have made Subway travel free of charge for customers under 16 during the Easter, summer and October school holidays. This has for the first time included customers using their National Entitlement Card (NEC)/Young Scot card to travel – these customers are identified by the ticket gate as being aged under 16 and automatically allowed free travel during the promotional period.

During the Easter holiday period U16 patronage increased by more than 43% year-on-year (overall patronage increased by 18.5% in the same period).

During the summer holiday period U16 patronage increased by 70% year-on-year (overall patronage increased 26% in the same period). More than 127,000 Subway journeys were enjoyed by under 16s free of charge, and an estimated 32,500 Subway journeys by under 16s which wouldn’t otherwise have been made.

During the October holiday period U16 patronage increased by 21% (overall patronage increased by 4% in the same period). The Kids Go Free campaign is considered to have been successful and proposals to continue the promotion into 2024 will be considered.

(v) Subway contactless payments

A separate paper to committee proposes awarding a contract to deliver contactless payments at Subway entry gates, to deliver a major improvement to the Subway customer experience.

If approved, this is expected to be an attractive option for many Subway customers more than 80% of whom pay by card already. All existing ticket and payment options will also be retained, including cash payments.

(vi) Subway car parking/park-and-ride

Park-and-ride facilities are available at Bridge Street, Kelvinbridge and Shields Road Subway stations. In early 2023 the access control and revenue collection equipment (entry/exit barriers) were replaced following a procurement exercise.

While there were some challenges during the migration period for Subway customers and staff, the new system has now facilitated more than 238,000 car park entries since the start of 2023. SPT continues to explore further opportunities for process improvements for the benefit of customers and staff.

(vii) ZoneCard

ZoneCard is a commercial multi-operating ticketing arrangement administered by SPT, operators participate in ZoneCard on a voluntary basis. Customers benefit from using one ticket which entitles them to travel by bus, rail and Subway. ZoneCard ticket pricing is set by agreement between the participating operators.

The format of the ticketing arrangement and of ZoneCard tickets themselves have been largely unchanged for more than 30 years. ZoneCard remains a popular and valued ticket option with sales of more than £3.5million per year, although this is down from more than £10m per year before the Covid lockdown in 2020.

Recognising the need for a modern and flexible multi-operator ticketing solution, SPT and the ZoneCard operators have been working to migrate ZoneCard onto a smart ticket platform. This work is now nearing completion and will offer a range of improvements for customers who will be able to use one ticket on a smartcard to travel on bus, rail and Subway delivering a step change in seamless smart integrated ticketing.

One-day tickets and flexi tickets will be offered as well as the existing options for season tickets between a week and a year in validity.

Customers will be able to obtain a ZoneCard smartcard, but will also benefit from the option of loading ZoneCard tickets onto any existing Subway, ScotRail, McGill's, Stagecoach or National Entitlement Card.

Smart ZoneCard ticket sales will be available online and via Payzone shops which will provide a network of retail outlets throughout the ZoneCard area (including in future retail at Post Offices). The use of paper ZoneCards will be phased out and ScotRail have indicated that they will no longer be retailing ZoneCards after the migration to smartcard format.

Customers buying online will be able to load a ZoneCard ticket onto a smartcard using the ZoneCard mobile app. This means customers can purchase online and be ready to travel within minutes, offering significantly increased convenience compared to existing arrangements.

(viii) Nevis Technologies

Nevis Technologies was established as a joint venture between SPT and Ecebs Ltd to deliver smart ticketing solutions for Subway and other customers in Scotland. Ecebs Ltd has recently been sold to Unicard Ltd, an established supplier of smart ticketing products.

The Nevis Technologies joint venture continues to provide smart ticketing services to customers including Subway, ScotRail, McGill's, Glasgow Smartzone (Tripper) and Lothian Buses.

4. Other ticketing context

The transport industry in the west of Scotland is complex and as a result the landscape for ticketing and payments is similarly diverse with multiple stakeholders involved at different levels. Some relevant recent developments are:

(i) Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme

The Scottish Government introduced free bus travel for customers aged under 22 in January 2022.

While SPT is fully supportive of the objectives of this scheme, it should also be noted that Subway customers aged under 22 do not derive the same benefits of free Subway travel. Subway provides the quickest and most direct means to access many significant places of education and employment in the centre, west and south of Glasgow. SPT has continually made the case, in conjunction with Edinburgh Trams that an approach to free travel for young people which covers all public transport modes would offer the greatest benefits.

SPT would support any detailed assessment of the benefits associated with funding free (or reduced fare) bus travel for the under 22 age group and whether the benefits could be expanded by including other modes such as Subway.

(ii) ScotRail Peak Fares pilot

The Scottish Government has funded a six-month trial of removing peak fares on all ScotRail services from October 2023 to March 2024.

SPT is fully supportive of any measures to make public transport more affordable and accessible but would favour an industry-wide approach to this; while rail is a useful and essential mode for some journeys, other modes (Subway and bus) play a key role for many residents across the SPT area and significantly more people travel by bus every day than by rail.

(viii) National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board (NSTAB)

The National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board is an expert group constituted by the Scottish Government to advise ministers on smart ticketing. Membership of the board has been established during 2023 and SPT can confirm Neil Wylie, Director of Finance and Corporate Support has been appointed to the NSTA Board.

5. Committee action

The Committee is recommended to note the contents of the report.

6. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>Aligned to RTS policies 18 and 19 (Integrated public transport system and Ticketing and information)</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None at present.</i>

Climate Change, Adaptation &
Carbon consequences

None at present.

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