

Transform Scotland director **Colin Howden** says it's time Scotland caught up with the rest of the world and made public transport easier to use through smart ticketing options

Give us a ticket to ride...

Major improvements must be made to the quality and affordability of public transport if Scotland is to catch up with best practice around the world. There has been progress in this area in recent years, but for this to continue we need to see priority given for investment in public transport – buses, trams, trains and ferries – over the least sustainable modes of transport such as cars and planes.

The move to a truly sustainable, integrated public transport network will require many changes. We will need to see fair prices for public transport use; major improvements in conditions for bus travellers; and a long-term programme of investment in the Scottish inter-city rail network so that rail, rather than road, can become the norm for travel between our cities.

However, we believe that the one single, swiftly deliverable measure that would make

public transport substantially more attractive would be the implementation of a Scottish public transport Smartcard.

London's Oystercard has been fantastically successful, and we would like to see the delivery of a similar scheme in Scotland. International experience shows that if people hold public transport season tickets then they are much more likely to continue using public transport.

I can speak from recent experience. On a trip to Aberdeen I left the train station needing to get on a bus to the outskirts of the city. But carrying no change for the bus, and with no opportunity to buy one of the local bus travelcards, the only option left was to go shopping in order to find change for the bus fare. Not a major inconvenience, although it did mean that I was slightly out of pocket and I also missed a bus that I would otherwise have caught, but it is precisely these frustrating experiences of public transport that deter many people from using it as a matter of routine.

If, instead, I held a Scottish public transport smartcard – with stored credit useable on any form of public transport across the country – it would have taken one of the worries associated with public transport use: "Do I have the right fare?" out of the equation.

There are, of course, existing public transport multi-modal tickets in existence in Scotland. Two systems cover our most densely populated areas: Zonecard in the west and One-Ticket in the east.

Of the two, Zonecard is the better established, and is more flexible, allowing freedom to use any participating operator, rail, bus, ferry and subway, within the area purchased. One-Ticket is more limited, coming in a bus-only or a train-plus-bus form, the latter allowing local buses to be used to complete a train journey to and from Edinburgh. Both are, however, awkward to use for those unfamiliar with the system and One-Ticket, in particular, is over-priced. As a result, the vast majority of Scottish season-ticket-holders continue to use single-mode tickets.

There are also a number of rover tickets, allowing one or more days limited travel between rail, ferry and bus routes, as well as single and return tickets allowing through-travel

between bus/rail and ferries. Plus-Bus tickets allow local bus travel at the end of certain rail journeys

and full through-ticketing has now been enabled between the National Rail network and Glasgow Subway. Finally, SPT has a Day-Tripper ticket that allows similar freedom to Zonecard over a large area surrounding Glasgow and represents very good value over longer distances.

In short, the range of tickets on sale at present is varied with often overlapping and confusing validity. We would not, then, support the intro-

duction of a Smartcard as an addition to the existing range of tickets. We would rather see the development of a Smartcard platform to replace existing paper tickets. In this respect the Smartcard has to be attractive to operators as an alternative to cash and prepaid season tickets.

Administratively, the Smartcard system should be an extension of that developed for the concessionary fare system, with the necessary readers installed on the railway.

In summary, we want our public transport system to be one of the best in the world. We need public transport to become more affordable, more widely available, and of high quality everywhere.

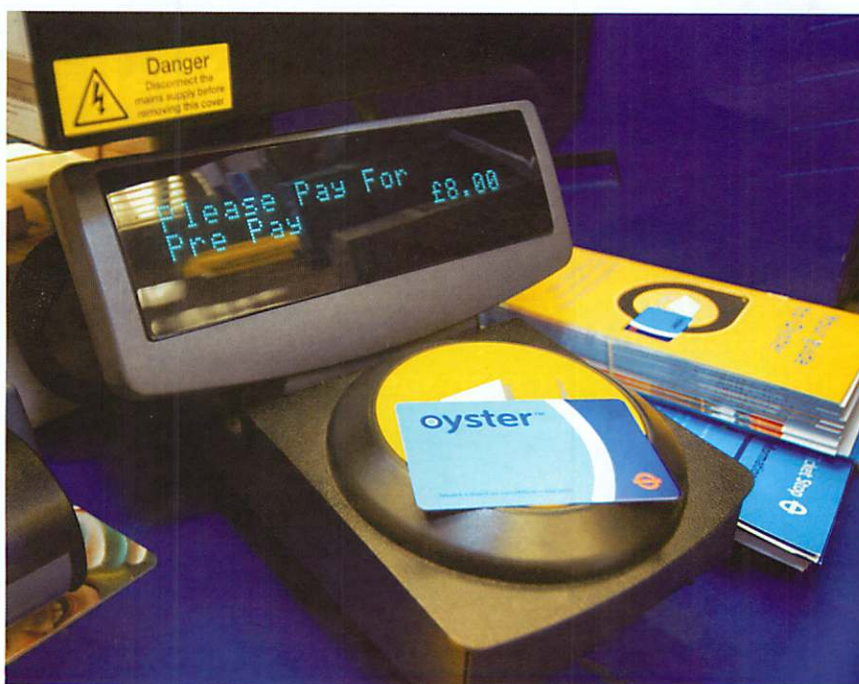
The clear aspiration for integrated transport should be for every Scot to have a public transport Smartcard in their pocket. A Scottish Smartcard would make use of the public transport network easier, not just for regular users but also for occasional users who would want pay-as-you-go options.

The aim to create a single, unified system for all public transport is one that should be kept in clear view despite any political and logistical hurdles which may arise. In order to make public transport easier to understand, especially for those who are not currently regular users, it is imperative that the Scottish Smartcard replaces, not duplicates, the existing range of tickets.

The first stage should be the replacement of existing paper tickets, particularly season tickets, with a single electronic format. As Smartcard readers are already being installed in buses across Scotland, this should be the short-term priority for integrated ticketing in Scotland.



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SMARTCARD:
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