



Pay As You Go Rail Consultation – ASLEF Response

1. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK's largest train drivers' union representing approximately 20,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and light rail systems.
2. ASLEF is grateful for the opportunity to respond to this consultation. As a rail union, we are strongly in favour of increasing the use of rail transport in the UK and therefore broadly supportive of any work which makes it easier for passengers to choose the train over other less sustainable modes of transport.
3. Passengers, when surveyed, frequently report that there is confusion over the types of tickets required to make different journeys, difficulty in ascertaining which is the best price for their journey and frustration that it is not possible to have a season ticket type rate for other patterns of travel than a Monday to Friday journey between two specified stations.
4. Figures from the Office of Rail and Road show that season ticket sales have fallen over recent years, with a 9.2% drop in the 2017-18 financial year and sales at their lowest level since 2010-11. Franchise holders rely on season ticket income so this fall has been cause for concern about the future of the franchise system and the incentives for companies to bid.
5. While there is a significant body of commuting passengers who travel on the same route each weekday, and for whom the season ticket system is an ideal and affordable option, it is not the case that this works for everyone. There is a strong argument in favour of season ticket or pay-as-you-go systems particularly for part-time workers who may be making the same journey but two or three times per week rather than every week day, or on days other than Monday to Friday. While these patterns of travel are seen right across the workforce, there is evidence to show that more women are likely to be part-time workers than men. There is therefore a strong argument in favour of introducing provision for a 'part time season ticket' equivalent in order to further gender equality and make sure women in particular aren't paying more per journey than their full-time male counterparts to get to work.
6. For less frequent travellers, or people likely to make a variety of different journeys rather than the same journey multiple times per week, the current system of ticketing means they are paying significantly more per journey than people with a standard season ticket who travel five days a week most weeks. A pay-as-you-go system for a specific area, which

allowed a set number of journeys per day, week, month or year within a zoned boundary would be a good step towards equalising the fares paid per journey for people with more varied travel requirements. While some people's travel may be conducted in this way to get to multi-site workplaces, for many travellers there is a need to move between different stations and routes due to other commitments including caring responsibilities, childcare arrangements and other lifestyle factors which may mean taking the same journey every day is not feasible. These travellers should be encouraged to take the train rather than resorting to a private car, and the equalising of the fares they pay would go some way towards this.

7. In many European countries, fare systems operate on a regional basis, with an easily purchased, affordable ticket providing travel on the railway within a region for a day, week or month. Any combination of routes within the region are available to the passenger, on an unlimited basis throughout the validity of their ticket. Passengers in the UK who have travelled to other European countries are likely to begin to expect this sort of ticketing to be available in Britain. While this is how the Oyster PAYG ticketing system works within in the London travel area, given some of the work already taking place in the south East and by Transport for the North and authorities in the West Midlands, it seems reasonable to expect that travel card tickets for unlimited regional travel should be among the policies for consideration as part of this review.
8. The consultation document discusses the issue of how different pay-as-you-go travel areas would intersect and how to make sure passengers are able to access the most appropriate fare for each part of their journey. This particularly applies in the central London area where passengers may well pass in and out of the current Transport for London Oyster area, and miss out on being charged Oyster travel rates for that part of their journey. ASLEF consistently advocates for a fully nationalised railway system, owned and operated publicly, and believes that under such a system it would be possible for a passenger to have a railcard that operates on the entire British railway network, automatically charging the best fare for the journey. Without the split between franchised areas, and without fragmentation of regional operations, it would be possible to make a calculation for the full journey based on a national fare scheme rather than leaving passengers forced to change ticketing system part way through their journeys, or miss out on more affordable tickets because of the layout of the fare areas.
9. Regarding the potential issues with passengers failing to 'tap in' or 'tap out' of their journeys, the consultation document mentions stations where there are freestanding card readers. ASLEF supports full and effective investment in station and railway infrastructure and would therefore recommend that all stations on the network should be installed with standard ticket barriers which facilitate tapping in and out.
10. In considering the criteria for inclusion in the proposed initial pay-as-you-go travel zone, the union broadly agrees with the principles set out in the consultation document. ASLEF is concerned by the need to agree any rollout or ticketing options with the train operating companies. In a single, publicly owned and operated system, this layer of bureaucracy would be unnecessary and the needs of the passengers – who tend to just want the simplest and

cheapest ticket – would come first. Within the confines of the current system, the union agrees that the rollout should start with stations on commuter lines which are already partly in a pay-as-you-go or smartcard ticketed area. This would relieve passenger confusion and prevent passengers using a smart card to board and unexpectedly discover they are unable to ‘tap out’ at the other end of their journey as it is beyond a boundary, despite being on the same route as other pay-as-you-go stations.

11. The union welcomes the proposal to include two additional airport stations in the first expansion of the pay-as-you-go area. Intermodal connections, such as from air to rail, rail to bus, or rail to metro and other sustainable urban modes are an important part of increasing the number of people choosing to use public transport. If residents and commuters in the South East know they can access an airport without needing a paper ticket or a new type of smart card they will be more likely to take up the option of travelling to airports by rail rather than road.
12. While it is of course logical to begin the rollout with the most used stations, based on passenger entries and exits, there is a significant argument for ensuring that rollout does continue to less-used stations and to areas of the country where the number of people travelling by train is currently lower. We will only achieve the aspiration of more people taking public transport if we make it simpler and more easily available. If people living or working near less-used stations feel a disadvantage from not being included in a pay-as-you-go area, they may remain disinclined to use the railway. ASLEF believes that infrastructure should precede passengers, with the philosophy of ‘if you build it they will come’ as this has shown to be effective in increasing passenger numbers in areas where good-quality infrastructure has been put in place.
13. The union believes that everyone in Britain should have access to efficient, reliable and affordable public transport. Therefore, while the initial rollout of an expanded pay-as-you-go area will be in the South East England commuter region, it is very important that this ticketing system is quickly rolled out to all areas of the country when it has been trialled and tested. The rail network in Britain has suffered from unequal investment over many decades, leaving areas such as the North, South West and Wales lagging behind. This must not be allowed to remain the case with new innovations such as smarter ticketing.
14. The current system of fares is widely regarded as being over complicated and disadvantageous to people whose journeys aren’t frequent and consistent, and who may not understand the complex system of off-peak times and fares and end up paying more for their journey than they need to. Along with making it easier for people to access the best fare, changing to a regional fare system would also bring into line fares across different operators. There is no reason why a ticket from one station to another should be a different price depending which operator’s trains you’re travelling in or which London station you arrive into and leave from. ASLEF maintains its support for a fully publicly owned and operated system in which there would be a single national operator and therefore no difference between different operators’ route pricing.

15. If a pay-as-you-go smartcard system is brought in for the proposed area it is reasonable to suggest that passengers will expect daily or weekly caps to be applied to their journeys like they are with London's Oyster card system. In order to increase the number of people choosing to travel by rail over less sustainable methods of transport, the fare system must be simple and people must feel that they are getting the best value fares.
16. In conclusion, ASLEF is broadly in favour of the proposal to extend pay-as-you-go travel not just in the south East of England but right across the United Kingdom. As a union our position is that the railway should be publicly owned and public operated as it is a public service, and increasing the number of people and goods travelling by rail benefits the whole of society.