



## **ASLEF Response to the DfT's Consultation on Rail Fares and Ticketing**

1. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK's largest train driver's union representing approximately 18,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and light rail systems.
2. The area of ticketing and fares is one of the most important and emotive subjects with regard to the railways. It is important to put any such discussion in context of where fares are in the historic context and compared to other railways in Europe.
3. Since 1995, fares across all journeys have gone up by an extraordinary 83.7%. In real terms this is 20%. This increase is even more dramatic when looking at long distance operators where fares have increased by 39% in real terms in this time period. These figures alone demonstrate that across all ticket types, fares have dramatically increased since privatisation. These increases have been far higher than inflation.
4. Figure from the Campaign for Better Transport demonstrate that on average, UK fares are 20% higher than European rail prices, and London commuters pay twice as much for their season tickets as their counterparts in other major European cities.
5. These increases have coincided with far greater passenger numbers. The network now carries more passengers than in anytime in peace time Britain with 1.3 billion passenger journeys being made every year. This is something that should be celebrated. Rail produces far less CO2

emissions than other forms of transport, in particular cars. Therefore the more journeys that are taken by rail, the easier it will be for the Government to fulfil its legally binding target of reducing CO2 emissions by 34% by 2020 and an 80% reduction by the year 2050. In addition it reduces road congestion and therefore also transport related deaths.

6. The Government's main transport priority must therefore be to grow the railway network within the UK to increase capacity. We must strive towards even more growth in passenger numbers whilst ensuring that the infrastructure has the capacity to take more people. Fares policy is an important piece in this puzzle.
7. ASLEF is pleased that the DfT are not using this consultation in order to increase revenue from fare increases. Whilst acknowledging that this consultation does not contain the RPI+ formula within its scope, it would be remiss to not mention that with fares already so high, the continuation of above inflation increases will continue to make the railways increasingly unaffordable to many workers.
8. ASLEF strongly supports many of the aims of the consultation. Where possible, it would be positive to make better use of capacity. Ticketing should also better service the needs of passengers. As previously mentioned, the Union wants to promote further growth therefore removing obstacles to this is another important aspect.
9. ASLEF fully supports the introduction of smart ticketing and the benefits it can produce. These are clear when looking at the Oyster Card out in London. Smart tickets would enable more flexibility for passengers in terms of ticket types and can mean a simplification in getting the right fare. For example the cap on fares that ensures TfL passengers do not pay more than the cost of a Travelcard.

10. It should be remembered that the rail network is a national network. People therefore want single tickets to work on several services from the starting point to the destination of a journey. It is extremely important that the DfT ensure that the rolling out of smart ticketing allows for a unified system. To run many parallel systems would only add to the confusion and would in fact take away from many of the supposed benefits of smart ticketing.
11. ASLEF believes that there must be changes to allow flexibility to season ticket holders. The current system for season tickets is highly beneficial and creates savings for those who work full time and traditional working hours. ASLEF agrees with the DfT that the current season ticket structure does little to support part time workers. Often commuters who may work 3 or 4 days a week could in a situation where it is still cheaper to purchase an annual season ticket than purchasing daily tickets but do not so as they may have the perception that it would represent pouring money “down the drain” as they are only used for about 50% of the days for which they are valid.
12. In addition, some workers do not need to use peak services. Often any savings that are to be gained from buying a season ticket are lost by the fact that passengers may only require cheaper off-peak services on a daily basis.
13. These problems of a one size fits all, all-encompassing season ticket mostly has a negative effect on women who are more likely to be part time workers or have caring responsibilities.
14. ASLEF would therefore urge the DfT to introduce a larger variety of season tickets with the options of peak and off peak and also for use for those who travel less than 5 days a week. This may well help maximise the use of capacity throughout the day and also create savings for part time works and help promote flexible working.

15. The Union would also support the DfT in ensuring that Train Operating Companies give passengers the option to pay for season tickets in instalments should employers not offer interest free season ticket loans.
16. An area that ASLEF is extremely concerned about is the creation of more expensive peak tickets. The Union fully supports measures that will help achieve more efficient use of rail capacity. However this must not lead to social exclusion with only the very wealthy being about to afford to travel by rail at peak times. Most commuters do not have flexibility in the times they work. Their employer dictates when they must start and finish work. For this reason, the creation of a “high-peak” seems to be unfairly punitive to these people.
17. ASLEF strongly opposes the proposal in the McNulty report where the total value of regulated fares baskets is permitted to increase by 2.3% each year for five years on top of the existing assumed fares changes using the “RPI+k” formula; with some fares (in the high-peak) rising by an additional 7% annually. That would be an additional 40% over the course of five years. Considering the UK’s already high fares this would be prohibitive and damaging to rail.
18. ASLEF would also question how effective using fares to change people’s behaviour may be. Britain’s railways are already running at capacity with peak services being extremely uncomfortable and overcrowded. The idea that there are many passengers who could choose travel at off peak times but decide to take busier services seems unlikely. If individuals have a free choice of travel time it is likely that they would travel at a time when services are quieter and more comfortable. Therefore manipulating passenger numbers with the fares structure will only work by pricing poorer commuters off of the railway. This is economically, socially and environmentally wrong.

19. That is not to say that ASLEF oppose cheaper fares on off-peak services. But the system should offer carrots to those who can change behaviour rather than sticks to those who cannot.

20. ASLEF support the DfT's measures to make purchasing the correct ticket easier for passengers and support the rolling out of Smart ticketing. However the way to deal with capacity issues on the railway is not to price people off but to build capacity. The UK already has record high prices when put in historic context and compared with the rest of Europe. The DfT must not reduce regulation on fares. Train Operators often have monopolies. The DfT must realise that rail policy is of national importance in many social ways. It is therefore only right that the state has a strong voice in policy and in particular in regard to fares. It must therefore stop profiteering by franchise operators. ASLEF therefore supports a fares structure that builds upon the success of rising passenger numbers rather than one that suppresses it. Capacity must increase to increase ticket revenue through higher numbers. Punitive costs will damage the network, not improve it.

Mick Whelan  
General Secretary  
ASLEF  
77 St John Street  
London  
EC1M 4NN