

Ticketing technology

A round-up of technical developments and recent contract awards in the ticketing area



There are plans to extend the Oyster pay-as-you-go system from the Underground to national rail stations in London.

Trainline's Print@Home success

The Trainline website has concluded successful trials with a print-at-home ticket facility. The development avoids reliance on the Royal Mail or having to allow time to pick up the ticket at the station through a FastTicket machine.

The Print@Home trials began with Midland Mainline, where the test period concluded in October and the operator is now looking to set up an ongoing operation for its business clientele. More trials, this time with 'one' and Virgin, are underway and set to conclude on 15 December.

'In order to keep the costs down on the trial we set up microsites for each operator' explains Nick Yates, Product Manager with The Trainline. The company, which was sold three months ago by Virgin Trains to a venture capital company, used its own in-house technology to set up the trial.

To prevent fraud, the print-at-home tickets were only valid for reserved seats on specific trains. 'We assigned a number of seats to the trial and used images and fonts to stop anyone from changing the ticket' says Mr Yates.

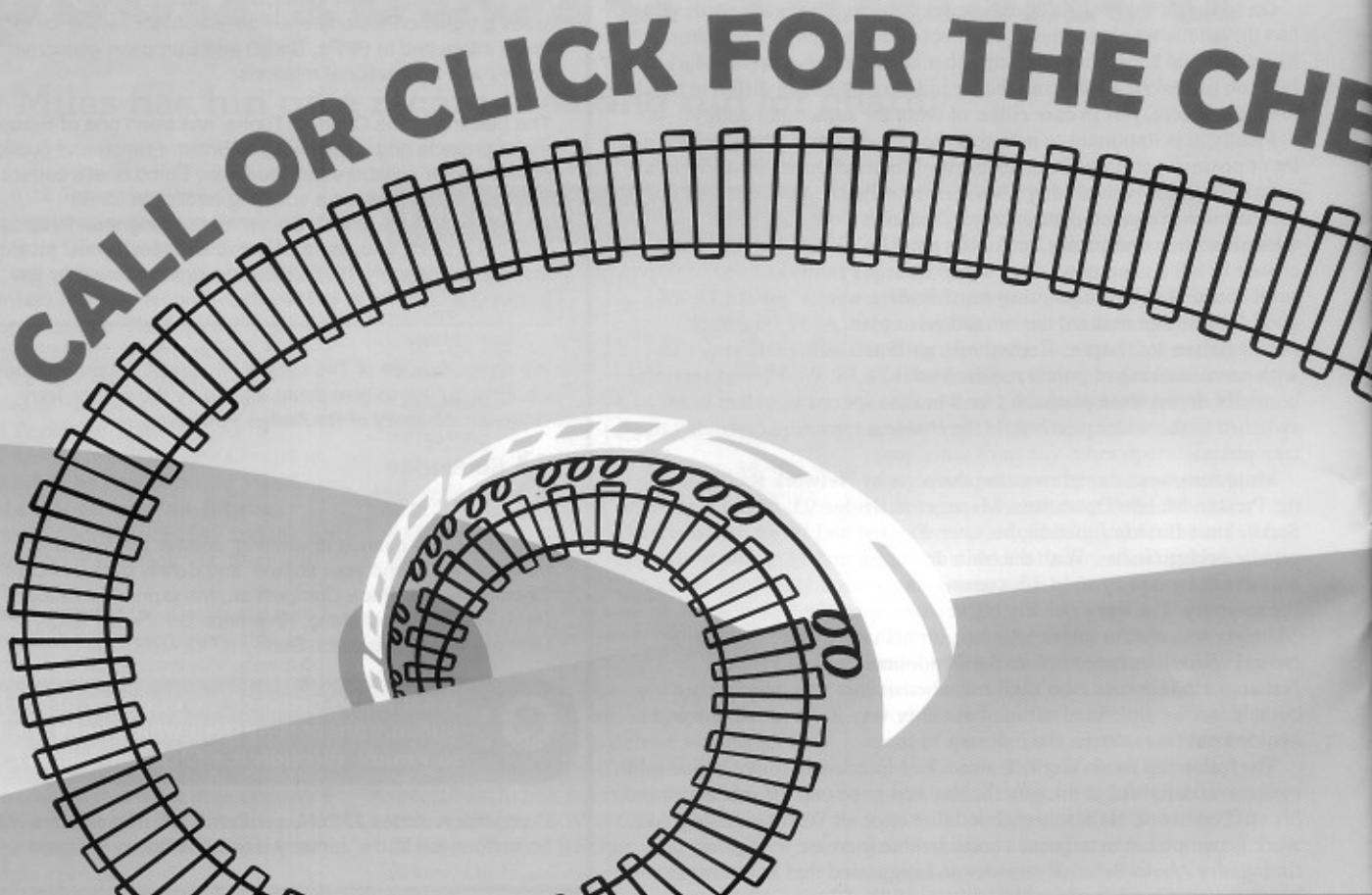
In September, ATOC announced that it is to issue an Official Journal of the European Union Periodic Indicative Notice (OJEU-PIN) to pre-qualify suppliers for the development and evaluation of technologies for home printing of tickets.

ITSO progress

Work is underway with the aim of bringing ITSO standard smart cards onto the railway. While ATOC is chairing an umbrella group overseeing the industry work streams to make this happen, the Department for Transport has included the roll-out of ITSO smart cards in the specification for the new South Western franchise.

In the case of London, the aim is that passengers will be able to use both Oyster 'pay-as-you-go' and ITSO smartcards. Transport for London has agreed to pay for Oyster validation equipment to be provided for all 310 national rail stations in Zones 1 - 6. This is a significant breakthrough that offers train companies the opportunity to accept Oyster pay-as-you-go products on their services.

Transport for London has also agreed to work with the Department for Transport to ensure that all Oyster equipment is capable of accepting ITSO smart cards. Trials have already been undertaken with ITSO-compliant Oyster cards on buses in east London.



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APTIS almost gone

Work to replace the British Rail-era APTIS ticket-issuing machines in national rail ticket offices is almost complete. A few remain in the Greater London area as they have the ANT add-on that allows them to cope with Oyster; these are being retained pending further integration of Oyster on national rail.

Fujitsu's STAR system captured about 40% of the APTIS replacement market, supplying a number of train operators including First companies Great Western, ScotRail and TransPennine, South West Trains, Southeastern and Merseyrail. In Liverpool STAR has supported Merseyrail's M-to-Go shops (p44, last month), where both rail tickets and groceries are retailed through the same terminal.

The other large player in the APTIS replacement market was the Tribute system, which is supported with technology from Atos Origin.

Cubic captured Chiltern and Northern, while Shere was another niche player with Southern and the former Thameslink route.

OD up

cket on Departure machines are now ring over £260million pa of sales, sulting in 4.6million tickets being issued, ys ATOC. Ticket on Departure now counts for 6% of all ticket sales, involving TOCs at approximately 350 locations ross the rail network.

£30million contract for Atos

The Association of Train Operating Companies' Rail Settlement Plan Ltd has awarded Atos Origin a 12-year business processing outsourcing contract worth over £30million. Atos is charged with automation of the Rail Revenue Settlement Service, which processes the payment of all rail ticket sales in the UK to the 25 train operating companies (TOCs). ATOC says the new automated service is expected to deliver operational savings worth £20million by 2018.

The contract is in two phases. In the first phase, Atos Origin will manage the transition of the service which it currently manages and which covers the settlement of all tickets purchased directly from train operators on-line, over the telephone, at the station, or on the train, to the new framework that is built on CODA accounting software. In the second phase, which will complete in April 2008, Atos Origin will take on the service currently provided by Fujitsu, for all tickets purchased by travel agents, large companies and warrant account holders.

The new automated settlement service will be integrated with LENNON, also managed by Atos Origin. This service allocates the ticket sale revenue to each of the train operating companies within 24 hours of the ticket being purchased. The contracts for both services run concurrently to 2018.

ITSO proves interoperability

The Wayfarer stand at the recent ITS show in London was proving an important step forward for smartcard ticketing in the UK: interoperability. On the stand were card readers from buses in Chester and Blackpool. A card from Blackpool would work on the Chester reader, and vice versa. The cards are from different manufacturers, and the different back office systems have proved able to talk to one another.

'It means a bus driver in, say, Devon, does not have to recognise a flash card from Sunderland – the machine will do it for him' said Peter Stoddart, of the transport smartcard trade group ITSO. This is important, as from 1 April 2008 pensioners will be entitled to free bus travel across the country.

ATOC explores mobile phone technology

ATOC has engaged two technology suppliers – Atos Origin and Kizoom – to develop and evaluate ideas for ticket-to-mobile technology for use on the railways. Ticket-to-mobile offers the potential for the sale of a ticket directly to a passenger's mobile phone. ATOC says that if the technology can be fully exploited, this system has the potential to be used for walk-up tickets – which would be a great advance for passengers. Technology to read the ticket rapidly and easily, such as bar code readers, will be important. 'While this and the other technologies necessary are generally available now, the challenge will be to determine the best combination of technologies for practical use on the railway' says ATOC Director General George Muir.

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