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Reference number of document: **ITSO/DF 0001**

## **Title: ITSO Interoperability Explained**

Source of document: **ITSO**  
ITSO – General Manager

### Change Control Details

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comment</b>
D1	04/07/2005	Draft (1) for Internal Review
D2	12/07/2005	Amended following comment from DfT
D3	03/08/2005	Amended by PN and ME for final comment
DF0001	15/08/2005	Publication

Document type: ITSO Explanation  
Document subtype: Marketing  
Document template: ITSO 2



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## **ITSO Interoperability Explained**

This note explains what is meant by Interoperability in the ITSO Environment. It describes what it is, what it does, and what it means for scheme operators and their customers.

### **Interoperability Definitions**

Interoperability may be defined in more than one way.

Interoperability can be defined to mean that

- a media is accepted for use- between modes of travel; for example Bus and Ferry within one locality. This is often described as intermodal interoperability.
- a media is able to be used interoperably, i.e. is interavailable between localities or distinct geographical locations; for example Manchester and London.
- products<sup>1</sup> can be used interoperably between different operators in either the same or different locations; for example Virgin Rail and First Group Bus.

The emphasis on all the above is the word "can".

### **ITSO Interoperability Defined.**

In terms of the above three definitions of Interoperability ITSO can facilitate all of them.

There is one fundamental requirement for Interoperability in the ITSO Environment. This is that an ITSO Customer Media (or Smart Card) is capable of being used anytime, anywhere. Again, the emphasis is on capability.

This means that a Customer Media may be used to load products at any participating product loading point, but it can only be loaded with those products that the loading point is allowed to load. (This is standard retailing practice and is no different from visiting Tesco and being unable to purchase Sainsbury's own brand items). In simple terms it means that there has to be a commercial agreement in place between a retailer and a product owner before a customer can purchase a particular product at that location. And, in the ITSO context, the product will then be loaded onto the smart media for subsequent use. A simple non-electronic analogy might be that you have your own personal pre-authorised security marked blank ticket roll in your pocket. You go to a ticket seller, establish that he sells the ticket you wish to buy, and hand over your ticket roll. The seller then imprints it with the ticket that you have just purchased.

An example is that I can have my customer media issued to me in Leeds. I can then go to Manchester, say, and buy a Manchester only Arriva Travelcard. This will enable me to use my media only in Manchester while and where the product is valid (probably only on Arriva buses – UNLESS Arriva have commercial agreements with other operators for acceptance). What the Arriva Travelcard won't let me do though is go home and use the bus in Leeds (even on Arriva buses in Leeds – unless of course, Arriva Travelcards are

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<sup>1</sup> Note that in this document the word product is used in terms of loading into a Customer Media. This is because ITSO contains product entities that provide for multi-application use. A product load can mean either a ticket or adding value to Stored Travel. Where the term ticket is used in this document it refers to a specific application where a ticket is purchased that gives entitlement to make a journey or journeys.



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accepted nationwide by Arriva). Assuming this is not the case, then I need a product issued by an Arriva authorised Leeds sales outlet for use on Arriva buses in Leeds.

So the media may be used anywhere where there is an ITSO authorised product-loading point to purchase products for subsequent use where those products are accepted.

It does not mean, for example, that if I purchase a ticket for use on an Arriva Bus it will automatically be usable on a First Bus. (This can only happen if there is an agreement between First and Arriva for the First Bus to accept the Arriva ticket.)

Put another way, I can only buy a ticket [or product] for use on a specific service from an outlet that has been authorised by the system (as notified by the product owner) to issue the ticket for that service. But I can use my ITSO media anywhere to buy a ticket [or product] that is available. If I buy the wrong ticket or product then the point of service will not be able to validate the ticket. It will react as though there is no ticket or product on the media.

ITSO requires that all products can be loaded onto all customer media containing an authorised ITSO shell. ITSO does not however have any involvement in where products are retailed or accepted, this is solely within the control of the product owner.

ITSO will not attempt to second-guess how markets will develop, and which Members will agree with each other to promote and accept which products. ITSO's objective is to ensure that the infrastructure exists to enable interoperability and that the infrastructure itself is not an impediment to its implementation.

Clearly, some standardisation of trading practices and some common procedures will be desirable, which is why AILO are seeking to develop various Codes of Practice. Eventually, Members may wish to see some of these mandated. If in due course, that proves to be case, then if its Members agree, ITSO will embody them in its Operating Licences.

To Summarise

ITSO enables interoperability of products between its membership, and strongly encourages it, but does not mandate it.

The mandate only states that all types of customer media must be able to be used wherever ITSO is implemented.

In simple terms:

- Customer media may be used anywhere to load product. (But only product permitted to be sold at that location, and onto that media).
- Products are usable only where they are accepted.
- Interoperability does not mean that all products are sold everywhere.
- Interoperability does not mean that all products are accepted everywhere.
- Interoperability does mean that all products that are interoperable are accepted interoperably without hindrance.

~END of Note~