

## Fares and Ticketing Strategy for Aberdeen City and Shire

### Executive Summary

#### ***Aim and Objectives***

The overall aim of the fares and ticketing strategy is:

- *to work in partnership with operators to ensure that the travelling public are aware of, and have on offer, fares which represent value for money and ticket options which reflect their travel patterns.*

To enhance the image of the public transport product and, in turn, encourage passenger growth and revenue generation, fares and ticketing products will be developed which:

- *assist 'seamless' ease of travel for passengers thus enhancing the travel experience;*
- *provide perceived value for money and enhance the attractiveness of public transport services; and,*
- *speed passenger boarding and enable efficient service operation.*

#### ***Context***

Across the Nestrans region there is a multiplicity of ticket types available to the travelling public, offered by a number of different operators to encourage customer loyalty, retain market share and maximise revenue flow. In addition to operator specific ticket types there are currently four multi-operator integrated tickets available: *Aberdeen PLUSBUS; Westhill Bus; Railbus; and, Aberdeenshire Connect*. Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils also have a direct involvement by specifying the requirement to issue and accept certain ticket types on their respective supported bus services.

The current multiplicity of fare levels, fare structures and ticket types can undermine confidence in public transport, particularly amongst irregular or non-users, who are not necessarily aware of some of the best value tickets.

The lack of multi-operator transfer tickets and multi-operator travelcards reduces the attractiveness of public transport both to users and non-users as passengers do not have: the flexibility to board the first bus to their destination where a corridor is served by more than one operator, if they have already purchased a better value single operator multi-journey ticket; the opportunity to avail themselves of a discounted return ticket if their return trip involves the use of a different operator from the inbound trip; and, the ability in some circumstances to purchase value for money transfer tickets where their journey involves interchange between different operators.

The strategy acknowledges:

- the potential benefits of simplified and integrated public transport ticketing systems, including patronage growth;
- that the nature and extent of the benefits depend upon the ticketing system(s) adopted and the local operational environment; and,
- that smart ticketing infrastructure can facilitate better integration but does not in itself guarantee it, and that the potential benefits of such technological investment will not be fully realised without further integration;

There are also significant constraints that are placed upon both local authorities and operators in promoting multi-operator integrated ticketing arrangements as a consequence of competition legislation and the deregulated public transport market. Current legislation makes no provision for local authorities to set the price of tickets under a multi-operator ticketing scheme.

The strategy is based on the premise that the introduction of integrated tickets by voluntary agreement with bus operators is preferable to the imposition of such tickets through the use of statutory legislation.

### ***Strategy Actions***

Actions have been identified that are considered both desirable and deliverable, with the timescale for proposed implementation reflecting the priority and complexity of the issue to be addressed.

The Actions identified are to:

#### Short Term (0-9 months)

- Set supported bus service fares to broadly reflect prevailing commercial fare levels.
- Specify the sale on supported bus services of discounted child fares, including 'half-fare' single fares.
- Set attractive and simple levels of discount for supported bus service return tickets and multi-journey tickets.
- Incorporate the issue and acceptance of appropriate multi-operator tickets as a condition of all supported bus service contracts.
- Specify the sale on supported bus services of a range of discounted 'family/group' tickets.
- Permit the sale of commercial tickets at commercial fare levels on supported bus service journeys that are provided on predominantly commercial routes.
- Encourage operators to provide commercial multi-operator ticketing products.

- Encourage the sale of a range of discounted ‘family/group’ tickets on commercial bus services.
- Maintain and/or introduce *Aberdeenshire Connect* multi-operator transfer tickets where passenger and other benefits will ensue.
- Provide an electronic ticket machine (ETM) back office for ‘smaller operators’.
- Facilitate a revenue redistribution facility for multi-operator ticketing arrangements.
- Encourage bus and rail operators to continue to develop, and participate in, rail-bus ‘add-on’ through tickets.
- Encourage operators to provide clear and comprehensive information on fares and ticketing.

#### Medium Term (9-24 months)

- Where possible, simplify supported bus service fare structures.
- Encourage operators to, where possible, simplify commercial bus service fare structures.
- Consider the options for an *Aberdeenshire Connect plus* ticketing product (i.e. an *Aberdeenshire Connect* multi-operator transfer ticket plus add-on for onward/return travel within Aberdeen City).
- Promote, and encourage operators to participate on a voluntary basis, in a joint ticketing arrangement providing for multi-operator travelcards across the Nestrans region on a zonal basis, with a phased implementation.
- Provide fares and ticketing information on the Councils’ corporate web sites.
- Lobby Traveline Scotland to hold and disseminate fares information.
- Promote and publicise multi-operator tickets and single operator discounted ticket products.
- Investigate the options for the introduction of an ITSO compliant interoperable e-purse that could be universally accepted by all bus operators in Aberdeen City and Shire.
- Investigate the options for the introduction of an integrated e-ticket product range.

#### Long Term (24 months +)

- Introduce an ITSO compliant interoperable e-purse that is universally accepted by all bus operators in Aberdeen City and Shire.
- Introduce an integrated e-ticket product range.

Progress on implementing the Actions and, in turn, the effects of the Fares and Ticketing Strategy will be monitored and reported on an annual basis to the Local Authority Bus Operators Forum and Nestrans Board. The Strategy will be reviewed as appropriate in light of the monitoring process.