

# Fares increases capped as DfT considers flexible ticketing



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FLEXIBLE ticketing, single-leg ticketing, and limiting the increase in fares form part of the Government's Fares and Ticketing Review published on October 9.

Government has clipped the rail industry's powers to increase fares, limiting it to an additional 2% (provided the average rise of regulated fares is maintained at 1% above inflation) instead of the current 5%.

"By capping fares we are protecting passengers from large rises at a time when family incomes are already being squeezed," said Secretary of State for Transport Patrick McLoughlin

However, he warned that before being able to state exactly how much a commuter could save, Government needs to wait for the rail industry to calculate individual ticket prices for next year.

The introduction of flexible ticketing will enable more 'touch in, touch out' rail tickets across the network, which Government says "could mean part-time workers receive a discount on season tickets for travelling three days rather than five, or for travelling earlier or later". This follows

the Department for Transport's £45 million South East Flexible Ticketing Programme plan that will pilot next year (RAIL 732).

A single-leg ticket will also be introduced, with DfT planning a pilot scheme to allow passengers to 'mix and match' each ticket type when planning return journeys.

David Mapp, commercial director at the Association of Train Operating Companies, said: "Train companies and passengers will welcome the planned reduction in flex. Although the level of flex has always been a matter of government policy, the reduction being proposed is in line with that suggested by train companies, and should help to encourage greater rail use.

"The package of measures, which train companies have worked with the Government to draw up, should make it quicker and easier for people to get the best value ticket for their rail journey. Operators look forward to

working with the Government to introduce the changes."

As well as the capping of a maximum increase in regulated fares, the review includes a ticketing code of practice that will be overseen by the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR), to ensure passengers are provided with the necessary information to obtain the best ticket.

ATOC has agreed to release information to passengers from 2014 on how well ticket office staff, ticket machines and websites perform in this area.

Rules will also be strengthened regarding ticket office opening times at stations. It is intended that passenger representative bodies play a greater role in

**TransPennine Express 185137 takes the crossover at Eaglescliffe on October 7, working the 0835 Manchester Airport-Middlesbrough. The annual increase in ticket prices is due to be reduced, while passengers on long-distance services could see a more flexible way of booking tickets. However, critics suggest that there is no change in the Government's fare policy. PETER FOSTER.**



## Comment Anthony Smith, Chief Executive, Passenger Focus

Passengers will be pleased to hear that the amount by which train companies can raise individual regulated fares has been limited.

We have been calling for this to happen for years - it is a step towards a fairer system. This will allow passengers to plan with a bit more certainty, and have confidence that actual regulated fare rises will bear more relation to the figures set by Government.

It is imperative that the rail industry does what it can to ensure that passengers buy the right ticket. It should then be obvious what they have bought and when it can be used.

These reforms taken together will, in time, help to boost confidence. The price of getting it wrong has now become very high for passengers.



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shaping these changes.

ORR is to look into the sale of tickets, and consider whether the markets are operating efficiently, effectively and in the best interests of passengers and taxpayers. DfT says it will consider any cost-effective recommendations as a result of this.

Stephen Joseph, Campaign for Better Transport chief executive, said: "Although we welcome a curb on even higher fare increases, there's still a gaping hole at the

centre of the Government's fares policy.

"While trials for things like part-time season tickets are very welcome, the biggest issue has always been annual above-inflation fare increases, and there is no change of policy on this. This is bitter news for everyone who relies on the train to get to work, not least the large number of commuters in marginal constituencies who will be a key group at the next election."