

Ticket Vending Machine: Ten Point Improvement Plan

December 2016

Following production of the TVM Design Guidelines, and consultation with stakeholders and suppliers the following ten key points have been identified that will give improvements to the customer experience of TVMs in the short to medium term, and will enable TVM suppliers to more easily meet the requirements of the TVM Design Guidelines.

1) Reduce the number of tickets and routes that cover the same journey

One of the key issues with the TVM experience is the difficulty in enabling the retail of every product, as well as the confusion and decision paralysis that results from having so much choice. Reducing the number of tickets and routes that cover the same journey will simplify the development of the TVMs to meet the Design Guidelines, and will reduce customer confusion.

ACTION: RDG will work with the Train Operating Companies to identify and eliminate unnecessary and undesirable duplication of tickets and routes.

BENEFIT: Customers have a clearer choice and are more easily able to select the correct ticket for their needs

2) Ticket validity information (peak/off-peak information)

Not all TVMs fully explain what the peak and off-peak restrictions are for a ticket the customer is purchasing.

ACTION: RDG will make a data feed of ticket validity information available to TVM suppliers and work with them to incorporate this into the TVM interface.

BENEFIT: Customers know when their selected off-peak ticket is valid, ensuring they have all the information necessary to buy the correct ticket.

3) Peak / off-peak configuration

TVMs are configured differently to sell off-peak tickets only at certain times. This raises two requirements; 1) if a customer purchases an off-peak ticket they need to have sufficient time to then catch an off-peak service before the end of the off-peak period; and 2) if the beginning of the off-peak period is approaching customers need to be informed that a cheaper ticket will be soon available.

ACTION: RDG will liaise with TOCs and TVM suppliers to configure TVMs appropriately, and to make clear to customers at what times a TVM is configured to sell off-peak tickets.

BENEFIT: Customers know when the TVM will begin to sell off-peak tickets and thus when they might be able to find a cheaper ticket.

4) RDG's "My Ticket" feed

What a customer is entitled to do with a ticket – the routes they may travel, the trains they may catch, the times and dates for which it is valid – depend on the type of ticket purchased. RDG's "My Ticket" functionality gives customers who have purchased a ticket access to this and more information. Better access to this type of information when purchasing a ticket will make it easier for a customer to be confident they have bought the best value ticket for their needs.

ACTION: RDG will make its "My Ticket" feed available to TVM suppliers and will liaise with suppliers to embed a link to the functionality within the ticket purchase process.

BENEFIT: Customers can see in a single functional area everything that their ticket entitles them to do.

5) Build the TVM Design Guidelines into future franchises

It is not proposed that the TVM Design Guidelines are mandated; however to ensure their future adoption and the proper consideration of the costs of implementation they could be stipulated in any future franchise agreements.

ACTION: RDG will liaise with the DfT to add the TVM Design Guidelines into future franchise agreements.

BENEFIT: All TVMs comply with the TVM design guidelines.

6) Do not use cryptic short codes in place of Train Operator names

Passengers do not easily recognise abbreviations such as “VTEC only” thus it should be made clearer which tickets are valid only on a particular TOC and which can be used on any operator through the use of the full TOC name.

ACTION: RDG will liaise with TVM Suppliers to replace cryptic short codes with the full Train Operator name.

BENEFIT: Customers are clear on which operators they can, or cannot use their ticket with

7) Make customers aware if cheaper tickets are available through the TVM

If there is a cheaper alternative ticket available via the TVM that might allow the customer to travel on their specified journey more cheaply, this should be made clear. It is accepted that limitations of TVM retailing mean that TVMs will not be able to advise on some alternative products eg Advance products or mobile only fares, or might not be able to accurately advise on the suitability of some products eg Returns.

ACTION: Work with the TVM suppliers and the TOCs to understand what existing configuration elements can be used to meet this requirement or, where that’s not possible, to understand what changes are needed.

BENEFIT: Customers never unknowingly pay more for a ticket than they needed

8) Replace ‘sticky’ labels with digital labels

All TVMs are now labelled to make clear the range of tickets they do, and do not sell; however changes in functionality of a TVM, or vandalism of the labels, results in new labels being necessary. Some TOCs use on-screen messaging in addition to the labels; such on-screen messaging is easier to change if TVM functionality changes.

ACTION: RDG will liaise with TVM suppliers and TOCs to replace ‘sticky’ labels with digital labels.

BENEFIT: Customers are always aware of the range of tickets that the TVMs do, and do not sell

9) Consistent and intuitive station look-up functionality

On many TVMs it is difficult to search for station names, for example a customer might need to type “London S” before being presented with London St Pancras as an option. For customers who

do not know a full industry station name this can make buying a ticket to such stations difficult and frustrating.

ACTION: RDG will liaise with the TVM suppliers to implement consistent and intuitive station look-up functionality that, as a minimum, includes key word look-up ie a customer typing in “Kings” will be presented with London Kings Cross as well as any other matching stations.

BENEFIT: Customers can easily and consistently find the station to which they wish to buy a ticket.

10) A) Make clear what group stations a ticket is valid to or from

When purchasing a ticket that is valid to or from a group station, the TVMs do not tell the customer which stations it is valid for.

ACTION: RDG will liaise with the TVM suppliers to add functionality to make clear which group stations a ticket is valid to or from.

BENEFIT: Customers can see which group stations their ticket is valid to or from.

B) Look at what additional Data feeds RDG can make available.

RDG has many data feeds that contain much additional information that could be used to fulfil many of the requirements of the TVM Design Guidelines, and more.

ACTION: RDG will make all its data feeds available to the TVM suppliers.

BENEFIT: Suppliers are able to develop innovative solutions using all the available data.