



60 Seconds with John Backway

Hi John, tell us a bit about your role and what you're working on?

I am responsible for retailing, ticketing and pricing at Southeastern. I also represent Southeastern and Go-Ahead Group in industry ticketing projects, working with RDG, TfL and DfT.

What are your key priorities for the next 3 months?

The most important priority in terms of Southeastern is the delivery of our STNR Deed of Amendment. This will extend our Key smartcard to include additional sales outlets, new ticket types and interoperability with other TOCs. Secondly, in my role as sponsor of the RDG's Digital Wallet Ticketing workstream, finding a way forward to make contactless NFC ticketing work on the iOS platform continues to be a high priority. Finally, I am looking forward to seeing the outcome of the RDG Fares Consultation, and how we can reform some of the industry's longstanding challenges around pricing.

What do you feel will be the biggest challenge for you / your project in the next 3 months and how do you plan to work through this?

I think the biggest challenge is the pace of change and the desire for everyone in the industry to drive through modernised ticketing in such a short timeframe. Both STNR and the barcode project quite rightly have demanding timescales, but the industry is not always adaptable to such rapid deployment of new technology. At the same time, we also have rising customer expectations which are often shaped by developments in consumer technology well ahead of what the railway industry is trying to deliver.

As a customer, what would be the one piece of innovation you'd like to see in the rail industry and why?

I would like to see a single smartphone app offering flexible ticketing options, tailored real-time travel information and automatic compensation if things go wrong. The benefit this would bring to customers is the reduction in stress and anxiety, and a feeling of being control of their journey.

Did you manage to go anywhere for a summer holiday?

I spent a few days in Whitstable this month, at the height of the heatwave. The beaches were packed and the sea was warm. We only had time for a short break this summer as we are getting our daughter ready for her first day at school in September and need to save up our leave!