

Report to Partnership Meeting 11 September 2026

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board (NSTAB) Update

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the work of the National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board (NSTAB), on which the Partnership Director represents Scotland's Regional Transport Partnerships, and to highlight the publication of the Board's first Standards and Technology Advisory Report (STAR).

Background

The National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board (NSTAB) was established under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 to provide independent advice to Scottish Ministers on the strategic development of smart and integrated ticketing across Scotland.

Membership comprises representatives from transport authorities, operators, passenger groups and technical specialists, with the Regional Transport Partnerships represented collectively through the Partnership Director of HITRANS.

The Board's remit is to advise Scottish Ministers on:

- the strategic direction of smart and integrated ticketing;
- the national technological standard for smart ticketing; and
- wider arrangements necessary to support integrated public transport ticketing in Scotland.

NSTAB continues to meet regularly and has recently completed its first major programme of work through publication of the Standards and Technology Advisory Report (STAR).

Standards and Technology Advisory Report (STAR)

The STAR report provides Scottish Ministers with a strategic framework for the future development of smart and integrated ticketing across Scotland. It establishes the principles, governance arrangements and technical standards that should underpin future investment and implementation.

The report contains over 150 recommendations organised across short, medium and longer-term timescales.

The overall vision is for a nationally integrated, customer-focused ticketing ecosystem centred on Account-Based Ticketing (ABT), capable of supporting travel across bus, rail, ferry, coach, tram and future mobility services.

Importantly, the report recognises that customers should continue to have a choice of ticketing media, including:

- contactless payment cards;
- smartcards;
- mobile ticketing;
- barcode products; and
- future digital technologies.

Rather than replacing existing customer channels, STAR proposes the development of a common national architecture capable of supporting multiple forms of ticket purchase and validation through a shared back-office.

Technical Standards and Interoperability

A principal recommendation of STAR is the adoption of nationally consistent technical standards to support interoperability between operators, transport authorities and technology suppliers.

Recommendations include:

- progression towards a national Account-Based Ticketing architecture;
- common standards for retailing and ticket validation;
- adoption of open APIs and open data standards;
- procurement approaches that promote interoperability and avoid proprietary solutions; and
- consistent technical governance arrangements across Scotland.

These recommendations are intended to reduce fragmentation, simplify future integration and provide greater flexibility for passengers travelling across different operators and transport modes.

Single Source of Truth

One of the most significant recommendations is the creation of a national Single Source of Truth (SST).

The SST would provide nationally maintained datasets covering matters such as:

- fares;
- ticket products;
- concessionary travel entitlements;
- public transport service information;
- journey planning; and
- retail information.

The objective is to ensure consistency across customer information systems, journey planners and ticket retailing platforms while reducing duplication of data maintenance.

Accessibility

Accessibility is a key principle throughout the STAR report.

The Board recommends that future smart ticketing developments should:

- remain fully accessible to passengers without smartphones or access to banking services;
- adopt Human-Centred Design principles;
- improve accessibility across all customer interfaces; and
- ensure technological development reduces barriers to travel rather than creating new ones.

This aligns closely with the Scottish Government's wider Fair Fares agenda and commitments to improving accessibility across Scotland's transport network.

Relevance to HITRANS

Many of the recommendations within STAR align closely with work already being undertaken across the Highlands and Islands.

The emphasis on common standards, interoperability and open data supports a wide range of regional initiatives including:

- Mobility as a Service (MaaS);
- Bus Service Improvement Partnerships;
- Demand Responsive Transport (DRT);
- multi-modal and multi-operator ticketing;
- integrated public transport information;
- digital customer information; and
- behaviour change programmes delivered through the People and Place programme.

These recommendations provide a framework that should allow regional innovation to continue whilst ensuring that locally developed solutions can integrate effectively within a future national ticketing environment.

HITRANS has consistently supported the principle of nationally agreed standards alongside local flexibility in delivery. This approach has enabled innovation across the region, including through GO-HI, Real Time Passenger Information, Demand Responsive Transport and integrated digital travel information, whilst avoiding unnecessary duplication of systems and investment.

The Partnership Director will continue to represent the interests of Regional Transport Partnerships through NSTAB as the Scottish Government considers implementation of the STAR recommendations.

Risk Register

RTS Delivery

Impact - Positive

Policy

Impact – Neutral

Comment – The report supports delivery of Scotland's National Transport Strategy and aligns with wider work on Fair Fares, integrated public transport and digital transport services.

Financial

Impact – Positive

Comment – There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Future Scottish Government implementation programmes may present opportunities for regional investment.

Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment – The STAR report places significant emphasis on accessibility and inclusive design, supporting HITRANS' commitment to reducing transport inequality.

Recommendation

Members are invited to:

1. Note the ongoing work of the National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board (NSTAB).
2. Note the publication of the Standards and Technology Advisory Report (STAR) and its recommendations for the future development of smart and integrated ticketing in Scotland.
3. Note that the Partnership Director will continue to represent the interests of Scotland's Regional Transport Partnerships through NSTAB as work progresses on implementation of the report's recommendations.

Report by:
Designation:
Date:

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23rd July 2026