

# PROJECT CORAL

## Integrated Ticketing Broker Briefing Report

5 October 2023



***Please note that the following recommendation/s is/are subject to consideration and determination by the Board before taking effect.***

## RECOMMENDATION

### It is recommended that:

- (a) The Board notes the work led by Midlands Connect, in collaboration with Transport for the West Midlands and Department for Transport, for a National Integrated Ticketing Brokering system.
- (b) The Board agrees to support in principle this initiative and that Peninsula transport continues to work with Midlands Connect and the local authorities within the Peninsula to develop this approach further.
- (c) The chair write to Midlands Connect and the Department for Transport setting out Peninsula Transport's position in respect of this initiative.

### 1. Background

Following the release of the National Bus Strategy the Government produced guidance stating that Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and bus operators should work on the basis that:

- a single solution to connect the payment back offices of individual operators is available; and
- that LTAs should not therefore seek to develop this independently.

The approach is intended to enable better seamless travel experiences and provide bus users with confidence that they will always receive best value fares. Essentially, this paves the way for smart, contactless ticketing to be developed across the national bus network.

A multi-disciplinary team has been assembled to develop proposals for a single nationwide scheme to tackle a Project to achieve this single solution. The project team, known as Project Coral, is led by TfWM, Nottingham City Council & Midlands Connect, and has the aim of creating a solution that is best placed to change transport habits in the region. This has the explicit objective of being able to readily roll-out the same solution to other local authorities throughout England (and potentially elsewhere in the UK) in pursuit of the same benefits for their travellers.

This project has progressed significantly in recent months. A business case is now being developed to support the rollout of this approach nationally which is being supported by the Department for Transport. Midlands Connect, who are leading this work, is now seeking in principle support from the other Sub-National Transport Bodies which will help solidify the business case, drive economies of scale, and expedite delivery of a national solution.

### 2. Project Coral Broker Solution

Project Coral, made up of the 'big five' bus operators (Arriva, First Group, Go-Ahead, National Express and Stagecoach), investigated the potential options and concluded a solution similar to the Broker model is the most attractive. Since then, Project Coral and TfWM (who in turn are working closely with Midlands Connect and Nottingham City Council) have begun working together to produce a solution that would deliver the right user proposition and is attractive to operators. DfT have been closely engaged with this throughout.

DfT have also set out an expectation that bus operators develop plans to enable multi-operator ticketing nationally (in the National Bus Strategy) and committed to “London-style contactless ticketing across the commuter networks in the Midlands and North” (Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands<sup>1</sup>). DfT identified the broker as the most mature mechanism for making this happen.

It should be noted that the Cornwall model, along with Leicester, has been used as the pilot for the delivery of this broker model and therefore a national solution will be fully aligned with the brokering arrangement already in place within part of the Peninsula.

### **3. Upcoming Letter of Support**

A request for support will be issued within the next two months in the form of a ‘Letter of Support’ template sent by the Project Team for your review and signatures. This will be sent to all Local Transport Authorities, Sub-National Transport Bodies and Transport Operators.

The Letter of Support template will set out the objectives of the project in procuring and rolling out a contactless transport ticketing broker in a national context. It will seek support from stakeholders, which will strengthen the business case development for the large-scale deployment, starting in the West Midlands and Nottingham (subject to readiness) and the subsequent planned roll-out nationally.

At this stage support from STBs and LTAs is sought to confirm that:

- Authorities would be supportive of the project in principle; and
- The project has relevance to their locality.

This will enable a more robust picture of the scope and scale of national deployment and the capacity and resource required to support exploitation of the underlying systems, which the project will build (and make available for all stakeholders to access).

### **4. Engagement**

Midlands Connect and the Project Coral team have undertaken extensive engagement with operators, LTAs within the STB area and the DfT. They also host regular ‘town hall’ events to which all LTAs are nationally invited. In addition, an Integrated Ticketing Advisory Forum has been set up, with all STBs along with Midlands LTAs, to keep stakeholders informed on progress.

STBs are intended to be a conduit for this local engagement – filtering down the national agenda, and project in order to draw out local challenges, opportunities, and relevance. As the national business case develops, engagement via STBs and directly with LTAs will enable them to shape the final product. This briefing paper provides an opportunity for stakeholders to raise any concerns they may have about the project ahead of receiving the request for a letter of support described above.

This early engagement will also enable an assessment of technical readiness and the identification of systems gaps for each area, including any additional capital funding requirements that could be addressed by a joined-up national level deployment.

### **5. Regional Relevance**

Within the Peninsula Transport area, there are already examples of successful and innovative contactless and joined up ticketing, in particular Transport for Cornwall, along with multi-operator ticketing in Plymouth.

The emerging Peninsula Transport strategy will have a clear objective focused around facilitating easier journeys with integrated ticketing playing a central part in achieving that. The opportunity to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-rail-plan-for-the-north-and-the-midlands>

support and take advantage of this national brokering approach will enable this objective to come forward in the relatively near future, subject to engagement and support of stakeholders and LTAs. The STB will work closely with LTAs and operators to facilitate the potential rollout of this scheme and ensure all operators, LTAs and other stakeholders are well informed.

## **6. Financial Considerations**

There are no current financial implications or considerations in relation to this paper. As Project Coral progresses, the potential financial arrangements for the adoption of integrated contactless ticketing will be explored further with the Department for Transport.

## **7. Legal Considerations**

There are no specific legal considerations associated with this paper.

## **8. Risk Management Considerations**

The Peninsula Transport Programme Management Group reviews risk and assigns the required mitigation actions across the Peninsula Transport workstreams on at least a monthly basis. There are no specific additional risks identified in relation to this paper.

## **9. Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations**

This paper has set out the proposed national approach to enabling integrated contactless ticketing across the bus network. The recommendation to support this initiative in principle is aligned with the emerging transport strategy and enables the STB and member authorities to engage further with the project leads as it progresses.