31 May, 2019

**Virgin price-guarantee app to cut £1bn from rail fares**

* *Passengers guaranteed cheapest fare through revolutionary new app*
* *Oyster-style fare caps and split-ticketing function guarantee best walk-up fares*
* *Savings of around £1bn expected when app goes live*

Rail passengers will save around a billion pounds in fares thanks to a price-guarantee app being developed by Virgin Trains.

The new technology, which is due to go live by the end of this year, will cut through confusing and outdated ticketing systems to ensure that customers are automatically given the best ticket for their journey at the tap of a button.

Customers across the whole UK rail network will benefit from an Oyster-style fares cap which will work out the cheapest fare for their journey retrospectively, ensuring they have the cheapest fare combination available.

The app will also deliver a seamless split-ticketing function, automatically calculating if a cheaper combination of fares for one journey is available, without having to change train or purchase multiple paper tickets.

The revolutionary new approach builds on Virgin Trains’ experience of innovation over the last two decades, having introduced the industry’s first automatic delay repay system, rolled out digital ticketing on all routes and recently abolished peak restrictions on Friday afternoons.

It also follows on from the fares reform consultation overseen by the Rail Delivery Group, which found that passengers were frustrated by arcane ticketing regulations which frequently led to them buying more expensive tickets than others available.

Phil Whittingham, Managing Director of Virgin Trains, said, “We’ve been in the UK rail industry for more than twenty-two years, leading the industry in areas such as introducing automatic delay repay and digital tickets and scrapping the Friday evening peak. But we want to do more. The changes we’ve announced today, which align with the Rail Delivery Group’s Fares Reform agenda, could save UK rail passengers around a billion pounds a year, and ensure Virgin Trains continues to deliver for customers whatever happens with the West Coast franchise.”

Customers are expected to save nearly 10% of the £11bn spent on fares every year by automatically finding the most appropriate ticket.

The development will be of particular benefit to commuters who do not work regular 9-5, Monday to Friday shifts, travel on some peak and some off-peak journeys or want greater flexibility over when they travel.

The ticket-management system developed by Virgin will automatically and retrospectively allow someone who has a peak-time return but who ends up travelling off-peak to pay the lower fare. Alternatively, if a customer ended up making multiple journeys where a weekly season ticket would have been cheaper, the system will cap their fares at the price of the weekly ticket.

The system will now be subject to industry approval and is expected to go live by the end of the year across the UK, though roll-out on London Underground and Overground routes is due to take a year longer while necessary ticket-scanning technology is introduced.

Notes to editors:

\* Analysis undertaken by the Rail Delivery Group has shown that around £750m could be saved every year if split-ticketing was made available for all journeys. Virgin Trains’ analysis shows the benefit of its new account-based system could save between £200m and £400m, depending on take-up.

The new initiative is being developed by Virgin Trains independently of its current West Coast operation.

**About Virgin Trains**

Stagecoach and Virgin are working in partnership to operate the West Coast inter-city route under the Virgin Trains brand, revolutionising travel on one of the UK’s key rail arteries.

The network connects some of the nation’s most iconic destinations including Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester and London.

Virgin Trains is committed to delivering a high speed, high frequency service, offering shorter journey times, more comfortable travel and excellent customer service. Customers consistently rate Virgin Trains ahead of other long-distance rail franchise operators in the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) commissioned by industry watchdog, Transport Focus.

Virgin Trains has a proud record of challenging the status quo - from introducing tilting Pendolino trains, to a pioneering automated delay repay scheme, introducing the industry-leading onboard entertainment streaming service, BEAM, and becoming the first franchised rail operator to offer m-Tickets for all ticket types.

Working together, the partnership railway of the public and private sectors has published a long-term plan, called *In Partnership for Britain’s Prosperity,* to change and improve Britain’s railway. The plan will secure almost £85bn of additional economic benefits to the country whilst enabling further investment and improvement, and contains four commitments which will see rail companies: strengthen our economic contribution to the country; improve customers’ satisfaction; boost the communities we serve; and, create more and better jobs in rail. For more information go to [Britain Runs on Rail](http://www.britainrunsonrail.co.uk/?gclid=CjwKCAiAr_TQBRB5EiwAC_QCq9OA-y_Al1Voo4ZvYjMvSBs86kuvjZLD8MfFvnOUU9UeVZ1T5CObLRoCasIQAvD_BwE).

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