

Cross-TOC 2-hours ticket acceptance policy

*The content of this Staff Brief is for the information of **all** Train Operating Companies with a distinction between DfT TOCs, Open Access Operators and Devolved Operator TOCs if/where noted below. Other arrangements may apply to third-party retailers. The contents below fully supersede any previous versions of this Brief.*

Introduction

Ticket acceptance between operators is an important mechanism to help keep customers moving during disruption, unlocking a range of benefits:

- Reduced negative customer satisfaction, as customers are offered the easiest alternative to complete their journey, with no requirement to change their tickets or incur further cost.
- Reduced refunds / complaints – reducing the burden at train company contact centres.
- Protects industry revenue by encouraging travel via an alternative train company/mode, instead of a refund.
- Reputational benefits, as the industry is seen to act as one and to be making every effort to keep customers moving.

A new ticket acceptance policy aims to unlock both customer and reputational benefits by creating a simple, effective and long-standing ticket acceptance framework between TOCs.

The policy has been successfully implemented by LNER, Northern and TransPennine Express since December 2024 and is now being rolled out across publicly owned operators within the DfTO group on 31 May 2026.

Participating TOCs

The policy is already applicable to the following participating TOCs:

- LNER
- Northern
- TransPennine Express

From 31 May 2026, it will also include all other current publicly owned operators / TOCs that are part of the DfTO group:

- c2c
- Gatwick Express
- Greater Anglia
- Great Northern
- London Northwestern Railway
- Southeastern
- Southern
- Thameslink
- South Western Railway
- West Midlands Railway

Other TOCs will be added at a future date – and an update to this Staff Brief will be issued.

Principle of policy

In the event of a cancellation to a participating TOC service, customers holding a ticket valid for that service will be able to travel on any other participating TOC service within the two hours before or after the cancelled service on a direct or reasonable indirect routing (any service displayed in a journey planner) to their destination.

The policy covers short notice cancellations and includes services that are cancelled due to an unplanned on-the day issue, also services cancelled under p-coding arrangements. The policy is valid automatically and does not require the authority of TOC Control or Commercial teams to activate.

For more severe disruption resulting in cancellations across multiple services or TOCs, normal protocol for CSL2 incidents is applied with Operators agreeing ticket acceptance with one another.

The policy will be communicated to customers as part of customer information during disruption and may also feature in wider TOC information/publications.

Supporting principles

Qualifying tickets should be for trains that are cancelled in Darwin and that appear as “Cancelled” to customers in journey planners and on station screens.

Customers would simply need to produce a ticket, valid for a cancelled service within two hours of the new service time, to utilise the policy on-board another operator’s service.

The ticket that the customer is using to travel with an alternative operator’s service should have been purchased before the scheduled departure time of the train that has been cancelled.

The customer can travel on a reasonable direct or indirect routing that is available in any journey planner. This includes if the journey planner is unable to find a valid fare for this route.

- Customers travelling with Standard Class tickets would be entitled to travel in Standard Class.
- Customers travelling with First Class tickets will be entitled to travel in First Class on other TOCs. This may not always be possible where the alternative TOC service does not have First Class available.

Customers using Passenger Assist and utilising the policy are advised to make themselves known to either the station team (if available) or the conductor/train manager so that alternative PA arrangements can be made. At unstaffed stations customers should use the Help Point. Station Teams & Train Managers should follow the usual process for contacting the destination station to advise them of the Passenger Assist customer.

Further information

This Staff Brief is aimed at giving a high-level summary and awareness of the general principles that apply to the above named participating TOCs.

For the participating TOCs, more detailed information and how it applies specifically to your TOC has (or soon will be) distributed to you via your normal internal briefing channels. Therefore, for further information please speak to your line manager or Retail Manager.

Brief ends <<<

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