

Highlights from Transport Ticketing Global 2026

The [FirstPartner](#) transit and payments team enjoyed a highly productive few days at [Transport Ticketing Global](#), the world's largest public transport, smart ticketing and mobility event, held at London's Olympia on 17–18 March 2026.



As ever, the event was the centre of the world's transit ticketing world for a few days, with 1,500+ attendees listening to a diverse conference programme, highlighting the latest insights and innovations in the world of transit ticketing, urban mobility and fare collection.

The exhibition floor featured over 50 of the world's leading technology players from across the transit ticketing ecosystem. From technology vendors, systems integrators and global financial powerhouses everything one could wish to see and experience was gathered under one roof.

The conference programme was as extensive as ever, with over 150 registered speakers from public transit agencies, leading technology companies and global payment schemes. Hot topics this year included the future of UK rail ticketing, the challenge of fraud and revenue protection, what is the future for contactless ticketing and many others.



Senior consultants from the FirstPartner team attended many of these presentations, and have summarised our thoughts and discussions on these topics below, which we hope will be both informative and useful for our partners.

If you would like to discuss any of these themes with us, or if you would like more information on how FirstPartner can help your organisation, please contact us at tjefferson@firstpartner.net. We support clients in all aspects of business and technical consulting and qualitative research in transit ticketing, cEMV, mobile ticketing, ABT, procurement and deploying new digital services and products.

What is next for contactless EMV?

Contactless EMV is now firmly established as the long-term foundation of public transport ticketing, with the next phase about scale, integration and customer trust. Industry leaders are clear: EMV is no longer a pilot technology, but critical national transit infrastructure.

The shift toward **multi-operator and multi-agency systems** is accelerating. Carrie Hotton-MacDonald, Transit Director at Edmonton Transit Services (Canada), shared how agencies can retain individual fare structures while delivering a single, seamless contactless experience for passengers across multiple individual transit agencies, supported by fare capping and simplified payments.

Across Europe, **nationwide EMV deployments** are setting the benchmark. Peter van Dijk, CEO of TransLink (NL), highlighted how a blended **open and closed-loop EMV model** preserves customer choice while driving revenue growth. His experience shows that EMV innovation does not stop at launch, with ongoing optimisation and new features such as park-and-ride discounts and wider mobility integration already underway.

Maintaining **customer trust** remains central to EMV's success. Shashi Verma, CTO at Transport for London (UK), reinforced that technology choices are secondary to outcomes. What matters is that EMV consistently delivers the best fare, including automatic fare capping, to meet customer expectations and sustain confidence at scale.

Looking ahead in the UK, Stewart Fox-Mills, Programme Director at the Fares, Ticketing and Retail Programme (UK), talked to further **EMV deployment across rail in England** coupled with fares simplification, strengthening the role of contactless as the default way to pay for travel.



The changing face of procurement

There were a number of sessions during TTG that focused on how procurement in the industry has been changing, but for 2026 procurement seems to have been an "underlying theme" across both presentations and on panels.

During Tim Jefferson's in-depth procurement panel on Tuesday, Alvaro Madrigal Montes de Oca (Mexico City), Dr Andrew Seedhouse (SAM UK) and Carl Fisher, of GTS Rail (the Elizabeth line operator, UK) provided real insight from a local transport authority (LTA) procurement framework and transport operator viewpoint. One notable take-out was the necessity of "being a good client". This means **transparency, being open with the supplier base, engaging and sharing as much and as early as possible.** Also key is encouraging innovation and trying to **get the supplier base as wide as possible,** by defining

standards-based requirements and building structured procurement frameworks.

Martin Bradshaw and Tamara Cambell from Adelaide (Australia), gave a brilliant and different view of how to procure correctly, with an aptly named presentation titled "Am I making my ABT delivery harder? (And how not to)". Martin provided real insight into the need to focus on **"outcomes, reducing complexity, talking and engaging with bidders during the procurement process, aligning your requirements with market solutions and most importantly building a partnership with suppliers"**. Tamara then demonstrated how they applied this thinking and procurement logic with a staged roll out across buses, trams and heavy rail. Her messages were really clear, **"start small and keep moving forward and make sure you are aligned with you supplier"**.

Another great insight for procurement was the presentation on the recent Littlepay cEMV implementation in WMATA in Washington (US). This fast-paced cEMV add-on to an existing system,



demonstrates that with **clear and focused requirements**, a procurement can be turned around and successfully delivered at speed., In this case within six months! **Openness by the transit agency during the procurement process and a partnership approach again shone through.** A clear and guiding procurement message to take from TTG 26!

Is now the time for White Label EMV?

Another notable conference take out was evidence that white label closed loop EMV is really starting to penetrate the market, alongside cEMV Pay as you Go (PAYG) turn up and travel solutions. From the nationwide implementation by Translink (NL) with Thales, providing white label EMV cards and a virtual card solution in mobile wallets, to individual transit authority implementations such as by MARTA Atlanta (US).

Both Translink and Thales explained that the **key drivers were cost reduction, simplification** through using the same technology for the readers and in the back office. EMV readers read both open loop (cEMV) and closed loop white label cards and mobile devices. Physical white label EMV cards are low cost and available from multiple suppliers avoiding vendor lock.

Peter van Dijk, CEO of Translink clearly defined the benefits as "**cost reduction, technology simplification, existing interfaces to major mobile wallets and time to market**".

Venceslas Cartier of Thales explained in more detail how closed loop EMV can greatly improve and "transform the customer experience in mobile apps and mobile wallets", compared to card based user experience. He also stressed the need for a **unified approach between Account Based Ticketing (ABT) and EMV architecture.** The approach should encompass open competitive pricing, lower lifecycle costs and future proofing, where new devices can be added without system re-design. Citing a list of deployments including New York (US), Dubai (UAE), nationwide in the Netherlands, Stockholm, Sweden and soon to be launched in Atlanta (US), he noted that the momentum is compelling, stating "if now is the time for White label EMV, **it has arrived and penetrating the market rapidly**".



The future of rail ticketing in the UK

The messaging from Department for Transport Operator (DFTO) and Future Ticketing and Retail Programme (FTR) was completely aligned to the rest of the conference, highlighting "**Simplicity, Trust, and Passenger Focus**".

Industry representatives were positive about the changes being seen under the new UK rail Authority Great British Rail (GBR). Blockers are actively falling away with examples including the **upcoming tender for the Great British Rail (GBR) Online (mobile apps and website)**, the work done on rail-card validation services and unified Delay-Repay and fare structure simplification.

DFTO and FTR also highlighted upcoming trials of Long-Distance fares, passenger focussed simplification of terms and conditions (T&Cs), extended booking horizons, and taking learnings from the LNER Flexi product, as examples of positive change under GBR. There is no doubt that these are positive, but

perhaps not transformative.

The undertone for the whole set of sessions was that UK Rail, like many other transport authorities and organisations, is lumbered with legacy technology that is hard to innovate on, and the fastest route to the future is from the outside.



Although the project in Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) that extends the Bee network cEMV PAYG to local heavy rail (first phase due Dec 2026), and the similar project in the West Midlands that introduces regional ITSO PAYG to heavy rail, were both mentioned several times, this was almost in passing (as was reference to PAYG on the Pop card in Nexus, which seemed an afterthought), with **attention and excitement focused on the app-based digital PAYG trials** happening on East Midlands Railways and on Northern in Yorkshire.

These trials, facilitated variously by Trainline, Tracsis, and Fairtiq, use adult single barcodes to gain entry to the system and GPS to assign passengers to a train and a trip, with post-journey calculation of point-to-point fares.

Whilst users and TOCs were positive about the app trials, an emerging set of product silos within UK rail based on distance -- Local vs Regional vs Long-Distance (as exemplified by Islands and Bridges thinking) - is in danger of regionalising innovation in the interests of avoiding hard questions. And despite the ostensible innovation, these trials, themselves very similar, still tie everything back to existing products, and don't address the LENNON (**Networked Nationally Overnight (LENNON)**) is an application used by the rail industry. It provides data, such as ticket sales and franchise earnings) -shaped elephant in the room.

So, in summary, the DFTO juggernaut is beginning to move, but change at scale will take time and commitment.

Fraud & revenue protection

TTG 26 had a number of presentations and panels, focused on fraud and revenue protection. Themes included the role of AI and data analytics, collaborative strategies to combat ticketless travel, digital fare evasion and payment fraud.

The key payment fraud panel was “Fighting fraud and chargebacks in a digital-first world” This featured David Kershaw (TfL), Julia Glascott (Barclaycard), Dominique Spalburg (Translink) and Nick Mackie (Consultant), chaired by Georgia Jones (Rebel). This panel packed the conference room, a reflection of the concern over levels of chargeback associated with cEMV Pay as You Go travel.



The panel explained that most of these chargebacks are driven by card issuing banks or financial institutions now providing excellent app based chargeback initiation user experiences. The simplicity now offered has driven what is euphemistically called "friendly" or 1st Party fraud, where a journey has been taken, but the account holder claims it has not. These claims can be successfully challenged but disputes are costly and time consuming for the transport operator. The panel noted that the greatest issue for the transit agency was the need for card issuers to recognise fraud committed by their customers and to clearly define liability.

Announcements

A selection of event related announcements and news articles that caught our eye:

Rail Infrastructure and Networks

[Delay Repay changes will make rail travel easier under Great British Railways](#)

[Arrive and Google to provide real-time, in-wallet transit payment data, with Lothian Bus and Edinburgh](#)

[Trams](#)

[The French franchising model](#)

[Plans published for 'Mini Switzerland'](#)

[Luxembourg modernises on-train ticket sales](#)

[Ticket validators go live at NI Railways stations](#)

[Trainline CEO Jody Ford to step down](#)

[ScotRail to introduce £10 minimum fare for ticketless travel](#)

[Masabi acquires customer information and ticketing system supplier Passenger Technology Group](#)

[Trainline calls for third party ticket sellers to be able to offer 'one-click' Delay Repay](#)

[Contactless ticketing now live at 20 more Greater Anglia stations](#)

[HS2 launches final giant tunnelling machine towards Euston station](#)

[Mayor unveils 'once in a generation' change to public transport in South Yorkshire](#)

[Network Rail reveals details of Easter work on Great Western network](#)

[London Northwestern Railway reaffirms support for neurodiverse passengers](#)

[Network Rail begins next phase of upgrades on Portsmouth Direct Line](#)

[ORR independent review of train operator revenue protection practices: government response](#)

[Commuters can use contactless payments for Glasgow subway](#)

[Train passengers face new railcard checks in fare dodging crackdown](#)

Bus

[‘Go Local’ to attract more customers](#)

[Alexander Dennis to Supply 164 Additional Buses to Arriva UK](#)

[South Yorkshire Public Transport Services Branded ‘People’s Network’](#)

[US: MTA Adds Q60 and B12 Routes to ACE Programme](#)

[Greater Manchester Orders 55 Electric Wrightbus Buses for Bee Network](#)

[‘Step forward’ as new electric buses enter service](#)

Sustainable Transport

[EU adopts new State aid rules to boost sustainable transport](#)

[NHS fleet goes green with £4m boost for EV charging sockets](#)

About FirstPartner

FirstPartner is a specialist management consulting and research company that brings deep market expertise and clear recommendations to its clients. We deliver the insight, expertise and support that product, marketing, sales and management teams require to:

- validate market opportunities
- launch compelling digital products & services
- build engagement with customers & stakeholders

Founded in 2002, we are based in the UK, but serve clients and undertake consulting and research engagements across Europe, North America, MENA and South East Asia.

We have a focused transport and transit ticketing practice led by Tim Jefferson, that provides consultancy services to transit agencies, card payment schemes, merchant acquirers, banks and

technology vendors. We are subject matter experts in cEMV open payments, mobile ticketing, Account Based Ticketing (ABT) and White Label EMV.

We have unique current experience of defining and delivering cEMV open payments and White Label EMV ABT solutions in UK, Europe, MENA and North America.

[Tim Jefferson](#), [Sue Walnut](#), [Stephen Cooles](#) and [Lewis Nolan](#) from [FirstPartner](#) all attended Transport Ticketing Global 2026, so if you would like to follow up with any of them, please contact Tim Jefferson at tjefferson@firstpartner.net