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Prices fall thanks to train companies

From Mr Michael Roberts.

Sir, Your article “Network Rail lays out £37bn spending plans” (January 9) states that the “average rail fare has risen 40 per cent in the past decade”.

Rather than taking an average of all the prices that were advertised, looking at tickets people actually purchased reveals that between 2001-02 and 2011-12, the average price paid by passengers for a single journey expressed at 2011-12 prices fell by 1.9 per cent, hovering round £5 through that period. That is down to train companies working to attract passengers by offering a range of good value fares, including cheap advance tickets and Railcard deals.

Last November, a report from the rail regulator said that costs per passenger kilometre have already fallen 12 per cent since 2001. Train companies continue to work with the rest of the industry to improve efficiency and provide ministers with the option of limiting future fare rises.

Michael Roberts, Chief Executive, Association of Train Operating Companies, London WC1, UK

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