

# TRANSPORT

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## Southern first to offer smart tickets to capital

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Go-Ahead's Southern franchise is set to become the first train operator to offer season tickets into London on ITSO smartcards, opening up new payment options for travel from the south coast to the capital. The move will be followed by offering the railway's first smartcard 'flexi-season' ticket providing discounted tickets for three to four days travel per week.

The schedule is expected to see Southern launch the tickets several months ahead of any other operator. The migration of season tickets and travelcards to ITSO smart ticketing will start this summer. Flexi-seasons are expected to be offered in late 2013 or early 2014. Currently Southern's smart ticketing is limited to weekly and monthly season tickets on its coastal Bexhill-Brighton-Worthing services and stations around Gatwick Airport.

The catalyst for expansion will be the completion of the late-running DfT/TfL-sponsored ITSO on Prestige (IoP) project to enable ITSO tickets to be used on TfL's Oyster equipment. By the end of the spring a major project milestone will enable ITSO tickets to open TfL gates, although ITSO retailing will only be available outside the TfL boundary. Full IoP functionality is expected to be achieved by the end of 2013.

Sources at the Association of Train Operating Companies estimate that other operators participating in the South East Flexible Ticketing Initiative are likely to start offering season tickets on ITSO smartcards at the end of this year and flexi seasons by the end of 2014.

Go-Ahead IT director Dave Lynch said that it was understandable that other operators wished to wait until IoP is fully completed before offering smartcard tickets into London. However, he explained Go-Ahead's early adoption was driven partly by franchise commitments but also by the desire to gain industry leadership in smart ticketing.

"We want to launch early because we want to make a difference, we want to see how it works and we see it as an advantage when bidding for franchises," he said. "We genuinely see what we are doing as first mover advantage."

Originally, Southern's franchise agreement committed it to have installed ITSO ticketing across its network in early 2012. However, delays to the IoP project meant that was not possible.

*Southern: set to be first train operator to offer season tickets into London on ITSO smartcards*



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[This article was first published in \*Passenger Transport\*, the leading fortnightly magazine for the UK transport sector.](#)

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