

## ZoneCard Update

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**Date of meeting** 28 June 2024

**Date of report** 7 June 2024

**Report by Director of Finance & Corporate Support**

### 1. Object of report

To update the Partnership on the roll out of the new Smart ZoneCard tickets.

### 2. Background to report

ZoneCard is a multi-modal, multi-operator commercial ticketing arrangement which SPT administers on behalf of the ZoneCard Forum. The ZoneCard Forum is a collection of transport operators. While SPT administer the ticketing scheme, SPT do not have the power to set or impose ticketing prices or agree the Zones. These decisions are made by the ZoneCard Forum which SPT is a member of but does not Chair.

The ZoneCard ticketing arrangement has been in existence since the late 1980s and has remained largely unchanged throughout that time. This includes the ticket format, which is a large paper ticket in two parts, including a printed passport photograph of the ticket holder.

The revenue from ZoneCard ticket sales is divided among the participating operators in proportion to the number of ZoneCard journeys they have carried. The cost of ZoneCard tickets is not subsidised by SPT or any other organisation. SPT do not profit from the sale of ZoneCard tickets.

The implementation of the Smart ZoneCard is part of the ongoing efforts to improve the transport system of the west of Scotland. For passengers, it will facilitate improved integration between modes, a simpler zoning system and flexible tickets to suit modern lifestyles (including working from office / home part of the week).

### 3. Smart ZoneCard

For the first time in more than 30 years ZoneCard has been comprehensively modernised. The new smart ZoneCard launched on 24 June 2024 and will replace the legacy paper ZoneCards.

The new smart ZoneCard is one of a number of ticketing options for people living in or visiting the Strathclyde area. The new ZoneCards offer increased flexibility for customers and represent value for money and convenience where customers are:

- a) travelling regularly using more than one transport mode or operator across a Zone or Zones, and/or
- b) wish to travel to a number of different destinations within a Zone or Zones.

ZoneCard tickets are designed to give maximum travel flexibility within each region and the pricing model reflects that level of flexibility. For customers with relatively simple or short travel requirements, other ticket options may offer better value. ZoneCard is also intended to offer good value where customers are travelling regularly using more than one mode of transport several days a week or they wish to travel extensively within specific zones.

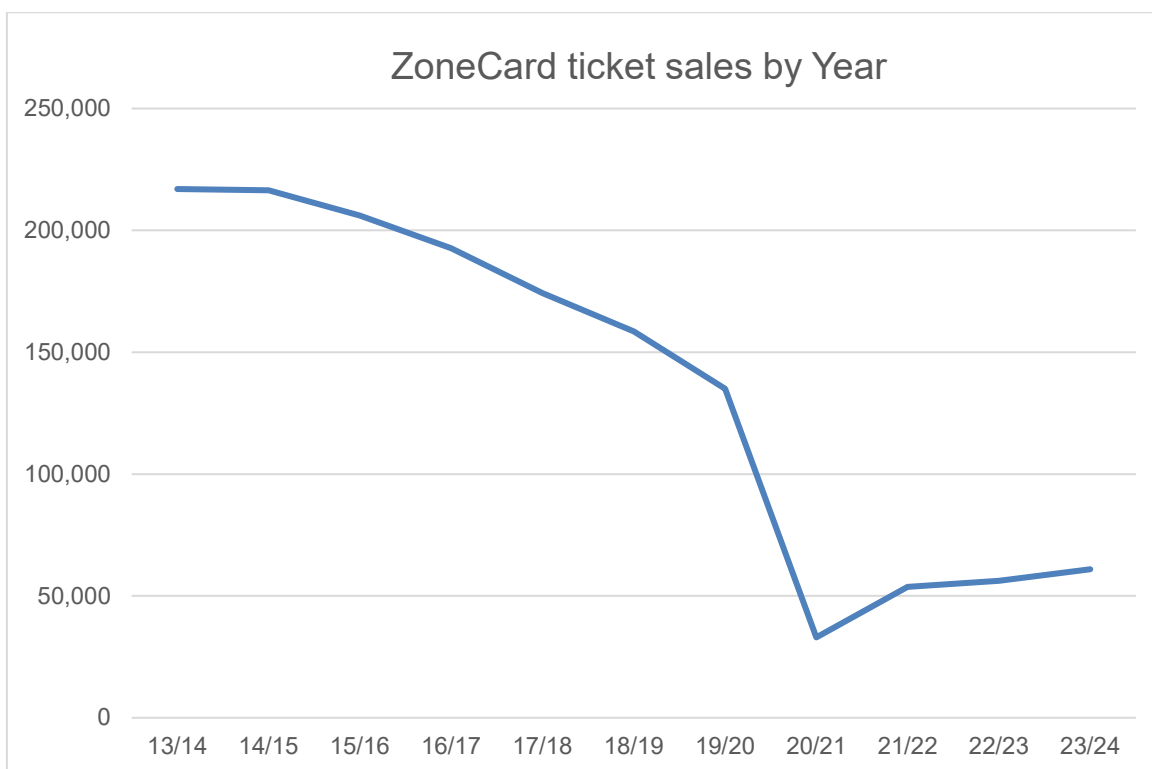
The new ZoneCard is a smart product and is therefore more flexible and convenient to use and renew. The Zone map has also been updated so there are less Zones (from 70 Zones down to 7 covering much bigger areas) and many people may find they do not need as many Zones to cover their travel requirements and that they can travel further within these new Zones. More information is available at: [www.spt.co.uk/zonecard](http://www.spt.co.uk/zonecard). Appendix 1 contains the new Zone map and pricing schedule.

The new ZoneCard brings a range of benefits which passengers have been asking for, including:

- new flexible ticket options;
- good value for customers wishing to travel extensively within a Zone;
- a simplified Zone map moving from more than 70 Zones to just 7, easier for passengers and operators to understand and navigate; and
- smartcard functionality allowing passengers to buy and renew tickets online.

ZoneCard ticket sales have declined significantly over the past few years. In 2020/2021, at the start of the pandemic they dropped further to only 15% of the 2013/2014 levels. By 2023/2024 they had started to grow again and were at 28% of the 2013/2014 levels. Overall numbers of ZoneCard customers by 2023/2024 was only at circa 3,200 customers per annum, with only 451 annual ZoneCard tickets sold. Particularly in the post-Covid era of hybrid working, ZoneCard in its existing format no longer serves the travel requirements for many customers.

The chart below shows the decrease in overall ZoneCard ticket sales over the past 10 years:



With the move to smart ZoneCard, customers can now choose from a range of tickets to suit their travel needs. There are seven Zones in the ZoneCard area and customers can purchase travel for one, two or all seven Zones in any of the following validities:

- One day
- One week
- Four weeks
- Ten weeks
- Annual
- 3 days in 7 flexi ticket
- 10 days in 28 flexi ticket

Tickets are available for adults (all variations) and under 16s (up to four weeks validity).

ZoneCard tickets can now be purchased online ([www.zonecard.co.uk](http://www.zonecard.co.uk)) or in person (at any Payzone outlet across the ZoneCard area, from 8 July 2024).

There will be a four-week transitional period where legacy paper ZoneCard tickets remain on sale alongside new smart ZoneCard tickets to allow customers to become familiar with the new arrangements.

A new ZoneCard smartcard is available for purchase, but customers can also load ZoneCard products onto their existing Subway, ScotRail, Stagecoach, McGills or National Entitlement smartcard, benefitting from previous work by SPT and partners to deliver interoperable smartcard acceptance.

A smartcard format was selected for ZoneCard as the only ticket type currently accepted across all relevant bus, rail and Subway services. Smart ZoneCard could be seen as the first step in a smart ticket evolution rather than the last one. It is hoped that the new smart functionality, flexible ticket options and new Zone maps will encourage growth in overall ticket sales.

#### **4. Benefits to customers**

Smart ZoneCard offers:

- seamless transport integration – one ticket on one card to travel across bus, rail and Subway
- convenience and flexibility for customers with a new one-day ticket option, flexi tickets and season tickets from one week up to a year in validity

A number of restrictions affected the previous ZoneCard, for example when and where they could be purchased and when the validity could start from. The new smart ZoneCard addresses these restrictions and provides more flexibility for customers who can now choose to buy online at a time of their convenience, or in person at any Payzone outlet across the ZoneCard area.

Customers who lose their smartcard can now have their ZoneCard validity replaced onto another smartcard, another advantage compared to the legacy arrangements.

#### **5. Benefits to operators**

A weakness of ZoneCard had always been a lack of data about ticket usage; this is overcome by the move to a smartcard format. Operators can now benefit from a more robust and transparent allocation of ticket revenue based on the actual number of ZoneCard journeys carried.

The new ZoneCard also reduces the risk of fraud which was an issue with the legacy paper ZoneCard tickets and the technology for printing fraudulent tickets improving dramatically over 30 years. The new smartcard format is significantly more secure, ensuring revenue protection.

The new pricing structure is in line with current operators' own ticketing offers and helps to ensure that the ZoneCard arrangement remains commercially viable.

## 6. ZoneCard Pricing

ZoneCard is a voluntary, commercial agreement between participating operators and decisions relating to ZoneCard are made collectively by the operators. The only exceptions to this are operators of bus services subsidised by SPT, who must accept ZoneCard tickets on those subsidised services. As ZoneCard is a voluntary commercial ticketing agreement between operators, SPT is not empowered to specify the price of ZoneCard tickets.

For a number of years, operators have discussed potential improvements to ZoneCard to benefit both passengers and operators. The project has been steered by the ZoneCard Forum of operators (ScotRail, First, McGill's, Stagecoach, Whitelaws, SPT and a representative for smaller operators) and has been an excellent example of partnership working.

The current ZoneCard prices have not been increased since January 2020, while individual bus, rail and Subway prices have all increased with inflation. As part of the move to the new smart ZoneCard the new ticket prices have been comprehensively reviewed by the ZoneCard Forum for the first time in several years, taking into account current operator pricing as well as the new Zone structure.

The pricing model for smart ZoneCard was developed from scratch to the following principles:

- As a multi-modal, multi operator product, ZoneCard ticket prices are expected to be at a premium to any equivalent single operator ticket
- ZoneCard tickets should offer increased convenience and in some cases a saving compared to purchasing two or more equivalent single operator tickets (or for example rail and bus)
- The pricing model is based on ScotRail peak fares as the current Off Peak scheme is a temporary arrangement at present. If Off Peak prices were to be made permanent this would trigger a review of ZoneCard pricing

The new smart ZoneCard is one of a number of ticketing options for people living in the Strathclyde area. The new ZoneCard tickets offer increased flexibility for customers and do represent value for money and convenience where customers are:

- a. travelling regularly using more than one transport mode or operator across a Zone or Zones and/or
- b. wish to travel to a number of different destinations within a Zone or Zones.

ZoneCard tickets are designed to give maximum travel flexibility within each region and the pricing model reflects that level of flexibility.

## 7. Customer Feedback

The ZoneCard team have been responding to a high volume of enquiries about the new ZoneCard. They are working with customers to help them identify the best ticket solution for their travel needs. That solution may or may not be a ZoneCard depending on the individual customer needs.

Where customers have provided feedback on proposed changes to Zones or pricing structures these are being fed back to the ZoneCard Forum for consideration.

The SPT website has been updated with additional information on the ZoneCard and the Frequently Asked Questions page has been expanded to cover some of the new enquiries that are coming in.

A further report will be brought to the Partnership in December 2024 providing an update on progress in the first few months of operation of the modernised ZoneCard arrangement.

## 8. Partnership action

The Partnership is recommended to note the report.

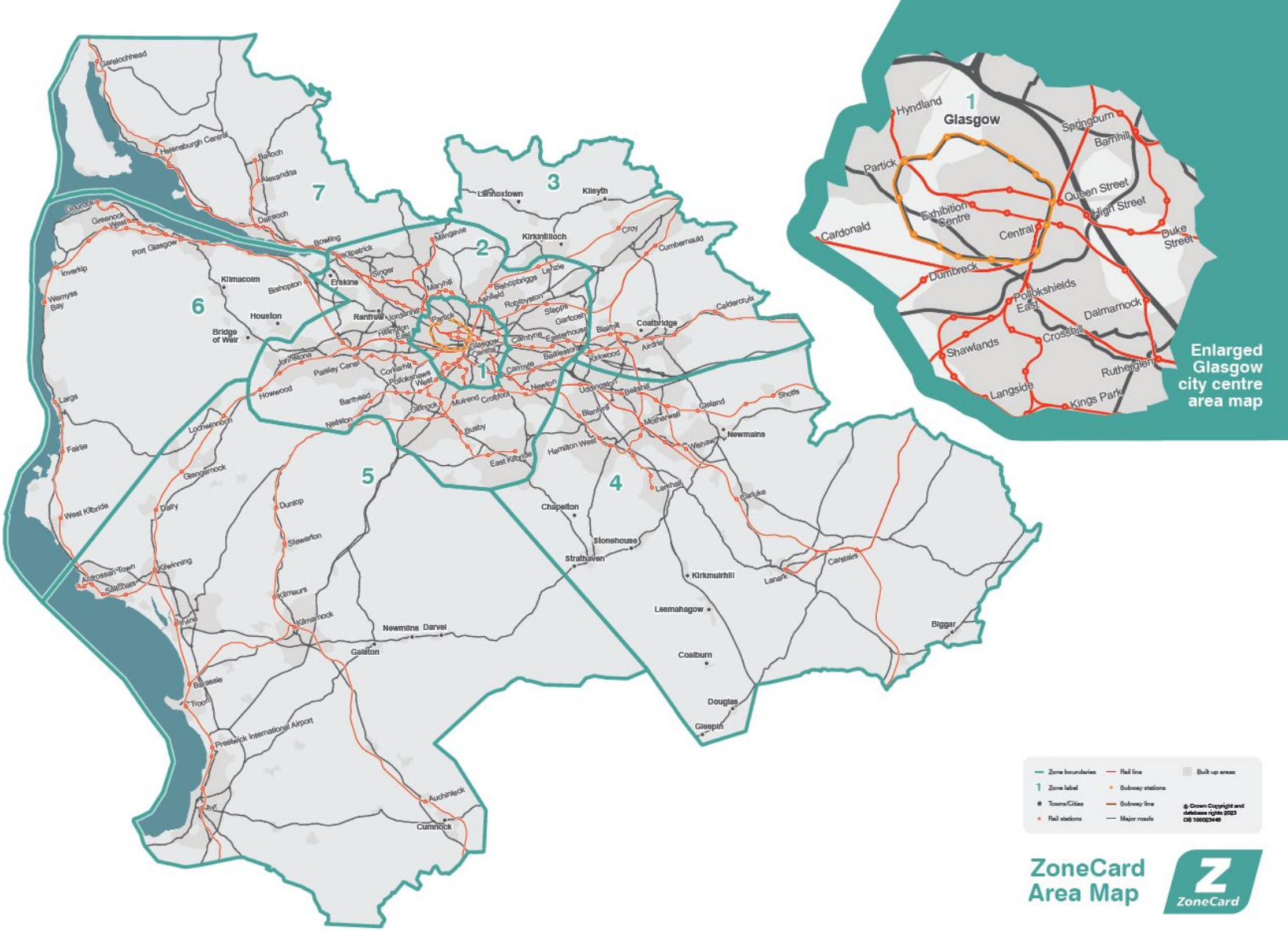
## 9. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>A lack of external awareness that SPT's role is as administrator of the system rather than it being an SPT product has led to a risk of some reputational damage to SPT. This is being managed through customer feedback and media enquiry responses</i>
Climate Change, Adaptation & Carbon consequences	<i>None directly.</i>

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<b>Title</b>	<b>Director of Finance &amp; Corporate Support</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Chief Executive</b>

For further information, please contact *Lesley Aird, Director of Finance & Corporate Support* on 0141 333 3380.

**APPENDIX 1  
Smart ZoneCard Map**



### Smart ZoneCard Pricing (Adult)

Zone(s)	One Day Adult	One Week Adult	Four Week Adult	10 Week Adult	Annual Adult	3-in-7 Adult	10-in-28 Adult
Zone 1	£8.40	£32.00	£115.20	£272.00	£1,248.00	£22.70	£67.20
Zone 2 (inc. 1)	£12.80	£49.00	£176.40	£416.50	£1,911.00	£34.60	£102.40
Zone 3	£10.50	£40.00	£144.00	£340.00	£1,560.00	£28.40	£84.00
Zone 4	£13.40	£51.00	£183.60	£433.50	£1,989.00	£36.20	£107.20
Zone 5	£22.50	£86.00	£309.60	£731.00	£3,354.00	£60.80	£180.00
Zone 6	£14.70	£56.00	£201.60	£476.00	£2,184.00	£39.70	£117.60
Zone 7	£13.40	£51.00	£183.60	£433.50	£1,989.00	£36.20	£107.20
Zones 2+3	£17.80	£68.00	£244.80	£578.00	£2,652.00	£48.10	£142.40
Zones 2+4	£18.40	£70.00	£252.00	£595.00	£2,730.00	£49.70	£147.20
Zones 2+5	£27.50	£105.00	£378.00	£892.50	£4,095.00	£74.30	£220.00
Zones 2+6	£19.70	£75.00	£270.00	£637.50	£2,925.00	£53.20	£157.60
Zones 2+7	£18.40	£70.00	£252.00	£595.00	£2,730.00	£49.70	£147.20
Zones 3+4	£18.40	£70.00	£252.00	£595.00	£2,730.00	£49.70	£147.20
Zones 5+6	£27.50	£105.00	£378.00	£892.50	£4,095.00	£74.30	£220.00
ALL	£32.50	£124.00	£446.40	£1,054.00	£4,836.00	£87.80	£260.00

### Smart ZoneCard Pricing (Under 16)

Zone(s)	One Day Under 16	One Week Under 16	Four Week Under 16			3-in-7 Under 16	10-in-28 Under 16
Zone 1	£5.00	£19.20	£69.10			£13.60	£40.30
Zone 2 (inc. 1)	£7.70	£29.40	£105.80			£20.80	£61.40
Zone 3	£6.30	£24.00	£86.40			£17.00	£50.40
Zone 4	£8.00	£30.60	£110.20			£21.70	£64.30
Zone 5	£13.50	£51.60	£185.80			£36.50	£108.00
Zone 6	£8.80	£33.60	£121.00			£23.80	£70.60
Zone 7	£8.00	£30.60	£110.20			£21.70	£64.30
Zones 2+3	£10.70	£40.80	£146.90			£28.90	£85.40
Zones 2+4	£11.00	£42.00	£151.20			£29.80	£88.30
Zones 2+5	£16.50	£63.00	£226.80			£44.60	£132.00
Zones 2+6	£11.80	£45.00	£162.00			£31.90	£94.60
Zones 2+7	£11.00	£42.00	£151.20			£29.80	£88.30
Zones 3+4	£11.00	£42.00	£151.20			£29.80	£88.30
Zones 5+6	£16.50	£63.00	£226.80			£44.60	£132.00
ALL	£19.50	£74.40	£267.80			£52.70	£156.00