

Leading the way in smart travel

The North East is leading the country in giving local people the benefit of new smart travel on public transport.

On Metro more than 100,000 people are now using smart cards to pay for and make journeys, touching in and out easily at station gates and validators.

Tens of thousands of Pop card holders will from the New Year be able to renew online at the Nexus website then pick up their season ticket the next day at any station.

And the countdown has started to the 2014 launch of the first universal 'pay as you go' smart travel network outside London, covering all local public transport.

Pop card holders on Metro and the Shields Ferry, both owned and managed by Nexus, will have the option to use a cash balance to pay for discounted journeys whenever they need them - with the price capped to a maximum each day they travel.

Investment by NESTI, the North East Smart Ticketing Initiative partnership of local authorities, means that a single card will also buy travel on buses anywhere from North Northumberland to the Tees Valley, with the holder being charged the local operator's fare.

Older and disabled passengers in the region are already making more than a million journeys a week using smart cards to touch in, helping reduce fraud and deliver value for money to local councils who pay for their travel.

Bus companies including Go North East, which has issued 100,000 of its Key card



Nexus Director General Bernard Garner and ITA Chairman Cllr David Wood hand out advice for passengers as smart gate lines and validators are phased into use.

brand, have helped lead the way in creating smart travel, while public investment by NESTI has ensured there is a single common technology for the region.

Cllr David Wood, Chairman of the Tyne and Wear Integrated Transport Authority, said: "North East England is in the middle of the biggest roll-out

of smart tickets and technology since the introduction of the Oyster card in London.

"People across the region are seeing the benefits of the hard work done by NESTI, Nexus and local authorities to put a single smart infrastructure in place."

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Better bus process moving forwards

Efforts to protect and improve local buses are moving forward following consultation on a proposed Quality Contracts Scheme.

Nexus is evaluating responses to the proposal, which would, if taken forwards, see a public body take responsibility for fares and services provided by private companies on its behalf.

The North East Bus Operators Association, meanwhile, has at the invitation of the Tyne and Wear Integrated Transport Authority put forward an improved voluntary partnership offer.

This would see bus companies, Nexus, local authorities and the ITA work together to deliver improvements within the existing market.

The detailed Quality Contracts Scheme proposal was open to consultation from July to November with bus companies, unions, passenger groups and major employers among those to make suggestions.

The ITA is expected to compare the benefits of the partnership and contracts approaches, and agree a way forwards, in Spring 2014.

New improved website for the smartphone age

Nexus has launched an improved and more user-friendly website, nexus.org.uk, prompted by the growth in smartphone use. The new-look Nexus home page has undergone a series of design improvements to make it easier to use and more responsive for tablet and smartphone users. More than 45% of the hits on nexus.org.uk come from smartphones and tablet computers. The website has been redesigned to reflect that. The Nexus site receives 3.9 million visits per year and site usage has grown by 30% over the last 12 months. New features will make it easier for customers to buy Metro tickets online and upload them on to a Pop card. The site has also had its integration improved with social media sites, like Facebook and Twitter. It is also much easier for public transport users to plan their daily journeys using the Nexus website. The unique Nexus myJourney app on the site lets people view their location on a map or satellite image, see the nearest bus or Metro stop and view the next services to depart. Nexus Marketing Manager, Kerry Leng, said: "We've worked hard to make navigational



and design improvements that will benefit our customers. The site is now responsive, meaning that we don't need to run two separate websites for desktop and mobile. "There are other improvements including better integration with social media, more focus on our digital planning tools like myJourney and more video including 360 degree tours of bus stations. "We can now also offer commercial advertising opportunities to partners and businesses to help generate additional income. "In the next few months we'll be launching extra features including an improved journey planner and access to the Pop card smart retailing system direct from the nexus.org.uk homepage."

Nexus invests in WiFi for buses

Nexus is investing more than £100,000 to provide wifi for bus passengers in and around Tyne and Wear. Most of the money, secured from the Government's Better Bus Area Fund, will be provided in grants to the region's three main bus companies, Go North East, Stagecoach and Arriva. It will be used by the companies to provide wifi on board vehicles, alongside their own investment in the communications technology.

Nexus is also installing wifi at major bus stations and has secured Government funding for wifi on Metro trains, subject to a feasibility study. Tobyn Hughes, Deputy Director General of Nexus, said: "This continues our investment in new technology on buses. "Bus passengers in the region benefit from the smart ticket technology and CCTV we have already funded on hundreds of buses, and will now enjoy the benefit of wifi as they travel."



Patrick Murphy's striking new artwork will brighten up Byker this winter.

Community creates art for Byker

The third in a series of giant works created by artists working with the community will appear at Byker Metro Station in December. The bright new image by Patrick Murphy will fill an 11-metre wall in the ticket concourse used by thousands of passengers every week, as well as being visible to passers by.

It is the third in a series of six works funded by Arts Council England, Newcastle City Council and Nexus as part of the Art on Transport Programme. Each work sees artists working with different sections of Byker's diverse local community to explore the history, culture and aspirations of the area.

Bus round-up



Hebburn bus route trial extended for six months

A local marketing campaign has been launched to promote a bus route linking communities in Hebburn with the town centre, Gateshead and Newcastle.

The 27X service was launched earlier this year through the South Tyneside bus partnerships process at the request of local councillors and in response to a resident survey.

An original six-month trial to see how well the service is used has now been extended until May, while passengers numbers are kept under review.

Open consultation on service changes in North Tyneside

Nexus has been consulting on possible changes to a bus service it provides in North Tyneside.

It wants to hear local views on whether the route of the 59 should be altered following recent changes to commercial services in the area, to improve hospital links. A decision will be made in the new year.

'Bus Station' standards for streets of North Shields

Nexus is investing to improve bus travel in North Shields by installing new shelters in the town centre, including better lighting and CCTV security.

A new 23-metre shelter for the busy bus stops in Bedford Street meets the standard seen at town centre bus stations in Tyne and Wear such as Wallsend and Blaydon.

New fares and route to the beach for Sunderland bus



New fares and a summer route to the beach helped boost passenger numbers on Sunderland's green city centre bus.

The Sunderland Connect 700 service is a partnership between Sunderland City Council, University of Sunderland and Nexus.

The greener hybrid vehicles link city centre attractions, university campuses and halls and local amenities. The route to the beach and new family and weekly tickets saw a big rise in passenger numbers over the summer.

Metro passengers start to touch in for travel

Passengers are enjoying a new more modern way to travel as Metro's new smart functionality - including automatic ticket gates and validators - is phased in.

This is the largest implementation of a smartcard system using gatelines outside London, and paves the way for new ticket products and new ways to buy tickets to be introduced.

Nexus, which owns, manages and is modernising Metro, has installed automatic ticket gates and smartcard validators across the system. The gates are being brought into use in a phased approach over the winter to give customers time to get used to them.

Adult passengers holding a valid Pop card or smart Gold Card will be asked to 'touch in' and 'touch out' each time they enter or exit the Metro system, using the yellow validators or the orange card readers on the new ticket gates.

Some 60,000 regular Metro customers already have a smart season ticket loaded onto a Pop card, their concessionary travel card, or Newcastle University ID cards. Passengers can apply for a Pop card at nexus.org.uk/pop. Director General of Nexus, Bernard Garner, said: "Smart travel is transforming the way people use Metro.

"Metro users will quickly get used to gates and validators. We're phasing in their use so people have plenty of time to get used to them, with the help of Metro staff.



Disabled passengers are helped to get used to gates by staff from Nexus and Newcastle Deaflink.

"The gates will allow us to clamp down on fare evasion and will mean that more stations are staffed, which improves security and customer service."

Wayne Dixon, Head of Station Delivery at DB Regio Tyne and Wear, which operates the Metro on behalf of Nexus, said: "We've employed 30% more frontline staff, so we're ready to help passengers when the gates are switched on. There will be benefits across the network." Ticket gates at 11 busy stations are being put into use with increasing frequency in a phased programme. Metro staff will always be present where gates are in use.

Special video guides and leaflets on how to get the most out of smart technology have been produced to guide customers.

Check your Pop card on the phone

Metro inspectors now check Pop cards with their phones thanks to a unique application developed for Nexus.

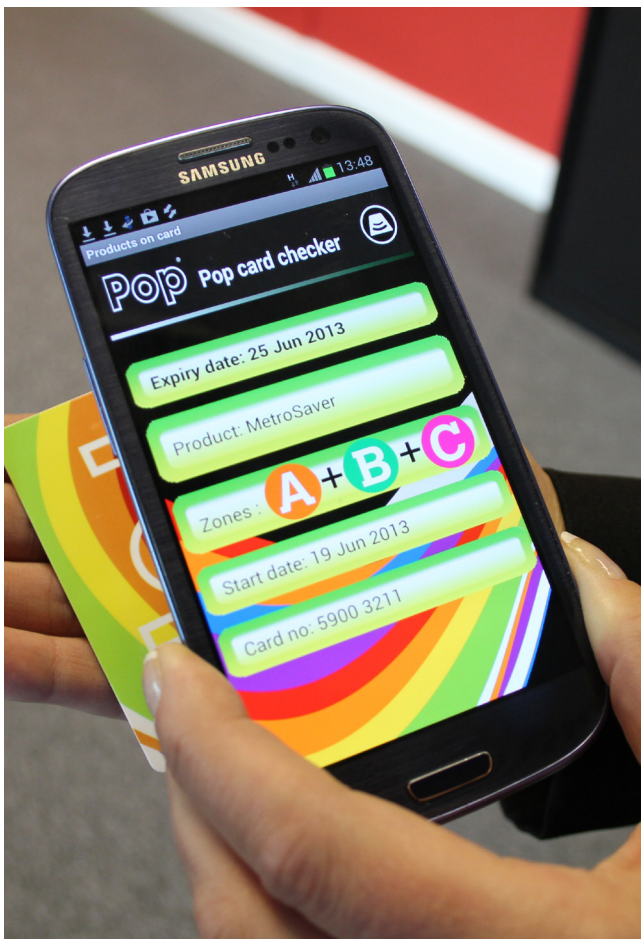
And passengers can also download the free app, for android smartphone, to keep on top of their ticket as they travel.

Hundreds of people have already downloaded the app ahead of the launch of pay-as-you-go travel next year, when Metro passengers will be able to put cash balances on their Pop cards.

Andy Bairstow, Head of Service Delivery for Nexus, said: "The app allows Metro inspectors to scan a Pop card in a fraction of a second, with no inconvenience to the passenger.

"This will ensure that people who are travelling on Metro have the correct products stored on their card, allowing us to know who might be attempting to travel fraudulently.

"Passengers can already check the expiry date of a season ticket with the app. When we introduce pay-as-you-go travel customers will be able to check the stored balance, look at their transactions and confirm their last top up. This makes life easier for people and Metro more user-friendly."



Gateshead stations benefit from more trains

Blaydon and Dunston railway stations are to get a regular Northern Rail train service from 9 December for the first time in recent years, after a campaign by local MP Dave Anderson and local councillors. There will be 31 trains on weekdays at Dunston instead of the current three, and 20 trains a day on weekdays at Blaydon, instead of the

current four. Trains will provide direct links to stations between Hexham and Newcastle and further afield. Nexus is supporting Northern with marketing and promoting the service, while the train company and Network Rail have improve facilities at Blaydon station.

Pop round-up



National honour for North East smart ticket programme

The North East Smart Ticketing Initiative was shortlisted for a National Transport Award for new technology, recognising the innovation and efficiency it offers to local authorities.

NESTI, being delivered by Nexus on behalf of 12 local authorities in the region, had reduced fraud by an estimated £1 million a year by investing in smart ticket readers for around 1,000 buses operating between the Tees Valley and Scottish border.

The next phase of the project will see pay-as-you-go travel offered anywhere in the region through a single smart card.

Buy a year of travel from any Metro machine



Metro passengers can now buy a year of travel from any of the system's 245 station ticket machines.

The smart machines introduced over the last two years well a wide range of season tickets for the first time to Pop card customers, as well as the Metro Gold Card for older and disabled passengers.

South Tyneside ITA members Cllrs Alan Smith and Gladys Hobson joined Tobyn Hughes of Nexus to launch the new options at South Shields Metro station.

Byker and Chichester to get new gatelines

Byker and Chichester will be the latest two stations to get new ticket gatelines, taking the total number across the system to 13 next year.

The stations will also benefit from having a permanent staff presence to monitor the gatelines and assist passengers.

Passengers will in future pass through a gateline on about 75% of all Metro journeys, helping Nexus keep down fraud and deliver better value for money.

Golden passengers helped to go smart

Gold Card customers still holding paper tickets are being encouraged to visit Nexus Travel Shops at Haymarket, Monument and Gateshead to make the switch to smart.

Most older and disabled passengers already hold their annual Gold Card as an electronic product within the concessionary travel card - with Tyne and Wear the first area in the country to put a separate product on the 'bus pass'.

Metro fare rises kept below inflation

The Tyne and Wear ITA has agreed a below inflation increase in Metro fares, with an average rise of 2.5%.

There will also be a price freeze for children and a price cut for season-ticket holders, students and young people as the new fares come into effect on 2 January.

Director General of Nexus, Bernard Garner, said: "Metro fare revenue continues to grow, and is supported by a long-term funding commitment from Government for both operational subsidy and capital renewal.

"This is why we have been able to pass on the lowest possible fare increase to customers. Metro provides the best value in the country when compared with other rail services."

The ITA approved a recommendation from Nexus, which owns and manages Metro, that fares go up by an average of 2.5%, below the Retail Price Index (RPI) rate of inflation, from 2 January 2014.

There will be a 7% reduction in the cost of all annual commercial tickets including the Annual MetroSaver, the Corporate MetroSaver and Annual Metro Student Card.

There will also be bigger discounts for students and young people in 2014. The cost of the 16-18 MetroSaver will be 60% less

than the full adult equivalent and the Student MetroSaver will be 30% less than the full adult equivalent product.

The price of child tickets will not be increased and will remain at the 2013 prices.

A one zone single ticket goes up from £1.70 to £1.80. A Metro all zone single goes up from £3.20 to £3.30. An all zone Daysaver is up from £4.40 to £4.50.

New pay-as-you-go fares for smart card users will be introduced in 2014 with discounts compared to normal day tickets included in the average price calculation.



New machines at all stations make buying tickets easy.

Track replacement success helps cut future line closures



Modernisation work at Gosforth involved laying a deep new bed for new tracks to rest on for the next 50 years.

The successful delivery of this summer's Metro modernisation projects meant passengers could look forward to an autumn and winter almost entirely free of disruptive engineering works.

The work to replace 6km of track on Metro's busiest section between South Gosforth and Jesmond, was at the heart of a programme by Nexus to invest up to £38 million in Metro this financial year.

By packing work into a concentrated block in August has been able to reduce the total number of days parts of the system have been replaced by bus services, with just four Sunday line closures between September and February.

Raymond Johnstone, Nexus Director of Rail and Infrastructure, said: "The August Major Line Closure was a success with 6km of track and trackbed renewed, new drainage installed, 10km of fibre-optic cables laid and refurbishment and improvements at stations. "By completing major projects in the summer, when Metro passenger numbers are lowest, we can provide a better service at the busiest time of year, supporting our town and city centre economies in the run up to Christmas.

"The hard work carries on as we invest £38 million this year alone, but more projects will be delivered at night without disruption to passengers or the need to close lines."

all change Metro round-up

New lift installed at Walkergate



Architect's impression.

A new passenger lift is being installed at Walkergate to improve accessibility as part of the complete refurbishment of the station. Work will be completed in the spring with the station remaining open while the project is carried out. The new lift will replace a steep platform ramp.

Walkergate is the 11th station on Metro to be completely refurbished since 2010, following similar modernisation to all the stations between Chillingham Road and North Shields, as well as West Jesmond, Ilford Road and South Gosforth, completed this summer. Existing lifts are also being replaced this winter at St James and Regent Centre stations.

Four new escalators at Gateshead Metro

A project to replace four escalators at Gateshead has been completed on schedule - in time for one of the station's busiest days of the year.

The original escalators between the ticket concourse and platforms at Gateshead, used by three and a half million passengers a year, have been replaced by new more energy - efficient models expected to last a further 30 years.

The six-month project was completed on time a week ahead of this year's Great North Run.

Metrocar fleet refurbishment approaches halfway stage

A £30 million project to refurbish the Metro train fleet is approaching the halfway stage, with 38 modernised Metrocars in service. That represents more than 40% of the cars which have been upgraded to improve the passenger environment. The refurbished Metrocars were the first trains in the UK to meet tougher accessibility standards.

Door campaign aimed at improving safety for passengers



An eye-catching new safety campaign by Metro aims to reduce incidents where passengers block doors.

An online cartoon and posters are being used to encourage people to behave responsibly when boarding trains, and not to put hands and other items into doors as they close, which can lead to maintenance problems, delays and injuries.