

Press release

Passengers save millions as rail fare freeze starts

Government freezes rail fares, saving passengers £600 million and easing cost-of-living pressures as it rebuilds a better, more reliable railway.

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- passengers to save £600 million as government calls a halt to decades of soaring rail fares, as part of plan to put passengers at the heart of the railway through Great British Railways
- over a billion journeys a year will benefit from the regulated fares freeze, covering season tickets, peak returns for commuters and off-peak returns between major cities
- new fraud tackling measure introduced to protect taxpayers' money and keep it in the railway through changes to ticket refund rules, saving millions annually

Millions of commuters across the country are now benefiting from a freeze on rail fares for the first time in 30 years, helping with the cost of living and supporting economic growth.

From this week, regulated rail fares across England have been frozen, meaning passengers won't pay a penny more on season tickets, peak returns for commuters and off-peak returns between major cities – benefitting more than a billion journeys.

For years, rail passengers have faced relentless fares hikes – under the previous government, fares rose by 60% between 2010 and 2024 hitting hard working families and commuters.

Had this government not taken the historic decision to step off the escalator of endless fare rises, regulated rail fares would have increased by 5.8% today. Instead, the fares freeze is expected to save existing rail passengers £600 million in 2026/27 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rail-fares-freeze-passenger-savings-estimate/rail-fares-freeze-passenger-savings-estimate>), putting money back in the pockets of people when they need it most. It is part of the government's wider plan to bring people back to rail, by offering better value for tax and farepayers alike.

The move is saving passengers hundreds of pounds off their season tickets and is supporting growth in town centres across the country, with commuters on some of the busiest routes set to save more than £300 per year. For example, a typical commuter travelling to work 3 days a week using flexi-season tickets, will save:

- £315 per year, travelling from Milton Keynes to London
- £173 per year, travelling from Woking to London
- £57 per year, travelling from Bradford to Leeds

With transport costs making up 14% of household spending, this cost-cutting move is providing real savings for passengers – delivering on the government's commitment to put more money in people's pockets.

These savings come alongside the government's extension of the £3 cap on bus fares, further helping ease pressures on day-to-day journeys and saving people money when they travel to work or school.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said:

“Affordable, reliable transport links are the gateway to jobs, school, and opportunities. So it's not right that passengers are being priced out of the routes they should rely on because of endless hikes.

“This freeze – the first since the 90s – will put more money in working people's pockets. By keeping costs down we are making journeys more affordable for millions of people - putting train travel back into the service of passengers, not profits.”

Transport Secretary, Heidi Alexander, said:

“Freezing rail fares for the first time in 30 years will help millions of passengers keep more of their hard-earned cash, with commuters on some routes saving more than £300 a year.

“As we bring the train operating companies into public ownership, and set up Great British Railways, we are determined to build an affordable railway that the public can be proud of and rely on.”

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, said:

“In the budget I said we would cut the cost of living. For the first time in 30 years, we have now frozen rail fares, saving hundreds of pounds for passengers.

“Our economic plan is the right one. By cutting the cost of living, cutting national debt, and creating the conditions for growth and investment in all parts of the country we are building a stronger more secure economy.”

The freeze applies to all regulated fares, including seasons, peak returns for commuters and off-peak returns between major cities, benefitting more than a billion passenger journeys across England.

To drive more passenger improvements like the historic fares freeze, the government is also taking action to tackle the blight of fraud and fare-dodging, protecting passengers’ and taxpayers’ money and saving around £40 million annually.

Ticket terms and conditions have been changed so from April 1, passengers will only be able to claim refunds for unused tickets ahead of travel.

Rail Minister, Lord Peter Hendy, said:

“Deliberate fare dodging has no place on our railways. It drains much needed revenue and undercuts the trust of passengers who play by the rules.

“Changing refund rules will help stamp out fraud, keeping money in the railway – which will ensure we can deliver an improved railway with passengers at its heart.”

These changes are part of the government’s plans to rebuild a publicly owned railway that the country can rely on and be proud of.

The Railways Bill will create Great British Railways (GBR), a new publicly owned company, that will run and manage the tracks and trains used every day – ending years of fragmentation, driving up standards for passengers, and making journeys easier and better value for money.

GBR will be accountable to passengers and taxpayers, bringing fares and ticketing into the 21st century, including through a new GBR website and app – which will be a one-stop shop for passengers to check train times and buy tickets at the best prices across the rail network, without any booking fees – and building on the expansion of successful Pay As You Go and fares trials across the country.

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