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Train tickets to go mobile

Pay by text on your phone with new barcode system

by Stuart Miles published on 18 December 2008

That dreaded moment of choosing to jump on the train without a ticket or buy one and wait for the next train will be soon a thing of the past thanks to a new system rolling out next year.

Expected to be available from the first quarter of 2009, train passengers will be able to buy a train ticket for their journey by sending a text message to a central number as they hop on the train.

Created by Masabi, a secure mobile applications company for the Association of Train Operating Companies, all franchises across the UK will be able to use the same system, allowing passengers to buy a single ticket for their journey even if they use more than one network.

Once a passenger has bought a ticket via the phone a barcode will be sent to the handset, which can then be shown to guards or used at a ticket gate at the station. Masabi say that the system will work with around 90% of mobile phones in circulation at the moment.

Chiltern Railway, National Express and the Heathrow Express are the first franchises to be running trials of the new service. If the trials are successful the system could be rolled out across the UK.

Masabi says it hopes the system will allow the mobile phone to reduce rush hour queues at the station, even if the traveller only thinks about purchasing as they arrive at the departure station.

