



60 Seconds with Gary Ashby

Hi Gary, tell us a bit about your role and what you're working on?

My role is the programme lead for RDG's Central Back Office (CBO), the common infrastructure that underpins the majority of the TOCs' smartcard solutions and enables network-wide interoperable travel. The programme, which started in January last year, took on the substantial task of expanding the TOCs using the CBO from three to fourteen plus integrating with at least three others.

What are your key priorities for the next 3 months?

Following the hard work to successfully meet the Secretary of State's commitment for smart ticketing availability by December 2018, this year the CBO team's priorities are:

- Completing the expansion, with three more TOCs to onboard, continued enhancement of the live services and completion the interoperability through integrating with those TOCs that operate their own smartcard schemes and working with TfL to enable cross-London travel.
- Developing and aligning new CBO services including common interfaces, local travel scheme integration, account based ticketing, smartcard type tickets on mobiles and standard enhancements such as delay repay and third party retailer solutions.
- Increasing the resilience of the CBO to ensure it is able to replace paper (mag-stripe) tickets as the default ticket type.

What do you feel will be the biggest challenge for you / your project in the next 3 months and how do you plan to work through this?

The biggest challenge for the CBO is the scale of the service. The programme, along with the barcode solution, is replacing rail ticketing infrastructure in a very short timescale. The smart ticket solutions offer many advantages over the current paper tickets, flexibility, usability and ability to support innovation in the future; it needs to be recognised and resourced as a critical element of the rail infrastructure providing a robust service that is reliable, scalable and reactive to change and innovation.

As a customer, what would be the one piece of innovation you'd like to see in the rail industry and why?

My focus is smart ticketing, so the innovation I would most like to see is to see the end of tickets! The infrastructure being put in place today is a step towards simpler and smarter tracking of journeys and a customer should be able to turn up and travel removing the time, complexity and worry associated with buying the right ticket for the journey.

Do you have any New Year's resolutions?

I am not one for New Year's resolutions generally, but if I were, one would be to make time to do learn new things, especially making time to practice the guitar! Time away to keep the right perspective is essential.