

PRESS RELEASE

April 24th 2024

The pilot implementation of the contactless payment system with bank cards begins on Express bus lines to “Eleftherios Venizelos Airport”

Expansion of the advanced contactless transaction system until the end of the year to all public transport under the jurisdiction of OASA

Starting today, April 24th 2024, the pilot implementation of the contactless payment system with bank cards and digital wallets through activated devices (smartphone, smartwatch) begins on Express bus lines to “Eleftherios Venizelos Airport”. By the end of the year, the contactless transaction system will be available to passengers and will cover all public transportation in Athens under the jurisdiction of OASA (Buses, Trolleybuses, Metro, Tram).

Today, at a special event held at Zappeion Megaro, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transport, Mr. Christos Staikouras, along with the Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Transport responsible for Transport, Mrs. Christina Alexopoulou, the General Secretary of Transport, Mr. Yiannis Xifaras, the CEO of the Growthfund, Mr. Gregoris Dimitriadis, the CEO of OASA, Mr. George Spiliopoulos, the Deputy CEO of TERNA ENERGY, Mr. George Agrafiotis, the General Manager of Greece, Israel, Malta, and Cyprus for Visa, Mrs. Sevi Vassileva, and the General Manager of NBG Pay, Mr. Christoforos Chatzopoulos, presented the new service.

The alternative option of using a bank card (debit, credit, or prepaid) for boarding public transportation signifies the entry of Athens Transport into a new digital era for the provided mobility services to the public.

Passengers, apart from ATH.ENA Ticket or ATH.ENA Card, can now, starting today, use a bank card or the cards on their activated devices (smartphone or smartwatch) to board buses of the Express lines of AIA (X93, X95, X96, X97). Payment cards issued by authorized institutions are also included.

OASA, within the framework of a contract with Hellas Smart Ticket S.A., a subsidiary of TERNA ENERGY, in collaboration with LG CNS and with the support of Visa and NBG Pay, developed the application of the pilot contactless transaction system on these specific bus lines, with the project's scope extending to the entirety of the urban transportation network of the capital, until the end of 2024.

Passengers traveling to and from Athens International Airport can now alternatively pay for their ticket contactlessly by tapping their bank card over the bus validators with the relevant indication for contactless transactions.

The equipment installed on the selected buses “reads” the card or digital wallet and charges the value of the journey to the passenger's account. With this new service, Athens joins the list of European cities such as Madrid, Milan, and London, which provide passengers with the opportunity to travel in a simple, safe, and comfortable way, contributing to the increased use of public transportation.

Public urban transportation will play a critical role in the development of smart cities and in facilitating user mobility, with contactless payments (tap & ride) offering a safe and seamless experience for passengers and system administrators seeking easy, immediate, and secure access to these services.

The benefits for the passenger

With the implementation of using bank cards for boarding on public transportation, the passenger community will not need to:

- purchase tickets through ticket offices or vending machines.
- know the available travel products to choose the right one. The system will be able to analyze travel data, and the charge on the bank card will be proportional to the routes, with the option to choose the optimal one. This is an extremely useful function for passengers who are not familiar with the Athens transportation system, such as visitors from other cities and tourists.
- search for sales points to travel by public transportation.

The **Minister of Infrastructure and Transport, Mr. Christos Staikouras**, stated regarding the implementation of the contactless transaction system in urban transportation: *“The support of contactless payments in public transportation is one of the top ten priorities we set when reading the Government's programmatic statements. This project: adapts urban transportation to the modern era, promotes smart mobility, facilitates passengers of public transportation, encourages further usage by citizens and visitors of the capital, reduces the cost of commuting, and contributes to the increase of revenue for transportation agencies. In the first phase, 'tap & pay' will be implemented on Airport Express Bus Lines vehicles, while the entire application suite will be available to passengers by the end of 2024. By then, the efforts made by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport to modernize public transportation will be more visible to citizens, as in a few weeks, 140 new electric buses will start operating on Athens' streets. With the new vehicles and services, we are proving in practice that we are implementing the plan we have developed. Gradually, we are shaping an environment for sustainable urban mobility in the capital, creating infrastructure and developing services that will serve citizens for many years to come.”*

On her part, the **Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Transport, responsible for Transport, Mrs. Christina Alexopoulou** emphasized that: *“With the installation of this specific system in public transportation, a reduction in ticket evasion is expected, which will lead to an increase in their revenue.”* The Deputy Minister highlighted: *“We are digitizing, services and simplifying procedures for the benefit of citizens, and we are planning further utilization of technology for significant improvement in mobility and reduction of environmental footprint.”*

The **Secretary General of Transport, Yiannis Xifaras**, noted that: *“Contactless payments significantly facilitate the daily lives of regular passengers of urban transportation, as well as visitors to our city. At the same time, they unlock the interoperability of Athens' transportation with other mobility applications. Thus, we are given the opportunity for combined trips using both the public transportation system and other means, with a unified fare. Particularly important is the automatic selection of the cheapest fare package by the system for the passenger, without the need for prepayment for a service that may not ultimately be used. Therefore, we can say that waiting time in queues for card renewals and ticket issuance is eliminated, the cost of our travels is reduced, and new possibilities for combined transportation are opened.”*

On his part, the **CEO of Growthfund, Mr. Grigoris Dimitriadis**, noted: *“The transportation system in Athens is changing, entering a new era. It becomes more digital and user-friendly by adopting new technologies that provide more freedom and facilitate passengers. This evolution is part of the overall strategy of Growthfund, which emphasizes the modernization of public interest enterprises. In collaboration with reliable partners, we are progressing in the gradual digital transformation of public transportation, aiming to improve the daily lives of citizens and enhance environmentally friendly urban mobility.”*

The **CEO of the Athens Urban Transport Organization, Mr. George Spiliopoulos**, noted:

“A significant chapter begins today for the urban transportation of the capital. The first phase of implementing the contactless transaction system for each public transportation boarding under the authority of OASA is put into operation. Another step in the digital transformation of Athens' urban transportation. Athens Urban Transport Organization, following the advancements in advanced transportation systems, is now added to the list of European metropolitan entities implementing smart city practices (London, Brussels, etc.). With the technological upgrade of OASA's ticket issuance and distribution information system, the level of service for millions of our fellow citizens who use urban transportation daily for their travels is significantly improved.”

Referring to the progress of the project, the **Deputy CEO of TERNA ENERGY, Mr. George Agrafiotis**, noted:

“Adaptation and evolution is the core and superiority of Public-Private Partnerships over Public projects, in projects of long-term operation and maintenance, as they undergo continuous improvements and modernizations due to different temporal and technological circumstances. We are starting today with a pilot project on the airport line, and within the year, we will expand to all OASA vehicles. At the same time, TERNA ENERGY has completed the development of the Thessaloniki electronic fare software and has begun installation on vehicles in the co-capital, ensuring interoperability with the Thessaloniki Metro systems, so they are ready for the planned start of operations.”

Ms. Sevi Vassileva, General Manager of Greece, Israel, Malta and Cyprus for Visa, stated: *“The new contactless payment system signifies the beginning of a different travel experience on public transportation. It's simpler, faster, and easier for those living, working, and visiting Athens. Contactless payments on public transit contribute to the creation of more efficient and sustainable cities, while being a necessary choice for deploying solutions that combine safety and comfort. In over 750 urban mobility projects worldwide, Visa observes increasing and more intensive participation, with contactless payments being key to facilitating access and usage of public transportation.”*

Mr. Christoforos Hatzopoulos, CEO of NBG Pay, highlighted: *“We are very proud of the innovative service that creates new parameters in urban mobility and upgrades the operation of transportation in our country. We continue to monitor trends in the digital payment sector and adapt to the needs of the market.”*

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