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So that’s how I went to Idu Station yesterday to see the new Automated Fare Collection system at work. Told that 85% of tickets bought for the 7am to KD were bought online. People are abandoning their initial skepticism and starting to trust the system more. Here’s what’s changed



Anyone familiar with rail travel between Kaduna and Abuja in the last few years is fully aware of just how stressful getting tickets can be. People showing up several hours ahead and not even sure they'll get a ticket. A whole industry of touting arose to fill the gap. Naturally.

In Dec 2020, NRC finally launched its Automated Fare Collection (AFC) System, for the Abuja-Kaduna Line. The contract (I've talked about this in a previous thread) covers among other things Speedstiles, Validators and Ticket Vending machines at all the Stations. Rollout ongoing.



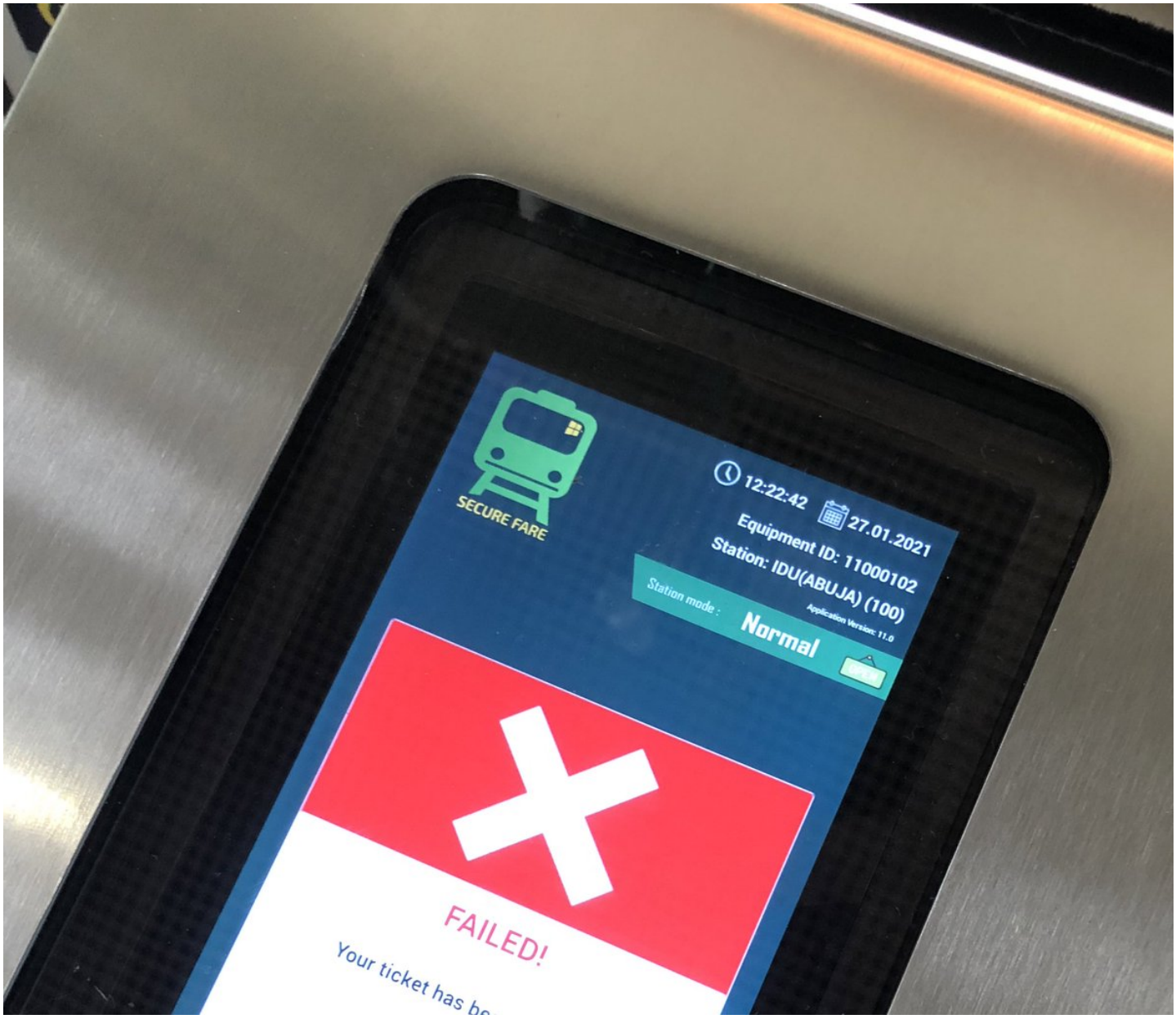
A couple of things to note:

You either buy on web or download an App (Android / iPhone)

You have to create a profile to log-in. So all tickets linked to profiles

For now you can only buy a day in advance - i.e. tickets for today or tomorrow. Will eventually expand that window

Here's what happens when you have an invalid ticket ie a used or expired ticket. Also if you buy a ticket to Station 3, get on train and then travel past Station 3 and come off at Station 5, the system will not allow you to exit the station. You'll have to pay penalty fare.



Ben interesting to see Nigerians quietly abandon their initial cynicism about the system. I'm told in the early days, people would buy online and still show up hours early LOL. Even though the system allocates Seats at ticket purchase stage. That Naija wariness in full force ■

Now that people are realizing that once you book a ticket online the seat you were allocated is guaranteed for you, they're adjusting. Swooping into the Station a few minutes ahead of departure lol. Same people that used to queue hours ahead. Convenience is sweet abeg.

It's still work in progress of course. The ticket vending machines have yet to be installed, coming soon. (At the Stations you can also buy the e-tickets at the counter). Also some Stations still have civil works going on - modifying the layout to fit in the speedstiles etc.

Because Idu Station is big, they could afford to have different sets of speedstiles for entry and for exit (photos - Entry on left, Exit on right). Smaller stations use bi-directional speedstiles ie the same speedstiles for both entry and exit. To maximize available space.



The company delivering this solution is a wholly Naija company - @TPSsolution. Building on PMB's Executive Order 5 (Promotion of local content). The parent company @secureidltd manufactures the bulk of the bank cards (Visa, MasterCard, etc) in use in Nigeria. Also SIM cards.

One of the major items of investments in this Automated Fare Collection project is Internet connections (Fibre + VSAT). You basically have these stations in the middle of nowhere that you have to arrange reliable internet for, with multiple backup, for it to function seamlessly.

The entire project is a @NigeriaGov concession. The FGN/NRC did not put any money down for the project. Concessionaire wholly funding it, deploying it, and will operate, maintain and support for a 10 year concession period, and earn a portion of revenues as fees.

Note that this AFC project has completely destroyed (without shame or apologies) a thriving touting-economy on that rail route. Imagine the 'Job' losses etc. Heard of someone who put a person on monthly pay just to be able to help secure tickets, pre-automation.