

TfL rolls out tougher action on fare evaders and staff abuse with increased penalty fares and body worn cameras

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Transport for London (TfL) has announced tough new action on fare evasion and staff abuse, making body worn video part of its essential kit and increasing the penalty fare from £80 to £100 to act as a further deterrent to fare evasion. TfL has also published new data which shows that it prosecuted 19,614 people for fare evasion in 2023, an increase of 56 per cent on 2022.

TfL says it is committed to tackling fare evasion as revenue from fares is vital for investment in safe, clean and reliable public transport. Fare evasion is a criminal offence and estimated to cost TfL around £150m a year, and TfL strives to ensure that wherever possible fare evaders themselves, not fare or tax payers, pay the cost of fare evasion. Revenue disputes are also a precursor to approximately half of all reported work-related violence and aggression incidents towards frontline colleagues across the network. TfL does not tolerate any violence, aggression or threatening behaviour towards staff or customers and always seeks

the strongest possible action against offenders.

The Mayor has approved an increase to the penalty fare on all TfL services from £80 to £100, reduced to £50 if paid within 21 days. This follows the Department for Transport's decision to increase the penalty fare to £100 across National Rail. This will ensure that there are clear and consistent rules and penalties across the different transport networks in London, and that the penalty fare remains an effective deterrent and that the costs of fare evasion are more effectively absorbed by those who deliberately fail to pay.

Fare evasion is often a trigger for violence and aggression towards staff. TfL has made body worn video (BWV) part of its essential kit for all frontline customer facing staff. BWV cameras film incidents in 60 second-loops and footage is automatically saved once the camera is recording. Research shows that the risk of assaults on colleagues can almost halve when wearing a BWV camera.

If an incident is captured on BWV the footage can also provide vital evidence to the police, resulting in better outcomes when offenders go to court. The major rollout of BWV plays a crucial role in TfL's commitment to the safety and protection of its customers and colleagues. Everyone should be able to go about their day without fear or intimidation and TfL will always work with the police to push for the strongest sentences possible for offenders.

The new data on fare evasion shows that TfL investigated 421 people for habitual fare evasion during 2023 who made more than 50,000 fraudulent journeys across the London Underground network, defrauding TfL of more than £300,000 in lost fare revenue. Of these cases, 190 have been prosecuted to date and 189 were found guilty, with the remaining cases pending court action.

TfL has a comprehensive programme in place to deter offenders, including more than 450 officers undertaking ticket inspection and revenue enforcement activity across every mode of transport every day. Station staff also provide insight and information about fare evaders to TfL enforcement and investigations teams to take action.

TfL has improved its ability to investigate and detect the most prolific offenders causing the greatest revenue loss through its irregular travel analysis platform (ITAP). ITAP is a detection system that detects fare evasion and revenue loss from patterns in ticketing and passenger data, identifying people who avoid paying for all or part of their journey. Information generated by ITAP supports a variety of intervention activities that aim to measure and reduce revenue loss and deter people from evading their fares.

These activities include targeted email campaigns warning customers that they must pay the correct fare, operational station deployments and a register of regular offenders that ITAP has identified for irregular travel patterns who may be prioritised for further investigation and subsequent prosecution.

A recent case investigated by TfL identified a passenger fare evading by using a Contactless Payment Card and failing to validate correctly for their journeys. An investigation into the travel patterns of the passenger identified 193 occasions of fare evasion which totalled unpaid fares of over £1,200. The passenger recently attended court and pleaded guilty to all the offences. TfL also recently identified a passenger fare evading by using a bank card that had insufficient funds to pay the fare. Analysis of the card's usage showed a regular failure to validate on every journey made in over a year. CCTV footage was

obtained to assist in locating and detecting the offender. The passenger attended court and again pleaded guilty to all the offences. He has been ordered to pay TfL £1,795.60.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan said: “TfL relies on revenue from fares to be able to deliver the safe, clean and reliable public transport that Londoners deserve. Fare evasion deprives us of much needed revenue and so I welcome this tough new action from TfL to increase enforcement and ensure more fare evaders are brought to justice. Latest figures show real progress is being made, but I will continue to work with TfL and the British Transport Police to crack down on fare evasion, and build a better, safer and fairer London for everyone.”

Siwan Hayward, TfL’s Director of Security, Policing and Enforcement, said: “The overwhelming majority of our customers pay the correct fare, however a minority do attempt to travel without a valid ticket. Fare evasion is a criminal offence. Fare evasion robs Londoners of vital investment in a safe, frequent and reliable transport. Fare evasion impacts our customers and our staff, and can make public transport feel unsafe. Sadly, fare evasion is often a trigger for violence and aggression towards our colleagues. We strive to ensure that wherever possible it is fare evaders themselves, not fare or tax payers, pay the cost of fare evasion. As today’s data shows, anyone who fare evades will be caught and have to pay the consequences.”

Photo credit: Transport for London