

## Lost direction

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The compass is a tool humans have long used to find our direction, to ensure we're on the right path. A Compass Card is a tool that allows us to spend wretched amounts of money in order to stay in pretty much the same place - at least until this fall when the system finally switches on and we lose the zone system for buses.

TransLink is pitching it as a big step forward, but in reality this is just a massive workaround for the bungled Compass Card system. We're now re-tailoring our fare policy to meet the needs of our broken technology (and with no business case to boot).

On the North Shore, it will have the strange effect of making the SeaBus less desirable than the already crowded buses.

For all their faults, this is one you can't blame entirely on TransLink.

The fare gates were foisted on TransLink (against its own experts' advice) by then-transportation minister Kevin Falcon. At a cost \$193 million, they never had a hope of recovering the revenue lost through fare evasion.

But the one perk that came in the pyrrhic battle against fare evaders was that the tap-in/tap-out system would provide much more sophisticated transit user data, allowing us to make the system more efficient and desirable for riders. But without the tap-out data, that too is now lost, or at least hampered.

Ultimately, we feel a smartcard fare system is a good thing. It will add a level of convenience and draw more people onto transit.

It's just a shame the needle on our compass has never been able to find true north.

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