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EDITORIAL: Tapped out

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TransLink is an organization everyone loves to hate.

This week, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation highlighted yet another reason why when it pointed out that bus drivers pressed a "fare not paid" button 2.7 million times in 2013. That figure didn't include fare evasion on SkyTrain, SeaBus or the West Van Blue Bus, the group pointed out.

It went on to question why honest folk should be asked to pay more transit tax dollars while TransLink ignores those who are grabbing a "free ride" from the system.

Admittedly, TransLink has done a less than stellar job on how to make fares fair. Introduction of the Compass card system - meant to simplify payment - has been badly botched. The cards haven't worked the way they should. The project is over budget and behind schedule.

The issue of fare evasion is more complicated. Pressing the "fare not paid" button saves drivers having to be a collection agency/mental health worker/cop at the same time.

People who don't pay may be dishonest, or desperate, or both and we can all agree drivers are too often the target for assaults and abuse.

And while fare-paying riders may not like freeloaders, see how much they like an extra 2.7-million delays in their commute.

How fare evaders' actions relate to the upcoming TransLink tax referendum is anything but clear.

Yes, there are many problems with TransLink. But voting no to a tax increase isn't likely to make the operational issues any easier. If anything, it's likely to make existing problems worse.

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