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Most gates are locked open, meaning people do not have to tap out to get through a fare gate.

COMMUTING

Don't forget to tap out: TransLink

Many who have one- and two-zone passes billed for three-zone trips

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VANCOUVER SUN

TransLink is reminding new Compass card users, particularly monthly pass holders, to "tap out" of the transit system, after hundreds were charged this week for more zones than they travelled.

The smart card, which was rolled out to the public Nov. 2, requires passengers both to tap in and to tap out on SkyTrain, Canada Line, SeaBus and West Coast Express to ensure they are billed the proper fare. Those who fail to tap out risk being charged for three zones — even if they travel one or two. (Bus passengers need only to tap in because all bus routes are one zone).

It's a particular problem during the phase-in period because most fare gates remain locked open, meaning people aren't forced to tap out to get through a gate and leave a station.

"You could have gone to Surrey and back or back and forth on the system all day because you didn't tap out," Compass program vice-president Lloyd Bauer said.

"We're trying to get the message out because it's important people understand how to use the system in that manner. Our biggest challenge right now really is around the change in habits and how they interact

with the system they're used to. It's getting out of that habit of just walking through the gate."

Thursday, 700 of 2,000 calls to the Compass card service desk required fare adjustments, with most coming from one- or two-zone monthly pass holders who had been charged too much because they didn't tap out at the end of their trip, Bauer said.

Over the course of this week, TransLink made 2,960 adjustments for people who failed to tap out, refunding a total of \$7,094.

The spike in calls comes as 27,000 monthly passes were loaded onto Compass cards this week and Bauer suspects monthly pass holders likely weren't aware they had to tap out, noting they previously never had to use their cards except to flash them at a bus driver when they boarded.

If a one-zone monthly Compass card holder, for instance, fails to tap out, the system will automatically deduct the other two zones — taking it from the card's stored value or deposit — and the passenger may be told they have "insufficient fare" the next time they travel. (Three-zone monthly pass holders aren't affected because they have already paid for the longest trip.)

Compass card holders who use "stored value" on their cards instead of paying for a monthly

pass face a similar issue if they don't tap out at the end of their trip.

TransLink estimates about 100,000 people are already tapping into the system each day. The new fare gate and Compass card system is being phased in over the next few months, with more fare gates to be closed as time goes on.

Paper faresaver tickets will also be phased out to coincide with the last gate going into operation, likely early next year.

TransLink is trying to get the tap-out message across through public announcements in stations, Bauer said, while having SkyTrain and Canada Line attendants in the stations to help people who may be confused.

About 60 people have been sent to Expo and Millennium Line SkyTrain stations, with up to 20 at Canada Line.

"We have been running about six or seven hundred calls a day, but it really popped up early this time because of the monthly pass," Bauer said. "The biggest challenge we're facing is the transition, not the system."

Friday, he said, there were only about 1,200 calls to the call centre. They didn't all have to do with fare adjustments, he said, but included questions about how to load a card and use it.

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