

# HOW TO MAKE THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT FREE

Fare-dodging is not only a way to make public transportation free for yourself, it can also put pressure on politicians to make it fare-free for everyone. By joining together in a solidarity fund, we can widen the impact of fare-dodging, transforming it from the individual's desire to save some money into a collective struggle for a free public transport. By paying a small amount every month to the solidarity fund, members can pay their fines together when they get caught. The solidarity fund for Stockholm in Sweden costs 10€/month (compared to 70€ for official monthly pass) and if you get caught the fund pays your fine (120€) minus a deductible of 10€.

*By following these simple steps you can start your own solidarity fund in your town! If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us at [sthlm@planka.nu](mailto:sthlm@planka.nu).*



## STEP 1: IS IT LEGAL?

The laws concerning ticketing and fare-dodging in the public transport vary depending on which country you live in. Whether a solidarity fund will be legal or not usually has to do with the kind of fine you get if caught fare-dodging: is it formally just an expensive extra charge issued by the public transport company or is the police or legal system involved? In Sweden it is completely legal to run a solidarity fund, but for example in Germany there seems to be some problems with doing it. If neither you or any of your friends know enough about the law, contact someone who studies law, they are usually interested in checking up on things out of curiosity.

## STEP 2: START ON A SMALL SCALE...

Get together with some friends or find people online through political communities or mail lists. Form a group and start a small-scale informal solidarity fund. This is a good way to minimize any consequences, while getting to know how the control system works, curiously investigate its possible gaps, and experiment with different membership fees to find the lowest possible fee that still makes the fund break even.

## STEP 3: DO THE MATH!

Whenever you start up the campaign officially a lot of people will respond with “but if we don’t pay for the tickets, how will the drivers get paid, etc.” This argument is of course not valid since almost all public transport systems are already heavily subsidized and only a small increase in the regional tax or VAT would be needed to skip the fare. But to avoid the use of this argument, and also to show how stupid it is with fares in the

public transport, check out some financial reports from the public transport company or the municipality that runs it. Usually you will find that the fares are not the public transport's biggest income, and that the cost of having a ticket system (selling them, investing in barriers and smart cards, ticket inspectors etc.) make up a big part of the income generated from selling tickets. In Stockholm around ten percent of the income from tickets go directly to upholding the ticket system, and everyone earning less than 6000€ (six thousand euro) would benefit from a fully tax-financed public transport.

## **STEP 4: THE FUN BEGINS...**

Now that you have figured out a good membership fee and sorted out the legal stuff it is time for the fun to begin! Figure out a catchy name for your organisation, register a web site, print some stickers, and if you re really serious, register yourselves as a legal non-profit organisation and set up a bank account for membership fees, and get an address where people can send their fines.

## **STEP 5: GO PUBLIC!**

Launch the solidarity fund with a press release presenting the concept and the underlying demands for a free public transport. Be ready for a lot of attention. If you have time it is a really good idea to read some guides (for example, The Hasbara Handbook: <http://korta.nu/hasbara>) on how to handle the press since, according to our experience, the attention from the press usually gets huge when a new solidarity fund is started.

## STEP 6: ROUTINES CAN BE GOOD!

One thing that sometimes can be a problem for newly started political groups is to get some routines in their work. Hopefully the solidarity fund will take care of this by making your group have to do some routine administrative work each week. This is something we have had a very good experience of in Stockholm, it is not that much work, a few hours every week to answer emails, register new members and pay fines. But it gives a stability to the group, and a reason to meet every week to write articles, leaflets, do research, plan actions and have a good time.

## STEP 7: ENJOY THE (FREE) RIDE!

In Stockholm the campaign has been going on for nine years and is growing stronger every year, we even have some people who were there in the start-up phase that are still active. We like to believe this has to do with our open attitude towards incorporating new ideas, ways of looking at the public transport and actions in our organisation. Whatever you need help with, we are here to help you. Do not hesitate to get in touch!

