# Robert Jenrick sparks debate over soaring London Underground fare evasion costs



Robert Jenrick, the shadow justice secretary and former Conservative leadership contender, has ignited a crucial dialogue regarding fare evasion on the London Underground with a provocative video showcasing his confrontations with alleged fare dodgers. During his visit to Stratford station, he took a firm stance, declaring, “The state needs to reassert itself and go after lawbreakers.” This call to action highlights a growing discontent with the current government's inability to uphold law and order.

The ramifications of fare evasion extend far beyond isolated incidents. Transport for London (TfL) estimates a staggering £150 million is lost annually due to fare dodging. In a bid to restore some semblance of accountability, TfL has increased enforcement efforts, deploying over 500 uniformed officers throughout the network. A recent crackdown, which lasted four weeks, led to the prosecution of 132 passengers and the removal of 47 individuals for obstructing staff. This indicates a desperate attempt to confront not only fare evasion but the wider antisocial behaviour prevalent in our transport systems.

However, the financial impact of such enforcement is monumental—TfL spent nearly £22 million combating fare dodging last year, recouping only a fraction of that through fines. This raises serious questions about the competence of current strategies to effectively deter lawbreakers. Siwan Hayward, TfL's Director of Security, Policing and Enforcement, insists that “the overwhelming majority of customers pay the correct fare,” yet the spiraling costs of enforcement reflect a system at odds with public expectations.

Emerging technologies are attempting to tackle fare evasion, with TfL trialing artificial intelligence systems to identify potential fare dodgers before they can commit the act. Early trials at Willesden Green station showed promise, but a lack of engagement on the part of the current administration begs the question: why is there a need for such advanced measures if the problem were being adequately addressed?

The complexity of fare evasion behaviour further complicates enforcement strategies. TfL distinguishes between accidental, calculated, and chronic evasion. While understanding these subcategories may refine efforts, with chronic offenders reportedly committing over 50,000 irregular journeys, the underlying causes of this behaviour remain unexamined.

Although technology and additional manpower are essential, addressing the root causes of fare evasion is equally vital. Reports reveal that disputes over fares often escalate into aggression toward staff, underscoring the urgent need for a safe environment for all passengers and employees. Public confidence in London’s transport system rests precariously on the current administration’s ability to balance stringent enforcement with a supportive atmosphere.

As the discourse continues, Jenrick’s assertive approach brings much-needed attention to the issue but also opens the floodgates to a multitude of criticisms regarding government inaction. With proposals for increased penalties and the introduction of body-worn cameras for staff, it is evident that the strategy against fare dodging is in constant flux. But the overarching failure of the current administration to effectively manage this crisis illustrates the urgent need for a robust alternative that prioritizes law and order in London’s transport infrastructure.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/tv/news/robert-jenrick-tube-fare-dodgers-video-b2760584.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-68545442> - Transport for London (TfL) has deployed enforcement officers across the network to tackle anti-social behaviour and fare evaders, estimated to cost about £150 million a year. Over a period of four weeks, TfL removed 47 passengers who refused to comply with its rules and were obstructive or threatening towards staff. The officers have also been catching people who do not pay for their travel, reporting 132 passengers for prosecution for breaching bylaws. BBC Radio London’s Eddie Nestor went behind the scenes with the enforcement officers to take a look at the challenges they face.
3. <https://feeds.bbci.co.uk/news/articles/cn8vq8vwg1zo> - Transport for London (TfL) has launched its latest effort to reduce fare evasion across the network by employing a team of investigators to target frequent offenders. About 3.4% of passengers did not pay fares between April and December 2024, a drop of 0.4% on 2023-24. Last year, it was revealed that TfL spent nearly £22 million tackling the crime, which sees fare evaders fined £100, halved if paid within two weeks. It says it employs more than 500 uniformed officers. TfL's Director of Security, Policing and Enforcement, Siwan Hayward, said: "The overwhelming majority of customers pay the correct fare, and it's unfair to those who do that a minority avoid paying."
4. <https://www.timeout.com/london/news/ai-is-being-used-to-catch-fare-dodgers-on-the-london-underground-120523> - Tube fare dodgers: your days are numbered. TfL is cracking down on barrier jumpers with new AI technology, but it's not using ‘facial recognition’, they say. Artificial intelligence is being trialled across the tube network to stop soaring rates of people skipping out on Underground fares. Software that can identify passengers who are likely to jump the barriers was tested at Willesden Green station, on the Jubilee Line. TfL now plans to roll out this technology in more stations after the success of the trial. It’s understood that the technology deployed at Willesden Green used AI algorithms and motion detection to detect passengers who were passing through barriers without paying. According to TfL figures, one in 25 tube journeys isn’t paid for (3.9%), causing TfL to lose more than £130 million a year. The transport authority wants to increase the penalty for not paying the fare from £80 to £100, but this still has to be approved by London Mayor Sadiq Khan. TfL also plans to crack down on ‘wide aisle’ tube gates – designed for passengers with luggage, pushchairs or in wheelchairs – which close slowly and are often targets for fare dodgers who follow paying passengers through before they close. Information gathered in the AI trial will be used to make these barriers more secure.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/08/12/tfl-crackdown-fare-dodgers-cost-money-london1/> - A crackdown on London Tube and bus fare dodgers cost around 20 times more than it clawed back over the past year, new figures show. Transport for London (TfL) spent nearly £22 million cracking down on illicit journeys on its Underground and bus networks across the capital over the past 12 months. A freedom of information (FoI) request reveals that TfL spent some £14.2 million on a revenue enforcement team to enforce fares on the Tube, with a further £7.7 million spent on the bus network. The organisation admitted that it did not know how much had been spent on the London Overground, Tram network or on the Elizabeth line because those services were operated by franchisees that outsource their enforcement teams. In total, TfL enforced around £1.3 million in fares on Tubes and buses – with £638,520 on the London Underground and a further £707,272 on buses, the FoI revealed. TfL insisted it took fare evasion "extremely seriously", adding that its crackdown "provides an important deterrent to potential fare evaders and helps ensure that around 96 per cent of our customers do pay their fares correctly". 414 people are said to avoid paying for their TfL journeys, totalling more than £363,000 in missed fares.
6. <https://www.mylondon.news/news/zone-1-news/tfl-now-catching-london-underground-26411338> - Fare evasion across the TfL network was estimated to be four per cent in the last reporting period, although this varies across each mode with the most popular transport mode, buses, believed to see a lower rate at just 1.5 per cent. In the session, the TfL team revealed the three ways they classify fare evasion actions - accidental (when a customer makes a mistake which means they do not have a valid ticket for their entire journey), calculated (when a customer 'tries their luck' by using a particular route or method to get a cheaper fare they aren't entitled to or avoid paying at all) and chronic (passengers who barge through ticket barriers or try to escape from/threaten TfL staff when challenged, with no regard for others). TfL has 440 operational officers who have a focus on revenue protection. TfL's efforts tend to focus on stopping chronic activity but Mr Poett said that ad-hoc actions such as "static interventions" such as when TfL staff and police pull over buses and systematically check every person, instead of doing it whilst the bus is moving covertly are effective. Ms Bradey told the conference that TfL uses an internal system called ITAP (Irregular Travel Analytics Platform) which can use algorithms to detect repeat patterns of fraudulent behaviour but that its fare evasion tactics don't just rely on data. She said: "We understand the impact this has on our staff in terms of workplace violence but also more broadly on our other fare-paying customers who see this behaviour and see this as a 'lack of control' or lack of ownership that we have over our system to create a safe and cared-for environment."
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-68239307> - The network has been able to detect more 56% more offenders through new technology. Last year Transport for London (TfL) prosecuted more than 19,500 people for fare evasion, an increase of half compared to 2022. It investigated 421 people for habitual fare evasion who made more than 50,000 irregular journeys across the Underground network. The network said the increase was due to better technology to detect prolific offenders. It comes as TfL announced the penalty fare was being raised from £80 to £100. TfL said that it has improved its ability to detect and investigate offenders causing the greatest revenue loss through its irregular travel analysis platform (ITAP). ITAP detects fare evasion from patterns in ticketing and passenger data, identifying people who avoided paying for all or part of their journey. It has gathered a register of regular offenders that ITAP has identified for unusual travel patterns who may be prioritised for further investigation and subsequent prosecution, TfL said. Better technology is credited with detecting fare evaders. TfL also announced on Friday that it was making body-worn video part of its essential kit for employees, and was increasing the penalty fare from £80 to £100 to act as a further deterrent to fare dodging. It added that disputes over fares were also a precursor to "approximately half" of all reported work-related violence and aggression incidents towards frontline staff. 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."