

EURO
CITIES



Tallinn residents travel for free



Pioneering free public transport

On 1 January 2013, Tallinn became the largest European city and first European capital city to provide free public transport to all its residents. The city hopes that this move will help reduce pollution and congestion as well as alleviating financial pressures on low-income residents.

'Green card'

The scheme is open to all residents of Tallinn as well as schoolchildren and over 65s who are resident in Estonia. Eligible transport users must purchase a €2 'green card' which they must then personalise, either at point of sale for €1 or free of charge online. They are then free to travel the city's public transport network without incurring any extra charges.

Students can register in the same way, but are able to replace the 'green card' with another RFID (radio frequency identification)-enabled card, such as a student card, for added convenience.

Non-residents can also purchase a card for €2 which they must top up with money in order to travel.

“Free public transport in Tallinn is definitely one of the top innovations over last decade. It effectively improves the quality of life for citizens, boosts the economy and helps protect the environment.”

Edgar Savisaar, mayor of Tallinn

cities in action

July 2013

where: Tallinn, Estonia
what: mobility
when: 2013+

Boom in registrations

The scheme has led to a rise in the number of people registering as residents of Tallinn in order to benefit from the scheme.

According to Tallinn's calculations, around 40,000 of its 404,000 residents have not yet registered in Tallinn or are registered in other towns and cities.

However, just five months after the launch of the scheme, Tallinn has already seen an additional 6,100 residents register, most of them after the scheme was approved by the city council in October 2012, compared to 3,600 in the whole of 2012.

The impact of this on Tallinn's tax base is significant; it estimates that for every 1,000 new residents registering, €1 million is generated for the city in personal income tax revenue.

The scheme is costing the city €12 million per year in lost ticket sales. However, given the current rate of new residents registering, it is forecast to offset the cost of providing free transport this year.

Travellers not in possession of a valid green card will have to pay a fine of up to €40, bringing in additional income for the city.

New users

Offering free public transport to all residents does not just have an impact financially. It helps to bring new groups of residents into the city centre, especially at the evenings and weekends, which in turn helps drive the local economy.

It also affords a new level of mobility and independence to the unemployed, low-income residents and less able residents, allowing them to travel freely without the need for a private car or incurring expensive public transport costs.

This can be particularly of value, for example, to larger, lower-income families for whom the cost of travelling could be a barrier.

The city has recorded a 10% rise in the number of public transport users and a 15% drop in the number of cars on the road.

Tallinn has taken further measures to encourage residents to choose public transport over private cars, such as expanding

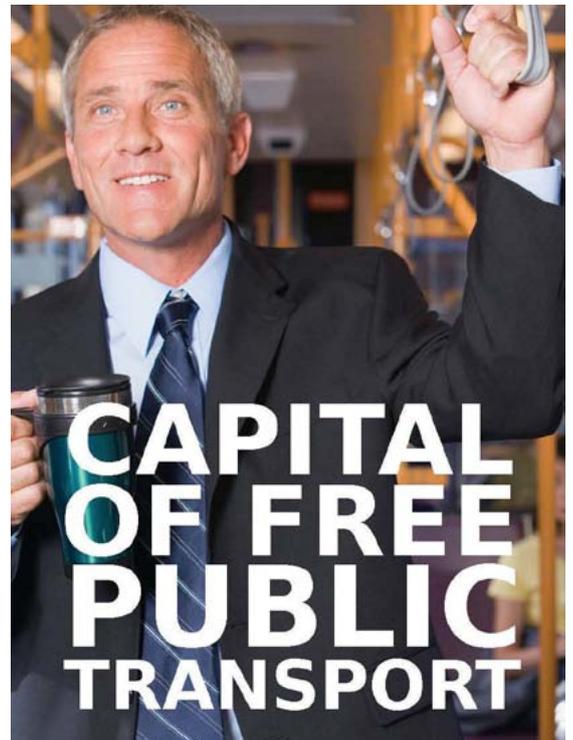
exclusive bus lanes, expanding paid parking zones and increasing parking charges.

The city has also developed its public transport infrastructure to cope with additional demand, purchasing an extra 15 trams and 70 buses.

Residents have welcomed the opportunity to travel around their city for free, with nine out of ten residents expressing satisfaction with the outcome of the scheme.

However, it has not been without criticism, with some residents concerned that the city will struggle to maintain the quality of the network over time.

The city has also been accused of using 'big brother' tactics by requiring residents to personalise their travel cards, but Tallinn argues that being able to study residents' travel patterns will help it adapt and improve the network according to users' needs.



Free public transport is good. People will have more possibilities to travel around and if it improves city traffic, then I'm all for it!



Resident, Tallinn

