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Over 1K in Russia's Kazan Kicked Off Public Transport on First Day of Covid Passes

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The republic of Tatarstan was among the first Russian regions to mandate QR code passes for public transit and other public places. **Yegor Aleyev / TASS**

More than 1,500 passengers were kicked off public transportation on the first day of digital Covid pass enforcement in the central Russian city of Kazan, the city's Mayor's Office said Monday.

The republic of Tatarstan was among the first Russian regions to mandate QR code passes for access to public places as the country battles the fourth and deadliest wave of the pandemic yet. The passes, which prove one's vaccination status, negative PCR test result or recent Covid-19 recovery, are an attempt to entice the vaccine-hesitant population to get the jab.

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Scuffles erupted over the new rules, leading to significant delays, multiple arrests and hospitalizations of bus conductors in the city of 1.2 million.

Kazan's transport authority said 786 passengers had been kicked off trams and trolleybuses and 126 off metro stations as of mid-Monday.

Police detained at least five people, the Metroelectrotrans Kazan company said on its social media page.

A number of bus conductors have been hospitalized after being beaten and pepper sprayed, the Kazan Mayor's Office said.

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Tatarstan's Business Online news outlet also reported higher taxi fares and shortages in car-sharing services in connection with the QR requirements.

The Kremlin said Monday that hiccups with transport are inevitable as the public adjusts to the new rules and expressed hope that the issues will be resolved soon.

Kazan's transportation crisis comes as Russian lawmakers race to mandate vaccine passports for public transport, restaurants and non-essential shops in a bid to combat deeply entrenched vaccine hesitancy.

Russia's parliament is expected to adopt the QR code requirements, which will come into effect from Feb. 1 to June 1, 2022, next month.

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