

# Chapter 5—Education and Encouragement

## 5.3: Transit Users

### Introduction

Education of both transit riders and transit drivers is a critical component for the successful operation of a mass transit system. Transit riders need to know how to use the system; for example, they need to know where transit routes go, how often the routes run, how much fares cost, how fares can be paid, and how to stay safe when using the system.

Transit drivers need to know how to operate transit vehicles safely when interacting with a variety of other users, such as pedestrians of all ages, bicyclists, wheelchair users, private cars, and other larger vehicles. Transit drivers should also recognize that there is an element of customer service to their work, and that professional behavior is crucial to the operation of a successful transit system.

Education of transit users will improve road safety, and is therefore integral to the concept of Complete Streets. This section covers messages and methods to educate transit users. Some example encouragement programs have also been included.

### Educational Messages for Transit Users

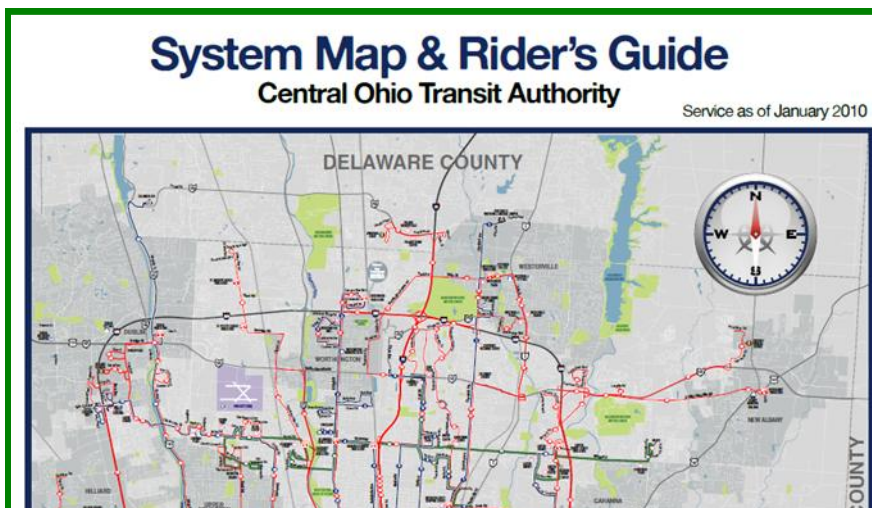
The following topics should be addressed in educational messages for transit riders. The type of medium used to portray the message may differ on what is deemed most useful, such as paid media, presentations, or brochures.

#### Safety

- Some bus stops are located in areas without sidewalks. Others are located without a convenient crosswalk to cross a busy road. Although these are engineering problems, transit riders should be educated to use caution at such locations.

#### Convenience

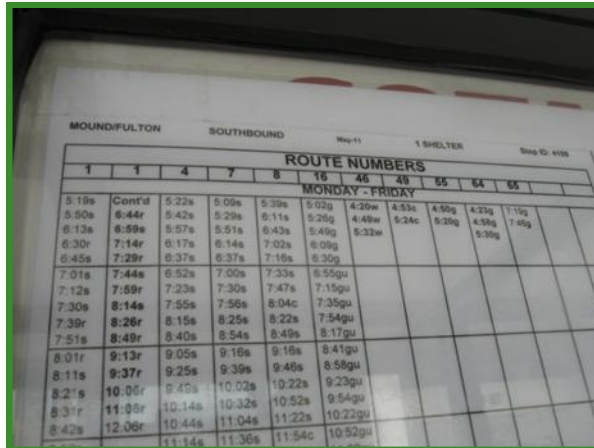
- Transit systems should be marketed as convenient (and in some cases, faster) alternatives to driving.
- Amenities offered by transit systems, such as bike racks on buses, Wi-Fi on buses, and special service to large events, should be specifically marketed to raise awareness.
- Certain bus features can be helpful for all riders, not just those with disabilities. These include buses that lower to the curb and lifts for wheelchairs and other devices.



◀ Portion of map of COTA bus routes.  
(Image: COTA)

### How To Ride

- Maps and schedules for individual bus routes should be posted at bus stops wherever possible.
- Maps of the entire bus system should be available and should be posted inside bus shelters.
- Printed bus schedules for the appropriate routes should be available inside buses.
- Consider providing schedules and other information in a variety of formats. For example, audiotape, large print, Braille, and languages such as Spanish and Somali.
- Encouraging passengers to exit through the rear door of a bus can improve transit system efficiency because it avoids congestion caused by passengers boarding and exiting through the same door. This can reduce the amount of time the bus spends at a stop. However, some bus systems (for example, Ohio State University’s free CABS system) allow riders to board at the rear as well as the front, since no fares are collected.
- Brochures that explain “how to ride” may also be helpful, especially for those with no prior experience using transit. This can make the process seem more familiar. An example of such a brochure is the COTA “How to Ride Guide.” It can be found online at [http://www.cota.com/assets/Riding-Cota/How\\_to\\_Ride\\_BrochureWEBopt.pdf](http://www.cota.com/assets/Riding-Cota/How_to_Ride_BrochureWEBopt.pdf).



| MOUND/FULTON    |        | SOUTHBOUND |        | MON-FRI |        | 1 SHELTER |       | Stop ID: 4100 |       |       |
|-----------------|--------|------------|--------|---------|--------|-----------|-------|---------------|-------|-------|
| ROUTE NUMBERS   |        |            |        |         |        |           |       |               |       |       |
| MONDAY - FRIDAY |        |            |        |         |        |           |       |               |       |       |
| 1               | 1      | 4          | 7      | 8       | 15     | 48        | 78    | 85            | 84    | 85    |
| 5:19a           | Cont'd | 5:22a      | 5:09a  | 5:38a   | 5:02a  | 4:26a     | 4:53a | 4:59a         | 4:23a | 7:46a |
| 5:50a           | 6:44a  | 5:42a      | 5:29a  | 6:11a   | 5:26a  | 4:49a     | 5:24a | 5:29a         | 4:58a | 5:39a |
| 6:13a           | 6:59a  | 5:57a      | 5:51a  | 6:43a   | 5:49a  | 5:32a     |       |               |       |       |
| 6:30a           | 7:14a  | 6:17a      | 6:14a  | 7:02a   | 6:09a  |           |       |               |       |       |
| 6:45a           | 7:29a  | 6:37a      | 6:37a  | 7:16a   | 6:25a  |           |       |               |       |       |
| 7:01a           | 7:44a  | 6:52a      | 7:00a  | 7:33a   | 6:55a  |           |       |               |       |       |
| 7:17a           | 7:59a  | 7:23a      | 7:30a  | 7:47a   | 7:15a  |           |       |               |       |       |
| 7:30a           | 8:14a  | 7:55a      | 7:56a  | 8:04a   | 7:35a  |           |       |               |       |       |
| 7:39a           | 8:26a  | 8:15a      | 8:25a  | 8:22a   | 7:54a  |           |       |               |       |       |
| 7:51a           | 8:49a  | 8:40a      | 8:54a  | 8:49a   | 8:17a  |           |       |               |       |       |
| 8:01a           | 9:13a  | 9:05a      | 9:16a  | 9:16a   | 8:41a  |           |       |               |       |       |
| 8:11a           | 9:37a  | 9:25a      | 9:39a  | 9:46a   | 8:58a  |           |       |               |       |       |
| 8:21a           | 10:05a | 9:45a      | 10:02a | 10:22a  | 9:23a  |           |       |               |       |       |
| 8:31a           | 11:05a | 10:14a     | 10:32a | 10:52a  | 9:54a  |           |       |               |       |       |
| 8:42a           | 12:06a | 10:44a     | 11:04a | 11:22a  | 10:22a |           |       |               |       |       |
|                 |        | 11:14a     | 11:36a | 11:54a  | 10:52a |           |       |               |       |       |

▲ Bus schedule posted inside a COTA shelter.  
(Photo: MORPC, Columbus, OH)



▲ Map posted inside a COTA shelter.  
(Photo: MORPC, Columbus, OH)

### Electronic Rider Information

- Route maps and schedules should be available on the transit agency website. They should be available in an easily printable format, such as PDF.
- System maps should also be available on the transit agency website. They may show different levels of detail for areas in which transit routes are more or less dense. For example, COTA has 3 system maps available: [www.cota.com/maps.aspx](http://www.cota.com/maps.aspx).
- Many transit agencies have an interactive online system map. Online trip planners are useful tools for many transit riders as they help customize the information to the individual trip. They allow the user to enter an origin, destination, and desired time of arrival. A local example is the COTA online trip planner: <http://infoweb.cota.com/hiwire>.

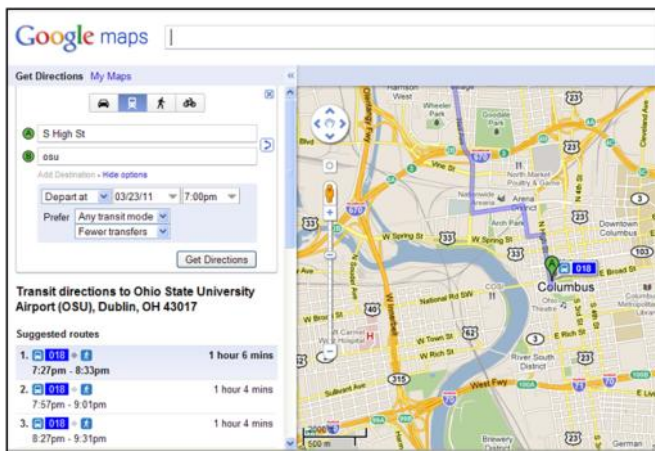
# Chapter 5—Education and Encouragement

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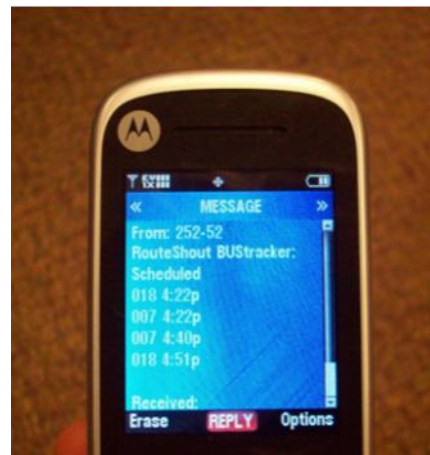


### Electronic Rider Information, Cont'd

- Google Maps ([www.maps.google.com](http://www.maps.google.com)) also has information on transit routes and schedules.
- It offers an option to select “public transit” as the travel mode when getting directions. It is possible to customize your route by choosing “fewer transfers” or “least walking.”
- For most urban areas, bus stops are marked on the map, and information on arriving buses can be obtained by clicking on the bus stop icon. Google Maps data is provided by the transit agencies; however they may not include temporary route or schedule changes.



▲ Example of “Public Transit Mode” directions by Google Maps (Photo: Google Maps)



◀ COTA “TXT 4 NXT Bus” informational message on a cell phone. (Photo: MORPC, Columbus, OH)

- Bus route and schedule information can also be made available on demand through relatively simple mobile phone tools. For example, COTA has an automated phone line that allows users to enter the ID of the bus stop where they are waiting to receive bus schedule information over the phone. COTA’s “TXT 4 NXT Bus” pilot program allows users to send a bus stop ID via text message and receive a text message in reply giving the times of upcoming buses: <http://www.cota.com/TXT4NXTBUS.aspx>.
- Bus route and schedule information can also be made available through more sophisticated methods such as smartphone applications. An example is the Chicago L Rapid Transit iPhone and iPod Touch Application, which allows users to find nearby transit stops, plan trips, and find points of interest: <http://www.presselite.com/iphone/chicagorapidtransit>.
- Open data provided by transit agencies facilitates the development of electronic trip planning tools by private developers. This can increase transit ridership by making transit use more convenient. The film “A Case for Open Data in Transit” gives a good overview of the benefits of providing open transit data. The site OpenTransitData.org provides a “[public transit openness index](http://www.opentransitdata.org/public-transit-openness-index).” Locally, COTA has provided their data in Google Transit Feed Spec format on the following webpage: <http://www.cota.com/data.asp>.
- Automatic vehicle locator (AVL) systems are online systems that are linked to GPS units on transit vehicles. These show the on-time status of a given transit vehicle, often through a map interface. This can be useful for giving passengers real-time information about whether a bus is going to arrive on time at a specific stop.



◀ Bus stop information on Google Maps.  
(Source: Google Maps)

### Educational Messages for Transit Users

The following topics should be addressed in educational messages for transit drivers. The type of medium used to portray the message may differ on what is deemed most useful, such as paid media, presentations, or brochures.

#### Bicyclists and Pedestrians

In addition to normal Commercial Driver License (CDL) training, bus drivers should be specifically trained to:

- Yield to pedestrians at crosswalks.
- Be alert for pedestrians who may cross improperly or suddenly in front of transit vehicles.
- Observe all traffic laws with regard to bicyclists, and understand that bicycles are considered vehicles under Ohio law.
- Pass bicyclists at a safe lateral distance of at least 3 feet.
- Assist bicycle riders with the usage of the bike racks.
- Understand that bicyclists belong in the road and should generally not ride on sidewalks.
- If applicable, ensure that the bus stop announcement system is working and report any damage of the in-vehicle electronic signs that display the next bus stop. This is especially important to make transit user-friendly to people with disabilities. If the announcement system needs repair, the bus driver needs to personally call out the stops.
- Remind passengers to use the rear door to exit, as this can speed up the time the bus spends at a stop. Delays at stops can reduce the ability for transit to stay on schedule.



◀ An excellent resource on bus/bike road sharing is the Chicago Bicycle Program's instructional video "Share the Road - Buses and Bicycles": <http://vimeo.com/7949969>.  
(Source: Chicago Bicycle Program, video)

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#### Encouragement Tips and Programs for Transit Riders

Encouragement programs are designed to increase the number of people using transit. Encouragement programs should always be accompanied by educational messages to ensure people are using the system safely and are having a pleasant experience. Targeted encouragement aimed at specific populations can be especially effective. The following are examples of transit-related encouragement tips and programs.



▲ Information on road-sharing in bus/bike lanes posted in a bus.  
(Photo: Ariel Godwin, Baltimore, MD)

#### Transit Encouragement for Children

Particularly in this economy, more children may be using public transit to travel to school or other destinations. This can reduce traffic congestion around schools, thus increasing safety for all students. Below are a few tips for younger riders and their parents:

- Accompany the child a few times before they go on their own.
- If they are not sure where to get off the bus, tell them to ask the driver. Sitting near the driver may also be a good idea.
- Wait until the bus has come to a full stop before getting up.
- More tips can be found on Vancouver's Smart Trips program website, called "Travel Smart": <http://www.travelsmart.ca/en/School/Getting-there.aspx>.
- Columbus City School students may ride COTA for free with a valid student ID card.

#### Transit Encouragement for Seniors

Public transit can provide seniors with independence. AARP outlines the steps to take when riding public transit for the first time: <http://www.aarp.org>. AARP also provides three short videos on planning your trip, riding the bus, and other transit services. While these videos are specific to Louisville's transit system, the majority of the information provided is true for local transit agencies in Central Ohio. The main difference that most local transit agencies use "swipe card" passes instead of tickets.

- COTA users who are 65 and older are eligible for a Senior ID card. This provides significant discounts (50%) on COTA monthly passes.
- COTA also provides free travel training to senior organizations. For more information, contact COTA at 614-275-5828.
- There are service providers that work with the senior population. Please see the [Franklin County Coordinated Plan](#) for more information. This program is reviewed tri-annually.
- AARP has produced a "Getting Around Guide" for seniors, which includes information on using transit. [English](#) and [Spanish](#) versions are both available online.

### Transit Encouragement for College Students

College campuses tend to have high demand for parking spaces which are often expensive. This can encourage college students to use transit. Transit can be an effective part of a comprehensive Travel Demand Management (TDM) program. Agreements have been reached between COTA and two local colleges so that students may ride without paying bus fare when they board. Students pay a small fee as part of their tuition:

<http://www.cota.com/Students.aspx>.

- CCAD students may ride COTA for free by showing their student ID.
- OSU students may also ride COTA by showing their student ID. Fees are \$9 a quarter for undergraduate students: <http://tp.osu.edu/students/alternate.shtml>
- A COTA service website aimed at OSU students can be found at COTA Go Bus: <http://www.cotagobus.com/>.
- OSU has its own transit service. The bus system is called the Campus Area Bus System (CABS). Anyone, not just students or OSU affiliates, can ride CABS for free. For more information, visit: <http://tp.osu.edu/cabs/index.shtml>.



◀ Screenshot from COTA Go Bus website for OSU students.  
(Source: COTA)

### Transit Training for Disabled Populations

Transit service is often complemented by paratransit service. This service is provided for those who are unable to use fixed-route service due to their disability. It is a demand-response shared-ride service.

- COTA calls this service “Mainstream.” For more information on this program, call 614-275-5828 or review their brochure on COTA’s website: <http://www.cota.com>.
- Riders with disabilities also receive a 50% discount on bus fares on regular fixed-route COTA service.



Wheelchair user getting on a bus ▶  
(Source: COTA website)

### Local Incentive Programs

Columbus-area businesses may offer discounted monthly COTA passes to their employees. Human Resources Departments may have more information.

- 7-Day COTA passes are also available for purchase. For more information, check COTA’s website: <http://www.cota.com/Employer-Bus-Passes.aspx>.
- MORPC RideSolutions offers a free guaranteed ride home (GRH) program. Registered transit users receive reimbursement for emergency taxi service home from work, up to 4 times a year. For details, visit the RideSolutions website: <http://www.morpc.org/ridesolutions>.

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#### Smart Trips program

Smart Trips is an individualized marketing program with information about many different modes of travel, including walking. This program originated in Australia and Europe, but has been used successfully in many communities around the U.S. over the past decade. A small geographic area of the city is chosen for the program each year. Some of the goals of Smart Trips include: reducing drive alone trips, increasing walking, biking, transit, carpooling and car sharing trips, and increasing neighborhood mobility and livability. Some of the transit-related items include ([Bicyclinginfo.org](http://Bicyclinginfo.org), [Portland Smart Trips, 2011](http://Portland Smart Trips, 2011)):

- Provision of relevant transit maps and schedules.
- Ride guides for seniors and the disabled.
- List of bus stop IDs for stops closest to the resident's home. This makes calling the transit agency for real-time bus information easier.
- For more information, see section 5.8, Transportation Demand Management.

#### Additional Public Meetings Related to Transit Programs

There are various public meetings that are related to transit programs. These can especially be of interest to the senior and disabled populations.

- COTA has a Mobility Advisory Board. For more information contact their Board Chair, Susan Colbert at (614) 866-6900 or [colbert.22@osu.edu](mailto:colbert.22@osu.edu).
- An advisory group chaired by COTA staff, Accessible Transportation Advisory Council (ATAC) meets regularly. Please visit their forum for more information: <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/mailatac/>.
- City of Columbus holds a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Disability Issues. For more information contact the Columbus ADA Coordinator, Richard Isbell at (614) 645-7671 or [raisbell@columbus.gov](mailto:raisbell@columbus.gov). You may also visit the ADA Coordinator webpage at: [http://mayor.columbus.gov/ADA/content.aspx?id=16540&menu\\_id=820](http://mayor.columbus.gov/ADA/content.aspx?id=16540&menu_id=820).

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