



Public Transport Information

Good Practice

February 2009

ATCO - Public Transport Information Good Practice

Guiding Principles

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to advise Local Authorities in the delivery of public transport information to a high standard. This is a working document, which will be updated annually, to reflect the changing nature of good practice.

It recognises that there are national standards and legislation that each Local Authority must adopt, together their own corporate strategies, policies and guidelines and therefore, this document does not set out to prescribe specific information formats. However, the aim is to encourage transport professionals to consider all scenario's that a passenger may experience on a journey to tailor their information provision accordingly. It is these scenarios that are considered in detail in this document and although the example used is for a bus journey the same principles can be applied to train, tram, ferry and other sustainable travel options.

There are a few guiding principles that underpin the whole process:

Fit for purpose

This is the most profound principle to follow. Public transport information has a very basic and fundamental objective - to help people. The most important rule is to always consider the end user.

Stepping stones

Stepping stones are a useful image to visualise, when considering all the various components that are needed for the way-finding process. Key points where decisions are made need to be identified. The requirement for each of those points can then be defined, and the ideal solution can be reached.

Choices

In order to provide the sort of information passengers require, first it must be accepted that everyone is different in terms of what each individual already knows and understands and also their ability to comprehend that which is presented to them. For example, the information found on a website does not replace the printed leaflet - not everyone is computer literate. Real-time displays only give live information in a particular moment they do not help a user decide if they are in the right place or what might happen at any other time, so static information is vital. Consider what people will need to know at specific points of a journey.

Context

The right information in the right format, correctly and carefully placed. For example, display information is more effective when it is specific and conveys to the user only what they need to know at a given place. Too much information can be just as unhelpful as too little.

Testing

To gauge public response and check the effectiveness of a public transport information scheme, it is vital that any testing is carried out in a realistic setting. Testing the information in very similar circumstances to the ultimate outcome, is a useful and worthwhile exercise and far more likely to show accurate results.

Promotion and information

There is a distinct difference between the basic criteria required for public transport information and promotion or advertising. These aspects inevitably do need to work in harmony. The clarity of information must not be compromised but equally, the detail must be made palatable and aesthetically pleasing. Transport information should be easy to follow and easy on the eye. Sometimes the content is necessarily complicated but this still needs to be made clear, simple and attractive.

Logos and endorsements

Their main function is to convey familiarity, reassurance and confidence - this supports the information. Logos and endorsements must not compromise the information or dominate it.

Consistent use of visual language

Visual information delivery needs to be constant in order for both existing and new users to learn, understand and continue to follow the information that is presented to them. Consistency does not mean that everything must be identical. Expert knowledge is required to best decide the demands of all the various applications so that it brings it together in a common format creating a seamless set of products.

Clear legible text

Good typography, especially for the complexities that can arise with transport information, requires practical experience and knowledge. Point size is not an indication of legibility. 10pt in one style could be a lot easier to read than 14pt in another. Text for hand-held information does not need to be as large as text for display material. If lines of type are too close together or too long with umpteen words on each line it is very difficult to read. Another important factor is contrast - the colour of the text needs to stand out from the background.

Marking a change

There will never be one concise and timeless way to convey particular types of information because, by their very nature, new products will require a fresh view in an ever changing environment. Improvements to any information format are inevitable to keep up with new demands made by modern transport. However, alterations to the information format should be made to improve it, not to simply mark a change. Decorative elements such as photographs and illustrations are effective devices to mark a change without altering the structure of the information that users feel confident with.

Emphasis and priority

To help guide the user through information, emphasis is given to important headings, symbols and graphics. For example, on a given bus map, priority should be given to the bus route and any relevant details such as bus route numbers. The map may hold other details such as places of interest but the product must be designed so that the important information is easily grasped.

Terminology

The most important rules to follow for the content of information are to keep it simple, direct, friendly and unambiguous. Always keep abbreviations to a minimum and when they need to be applied, ensure that they are applied consistently, for example in notes 'W' always means the same thing. A clear and simple explanation must be easy to find.

Twenty-four hour clock

For timetable information the twenty-four hour clock is essential. Sometimes it may be appropriate to use the twelve hour clock (e.g. call centre opening times) and therefore a suffix of am and pm is necessary.

SCENARIO 1

AT HOME:

“I know where I want to go, but which bus do I need?”

Internet - Website

Website

- Journey Planner
- Timetable information
- Map to illustrate the services on offer and give an overview
- Tickets and fares information (if available)
- Contact details including:
 - Website
 - Telephone number
 - E-mail link

Telephone -
Information
enquiry line

Telephone number

- Traveline
- Operator
- Direct contact for one-to-one assistance
 - A friendly voice
- Does the user need to know about easy access
- Fares information
- Cost of telephone call

Printed
Information
(direct mail)

Journey planner covering main area

- Destination led information in alphabetical order to locate town
 - Buses, trains etc serving that town
- Map to illustrate the services on offer and give an overview
- Timetable information
- Tickets and fares information (if available)
- Contact details including:
 - Website
 - Telephone number

SCENARIO 2

LEAVING HOME:

"I now know which bus I need, but where do I catch it from?"

Internet - Website

Website

- Journey Planner
- Timetable information
- Map to illustrate the services on offer and give an overview
- Tickets and fares information (if available)
- Contact details including:
 - Website
 - Telephone number
 - E-mail link

Printed information

(direct mail or posted on request via telephone or e-mail)

Local area bus guide

- Destination led information in alphabetical order to locate town
 - Buses serving that town
 - Where to board your bus (for where to board schemes)
- Map to illustrate bus services
- Maps to illustrate boarding points (for where to board schemes)
- Timetable information
- Tickets and fares information
- Highlighted changes from previous editions
- Contact details including:
 - Website
 - Telephone number

Telephone - Information enquiry line

Telephone number

- Traveline
- Operator
- Direct contact for one-to-one assistance
 - A friendly voice
- Does the user need to know about easy access
- Fares information
- Cost of telephone call

SCENARIO 3

LOCATING THE RIGHT BUS STOP:

“I think my bus stop should be just around this corner”

Bus stops with shelter - with individual identifier

Set of bus stops, each with an individual letter identifier

- Street furniture (flag or flag with shelter)
 - Letter/number displayed to identify each stop
 - Geographical name to identify each stop
 - Direction of buses
 - Route numbers displayed to reassure and confirm the right stop
 - Contact details e.g. Traveline
- Familiar graphic style to reassure and promote confidence
- Information panels/posters
 - Where to board your bus map
 - Destination list with bus route numbers and bus stop letters
 - Timetable information for this stop
 - Vicinity map of local area
 - Map of bus network.
 - Tickets and fares information
 - Mobile phone Text information
 - Contact details e.g. Traveline

Bus stop

Single bus stop

- Street furniture (flag)
 - Geographical name to identify each stop
 - Direction of buses
 - Route numbers displayed to reassure and confirm the right stop
 - Contact details e.g. Traveline
- Familiar graphic style to reassure and promote confidence.
- Information panels/posters
 - Destination list with bus route numbers
 - Timetable information for this stop
 - Map of bus network
 - Tickets and fares information
 - Mobile phone Text information
 - Contact details e.g. Traveline

Street signage -
Information site

Information site in street

- Universal information ⓘ symbol
- Familiar graphic style to reassure and promote confidence
- Poster or set of posters
 - Destination list with bus route numbers and bus stop letters
 - Where to board your bus map
 - Vicinity map of local area
 - Contact details e.g. Traveline

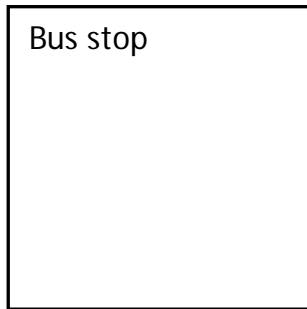
Street signage
- Finger post

Finger post sign in street

- Direction to buses
 - With lettered stops if appropriate

SCENARIO 4

CHOOSING BETWEEN TWO BUS STOPS: “Am I on the right side of the street?”



Single bus stop

- Street furniture (flag)
 - Geographical name to identify each stop
 - Direction of buses
 - Route numbers displayed to reassure and confirm the right stop
 - Contact details e.g. Traveline
- Familiar graphic style to reassure and promote confidence
- Information panels/posters
 - Destination list with bus route numbers
 - Timetable information for this stop
 - Map of bus network
 - Tickets and fares information
 - Mobile phone Text information
 - Contact details e.g. Traveline

SCENARIO 5

CHECKING THE ROUTE AND THE TIME:

“I think this is my bus stop, I just want to be sure where the bus goes and check the time”

Bus stop -
Information
panels

Single bus stop

- Information panels
 - Destination list with bus route numbers
 - Timetable information with route diagrams for this stop
 - Map of bus network
 - Tickets and fares information
 - Mobile phone Text information
 - Contact details e.g. Traveline

Printed
information
(direct mail or
posted on
request via
telephone or
e-mail)

Printed information

- Destination-led information in alphabetical order to locate town.
 - Buses serving that town
 - Where to board your bus (for where to board schemes)
- Map to illustrate bus services
- Maps to illustrate boarding points (for where to board schemes)
- Timetable information
- Tickets and fares information (if available)
- Highlighted changes from previous editions
- Contact details including:
 - Website
 - Telephone number

Electronic display

Electronic display

- Real-time information
 - Route numbers in order of arrival with final destination
 - Minutes remaining before arrival

Mobile phone -
Text information

Mobile phone

- Text details to obtain real-time information

SCENARIO 6

BUYING A TICKET: “How do I pay?”

Bus stop -
Information
panels

Single bus stop

- Information on appropriate pay method
 - prepaid pass
 - no change given
 - zonal based/flat fares
 - Mobile phone payment

Printed Information
(direct mail or
posted on
request via
telephone
or e-mail)

Printed information

- As above

On bus

On bus

- Tickets and fares options
 - weekly/monthly tickets
 - discounted ticket prices for prepayment

In bus -
the bus driver

The bus driver

- Ask the bus driver directly, face-to-face

SCENARIO 7

GETTING ON THE RIGHT BUS:

“I don’t want to get on the wrong bus”

On bus -
Exterior
information

On bus

- Front of bus
 - Route number
 - End destination
 - Intermediate destination points
- Near-side of bus
 - Route number
 - End destination
 - Route specific information such as a route diagram
(If bus is route-branded)

In bus -
the bus driver

The bus driver

- Ask the bus driver directly, face-to-face

SCENARIO 8

ON THE BUS:

“How will I know where to get off?”

Printed information (direct mail or posted on request via telephone e-mail)

Route specific information

- Destination led information in alphabetical order to locate town
 - Buses serving that town
 - Where to board your bus (for where to board schemes)
- Map to illustrate bus services
- Maps to illustrate boarding points (for where to board schemes)
- Timetable information (if available)
- Tickets and fares information
- Highlighted changes from previous editions
- Contact details including:
 - Website
 - Telephone number e.g. Traveline

On bus

On bus

- Linear diagram of places served
 - The place names match the geographical names that appear on the bus stops
- Electronic display
 - The next stop
 - Arrival at next stop
- Automatic announcements
 - The next stop
 - Arrival at next stop

Bus stops in the street - Along the route

Bus stops

- Named bus stops along the route
 - These match the map in the leaflet and the linear diagram

SCENARIO 9

LOCATING THE TOWN CENTRE: “Which way to the town centre?”

Bus stop with
shelter -
Set of posters

Bus stop

- Information panes/posters
 - Where to board your bus map
 - Destination list with bus route numbers and bus stop letters
 - Timetable information for this stop
 - Vicinity map of local area
 - Map of bus network
 - Tickets and fares information (if available)
 - Mobile phone Text information
 - Contact details e.g. Traveline

Street signage -
Finger post

Finger post sign in street

- Direction to town centre

Acknowledgements

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