

7 Reasons Transit Agencies Need a Rider App

The transparency and user-friendly functionality of popular ride-sharing apps—delivering exactly what riders expect to see and how they want to see it—provides a model for all transit apps to follow.

WHAT ARE THE 7 REASONS TRANSIT AGENCIES NEED A RIDER APP LIKE PASSIO GO?

1- Everything in One Place

Riders expect to be able to get to and view everything they need in one place on an app—in real-time and instantly. It's true for any app—whether banking, healthcare, travel, dating, music, and yes, transit apps as well. Good rider apps offer exactly that.

Take a typical transit passenger, looking to grab a bus later. A good app allows them to check, from anywhere, the bus schedule for any route—when and how often the buses run, and all the stops on the route. If they miss one, when's the next one? It's right there in the app.

Tapping on a stop on the route map that appears in the app lets them know at exactly what time the bus is arriving, and if there are any delays. The predictability that an app offers riders lets them go about their day with more freedom, knowing they're in control of their schedule.



As a SmartCitiesDive article notes, “Knowing when the bus will actually arrive is possibly the biggest advance for riders even if it doesn't make the bus faster or more on time.

It gives riders certainty and allows users to manage their time avoiding unproductive excessive wait times.”

Any good rider app is focused on improving the rider experience in myriad ways, and all with an eye towards earning the loyalty and continued patronage of your existing rider base, while also attracting new riders drawn by the ease and convenience of the process.

Adding that app, and integrating it into an existing transit agency system, is hardly a big technological hurdle. The above SmartCitiesDive article, in listing a rider app as one of the key things transit agencies can add to improve service, notes the relative ease of doing so:

“Implement an app for smart phones combined with a call-in service that allows real time bus information for each line and every stop. This isn’t rocket science since most transit vehicles in the U.S. are already equipped with GPS and transponders that emit the actual bus location.”

While riders are just the first beneficiary of rider apps (as they should be), it’d be a worthwhile investment to add one to your transit system even if riders were the only beneficiary. That said, rider apps reliably deliver a whole host of benefits to transit agencies as well—aside from increased ridership.

According to a 2021 article on Zesium - “[H]aving a mobile app helps your brand’s credibility and authority. When consumers can access your brand easier, it tells your consumers that you are there for them.”

2 - Ready-to-Go Notification System

Think about a transit agency that doesn’t have a rider app yet. Every time you change a route or schedule, drop or add a stop, run a promotion or special offer, or any other subject relevant to your riders, you have to get the word out somehow.

That can mean putting up signage in your buses, updating your website, sending mass emails to riders, etc. If that’s how you’re currently keeping your riders “in the loop,” you have a pretty good idea of what that can cost in time, money, and manpower. With a rider app, all the above can be “pushed” through the app, thanks to typically easy-to-use agency interfaces.

3 - Rider-Feedback Conduit

A good rider app is, essentially, a powerful feedback mechanism that makes it easy to gather info that riders submit—info that can lead to changes and improvements in stops, routes, and the transit experience in general.

This steady feedback from riders, coupled with data collected from day-to-day card scans, reveals ridership patterns, which stops/routes are most/least used, etc. from all the rides booked in a particular area over time can yield a

goldmine of insights that can help developers spot trends in ride demand and make changes that can improve service and routing.

Moreover, that data can often replace costly studies that transit agencies might need to undertake, to gather such information, in the absence of those feedback mechanisms.

4 - Built-In Driver Monitoring

That feedback system, featuring an easy interface for contacting the transit agency directly (just like sending a text), also allows riders to report drivers who are driving too fast or recklessly, or doing anything else that could potentially endanger riders. When drivers are aware that there’s an easy conduit for riders to report driver behavior, that can’t help but improve overall driver performance.

5 - Reduce Customer-Service Time/Staffing

This benefit is one you don’t realize until you put a rider app in place. Agencies without a rider app have to rely on their customer-service and transit-agency reps to field FAQs and complaints from riders and clients about routes, stops, and more.

But, add a user-friendly, function-rich rider app to your transit service, and many of those questions either disappear or can be asked through app. Not only are your customer-service reps now freed up to offer an even higher level of service to your clients, but, over time, you may find you can reduce your customer-service staffing.



6 - Raise Your System's Visibility

Get a group of friends together, and get them talking about how nice it'd be if there was a way to do "X" or "Y," and you're likely to hear the half-joking/half-serious retort, "There's an app for that!" The unspoken being that, if there was an app, they'd definitely use it.

Smartphone apps have become a way of life for all of us, and a huge and growing segment of the digital transformation movement is mobile-app development. Given how comfortable and familiar we've all become with Smartphone apps, if you want to people to use your product or service, one of the best ways to ensure that is to create an app.



Rider apps for transit agencies is a perfect example. Create an app, and you've just raised the visibility of your transit system in the eyes of current and future users.

When something (like a bus system) is more visible, and the gateway to using that system is a portal (the app) similar to so many portals your audience has come to depend on, you've just removed one of the biggest barriers for current users to increase their use, and for new users to "get onboard."

7 - Buses Are "Greener" than Cars

Sustainability is a huge trend these days, with more and more consumers embracing all things "green." Every new rider on a bus system is one less driver in a car. Certainly, many riders take buses because it's their only way to get around, but providing a bus system that offers a high level of convenience on many levels (i.e., including a rider app) can attract green-conscious riders who can afford to own a car.

As a Vulcan Post piece (about a wildly successful rider app created in Singapore) reports: "The fact that sustainability has become a buzzword has also helped their cause. According to the company's CEO, "...commuters are looking for an attractive alternative to...buying a car. For the latter, the cost of car ownership in Singapore is getting increasingly expensive."

Why Haven't You Added a Rider App Yet?

The answers to the above question typically fall into one of two categories that can be summed up in two words: Inertia and Money.

Inertia is, arguably, the most important one. It's always easier for any organization, transit agencies included, to just "stay the course" and not make any major changes. After all, change always involves a certain level of short-term upheaval, and who wants that?

Related to inertia is the understandable fear that undertaking a major improvement such as adding a rider app, will end up being a major hassle. Agencies are wise to ask, Will the process go as promised, or are we in for unpleasant surprises?

The good news is that the prevailing level of transit technology is high and getting better all the time. The major players are the major players because (as noted) they've made it easy and relatively painless for transit agencies to integrate a rider app into the existing platform, and take their operations to the next level. Speaking of "the next level," there's Reason #2: Money.

"What's this Going to Cost?"

If a transit agency finally hits a point where they know they need to upgrade their services, and they've committed to overcoming their institutional inertia to order to do so, money is the next question. Is there some huge lump sum that needs to be paid upfront? Are there more budget-friendly options available to pay for it?

Not surprisingly, different transit-technology providers operate differently. While some do structure their offerings with upfront investments, others offer more flexible arrangements. One company offers the best of both worlds...



Passio Makes It Easy

As you've seen, adding a rider app to your transit system can pay healthy dividends to both riders and transit agencies. For well over a decade, Passio Technologies has helped over 250 transit agencies elevate their systems to the next level of performance, flexibility and service, with their innovative, customizable transit solutions—including our rider app, Passio GO.

Passengers simply tap on a stop or touch the screen to let Passio GO know where they want to go. In just seconds, the passenger knows what time the bus is coming, where it will pick up, when it will drop them off, and where they need to walk to catch the bus—making scheduling and planning a breeze. Transit agencies are in full control of updating and editing routes and stops—not dependent on their transit-technology provider to make those changes.

Flexible Payment

Passio offers two ways to invest in our GPS CAD/AVL solutions. There's our standard arrangement where you pay for hardware and software upfront. If you're worried about steep upfront costs, or equipment installation and warranties, consider Passio GO Express.

With Passio GO Express, you simply pay a monthly fee for each vehicle. There are no setup, license or equipment fees, and you choose the term—12, 30 or 60 months. You receive a plug-in unit for each vehicle, and once installed, you get all the same benefits: great customer service, web-based management platform, and a connection to our Passio GO app.

For more information on Passio's full suite of state-of-the-art, transit-technology solutions, including the Passio GO app, and Passio GO Express:

Visit www.passiotech.com or call 678-825-3456.

Go to passiotech.com/passio-go/ to purchase or learn more