

Challenges & Unintended Consequences in Putting Transit Guidance In Place

November 6, 2020

Good Afternoon,

As transit agencies around the state are working to implement the updated transit guidance from CDPHE and mandated by CDOT we have run into a number of challenges and unintended consequences. I wanted to make you aware of the issues to see if we could figure out more workable solutions. CASTA would like to propose that agencies provide documentation to their health departments for instances where it doesn't work well operationally to follow the guidance and what solution they are using instead.

Here are some of the issues that are coming to the forefront as agencies work to put this guidance in place by Monday.

Ventilation Guidance

- Some agencies have installed highly technical enhancements to their vehicle ventilation systems. In order for some of them to operate properly, it is necessary to keep the windows closed. For instance, Vail Transit has installed new Dry Hydrogen Peroxide ventilation systems in all of their buildings and vehicles, opening windows compromises how well the system functions.

Guidance for Driver Safety

- Rear boarding precludes the ability to collect fares which adds to the budgetary issues most agencies are facing. More importantly, when Colorado's metro agencies went fare-free earlier this year they found that their buses were filled to capacity by homeless people at the cost of not being able to provide the necessary service to transit dependant riders going to work, school or other appointments.
- Having the bus driver step off the bus while riders are loading from the front door causes a number of other issues. In metro areas in particular, a high percentage of riders require transfers (30% in some agencies) that are distributed by the driver from the farebox at their seat and then when the transfer is used the driver verifies the transfer on the machine.
- Many agencies have implemented some sort of barrier around the driver to give them extra protection as riders get on the bus. Some agencies have put barriers in place that are not meant to be opened and closed multiple times during each route and make it challenging for the driver to follow the guidance to stand outside the bus.

50% Seated Capacity

- Agencies are very concerned about the implications of 50% seated capacity. One issue is the number of passengers queuing on a loading platform for an extended period because of the limited carrying capacity. If the buses cannot keep up with the demand, then the queue at the stop/depot will grow to a point that social distancing will not be possible.
- Many seniors and people with disabilities are unable to stand to maintain their spot in the queue.
- As the line builds up human nature will encourage people to crowd closer to preserve their place in line and not miss the next bus. Supervisors and drivers will likely be dealing with some mob mentality on a daily basis.
- It is impossible for a driver to ensure that people are sitting with family groups with 6 foot of distancing between.
- Resort agencies, in particular, have buses with fewer seats so that total bus capacity is greater allowing them to provide more service. The seated capacity guidance is limiting their capacity numbers disproportionately.
- Many ski areas have not provided capacity information to their towns or transit agencies. Capacity is considered proprietary information so transit agencies are working off hearsay and assumptions to plan for the transit needs of resort employees and skiers.
- Agencies are putting plans in place to address the requirements of the guidance while at the same time trying to meet the operational goals of their communities to reduce traffic congestion, minimize parking impacts and provide transit services to those that need it-at 50% seated capacity this is not achievable for resort agencies once ski season starts in earnest.

Thank you for your willingness to consider this while we are in the midst of such a key time in our state's fight against COVID. We really appreciate all the work you are doing to figure out ways to flatten the curve.

I would be happy to discuss these issues or provide additional information.

Sincerely,

Ann Rajewski