

Bussin' Basics

Transit Programming in Snohomish County Schools

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Background:

- Previously offered elementary programs but wanted to reach an older age group
- September 2022: transit became free for people 18 and younger
- November 2023: build out a program we could deliver to middle and high schools across Snohomish County
- Met with counterparts at agencies all over to learn about existing Youth Programs



Setting the Stage:

- December 2023, developed V1 of presentation and presented internally to different stakeholders
- Worked with our Research & Analytics team to develop youth survey (paper and electronic)
- Identified five test groups from across the county, and did pilot of presentation at one school



YES Drivers:

- Student feedback: more hands-on learning and more information about safety
- Wanted students to meet real drivers and establish a community connection
- Interviewed current Coach Operators, applicants came prepared with their own youth presentation
- Over 20 applied, 4 were selected (we now have 6)









SERIOUSLY...
IT'S FREE

YOUTH RIDE FREE



What We Cover:

- That transit is FREE for them
- How to read a bus flag and timetable
- Route planning and how to find a stop
- Fixed routes and how buses are named
- Our service area
- How we work with other agencies (Sound Transit, King County Metro, etc.)
- Bike and pedestrian safety
- Role of Service ambassadors and other transit officials
- Key features (bus cord, light up banner showing upcoming stops)
- Rider etiquette and safety basics
- **Youth ORCA cards** (& why they should use them)



School Stats:

- We have presented Bussin' Basics at **80** schools and youth serving organizations throughout the county
- Distributed over **9,000** Youth ORCA cards
- This means that close to **10,000** young people got to board a real bus while at school or organization, meet a CT Coach Operator, try out the bike rack, and learn Bussin' Basics!



Youth ORCA Cards

- We emphasize the importance of tapping and why it matters
- Helps communicate to the driver that you ride for free
- **23,000** cards distributed (9/14/2022-11/25/2025)
- **100,000** youth boardings generated from **3,303** cards used (9/20/2022-12/5/2025)
- **14%** card utilization rate



Learnings:

- Need to have a flexible presentation to work around school schedules and class sizes
- Timed back rack contests are a hit!
- Parent letter and teacher surveys
- There is a need for transit education (lack of knowledge, misconceptions)
- **It is hard to make a 13-year-old laugh**



Coming up...

- Lots more school presentations! 12 school days scheduled now-June
- Before summer hoping to present to at least one school in every district (14/15)
- Iterating on presentation, creating youth centered video clips
- Ultimately, have this program be part of every 7th grader's school experience (3-4 years)



“It has empowered my child to use public transportation and feel a sense of freedom unlike he has had in his life. It's built his confidence in trying something new and a little intimidating, but thanks to the presentation and the kindness of the bus drivers, he's thriving!”

“The presentation [they] gave was engaging, informative, and perfectly tailored for middle school students at Totem. It helped students understand how public transportation works and the benefits of using it safely and responsibly. [They] connected well with the students and made the learning fun and relevant to their lives.”

“My Multi-lingual Learners are often the interpreters for their non-English speaking parents. Giving this presentation serves to disseminate information to multiple generations. By showing interest in the kids, it also creates buy-in for Community Transit both in use and in an earned respect. Great work!”



114 LYNWOOD STATION

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Questions?

