



# ASK Transit

## **Inquiry on training for drivers to assist riders descending stairs backwards**

Information compiled on March 12, 2010

**The Question:** Do you allow riders to descend bus stairs backwards? Have you ever trained your drivers in techniques to assist riders to descend stairs backwards?

**Community Transit** says... Yes we do allow this; some guests will back down the steps. We do train the driver on assisting guest who prefer to alight the bus in this manner. Using the lift is always an option for guest who may have difficulties using the steps.

**Grays Harbor Transit** says... This issue has not presented itself at Grays Harbor if passengers have trouble with stairs we let them use the lift.

**Intercity Transit** says... This situation hasn't come our way. To my knowledge, our passengers exit the stairs "normally" not backwards. I checked with our Training Coordinator. PASS training doesn't discuss this scenario and drivers haven't brought it to his attention during at least 3 years of PASS Training. No, we have not specifically trained drivers in techniques to assist riders to descend stairs backwards.

**Island Transit** says... Yes we let them leave backwards if it is easier for them. Our operators, will stand at the base of the steps to assist as needed.

**Kitsap Transit** says... We do not train new operators to accommodate passengers to descend the stairs backward. The primary reason for this is that we feel it is safer for a passenger to see where they are going and use the handrails for support. Also descending backwards might encourage a driver to "catch" the passenger if they fall backwards which could increase the chance of the driver becoming injured. If the passenger is uncomfortable navigating the stairs, the operator should encourage the passenger to use the lift to board and alight the bus.

**Link Transit** says... Not sure if we have ever faced this situation. However, I can envision this may be safest mode of descending stairs for some people, depending on their physical condition or vertical alignment. We would try to accommodate them and provide assistance, if necessary. No, we don't specifically train operators to accommodate this specific situation. However, in general, we provide guidance to all operators they can apply to most situations.

**Mason Transit** says... We do not specifically train our drivers to assist passengers who may want to descend the stairs backwards. It is always the passenger's choice when using the stairs which way

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works best for them. We do encourage passengers to use the lift if they are having difficulty with the stairs. If the passenger can maneuver the stairs safely backwards they have that option. The techniques used for any passenger with mobility issues should be the same. The drivers should ensure the passenger has their hands free so they can use the hand rails. The driver should stand on the down stair side of the passenger when they are exiting or boarding the bus. The driver should be close enough to assist the passenger if they lose their balance while navigating the stairs.

If the passenger needs more assistance they would be required to use the lift. The drivers cannot physically lift someone up or down the stairs as it is not safe for the driver or the passenger.

**Pierce Transit** says... Some passenger with issues with height or balance concerns want to go down backwards to help avoid that. Our only request is that they use the handrails for safety and the operators will help with packages or other items. I include it as is part of the of CTAA PASS training also.

**Skagit Transit** says... I don't believe this has ever come up at our agency. We do not train our drivers to assist riders to descend stairs backwards.

**Spokane Transit** says... Yes we allow customers who request it to descend the stairs backwards. (it is rare) No special training has occurred for the operators other than to make sure the operator stays at the bottom of the steps and that the customer holds on to the handrails.

**Valley Transit** says... We use the PASS training for all our Operators. I am not sure if it includes assisting passengers descending backwards. This has never been an issue with us.

**Yakima Transit** says...I don't know that this issue has ever come up for us. I am unaware of any policy or training relating to this.