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Be Safe by Bus

Practical training for older passengers



BE SAFE BY BUS

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Preface

Salzburg AG and the Zentrum fuer Generationen & Barrierefreiheit (Centre for Generations & Accessibility) have worked together since 2004 to address the needs of elderly passengers in public transportation while also increasing safety.

Introducing training courses for senior citizens is a highly effective way for public transport companies to retain existing customers in advanced old age, as well as to attract new customers. The courses also have a social function, allowing elderly passengers to retain their mobility and independence.

Transport companies interested in introducing such courses require assistance from best-practice models and training documents. We are offering a “toolbox” of information, including the concept and development of such a programme (which has been successfully implemented in Salzburg). The contents can be adapted and varied according to the local context.

With the support of the EU project Attaining Energy-Efficient Mobility in an Ageing Society (AENEAS), we have summarised our experiences and compiled the present recommendations. This brochure and DVD are available free of charge to all transport companies.

We wish you every success in the introduction of the concept to senior citizens.

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Introduction

Older passengers are very rarely considered as a target group by public transport companies, despite the significant number of citizens within the population over the age of 75. Older people with restricted physical mobility, who are no longer fit to drive or cycle, often become dependent on public transportation. Traffic companies should therefore be prepared to adapt their services in order to cater for these passengers' needs. At present, 30 percent of all urban public transport users are over the age of 60. By 2030, this figure is expected to have risen to 50 percent.

While walking, cycling and public transport were the main mobility modes used by earlier generations, the mobility split today is dominated by private car use. Increased private car ownership among women has been a particularly noticeable trend in recent years. However, if private vehicles

There is an urgent need to promote sustainable alternatives to car use and to support environmentally friendly forms of transportation such as walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing. Multi-modal transportation has huge potential, especially among the elderly.

continue to be regarded as the preferred form of transportation, there will be a huge rise in carbon dioxide emissions and noise pollution in the coming decades, as well as greater demand for the construction of parking spaces and roads to cope with the higher volume of traffic.

Many elderly people are reluctant to adapt to life without a car and find it hard to acknowledge that they are no longer capable of driving safely. They need support and advice to find new ways of being independent and mobile. Training courses have proved successful in helping senior citizens who use public transport regularly to gain confidence and avoid accidents.

Training and the transport company

What is public transportation training for senior citizens?

Mobility training courses are an excellent way to encourage the regular use of public transportation among the elderly and to provide practical assistance in overcoming the barriers they may face. By explaining the system and introducing the possibilities on offer, the courses encourage older people to expand their range of mobility, to retain their independence and to continue as active members of society. The courses can therefore make a huge contribution to improving quality of life.

Who can benefit from a training course?

- Senior citizens and their relatives.
- Those who already use public transportation but lack confidence.
- Those who have had to give up driving, or drive less, for medical reasons.
- Those who are no longer able to cycle or who have difficulty walking.
- Non-drivers who were previously driven by a friend or relative who has died.
- Those who have had negative experiences on public transportation, particularly a fall.
- Those who would like to learn about public transportation but who are still capable of driving.

Why hold training courses for senior citizens?

To ensure equal opportunities

Everyone, including the elderly, should have equal access to medical facilities, education, work, amenities and leisure activities, and be able to participate actively in society.

To prevent discrimination

Nobody should be discriminated against because of their age: everyone has the same right to unhindered access to transportation.

To adjust to demographic changes

People are living longer: for the first time in Western Europe there are now more people over the age of 65 than under the age of 18. It is important to ensure that older citizens are active and independent for as long as possible.

To protect the environment

Encouraging senior citizens to use public transportation also makes sense for the environment. The generation of car drivers now reaching retirement age are unfamiliar with any other form of transportation. When older citizens are obliged to give up driving for physical and medical reasons they should be helped to make the switch to public transport as early as possible, since relearning these skills becomes increasingly difficult with age.

Senior citizens who remain mobile are able to maintain friendships, contribute to society and participate in leisure activities.

To promote social integration

Lack of mobility may lead to isolation, health problems and costly care requirements. However, senior citizens who remain mobile are able to maintain friendships, contribute to society (for example through volunteer work) and participate in leisure activities. Knowing how to make use of the various forms of public transportation on offer gives people independence and confidence and the chance to remain active and mobile.

What are the benefits for the transport company?

Customer retention

Elderly passengers tend to be loyal and satisfied customers as long as their needs are considered in relation to comfort, safety and respect. Courses such as these are vital to strengthen customer loyalty.



Fewer accidents involving senior citizens

Elderly passengers are involved in serious accidents more often than other groups. An accident can lead to loss of trust, ultimately resulting in loss of business for the company and loss of independence for the customer involved. Transport companies and their employees must therefore learn how to handle such situations appropriately.

Improved image

Campaigns specially designed for senior citizens contribute to a modern, customer-oriented business and improve the company's image.

Corporate social responsibility

Corporate social responsibility is a form of self-regulation, ensuring that businesses monitor the impact of their activities on the environment, consumers, employees and communities; and that they actively promote the public interest.

Prestige and positive press

Although the subject of demographic change has been around for years, specific projects directed towards senior citizens are still very rare. A transport company that brings attention to this subject is perceived as modern and future oriented. Successful projects focusing on senior citizens can win widespread acclaim and achieve “best practice” recognition.

Planning a training course for elderly passengers

Company decision making

The decision to introduce a training programme must be supported by all the departments involved: management, communications, complaints management, accident statistics, personnel training, operations etc. It can be useful to draw on experience acquired by other companies. Appropriate preparation and external consultation in the initial phase will save money and time.

Partners

Transport companies do not generally have particular competence with respect to the elderly, or significant contacts with the target group. They would therefore be recommended to identify a partner with whom to cooperate on the planning and implementation of the project. The partner should have specific knowledge and experience in the care of the elderly, as well as contacts with retirement homes and relevant associations. There are non-governmental organisations working in the fields of social care and care for disabled people, and experts can also be found in community centres, senior citizens organisations and geriatric clinics.

Personnel

The success of the training course will depend to a great extent on the choice of personnel. Due to the demands made on trainers, it is advisable to use an employee with social and technical competence, such as someone from a customer services department of the company management. Drivers themselves would be unlikely to have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the training materials or to carry out research into the experiences of other transportation companies or comparable projects.

Budget

Although the training budget would come mainly from the transportation company, partners may also contribute funding and provide personnel, either through public subsidies or through a funding or EU project. The budget will depend on the size of the project and how it is implemented. In addition to employees' work hours, the following items should be included among the start-up costs: personnel training; research; study visits to comparable programmes; printing; media work; etc.

Types of training

Transportation training for senior citizens can be delivered in three ways.

1. One-on-one training can provide valuable help and support following a fall, a prolonged stay in hospital or recent loss of sight, in order to help individuals regain their confidence and mobility. It is recommended that participants be accompanied by a family member. Specific needs and special requests can be addressed during this type of training.

Although not a practical training, lectures at retirement homes are an excellent way to reach older passengers and to give them tips to improve their safety when using public transport.

2. Lectures at retirement homes and clubs provide an ideal opportunity to present the positive efforts being made by the transport company, while answering specific questions raised by elderly passengers. Although this is not a practical training, it is an excellent way to reach older passengers and to give them tips to improve their safety when using public transport. It can also serve as a first step to attract groups or individual participants to practical training courses. Older people usually welcome such initiatives on the part of transport companies and are happy to attend the lectures and receive brochures and small gifts.

3. Transportation training for small groups of senior citizens follow a classic training model and are based on positive experiences in Salzburg. The information used can also be transferred to the other two types of training.



About the training

Venue

The location of the course and the facilities available will determine how well the participants accept the trainer and the training itself, so appropriate preparation is essential to the success of the course.

Access

It can be assumed that at least one of the participants will be severely physically handicapped and will be using a walker, crutches or wheelchair. Using facilities that are accessible by handicapped participants is an essential aspect of positive work with older people.

Orientation

In most cases, it will be the participants' first visit to your building. It is important to ensure that the venue is clearly signposted. It is also a good idea to inform other employees working in the building that a course is taking place so that they are prepared to provide clear directions and accurate information.

Hospitality

Older people greatly value courtesy and etiquette. Providing light refreshments will show that your business is taking its role as host seriously.

Comfort

You will need to ensure sufficient, comfortable seating. Chairs should be of a reasonable height to allow participants to stand up easily, and they should also have armrests. Cane holders can be purchased from a medical supply store and fixed to the chairs to stop walking sticks falling to the ground.

Lavatories

It is essential to provide clean lavatories that are easily accessible by handicapped participants.

Lighting

All training venues must have adequate, glare-free lighting to ensure the safety of participants and to make the information provided as clearly visible as possible.

Training bus

A special bus will be needed for a practical training session during the course.

Access for disabled people

Access for disabled participants means more than no stairs. The following rules are for guidance purposes only. You will need to be aware of the laws and regulations in force.

On the way to the training room:

- Door width of 85 cm
- Bell and handle height between 85 and 100 cm
- Grab rails next to the toilet
- Ramps with a maximum 6 percent slope
- 150 cm wheelchair turning radius
- Availability of a lift as an alternative to stairs (minimum lift dimensions 140 x 140 cm)
- Lift buttons at a maximum height of 100 cm and with tactile marking
- Thresholds with a maximum height of 3 cm
- Clearly marked steps (first two and last two in a flight)
- Information counter accessible by wheelchair users
- Clear marking for large areas of glass
- Anti-skid flooring
- No hanging items below 2.2 m (display cabinets, lamps etc.), or, where they do exist, clear and repeated marking
- Automatic opening devices for heavy doors
- Adequate seating at least every 100 m in long corridors

Inside the training room:

- 150 cm wheelchair turning radius
- Mounted brackets for hanging canes
- Wheelchair-accessible tables with a minimum height of 75 cm and 1 m gap between rows
- Suitable acoustics
- Grab rails next to toilets

TIP: Borrow a walker and a wheelchair from a medical supply store and test whether you can move around freely in the training venue. This will allow you to identify obstacles and barriers before the training. It is also a good idea to have the contact details of a sign language translator, should the need arise.

The trainers

Trainers must be able to provide encouragement and support and to convey the practical information that will allow participants to use public transportation independently, confidently and safely.

Attitude

Successful training courses promote competence and fill gaps in knowledge. Communication must take place at an appropriate level. While conveying information, trainers must be tactful and should never appear authoritarian, condescending or pitying.

Sensitivity

Ageing primarily means coping with a variety of physical changes that the younger generation may find difficult to understand. It is important to have empathy with elderly people and to appreciate the value they place on independent mobility.

Successful
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Awareness

An in-depth knowledge of the ageing process will enable trainers to understand the needs of participants and the difficulties they face.

Communication

Since members of the older generation tend to place a high value on good manners, it is important for trainers to remain polite and courteous at all times. This includes articulating clearly, and speaking slowly and slightly more loudly than normal.

Humour

The value of humour should never be underestimated. It helps to create an easy and comfortable atmosphere between trainer and participants, and will make the information being provided easier to remember.

Background

Awareness of traffic safety and of the causes of accidents and how to avoid them is just as important as knowledge of the transport company's operations, personnel, vehicles, tariffs and route networks.

Ideal training scenarios

The older we get, the harder it is to absorb new information. The courses are built around the fact that theoretical knowledge and abstract ideas are far more difficult to retain than practical experiences.

Time of day

Do not begin the course before 9 a.m. Include a lunch break between 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. and bear in mind that the days are shorter in autumn and winter.

Relaxed atmosphere

As we age, it becomes increasingly difficult to process facts and recall stored information, particularly when we are under stress. The training sessions should therefore be as stress free as possible.

Fun factor

The quality and speed of learning, for both young and old, depend on the context: fun and humour can make a big contribution to improved learning.

Repetition

Repeated summaries of the course content will help to ensure that information is retained.

Handouts

Let participants know at the start of the course that written handouts will be provided with all the information covered, so they know that they do not need to memorise everything they hear.

Practical relevance

Facts that are directly related to everyday situations are easier to remember and far more interesting to listen to. Make sure you underline the personal benefits of the information you convey.

Learning by doing

The more hands-on practice included during the training, the more secure participants will feel when using public transportation.

Duration

Make sure that members of the group never feel they are being put under pressure. Short sessions facilitate the retention of information, but it is important to plan sufficient time for questions and comments.

Work together

While competition may be a good way to motivate younger generations, it can have the opposite effect among elderly participants. It is important to avoid any competitive situations during the training course.

Praise

Trainers should always build upon what participants already know and what they are already able to do. Praise and appreciation will make the training more enjoyable and reinforce the message.

Communication tips

Communication between different generations involves specific challenges, intensified by the physiological process of ageing. An awareness of the changes inherent in ageing is the basis for successful communication. Examining and understanding these changes not only makes the training easier, it also consolidates the trainer's respect for the participants.

Be patient

Only begin to speak once all participants have found a place to sit or a safe place to stand (for example in the bus).

Trainers should always build upon what participants already know and what they are already able to do.

Acknowledge objections

Do not attempt to skip over disturbances or objections. Deal with them immediately and then regain the group's attention.

Two senses

Reinforce what is being said with visual aids, such as demonstrations or written documents, or a combination of the two.

Eye contact

Make sure that you position yourself so that all participants have direct eye contact with you. This will facilitate understanding, since facial expressions, gestures and lip reading can help participants to understand what they have not clearly heard.

Articulation and volume

Clear, distinct and slow articulation helps participants remember the information they are hearing.

Background noise

Minimise background noise and ensure that the atmosphere is as calm as possible. Never have people speaking simultaneously, and ensure effective moderation during discussions.

Registration

A registration process should precede each training course. In the interests of both participants and organisers, all bookings made by phone or verbally must also be confirmed in writing.

Contact person

There should be only one registration point with only one telephone number. A competent contact person must be available on this number during the advertised hours. This person must be knowledgeable about all course details and must be able to answer any questions that arise. Telephone hotlines should not be used.

Lists

A registration list should be created for phone bookings and personal registrations. This list must include a participant's name, address, telephone number and age. It should also include a column for the date on which the booking was confirmed in writing. An additional column for other information (e.g. use of wheelchair, walker or crutches, or other mobility restrictions) can later prove helpful when planning the course and the number of trainers required. The trainer should be given a copy of the list of participants at the beginning of the course for checking attendance.

Confirmation

Confirmation of registration should be sent to all participants, stating the exact date, time and venue. The date on which the letter was sent should be entered in the registration list. The confirmation letter should also include a request to participants to inform the organisers by phone in the event that they are unable to attend.

Participants' data

Participants' telephone numbers will be needed in the event that a course is cancelled, and addresses will be needed for sending out post-course evaluations.



Training structure and content

The course comprises two distinct units and is therefore ideally completed on two consecutive days in order to avoid tiring participants. Materials that have been covered during the day can be reviewed in the evening from the printed materials. This will help make the practical session on the second day more effective.

Day one: Practical aspects

Doors and buttons

Time pressure may result in safety risks for older passengers when boarding and alighting from a vehicle. A clear explanation of the various entrances and exits, as well as the buttons involved, can reduce fear and stress.

Button function

Technical developments may result in changes in the various button functions. This can be unsettling for older passengers, who may not know which buttons they need to press, and which they are allowed to use. It is important to give a detailed explanation of the function of all the buttons, including the pram signal. If the button with the pram symbol is pressed, the door will not close automatically but must be closed by the driver. By preventing the door from closing too quickly, this button can help reduce stress and give older passengers the extra time they need to enter or leave the vehicle.

Door safety

Many older passengers worry about being trapped by a closing door. It is therefore important to explain the types of security mechanisms used on the bus and to demonstrate what happens when someone is standing near a door as it closes. By explaining to participants that giving the door a gentle push will activate the safety mechanism, they can be helped to overcome their fear of falling. Proper instructions and tips should be given for the specific safety systems used on your particular vehicles.

Boarding and alighting

These tips focus on using the middle set of doors, as seating for elderly passengers is located here. The pram button is also located on this set of doors. If a participant is particularly uneasy, suggest using the driver's door because it guarantees safety when getting on and off the vehicle.

Entering the bus

In the interests of all passengers, the process of getting on and off a public transport vehicle needs to take place as quickly as possible. However, in their efforts not to hinder other passengers, older people may try to move too quickly, resulting in accidents and falls. It is important to emphasise during the course that participants must make their own safety a priority rather than worrying about causing delays. Extra care must be taken when getting on and off the bus, and they should never allow themselves to feel rushed.

Boarding tips:

- Wait in the right place: position yourself so that you are directly in front of the door when the bus stops.
- Get as close as you can to the bus once it has stopped.
- Find a secure handhold.
- Place one foot firmly and safely in the bus: make sure your foot is completely flat on the floor to reduce the risk of slipping. Decide which foot to step with first, and follow any guidelines given during physical therapy.
- Once both feet are in the bus, make sure you are standing upright before taking any further steps.
- Find a seat as soon as possible.

Alighting tips:

- Stand as close to the exit as possible.
- Find a secure handhold.
- Decide which foot to step with first and follow any guidelines given during physical therapy.
- Some older people prefer to get off the bus by stepping out backwards: practice both possibilities.
- Make sure that both feet are firmly on the ground and return to an upright position.
- It is now safe for you to let go of the handle and move away from the vehicle.
- If the bus has not stopped right at the edge of the street do not try to take a big step to reach the pavement. Instead, step first onto the street and then onto the pavement.

Walkers are extremely valuable mobility aids, supporting safe movement and providing a permanently available opportunity for rest.

Boarding and alighting with a walker

Walkers are extremely valuable mobility aids, supporting safe movement and providing a permanently available opportunity for rest. Older passengers should be encouraged not to postpone taking this chance to improve their mobility but rather to begin using a walker as soon as it becomes necessary.

People using walkers may nevertheless feel apprehensive at the idea of boarding a bus. They may wonder whether walkers are permitted on board, and where and how they can lift their walker onto the vehicle. These are questions that must be addressed during the course, even if none of the participants is currently using a walker.

Bus drivers will automatically lower the vehicle floor level if they see someone waiting with a walker. If this does not happen, the passenger must ask the driver or another passenger to make sure it is done.

Older passengers should never risk trying to lift their walker in or out of the bus by themselves. They should be advised to ask for help at the bus stop or during the journey.

Passengers with walkers should use the pram button and get into the bus through the middle or back door where there is most space and most likelihood of finding a seat.

Before sitting down, passengers should secure their walker using the pram strap and secure the brake.

Most importantly, the walker should not be used as a seat at any time during the journey.

On tour with Tarzan: Moving safely in the bus

All passengers must inevitably take at least a few steps during every bus trip, whether to find a seat or to validate their ticket. Older passengers may be unsure about walking on a moving vehicle and may be afraid of being pushed or losing balance. Walking safely through the bus is a skill that must be practised.

Johnny Weissmuller: A perfect ally

One of the most popular characters of early film and television was Tarzan. In 1932, he was famously played by the athletic actor Johnny Weissmuller, the George Clooney of his day. The actor is ideally suited to convey an image of strength, and mention of his name will still bring a smile to elderly participants' faces.

Compare a bus journey to the jungle: the situation is unpredictable and danger lurks on every side. Ask participants if they remember how Johnny Weissmuller swung through the jungle with determination. This image should be internalised and supported by the trainer's body language and demonstrations. Compare the handles and poles in the bus to jungle creepers, and point out that Tarzan never let go with both hands. This introduction forms the basis of the following exercise.

Practical exercise: Never let go of the creepers

Participants should now walk through the parked bus twice, while never letting go of the “jungle creepers” with both hands. Participants will realise that there are many places to hold onto in the bus, and that no step needs to be taken without having at least one hand holding securely onto a “creeper”.

Point out the various handholds: vertical poles and horizontal rails, backrests and seat supports. It is important to warn older passengers against using the hanging straps: because they are not stable there is a greater chance of them causing injuries.

It is also important to remind passengers that extra care needs to be taken because of the uneven floors in most vehicles.

Standing safely

Although passengers may sometimes need to remain standing, especially when they are not expecting to travel for more than one stop, standing up on a moving vehicle can be very dangerous for elderly passengers. In particular, women belonging to the older generation will have been taught to stand with their feet together. While once considered correct, it is not at all helpful when travelling on a bus. Trainers must demonstrate secure standing and practice with the participants.

Different ways of standing

Two trainers stand either with their weight on one foot and legs crossed, or with their feet very close together, and have a conversation about the previous evening. Participants will soon realise that, should the bus stop suddenly, neither would be able to avoid falling. Trainers should then discuss the situation with the participants and might raise a smile at the end of the demonstration by remarking that elegance and manners are far less important than safety when it comes to travelling by bus.

Partner exercise

Ask participants to stand in a line in pairs. Make sure that everyone has a safe spot in which to stand with sufficient room for movement. Feet should be shoulder width apart. Ask them to imagine that a flexible but firmly rooted tree is growing through them. The roots are deep in the soil, allowing the tree to withstand wind and weather.

Once they've found their optimal position, the pairs should be asked to push one another gently from side to side and from front to back to test their stability. Two trainers can demonstrate if necessary. Afterwards, participants should stand with their feet together and repeat the exercise. They will immediately notice the difference in their stability, balance and safety. Trainers should keep a close eye on the group to make sure that nobody is pushed too hard.



It is extremely important for elderly passengers to find a seat in order to be safe throughout the bus trip.

Finding a seat and other important seating tips

It is extremely important for elderly passengers to find a seat in order to be safe throughout the bus trip. One of the biggest causes of anxiety among older passengers is the fear that they will not be able to find a place to sit and will not be able to communicate their needs to other passengers. In this case, it is important to build participants' self-confidence.

The ideal seat

An important factor when passengers choose a seat is to make sure that they do not have to go too far into the bus and that the seat is as close as possible to the pram button. It might also be helpful for vulnerable passengers to choose a seat near the driver. The ideal seats for older passengers are therefore near the front of the bus.

Role-play for seating

In the first role-play, one trainer pretends to be a young bus passenger sitting near the door. The other trainer plays an elderly woman who boards the bus and hesitantly approaches the young passenger. She avoids direct eye contact. Her body language communicates lack of confidence and low self-esteem. The young passenger ignores the elderly woman and remains seated.

Participants realise in the subsequent discussion that because the woman made no obvious request for a seat, the young passenger felt no need to move.

In the second exercise, the “old lady” enters the bus again. This time, however, she has a greater physical presence: she stands up straight and focuses on the young passenger. Her attitude is purposeful and self-confident and other passengers notice her (remind them here of the Tarzan analogy). Once she reaches the front of the bus, the young passenger either gets up at once, or the elderly passenger asks for the seat in a friendly but determined manner.

It is important to include a brief explanation: “Excuse me, would you be so kind as to let me have this seat? I’m not so steady on my feet these days.” This reinforces the elderly passenger’s confidence and gives the younger passenger the chance to understand.

Failing this, some exaggeration might immediately elicit the required response: “I’m feeling a bit faint, could I please sit down here. I’m afraid I might fall...”

Encourage participants to practise taking this determined approach and discuss how it is received. Suggest that they employ such tactics in their daily lives in general, as they can prove helpful in many situations.



Day one: Theoretical aspects

(Information, questions, tips)

Introduction to the trainer and the company

Provide a description of the trainer's job and give a short company profile, which may include the number of vehicles, the number of drivers (including the percentage of women), and the number of employees working in other areas.

Express appreciation for elderly customers

Senior citizens form a large and growing customer group and are therefore particularly important passengers. It is in the bus company's best interests to do more for this group to encourage them to choose public transport and to feel safe on the buses.

Show understanding for common problems

The transport company should be aware of the typical problems that older passengers face:

- Any significant distance between the bus and the pavement complicates boarding and alighting. Drivers are trained to pull up as closely as possible to the pavement, especially for the ease of elderly passengers. However, this is not always possible, for example when the bus stop is full, or on a curving road. In these cases, it is important to show understanding for older customers.
- Lowering the bus floor level, known as the “kneeling” function, facilitates boarding and alighting. Drivers can activate this function on request, but should also be encouraged to use it as a precaution.

Drivers and passengers

Drivers are under significant pressure to keep to the schedule and may not always be able to give their passengers due consideration. Drivers are given special training on responding to older passengers' needs as helpfully and courteously as possible. In turn, employees appreciate a friendly greeting, praise, thanks and recognition.

Important travel information

Many questions arise with respect to planning trips, so it is important to dedicate some course time to the following areas:

- Route networks and tariffs for senior citizens.
- The advantages of season tickets (no need to validate individual tickets/available price reductions).
- Sources of information — hotlines, timetables, bus stops and customer service centres.

Information to read at home

This kind of course covers a vast amount of information. Participants can be helped to understand and remember what they have learned by being given information folders containing:

- pamphlets on safety;
- bus timetables;
- route networks in large print;
- information about promotions and special events; and
- general information.

Day two

Day two of the training focuses on implementing what has been learnt in real-life situations. The biggest difference from day one is that participants must now face the challenges of real bus use rather than simulated situations. This is more stressful for both participants and trainers and must be well planned.

Travelling with the group

- Choose a route on which you can travel for approximately one hour.
- Indicate only the first and last stops: the participants must select the route and decide on the stops in between.
- Include two difficult changes of bus, such as situations in which more than one possibility exists or high-traffic bus stops.
- Explain particular features at stops or during pauses. These include posted notices, schedules and information sources.
- Practise actively finding a seat.
- Pay special attention to putting into practice the skills acquired and the information learned during day one, and ask participants to be aware of mistakes made by group members and other passengers. The fun element of this activity should be encouraged, as participants generally identify a great many errors.

Small promotional items always go down well:

- canvas bags;
- lighters;
- ball-point pens;
- rain coats;
- pocket torches ;
- reflectors;
- shopping trolley tokens;
- sweets; and
- vouchers.

A look ahead to day two

Before the close of day one, it is a good idea to give detailed information about the second training day in order to create a sense of security and a positive attitude among participants:

- start time;
- meeting place;
- agenda; and
- invitation for coffee.

Participants can be helped to understand and remember what they have learned by being given information folders to read at home.



Other things to consider

When choosing the meeting place, make sure there is somewhere where participants can sit down and that they are protected from bad weather.

Make sure that there are sufficient trainers accompanying the group. If one of the participants requires special attention, consider providing them with an individual trainer.

Have sufficient tickets to hand in case some participants do not have their own.

In order to celebrate their newfound freedom and newly acquired skills, it is a great idea for participants to meet up at a cafe at the end of day two.

And finally, celebrate!

Many of the participants will not have travelled by public transport for quite a while. So, in order to celebrate their newfound freedom and newly acquired skills, it is a great idea for participants to meet up at a cafe at the end of day two — the bus company's treat, of course. It might also be possible for a number of cafes to take turn hosting training groups.

Further tips

Prepare to leave one stop in advance

Older passengers are more likely to feel faint if they stand up too quickly. Since alighting from the bus is particularly challenging, it is a good idea for passengers to prepare in advance. By curling their toes, stretching their feet or lifting their heels off the floor, they can boost the blood circulation in their legs, which helps alleviate light-headedness when they stand.

Strap or handle? Choosing the right handbag

Older women usually use handbags that are carried by short handles or in the crook of the arm. However, this style of bag makes it impossible for them to hold on to a support with both hands. They should be advised to use a practical shoulder bag for their own safety. Suggest they ask for a new bag for Christmas or for their next birthday. Shopping bags should have soft, wide straps that can be carried over the shoulder, and backpacks are another excellent alternative.

Put canes on a leash!

Another potentially problematic item is the otherwise helpful walking stick. Participants should be advised to purchase a cane strap at a medical supply store so that they can loop it over their wrist when travelling by bus.

Choose the right moment

The older we get, the more susceptible we become to stress. Stressful situations lead to greater risk: a brief lapse in concentration due to feeling under pressure can easily lead to a fall, especially when using public transportation. Participants should be advised to leave home five minutes early and whenever possible to travel at light-load times rather than during peak hours (that is, between 9 a.m. and 12 noon and between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.).

Stay hydrated

If you wait until you are very thirsty before you drink, it is already too late. The most beautiful rose will wilt without sufficient water, and the same is true of the most spirited person. Research has shown that drinking an adequate amount is the cheapest and most effective anti-ageing measure. Participants can be advised to always carry a bottle of apple juice mixed with tap water or mineral water, or some fruit or herbal tea. Drinks such as these are easily and quickly absorbed and hydrate better than pure water while also stabilising the electrolytes in the blood.

Exercise for body and soul

Regular exercise is important as you grow older, not only in order to remain mobile but also to ensure an efficient and adaptive brain. Normal brain circulation requires approximately three-quarters of a litre of water per minute. During exercise or exertion, the brain may require up to one litre of water. Physical exercise and exertion have a further advantage: they release endorphins that reduce the perception of pain, which improves quality of life. This is a property shared by exercise and chocolate: they both increase serotonin and improve mood, although unfortunately chocolate has some well-known and unwelcome side effects!

Physical strength provides safety

Passengers need to be able to hold on firmly to a support when travelling by bus. This requires muscle strength that inevitably diminishes with age. Participants should be advised to go to a medical supply store and buy a special ball for improving hand and arm strength that can be used even while watching television. Effective fall prevention training can take place in more places than the bus!

As little as three minutes' practice a day can help improve overall balance, increase blood circulation to the brain, and even improve brainpower.

Stay balanced!

As little as three minutes' practice a day can help improve overall balance, increase blood circulation to the brain, and even improve brainpower. Participants can be taught the following exercise: a towel should be folded lengthwise and placed on the floor near a stable handhold. Participants should walk along the length of the towel like a tightrope walker. If they feel unstable, they should ask someone to help the first few times. If they do this exercise every day they will soon see an improvement in their balance and will feel more stable and confident.



External communication

How to reach the target group

Modern life is shaped by communication. While mobile phones, the Internet and other technology offer huge potential, your biggest challenge is ensuring that your message is delivered to the target group.

The first step is to identify appropriate ways to communicate the message. The media can be used differently from partner organisations in reaching the final target group: potential course participants. It is useful to remember that people naturally accept the known more readily than the new and unknown.

The more often information is delivered through different media (newspapers, radio, brochures, billboards etc.), the more important the message appears, and the more likely it is to be effective.

Ideally, sensitivity to the needs of the elderly can be heightened by parallel articles on the subjects of mobility, security and demographic development.

Media and public relations

Carry out research to find out which media forms are particularly interesting to senior citizens. Regional newspapers and local radio stations are often better choices than the Internet for this target group. Ask your media partners which broadcasting times are preferred by the elderly.

Establish contact with journalists from daily newspapers or free newspapers in order to have proper press release placement. It is important to publicise your course and to give details of how to register. Ideally, sensitivity to the needs of the elderly would be heightened by parallel articles on the subjects of mobility, security and demographic development. It is therefore helpful to cooperate with a media partner in this phase. Paid announcements can supplement course marketing, depending on the available budget.

The information should be clear and comprehensible. Combining the announcement with attractive pictures will help to draw attention to the event.

Use multipliers

As a large and disparate group, senior citizens are often very difficult to reach directly. It is a good idea to find “allies” on every level when advertising the course. Organisers can make use of multipliers such as retirement homes, city authorities or aid organisations whenever possible in order to communicate event information. This can be done by placing articles in magazines or newsletters or by participating in relevant events.

Direct mail — old-fashioned but still the best!

If you have access to addresses, it can be a good idea to send out information letters and invitations. Addressees might, for example, be holders of senior citizens’ passes, or you might receive information from the city council (although privacy regulations should always be borne in mind). It is important to make the letters personal, since the older generation still places a high value on direct, personal communication. The letter should be signed by someone familiar to the recipient — for example the director of the transportation organisation or the city mayor. This will underline the importance of the message. Exact contact details should also be included.



Safety brochure

It can be helpful to use brochures to complement the transportation training. A written summary of the course content, along with useful tips, will help participants to remember the information received and relieve them from the stress of having to memorise vast amounts of information.

Having the brochure to refer to from time to time will also keep the message fresh in their minds long after the course has been completed.

Brochures available in doctors' surgeries, pharmacies and health centres will also raise awareness of the course among potential new participants.

When creating the brochures, as with any other form of written document, it is essential to have them professionally designed.

Distributing brochures

The primary purpose of information brochures is to popularise the course. They also introduce the course methodology and clearly summarise the most important information. Providing starting times, duration, venue and travel information, as well as contact data, allows for proper planning and prevents uncertainties.

The brochures can be distributed through the public transportation network and made available at customer service centres and ticket offices. It is also worth distributing brochures in places frequently visited by older citizens, such as markets and shops. This is a good way to target the dissemination and prevent loss, while conveying exact information about the training course and registration process. It is also a good idea to make use of contacts in retirement associations and include the brochures along with internal newsletters. You might also participate in events for senior citizens and distribute the brochures there.

Information stands

Senior citizens love personal contact, so information stands, for example at markets or special events, can be a good way to attract their attention. Use eye-catching umbrellas, tables or small booths and make direct contact with potential participants. Communication with older citizens requires special care: be sure to create a comfortable atmosphere that puts them at their ease. Give them your undivided attention, make direct eye contact and minimise background noise.

During the conversation, as well as describing the advantages of the safety training make sure you also listen to the other person's concerns. By doing so you are not only successfully marketing your course but also showing that you care about the needs of your elderly passengers. Be sure to provide suitable seating, which will demonstrate to elderly visitors that their needs will be taken care of by your organisation.

Telephone calls

The telephone tends to be the preferred means of communication among senior citizens. During a phone conversation, let them know that you have enough time to listen to their concerns. Do not overwhelm them with too much information. Instead, tell them that information materials and brochures will be sent to them. Ask a few questions to make sure they have understood the basic information. Bear in mind that hearing can deteriorate as a person ages, so it is important to adapt your voice accordingly. Summarise the most important points at the end of the conversation and always confirm the registration in writing as well.

Written communication

In addition to telephone calls, written communication is an ideal way to approach elderly citizens to convey information about new offers or to send event confirmations.

Remember that elderly people tend to be overanxious and generally appreciate receiving written confirmation of their participation in events, since telephone conversations can sometimes lead to misunderstandings. Give the participant all the necessary information during the first telephone

No matter how good the training, it will only be effective if suitable, legible printed materials are provided.

conversation and reassure them that they will also receive all the information by mail. This will ensure that the participant is aware of the time, date and venue of the training, and at the same time confirms their registration.

Since ageing also tends to lead to a deterioration in eyesight, it is important to ensure that any written communication is clearly legible, as discussed below.

Designing print media

No matter how good the training, it will only be effective if suitable, legible printed materials are provided.

By following a few simple guidelines when creating letters, leaflets and brochures, and by working with a professional graphic designer, you can ensure that the materials you provide adequately convey your message to your target group.

“Age is not different from earlier life as long as you’re sitting down.”

Malcolm Cowley

Content and message

- Use clear and simple language and avoid jargon and neologisms with which the older generation are likely to be unfamiliar.
- Write in short, concise sentences.
- Do not use thin paper (i.e. below 100g/m²).
- Use spiral-bound brochures and hard covers to make it easier to turn the pages.
- Give the brochures a distinctive cover for easy recognition.

Fonts

- Not every font is easy for older people to read, so don’t be too experimental.
- Do not use serif fonts such as Times New Roman. Serif fonts have small details at the ends of some of the strokes that make up letters, dating back to the days of printing presses when each letter had to be inserted individually. Serif fonts also have varied stroke thickness, which means that if documents in this font are copied or sent by fax, some parts of the letters may disappear. This sentence is written in a serif font — Times New Roman.
- It is better to use fonts that are clearer and simpler, such as Verdana.
- Avoid using underlining or italics, which also reduce legibility.
- Use a maximum of two different fonts in the document (titles and main text), or the publication will become difficult to read.

Font size

For ease of reading, use fonts no smaller than 12 pt, although 14 pt is preferable.

This text is practically illegible (9 pt)

This text is difficult to read (10 pt)

This font size is easier to read (12 pt)

This text can be read comfortably (14 pt)

Other things to consider

- For headings always use a font size that is three or four points larger than the body text.
- Use 1.5 line spacing (either more or less than this will make the publication harder to read).
- Do not use pictures as background and do not use colours that are too bright .
- Make sure that there is an adequate contrast between typeface and background — preferably black on white. Avoid colours and gradations.
- Do not use texts written entirely in upper case.
- Text should always be left-justified, and centred text must be avoided.
- Do not use italics.
- Make sure there is sufficient space between paragraphs and between columns of text in order to improve legibility. It may also be helpful to add a dividing line between columns.

TEXTS WRITTEN ENTIRELY IN CAPITAL LETTERS ARE DIFFICULT TO READ,
AS YOU HAVE PROBABLY REALISED.



BE SAFE BY BUS

Physiological changes

For a course to be successful, the organisers need to understand the basics of the ageing process. It is also important to be aware of participants' concerns, wishes, needs and problems.

In general, ageing involves structural changes and a reduction in functional reserve capacity. This becomes evident when dealing with physical, mental and social challenges. As a result of the natural ageing of the senses, our primary sources of perception, delayed or altered messages are sent to the brain. Slower processing time combined with changes to the musculoskeletal system can lead to higher risks among older people using public transportation.

Hearing

- Symmetrical hearing loss
- Reduced directional hearing
- Difficulties hearing high frequencies (bicycle bells)
- Difficulties understanding normal speech
- Slower sound processing
- Delayed reaction time to acoustic signals

Vision

- Defective vision related to age (correctable with glasses)
- Difficulties focusing at various distances
- Delayed light/dark adaptation
- Altered colour perception
- Reduced visual acuity and contrast sensitivity
- Diminished light sensitivity
- Difficulties estimating distance, speed and direction of motion
- Reduced visual exploration
- Image distortion in people who wear glasses

Movement and support

- Restrictions in movement
- Reduction in strength and elasticity
- Reduced grip strength of between 30 and 40 percent
- Clumsiness
- Difficulties standing independently
- Vulnerable shoulder joints (important for balance)
- Danger of osteoporosis and fractures from minor external pressure

Touch and motion

- Unsteadiness
- Clumsiness
- Risk of injury
- Loss of control



Balance

- Difficulty estimating movement and slower reaction time
- Delayed posture-correcting reactions
- Reduced ability to plan movements
- Altered balance strategies
- Difficulty correcting posture after impulses that cause the body to sway backwards

Gait

- Reduced speed
- Shorter length of stride
- Reduced step height
- Reduced maximum toe-floor clearance (leads to stumbling)
- Difficulties in accurate stepping (makes stairs particularly risky)
- Irregular and abrupt turning and targeted movements
- Disturbances in gait are accompanied by disturbances in balance, leading to a high risk of injury

Summary

Key benefits

Training for public transport use:

- helps older passengers with special needs feel safer, more comfortable and more secure when using public transportation;
- prevents or reduces accidents;
- reduces car use;
- enables independent mobility and promotes social inclusion;
- helps public transport companies retain existing customers and attract new ones;
- improves the image of the public transport operator; and
- reduces the need for special transport services, with potential financial savings.

Key conditions

Implementation requires:

- dedication to improve accessibility to public transport through soft measures for older citizens;
- motivated team;
- support from decision makers in the public transport company and local authority;
- direct communication with participants and interest groups in developing and fine-tuning the training concept;
- an integrated communications concept; and
- kick-off funding to launch the scheme and a long-term commitment to keep it running.

A few thoughts about mobility

While the term “mobility” is frequently used in the context of leisure activities and recreation, it is an essential element of human existence as a whole.

The Greek physician Hippocrates referred to physical and mental mobility as the key to longevity and healthy ageing in as early as 400 B.C. His recommendation to strive for an active lifestyle has long been widely accepted. The value of mobility has been enshrined in many cultures and languages through various sayings and proverbs: “Bed is bad”, “Use it or lose it”, “To rest is to rust”, “Keep moving to keep going...” etc.

In the twentieth century, engaging in regular exercise and training was acknowledged as a fundamental biological law for promoting optimum physical and mental performance and healthy ageing.

In the last 15 years, numerous scientific surveys have demonstrated that remaining mobile is essential if an individual is to achieve the life expectancy given in their genetic make-up.

Both mental and physical mobility generate a structural change in the brain, continuously enabling development and positively influencing wellbeing, fitness and pain perception.

Mobility is the precondition for responding to the challenges of the so-called greying society: lifelong learning, independence and participation. Older people have a huge contribution to make and often play a crucial role in their families and in their communities through voluntary work. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that mobility in old age is a risky undertaking. Disturbances in gait and balance, which can result in serious injury, are common among older people and tend to worsen in more advanced age.

In order to meet the challenges, the natural ageing process must be studied and understood and this knowledge must be factored into the planning of a secure, enabling and supportive environment. Without it, elderly passengers will be at a significantly higher risk of suffering injury that may lead to reduced mobility, vitality, motivation and social interaction. This in turn can eventually lead to illness and to loss of independence and autonomy.

I conclude with the best possible advice for a long and active life: “Keep moving!”

Dr. Christa Erhart
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BE SAFE BY BUS

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The contents of this publication are based on experiences gained in Salzburg, Austria.
Trainings implemented in other locations must be adapted to the local situation and to the relevant safety regulations.

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