

Manners on the bus go 'round and 'round

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Keeping your elbows off of the dining room table, covering your mouth when you sneeze and chewing with your mouth closed are all examples of good table manners. But what about good manners while riding the bus? What about bus etiquette?

For many students at UW-Milwaukee, riding the bus is an everyday experience. It requires time management, warm clothes and patience. According to the Milwaukee County Transit System's (MCTS) Passenger Bill of Rights and Responsibilities, it also requires attention to a few basic rules.

"MCTS serves roughly 140,000 riders each week-day," says Jacqueline Janz, the MCTS marketing director. "With that many people on our buses, we do need to remind people from time to time of certain bus practices."

noise at a reasonable level. Have your money or bus pass ready before entering the bus.

- Refrain from using offensive language.

- Move all the way to the back of the bus to allow other passengers to enter and find a seat or standing position.

- Don't sprawl out across two seats when other people are standing because there are no seats available. "Your purse does not need a seat of its own," says Jessica Hodkiewics, a UWM student.

- If you have excessive luggage or a stroller, sit on the sideways-facing seats in an attempt to keep the aisle clear. "We are currently testing 30 buses in which we created a stroller/cart area," said Janz. "We took out a row of seats to allow individuals to place themselves, with the stroller, in this area. This allows the aisle to remain clear."

- Be mindful of noise levels when talking on the phone.

- Allow elderly/disabled

According to the MCTS Passenger Bill of Rights and Responsibilities, the MCTS works to provide satisfactory buses, operators, schedules and bus stops. They also pledge to consider and respond to comments in a timely fashion, and to treat passengers with respect.

In return, they expect riders to pay the correct bus fare, provide identification when needed, respect other passengers and bus operators, and clean up after themselves. They also encourage riders to give up seats for the elderly and disabled, and to be patient during times of heavy traffic or poor weather conditions.

In response to a survey, UWM students and other Milwaukee-area residents were able to compile a list of their "biggest pet peeves while riding the bus," which nearly mimics the list of MCTS "Bus Rules":

– Don't play music without headphones, and keep the

passengers to enter and exit the bus ahead of you.

– Don't eat stinky food, and always put a lid on your beverage to avoid spilling it. (NOTE: According to the official MCTS Bus Rules, smoking, eating and drinking are not allowed on the bus, and are against the law.)

– Everything you enter the bus with, you must exit the bus with. There is a trashcan at the front of every bus, and usually a trash can at or near every bus stop.

Bus operators go through the Passenger Interaction Program during their initial training, and the MCTS offers a refresher course for senior operators. Drivers deal with each issue accordingly. In rare circumstances, when bus operation or customer safety is in jeopardy, drivers contact the dispatch center, and route supervisors offer assistance.

"Since the bus belongs to everyone, we all need to make an effort so everyone can have a pleasant ride," says Janz.