

Wheels on the bus go 'Round for Round'

Students at Texas A&M could benefit from lessons in proper etiquette on bus rides

BY BRIAN FLEMING
The Battalion

While driving her bus on campus one day, Meredith Stewart, a bus driver and senior management information systems major, was chased down by an angry student who was a few seconds too late. Frustrated, this student ran to the middle of the street putting his life in danger while trying to gain a spot on Stewart's already full bus. In accordance to Bus Operations rules and regulations, though, she had to leave him on the curb.

"I felt very bad, but there was nothing I could do," Stewart said.

Stories such as Stewart's are common at Texas A&M because many rely on campus transportation to get them around.

What many do not realize is that among the frustrations of packing students aboard a bus, a certain camaraderie does actually exist between passenger and driver. What could be called a "code for survival" applies not only to the written rules, as in Stewart's case, but to the unwritten rules of bus riding as well.

These rules, when broken, frustrate students and drivers alike and get in the way of daily campus life.

"What people do not understand is that we have rules to follow," Stewart said.

Stewart said when a bus is full, a bus is full, and it would put other peoples lives in danger to crowd it even more.

"We [bus drivers] are liable, and it is not our decision," she said.

Stewart said one of the biggest no-no's seems to always happen when students are entering and exiting the bus.

"The general rule has always been to let the people who are already on the bus off and then enter," Stewart said. "But someone always forgets, and that only takes more time."

Stewart said that by avoiding this, less time is spent at stops and the bus can stay on schedule.

"Overall, I would say that [not waiting for others to exit] is one of the biggest things that bothers drivers," Stewart said.

Because time is a factor as buses try to make the required stops, Stewart said students need to understand that walking up to the bus slows down operations and might mean they will not have a ride.

"What they taught us in training is you run, you ride; you walk, you wait," Stewart said.

Stewart said this is especially evident in certain parts of campus.

"I know when students are leaving the Bush School, they walk up so slowly," Stewart said. "Sometimes we have to leave, and that is not our fault. We are not trying to be mean, we are just doing our job."

Yet another intricate part of common bus etiquette is exercised for those who are courteous enough to speed their ingress. Rosie Arcelay, a bus driver and graduate modern languages student, said the simplest act can make riding a bus much more pleasant.

"I try to say 'Howdy' to everyone who comes on my bus," Arcelay said. "I know it is not only courteous but part of my job to make peoples' ride as pleasant as possible." Stewart said cleaning up after passengers is another on-the-bus no-no.

"The most important thing for people to know is to pick up your papers," Stewart said.

"Sometimes I spend up to 15 minutes just cleaning off the unnecessary trash that is left on my bus everyday."

Stewart said this really is more of a common courtesy than anything, and it is greatly appreciated.

Chris Palmaroy, a senior finance major, said that from a passenger's perspective, people need to understand what is acceptable and what is not.

"I know I hate it when people sit right next to you while there are other seats available," Palmaroy said. "For one thing, it is usually hot, and for another, it is just the principle of the whole thing."

This principle is what Palmaroy calls the "urinal rule." When there are four or five urinals open, students should not use the one right next to someone else.

"This can definitely be applied to the buses," he said.

Palmaroy said students also need to know some more obvious rules.

"Definitely stand up for girls and give them your seat regardless, and when the bus is crowded, let them off first as well," he said. "That should just be common sense, and plus, it makes you look good because girls love it."

Arcelay said that overall, students need to understand all of the rules of the bus system.

"People complain about the buses, but we honestly do the best job we can," Arcelay said. "I have no trouble saying that if it was not for bus operations, this University would not work."



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