

Wayfinding and Signage



Overview

Wayfinding is a system of signs and tools that help people orient themselves. Effective wayfinding tools help people figure out where they are, where exactly they want to go, and how to get there.

It is especially important for a transit system to implement good wayfinding practices—signs, maps, visual symbols—since a complicated or confusing system will discourage people from using transit. An innovative and consistent system of transit signs can make bus and light rail stops easier to find and navigate, provide better route information, and help orient new riders and visitors.

Port Authority's Values

Equitable, Accessible

Analysis

In addition to standard metal signposts, Port Authority has investigated installing digital kiosks at bus and light rail stops to help riders plan their trips. In 2016, Port Authority piloted a \$900,000 new wayfinding project for innovative wayfinding tools at six light rail stations and nine bus stops, including interactive kiosks and interactive bus stop displays, as well as new non-digital signs at 85 bus stops showing maps and route frequency. These kiosks include interactive touch screens that show “you are here” markers, route maps, and service updates in the event of construction or emergency closures. The kiosks can also show the real-time location and estimated arrival time of the next vehicle.

Higher-traffic transit hubs, especially those with nearby connections to other modes of transportation, could be candidates for more this type of interactive wayfinding kiosks and signs. However, most of the 7,200 bus stops in

the county will not likely warrant the expense of a digital kiosk. In these cases, the non-digital signs used in the pilot could still be expanded to all 7,200 bus stops to make bus stops in the system more consistent and navigable.

For underground light rail stations, overhead exit signage can advertise station exit numbers, nearby cross streets or points of interest, and connecting transit routes. Using station exit numbers in subway systems is becoming more popular in Asia and North America since they are easy to use regardless of transit users’ spoken language, reading level, or familiarity with the light rail system.

Port Authority staff is currently overseeing the creation of wayfinding signage guidelines and a master plan for 69 fixed guideway stations. Beginning with a pilot at South Hills Junction, the goal of the plan is to create standards of wayfinding signage for different station typologies throughout the system. Deliverables of the project include wayfinding signage standards and guidelines for several station typologies and detailed specs for in-house fabrication by Port Authority’s Sign Shop.

Peer Examples

Washington, DC’s WMATA

Metrobus provides more than 400,000 trips each weekday in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. In September 2018, over 700,000 transfers occurred from Metrobus to Metrorail and vice versa. These intermodal transfers play a critical role in connectivity. This guide explains how clear, consistent wayfinding signage helps passengers complete their transfers. Wayfinding can be especially helpful for tourists. For wayfinding to be successful certain aspects must be considered: location of information, quality of information, maps, aesthetics, lighting and placement, and digital wayfinding.

Philadelphia's SEPTA

In 2015, SEPTA completed a wayfinding signage project at 30th Street Station to improve the passenger experience as well as vehicular and pedestrian flow. The project removed outdated signs and installed various interior and exterior signs including free-standing directional signs, dynamic gate deification kiosks, passenger information displays, map kiosks, overhead wayfinding signs, and wall plaques. Currently, they are redesigning the signage for its "Rail Transit" network to ensure riders of all languages, abilities, and familiarity with the system can effectively utilize the wayfinding signage. They are using a survey that they publicly posted in Fall 2020 to help guide their Master Plan.

Seattle Department of Transportation

In July 2019, Seattle produced the Pedestrian Wayfinding Strategy as part of the development of Seamless Seattle, a pedestrian wayfinding system for the city. The guide builds on the recommendations from the 2017 Seamless Seattle Scoping Study. It details why and how wayfinding signage is successful. Also included are ten principles that detail how to develop and provide wayfinding information.

Level of Effort for Implementation: Low to Moderate

- o Updating all 7,200 bus stops with the same new (non-digital) wayfinding signage is a straightforward task; the greatest obstacle is deploying new signs at such a large scale.
- o Installing interactive kiosks at additional bus stops would require more effort and coordination with municipalities about installing kiosks on sidewalks.

Resources

[Port Authority](#)

[Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority](#)

[SEPTA](#)

[Seattle Department of Transportation](#)

[The Urbanist](#)

[Mass Transit Magazine](#)

[Pittsburgh City Paper](#)

[Metro Magazine](#)