Getting Around Town: Riding Buses and Bicycles in Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh Area Transit Buses

The bus system in Pittsburgh is a great way to travel, but it can be confusing to new students. This guide will help you learn to successfully navigate the bus system and to better understand the etiquette of bus riding in Pittsburgh.

How and when should I pay when riding the bus?
Pay when you enter by using either your CMU ID (as a student, faculty, or staff), with a ConnectCard (connectcard.org), or with cash (exact fare required). Buses do not take credit cards and do not give change.

Where should I sit or stand on the bus when it’s crowded?
When sitting, take any available seat. If crowded, be sure to take only one seat and hold your bag. Do not place umbrellas or other items on the seat next to you. Polite behavior is for young, healthy people to give up their seats for the elderly, people with small children, or for people with a disability or injury.

If you are standing, polite behavior in the U.S. is that you should always move as far back on the bus as possible. Do not stand in the doorways or block the aisles if there is space in the back. People who do not move to the back of the bus might be seen as rude or inconsiderate of others. If you are wearing a large backpack, you should remove it from your back and hold it between your feet. Large backpacks or bags should not block the aisle or hit the people who are sitting.

What else should I know for expected behavior on the bus?
Always let people get off the bus before boarding. Even though the bus has many doors, most drivers only allow you to board through the front door. If you have already paid and are at the back of a crowded bus, you can call out, “Back door, please” which will usually inform the driver to open the back doors.

It is okay to speak or use your cell phone while riding the bus in the U.S.; however, using a soft or quiet voice is considered polite when speaking in public places like on the bus. Listening to music is also very common, but headphones are required for listening to music or when playing games on a mobile device.

If traveling with small children, strollers must be folded while on the bus.

Info about buses: portauthority.org/paac/RiderServices/Riding101.aspx
Bicycles

Biking in Pittsburgh can be challenging for a variety of reasons (hills, hills, hills). Here are some tips for safe, courteous biking.

Where should I ride my bike?
When biking, always use the bike lanes when available. If there is no bike lane, you should ride on the right side of the road. A bicycle is considered a vehicle and it must follow the road laws (stop signs, traffic lights) just as a driver of a car would follow the law.

Many people wear safety helmets when riding bicycles and though the law does not require this, it’s a good idea. Also, for night biking, have a headlight and blinking red light so that you are visible to drivers. Bright or reflective clothing or bicycle gear can also help you stay safe at night.

Typically, bicycles are not ridden on the sidewalk. If you are riding on the sidewalk (including on campus), pedestrians always have the right of way. You must give them a warning that they can hear before you pass them.

Pittsburgh has many bus lanes. Bus lanes are for buses only. Do not ride your bicycle in a bus lane.

How should I let other bicyclists or drivers know that I am going to turn or stop?
• There are specific arm movements you can use to indicate you are planning to turn or stop.
• To stop, you can signal by extending your left arm and hand downwards.
• To turn left, extend your left arm and hand straight out.
• To turn right, you can extend your right arm and hand straight out, or you can extend your left arm out, bend at the elbow and point your left hand up. (Image from: blogs.oregonstate.edu/intoosu/front-office/life-in-the-u-s/bicycling-information).

Can I take my bicycle on public transit?
All Pittsburgh Area Transit buses are equipped with bicycle racks on the front. Inform the driver that you want to put your bike on the rack, then walk to the front of the bus, fold the rack open, lift and place bike in rack, and secure the bike with the safety bar before boarding the bus. Remember to inform the bus driver that you will get your bike when exiting the bus. PAT also recommends printing this information card and carrying it with you: portauthority.org/PAAC/Portals/1/PDFs/BikeRackInstructions.pdf

Info on bikes:
bikepgh.org / OR pacommutes.com

Carnegie Mellon’s Bike/Wheeled Vehicle Policy:
 cmu.edu/student-affairs/theword/comm_standards/bicycle.html