



BIG NEWS FOR CAREGIVERS AND ADVOCATES

New pilot program wants to improve transportation service for people with cognitive disabilities

In partnership with The Ohio State University (OSU) and Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), Smart Columbus is seeking 30 participants for a pilot program to enhance independence for transit service users with cognitive disabilities as well as older adults.

PILOT PROGRAM CRITERIA:

- » Central Ohio resident with a cognitive disability
- » Occasional user of bus services and would like to increase ridership and/or independence
- » Able to use a smartphone and an app

Older adults are also invited to participate

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

People with cognitive disabilities who wish to travel independently on public transportation must either qualify for paratransit services in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act or be sufficiently independent to safely use fixed-route bus service. Paratransit services are not as flexible as users need and cumbersome planning and scheduling is required.

This pilot program began with an initial evaluation and field study conducted by research partner OSU. Those learnings provided the base for user needs including what app features are desired and what challenges and opportunities residents with cognitive disabilities face in their daily travels.

As a result, the Smart Columbus pilot aims to address an important community challenge as part its vision to empower residents to live their best lives, through responsive, innovative and safe mobility solutions.



HOW IT WORKS

The pilot program features an app especially designed for users with cognitive disabilities. Multimedia prompts will aid in navigating public transit systems. Actual location images and audio prompts will provide notifications such as when to get off at a stop. Caregivers will create the routes using the application or web portal. Additional prompts can supplement each route. Real-time location updates and automatic notifications will be available including functions for a user to request a call or letting a caregiver know that they've arrived at a destination safely.

WHAT'S UNIQUE

This personal navigation app has been created especially for users with cognitive disabilities and older adults in the Columbus region. It uniquely sends and receives information in real time with COTA and allows for custom route creation that can be saved by each user.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- » An accessible smartphone app will be provided as well as phone and app training
- » Users should commit to the entire pilot period which runs from April 29, 2019 through April 29, 2020
- » Research partner OSU will measure the pilot program's impact on user's mobility independence and confidence in using bus service

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