



Riding Rapid Ride Guide for Youth Riders

www.rapidtransitsystem.org
rts@rcgov.org
333 6th Street
Rapid City, SD 57701
605-394-6631 ext. 0
Check us out on Facebook

This brochure is a helpful guide for youth riders and their guardians. More detailed information and route specifics can be found in the Rapid Ride Passenger Guide and route maps. These documents should be reviewed in conjunction with this brochure.

RTS offers free travel training sessions. To request a travel training, contact RTS at 605-394-6631 ext. 0 or rts@rcgov.org

All youth riders must register for safety purposes. Forms can be submitted in-person to any RCAS or RTS staff member, email, postal mail, by phone or on the RTS website.

All information needed to plan trips is available on the route maps and in the Rapid Ride Passenger Guide. Additional guidance is available through travel training sessions or quick answers can be provided by RTS staff during regular office hours by phone or in person. **If assistance is required, it is highly recommended to seek help at least one day prior.**

The Youth Ride Free Program (YRFP) allows all youth to ride any fixed-route, regular service bus completely free of charge. Free rides are not restricted to school related transportation and is available year-round during all normal operating hours for any purpose. It is important to remember that no entity funds the YRFP.

Eligible youth are those age 0-18 regardless of school registration status. Riders age 19+ who are still enrolled in a public or private high school are also eligible to ride for free. For these riders, a valid school ID is required. All high school age riders should always be prepared with a school ID or a photo ID verifying age. Photos on cell phones are sufficient. Youth riders in middle school, elementary school or younger children do not require any identification.

While safety is RTS's top priority, parents/guardians should know that Rapid Ride is a fixed-route public bus system open to all members of the community. It should not be confused with a school bus or taxi service. Parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss personal safety with their children.

Youth aged 5 and under are required to be accompanied by a mature rider. Youth riders must be able to safely and independently navigate the system before riding alone. It is highly recommended that youth do not ride unaccompanied until both they, and their parent/guardian, are comfortable in their ability to navigate the bus system without assistance. If a youth rider cannot walk from their home to a bus stop, transfer buses, request a stop and walk from a bus stop to their destination completely on their own, they should not ride alone. RTS recommends that youth aged 6-12 ride with a guardian or in groups with older siblings, classmates or neighbors. RTS recognizes that the maturity level of children varies and the decision to ride independently is left up to the parent's/guardian's discretion. In the event a youth rider is identified by RTS to be unable to ride independently, for that child's safety, an adult may be required to accompany them.

Adult parents/guardians of youth riders are required to pay the regular fare. RTS holds a "Parents Ride Free" event at the beginning of each school year. During that time, parents/guardians may ride with their child(ren) free of charge while teaching them to navigate the bus system.

RTS staff are unable to enforce parental or school rules. Staff will not monitor youth riders to ensure they go where they are instructed. Staff will guide youth riders to go to school, home or another safe place if found loitering.

While all RTS staff are dedicated to youth safety, they are unable to provide secretarial or childcare services such as relaying messages between youth and their parents/guardians or “checking-on” youth riders to ensure they follow parental instructions.

Here are some helpful navigation tips for a successful ride:

- Take practice rides with a parent/guardian and travel in groups when possible.
- Dress appropriately for the weather as waiting outside at bus stops is required.
- Stay visible when at the bus stop. Wear bright, reflective clothes or use a flashing light if needed. Watch for the bus, stand and wave to the driver as they approach.
- Never enter the roadway or run across the street to catch a bus.
- If needed, have your ID ready before the bus arrives. Sit near the front of the bus, close to the driver when possible.
- Wear your seatbelt and stay seated until the bus comes to a complete stop. Do not change seats mid-trip UNLESS someone sitting near you makes you feel uncomfortable.
- Do not cross the street in front of a bus. On-coming traffic is not required to stop behind a City bus.
- Let the driver or other staff know if you are scared or in danger. RTS considers itself a safe place for all youth to seek help and does not restrict assistance to transportation related issues.
- Report anything that makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable. RTS takes youth safety very seriously and will immediately remove any rider that is identified as a potential threat.
- If you get lost, stay on the bus and alert the driver. They will return you to the depot where a member of the management team will help you get home, to school or to another safe place.
- Drivers will only pick-up/drop-off at designated stops and will only do so upon request. Ensure you are at the correct bus stop 5-10 minutes early. While on board be sure to request a stop at the appropriate time. Youth cannot simply tell a driver where they are going or when they need to return. Riders are responsible for managing their own stop requests and buses will not wait at a stop for riders.
- If you need to transfer from one bus to another, tell the driver as soon as you board the first bus.

Youth riders are expected to follow the same rules as adult riders. Immediate consequences for failure to abide by rules will vary based on severity and rider age. These can range from a verbal reminder to removal from the bus and property. Severe or frequent infractions may result in a suspension of ridership privileges for a period of 30 days to 1 year and/or criminal charges. All riders are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is courteous and respectful to other riders, staff and property. RTS has a zero-tolerance policy for verbal abuse, discourteous conduct, creating safety hazards, property damage, violence or threats of violence.

A full list of bus rules is located in each bus and detailed in the Rapid Ride Passenger Guide. Important rules for youth include:

- Riders are not permitted to eat or drink while on board. All foods and beverages must be in sealed, leak-proof containers
- Shirts & shoes are required for all riders.
- Smoking/vaping is prohibited in buses, at bus stops and at the depot outside the designated smoking areas.
- Intoxication is prohibited on buses, at bus stops and at the depot. Any rider found to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol will be denied transportation for a minimum of 1 day.
- All riders are required to comply with RTS staff instructions.
- Riders are expected to be courteous, safety-minded and respectful which includes appropriate language, use of headphones/earbuds, no horseplay, roughhousing, throwing of items, bullying, etc.

Riders are responsible for loading/unloading and maintaining control/possession their own personal belongings. Items creating a safety hazard are not permitted on buses. RTS is not responsible for any items that are lost, stolen or damaged while riding the bus, at a bus stop or the bus depot. Riders may contact RTS to inquire about lost items and, if found, are responsible for retrieving them. Any items found that are not claimed are donated or destroyed. Ownership of items must be verified before they can be returned.

