

Reducing Administrative Burden Improves the Customer Experience

Public transport authorities often implement policies and processes that make initiatives easier and more predictable for agency staff to administer. While such practices may be cost effective or prevent misuse of a benefit, they can also create challenges for customers, who are often the ones in most need of those benefits.

The term “administrative burden” refers to obstacles we create that prevent customers from obtaining or maintaining a benefit for which they qualify. For example, agencies often require excessive paperwork, including proof of income disclosures, to justify a customer’s eligibility for a discounted fare program. These requirements are usually intended to prevent fraud or abuse of a program but can deter riders rather than invite them to experience our services.

Transit agencies can do more to simplify access to benefits. Research shows that self-attestation by applicants can streamline the process for customers to participate in discount programs without creating psychological burdens or increasing fraud or abuse. Southern California Edison, an electric utility company, for example, accepts applications without income verification for discount programs, to make enrollment easier for the customer. Qualifying for the discount requires no proof of income – the customer simply checks a box on the application. Periodically, the organization conducts random audits to verify eligibility and has not discovered abuse of the program.

Understanding the financial and psychological impacts of our requirements can help us ease the burden on riders and make transit much more customer friendly. UITP is a terrific forum for sharing best practices for reducing administrative burden to help us all succeed in improving customer experiences. With the right mindset, we can continue to modernize and innovate while ensuring we do not leave our most vulnerable customers behind. Together, we can lead the industry’s efforts to enable access to great public transport and deliver ease and convenience to our customers at the same time.



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