TECH TALK

Helping Seniors Embrace Technology

How the Flint Hills Coordinated Transit District gets seniors comfortable and confident with transit technology.

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THE ASSUMPTION WE HEAR

A myth worth retiring

> ***"We don't need technology. Most of our riders are seniors and they'd never use it."***

The reality: Older Americans are embracing technology faster than almost any other group. They don't need convincing that tech is for someone else — they need a little encouragement and support to get comfortable.

THE REALITY — AARP DATA

Seniors have already gone mobile

90%

of adults 50+ own a smartphone in 2025 — up from 55% in 2016

10

different apps used, on average, in a three-month period

14

digital services used, on average, in a three-month period

66%

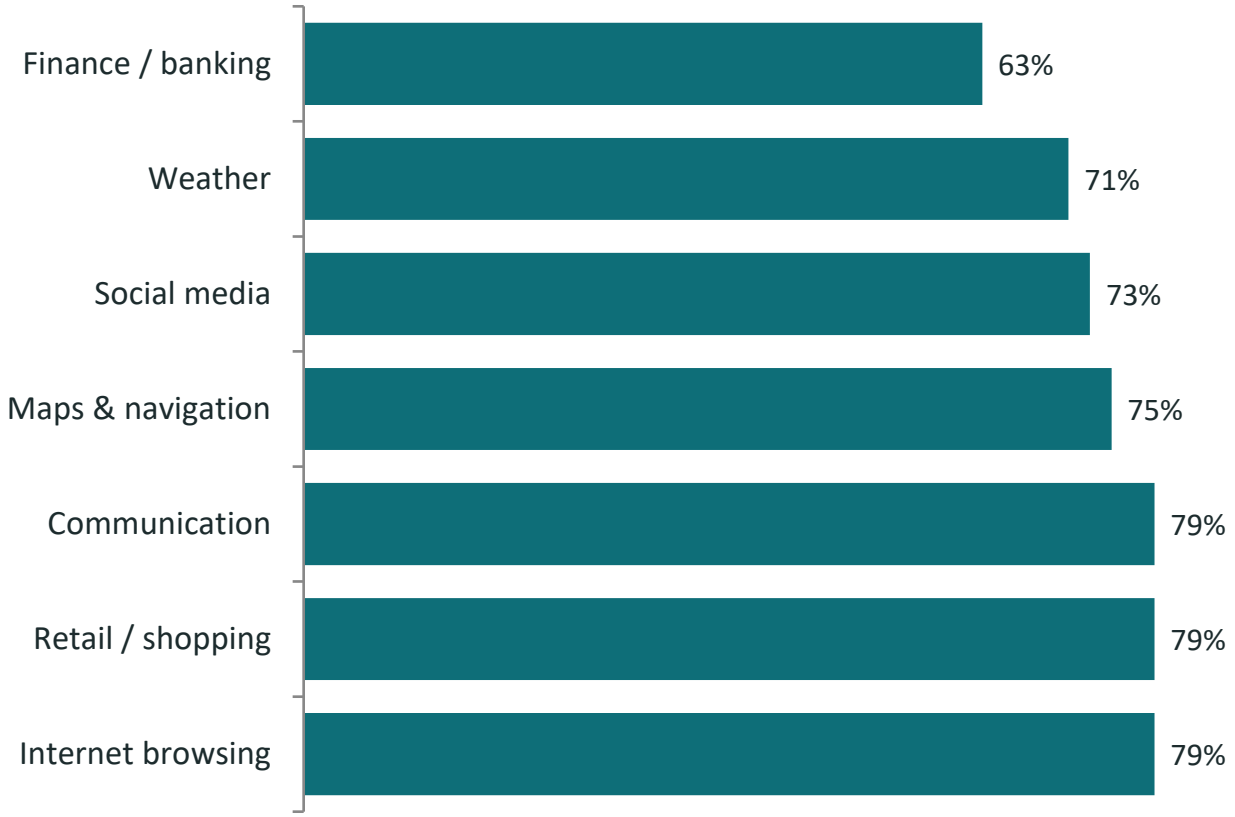
agree technology enriches life and makes aging easier

Older adults now own modern technology at the same rate as younger adults — and texting is now their lead communication method.

Source: AARP 2026 Tech Trends

WHAT THEY ACTUALLY USE

Apps are woven into daily life



Familiar before functional

Seniors already browse, shop, communicate, and navigate on their phones.

Transit tech isn't a leap — it's the next familiar app on a phone they already use every day.

Maps & navigation — used by 75% — is the exact skill riders lean on to plan a trip.

Source: AARP 2026 Tech Trends

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR TRANSIT

Technology is a bridge, not a barrier

Independence

Riders plan, pay, and track trips on their own — without calling in or waiting on hold.

Equity & access

Mobility is a pathway to healthcare, food, work, and connection. Tech widens that pathway.

Efficiency

Fewer phone calls and cash transactions mean faster boarding and lower administrative load.

Better information

Real-time arrivals and alerts reduce anxiety and no-shows for every rider.

Real barriers — and how we reframe them

The barrier	Our response
Data privacy & security	Walk through exactly what the app can and can’t see. Trust is built in person.
“Is it worth it?” value doubt	Show the payoff first: less waiting, no fumbling for cash, real-time arrivals.
“Not designed for my age”	3 in 5 feel tech ignores them. Large text, simple steps, and patience close that gap.
Low confidence	Hands-on practice on their own phone — repeated as many times as it takes.

Source: AARP 2026 Tech Trends

OUR APPROACH

How we get seniors to adopt transit technology at FHATA

Two rider-facing apps, a repeatable training playbook, and options for every comfort level.

FEATURED APP 1 — PLAN & TRACK

Transit: our official plan, track & pay app

Trip planning

Step-by-step directions that tell riders when to leave, when their stop is coming up, and alternatives if they miss a ride.

Real-time tracking

Accurate arrival times and map-based vehicle locations, plus crowding info: “Not crowded,” “Some crowding,” or “Crowded.”

Fare payment

Buy any fare or pass in a few taps, track pass expiration, and buy rides for the whole family.

No smartphone? No problem.

Text your Stop ID to
785.264.4595

and get the next three real-time arrivals for that stop — no app required.

Source: ATA Bus Transit App

FEATURED APP 2 — PAY BY PHONE

Token Transit: fares made simple

1

Purchase

Select your fare or pass in the app and buy it in seconds.

2

Activate

Passes are stored on the phone until the rider is ready — tap to activate.

3

Ride

Show the driver the digital ticket or scan at the validator when boarding.

Pay As You Go / fare capping: riders who can't afford a day or monthly pass up front earn it with each tap — an equitable option that removes a real barrier for fixed-income seniors.

Source: Token Transit, Citilink

FROM 10+ YEARS OF HANDS-ON TRAINING

My three keys to success

KEY 1

Patience is key

Never rush a training. Multiple sessions may be necessary. If you truly have a passion for helping, they will sense it — and that trust is what makes tech stick.

KEY 2

Get the prerequisites in place

Not every solution is one-size-fits-all. Confirm the right device, connection, and account are ready before you train, so the lesson isn't derailed by a missing step.

KEY 3

Technology is for everyone

Bring the attitude that anything can be learned. Don't age-discriminate based on past experiences — meet each person where they are.

What ties it together: *discuss expectations up front, then build a step-by-step plan with milestones. That structure turns a hesitant first session into lasting independence.*

A STEP-BY-STEP TRAINING PATH

Meeting every rider where they are

1. **Start with the familiar**

   Begin on the rider’s own phone with something they already know — a text, a photo, a map.

2. **One skill at a time**

   Plan a trip today. Pay a fare next time. Small wins build confidence and momentum.

3. **Practice, then repeat**

   Hands-on repetition on their device. Come back as many times as it takes — no pressure.

4. **Keep the low-tech door open**

   Text-for-arrivals and in-person support mean no one is left behind if an app isn’t the fit.

WHAT WE SEE WHEN IT WORKS

Confidence compounds

The shift we watch for

A rider who arrived unsure now plans their own trips, pays with a tap, and checks arrivals before leaving home.

Managers who once relied on phone calls now support riders through the same tools — from trip planning to CAD/AVL systems.

That independence is the whole point: mobility as a pathway to equity, connection, and opportunity.

46%

of adults 50+ used medical apps in 2025 — up from 35% the year before, proof that adoption accelerates once it starts

2 in 5

older adults are already planning a tech purchase — the audience is leaning in, not away

Source: AARP 2026 Tech Trends

WHAT TO TAKE BACK TO YOUR AGENCY

Change the mindset. Then run the play.

THE MINDSET SHIFT

- Seniors already use ~10 apps in three months.
- They’re not resistant to tech — they need support.
- Transit tech is the next familiar app, not a leap.
- Technology is for everyone. Never age-discriminate.

THE PLAYBOOK

- Be patient — plan for multiple sessions.
- Get prerequisites right; no one-size-fits-all.
- Teach one skill at a time on their own phone.
- Set expectations and milestones up front.
- Keep low-tech options open (text-for-arrivals).

Thank you

Let’s make transit technology a bridge for every rider.

Michael Wilson

Director of Mobility Management, Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency/CTD 4

Questions & discussion welcome

OUR PARTNERS

Meeting riders where they are

Source: AARP 2026 Tech Trends, ATA Bus Transit App, Token Transit