

Online application lets IndyGo plan your bus trip for you



By Bruce C. Smith

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IndyGo is already on the Internet at Facebook and Twitter, but the city's bus service is going a little higher tech.

Starting this week, riders can track routes or map out a bus trip using an application that can be delivered to a computer, a smartphone or any other device that can access the IndyGo Web site.

The new service, dubbed Trip Planner, can be found on the Internet at www.IndyGo.net/tripplanner.

"We have tested a beta version of the site since December, when it was made available to about 7,000 people, including IndyGo employees and the subscribers to our newsletter," said bus system spokeswoman Jenny Brown. "We've had quite a bit of feedback, and people say they've tested the trips and they love it."

Trip Planner is similar to other online maps such as MapQuest or Google maps or GPS-based mapping tools. Users enter a beginning point or address and an ending point, destination or landmark, and Trip Planner delivers a route, including bus times, transfers and bus stop locations. Access to the Web site is free.

IndyGo rider Stacy Quasebarth, who works Downtown and rides to Greenwood, has stopped taking the bus as often because of uncertainty about schedules. "This planner would be a big help, and it could be even better if it gave real-time information about the location of the buses and when they will be at your stop," Quasebarth said.

Trip Planner doesn't show where each bus is at the moment or how long a rider must wait for the next bus. But that service is available by phone and will eventually be online.

Brown said IndyGo already provides up-to-the minute information on the location of its buses and where they are between bus stops if riders call the customer center, (317) 635-3344.

"We also hope to unveil a text-message tool this year, so riders can text to a number and get real-time data on the location of a bus on its route," Brown said.

All IndyGo buses, which run on 29 scheduled routes and carry passengers on about 9 million trips a year, are equipped with satellite tracking devices.

"We have that information, so now the challenge is to find out how to make that available to our riders, too," Brown said. "We are trying to do all we can to meet the needs of our customers and to make riding the bus as easy as we can."

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