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I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received assistance in the completion of this assignment. All work contained herein is my own. All referenced work is cited correctly. March 6, 2007   Michael Reddy

Purdue Ride Board

As a freshman, I have very little contact with others outside of West Lafayette. Since I am a freshman, I am not allowed a car on campus. This causes problems for Purdue students wanting to travel. Purdue has no official ride board. A common situation that haunts many freshmen each year is being stuck on campus over a break. When I came to Purdue, I knew that I would go home some time either during weekends or breaks. But I wondered, "How would I get home?" Purdue University has tried many methods of dealing with the issue of students leaving campus. In the past, Purdue had a ride board posted in the Union. This was an informal way to get to places like Indianapolis or Chicago. There is also the Lafayette Limo that takes students to Indianapolis and Chicago. In addition, there is a bus that takes students around West Lafayette and Lafayette. In order to understand Purdue student's transportation needs, I will examine the need for a new ride board at Purdue. I will explore the options for students. I will explain the options for a ride board being reinstated. To increase my understanding of the topic, I will research if there is a need for a ride share board at Purdue. My primary research question will be the following: should Purdue reinstate a ride board? My research will include these points: does Purdue offer enough transportation options for students looking to go home? What has Purdue done in the past for providing transportation? If there is a need for a ride board, what options are there for implementing it? Now that I have outlined the main questions, I will begin researching the need of a ride board for Purdue students.

It may seem as though everyone has a ride back home, but this is false. Many students cannot get home for the weekends or breaks because of having no means of transportation. It is important to fit the transportation option to the students' budget. As a freshman, it is a rule that we are not allowed to have a car on campus. According to the Purdue Housing and Food service homepage, "Frequently Asked Questions" freshman are not allowed to have cars on campus. Depending on the area where one lives, some sophomores may not be able to register for cars either (Purdue Website, FAQ's, Question # 13). This creates a dilemma for underclassmen when we need rides off of campus. But, not all about Purdue's transportation system is limited.

While the city has set up a great system for college students to get to local areas such as Wal-Mart and the Tippecanoe mall, this does not extend into other areas. City Bus operates for too few hours during the weekend. According to the City Bus homepage, it does not operate most routes on the weekend. City Bus is an important reference since they are the prime mode of transportation for students on campus. The problem is that during the weekends and during breaks from school, Purdue, in essence, shuts down. People who don't have a ride home often become stuck on campus. For example, many international students become stuck on campus for breaks.

Many international students have an even greater challenge, as they do not go back home for the shorter breaks. If an international resident does not want to go back home during break, they may still want to travel. Many international students want to go somewhere during break inside of the United States. Not only does this cause a hassle for international students, but it also effects all students who are short on cash.

Another dilemma associated with student transportation is that many college students are short on cash, and therefore can't or do not want to overpay to get home. Although there are

ways to get home, many of them are very costly. For example, the Lafayette Limo webpage states that a one-way trip from Purdue to the Indianapolis airport is $25 and a roundtrip ticket is $45. (Lafayette Limo website, cost section) The Express Air Coach home page states that a bus ride to O'Hare International Airport in Chicago is $55 one way (Express Air Coach website, Cost section). Even trains are expensive. The Amtrak homepage states that a round trip ticket from Indianapolis to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania costs over $250 (Amtrak website, Cost section). Purdue students have access to Lafayette Aviation where there is a Budget rental car agency. However, according to the Budget homepage the minimum rental age for customers residing in the U.S is 21 years old. Renting a car is useless for the majority of undergraduate students who are under 21 years old (Budget Rental Car website, Rental fees). The costs of the various alternatives are too expensive for most students, so I decided to research the alternative solutions.

Now that I have examined the need and the problem currently plaguing students regarding transportation, I decided the best idea would be to research alternatives and solutions to the current systems. First, I looked at the Lafayette Limo, Amtrak, rental car agencies, and greyhound buses. What I found in common was a lack of ability to change the systems set up by private agencies. Their goal is to make a profit, not to create value for the Purdue student. It became quite clear to me that changing any of these businesses that have been in the Lafayette area for a long time would be nearly impossible. Because of this, I decided to focus on a system that is not for profit and that benefit the student. This lead me towards any transportation organization set up by Purdue.

In the past, there has been a ride board system set up in the lower level of the Purdue Memorial Union. It incorporates a simple posting of ride requests on a physical board. It is an easy, simplified approach to finding a ride home. After understanding its attributes, I decided to

research its flaws. One problem with the physical Ride Board system at Purdue is that it is not used anymore. One reason for this is because it was inaccessible or inconvenient or usable for most people: this board is not large enough in size to host the large student population at Purdue. After realizing the issues with the physical ride board system, it was important to understand what is considered usable.

A physical board is ineffective for Purdue due to its small size. Purdue is a very large campus, with over 35,000 students. A physical ride board is ineffective since it inaccessible to most busy students. Students do not have time to physically go to a ride board. Because of these reasons an online ride board would solve this problem by allowing for an unlimited number of people to post. It is convenient since anyone who has an Internet connection can access the online ride.

I then became interested in what people consider usable. I turned to the Purdue Writing lab where it has a book titled Technical Communication, written by Paul V. Anderson. According to Anderson, there are three elements that make a up a usable website. First, the site must be complete, containing all information that the readers require is there. This is done through grouping and creating a easy to navigate hierarchy. Second, the site must be task oriented, meaning that it is oriented around its readers and supports the readers' performance of the tasks as fully as possible. Third, the website must be accessible allowing readers to locate the information they want quickly (Anderson 54). This information helps create a definition for usable and makes it easy to decide what is usable. It gave me specific criteria to use when analyzing a web site.

I began my search of online ride board options by using the keywords Purdue Ride Board. There were many links to small private ride boards that helps show that a grassroots start

has already begun responding to the problem. The first ride board system set up by Purdue students is Hail.Purdue.edu. Hail is a current ride board system that offers a user to post or request a ride. The system requires a user to have a username and password for protection reasons. A problem associated with the website is that too few people post rides. Most Purdue students are unaware that the site even exists (Hail.Purdue.edu, Main Page). In addition, the board is confusing and unorganized, according to Anderson's usability standards.. There is no set process to help find rides. One has to search around randomly opposed to having a usable search box. Most posts are not responded to by a driver making the board ineffective. This site incorporates no safety features meaning the driver/rider has limited information about the person. It does not require a Purdue ID to authenticate the person (Anderson 54).

Another site Purdue students set up is Purdueonline.com that is forum-based. This site was established independently of Purdue and, therefore lacks credibility. Few people use the site. There are only about ten posts per month. The site incorporates few safety features. This board is also confusing and unorganized. I came to this conclusion using Anderson's book (Technical writing, Page 54) He states that a site must be easy to navigate and must have the content easily assessable. This is certainly not the case since the content is hidden in unorganized sub folders (Purdueonline.com, Main Page) For example, the graphic below illustrates the unorganized fashion of a forum-based system. It shows the difficulty of searching for a specific ride.

Orientation			
Introductions (1 Viewing) Meet & Greet - Introduce yourself	**The Lodge Apartments Meet and...** by researchtech 11-08-2006 02:15 AM	107	1,598
Campus			
Boiler Up (12 Viewing) General discussion about anything, current events. Anything goes here (may offend some people)	**New Ads Plz** by PurdueDoubleE Today 10:13 AM	1,142	24,774
Events & Night Life (2 Viewing) Know of something going on? Want to throw a block party? Talk about bars, breakfast club, etc.	**Official Lounge One Thread** by meisha 02-28-2007 01:27 PM	229	3,176
Apartment & Housing Reviews Discuss your experiences with off campus housing	**Community Rentals** by hellotheworld 02-26-2007 11:55 PM	59	240
Classifieds (16 Viewing) Buy or sell used or new stuff. **Sub-Forums**: ▯ Only Textbooks, ▯ Roomates & Sublease, ▯ Carpool Rideboard	**Goo Goo Dolls Tickets ($20...** by map Today 10:03 AM	2,881	9,298
Class & Teacher Reviews Want to recommend a class or teacher, or warn the masses	**favorite/least favorite...** by complich8 Yesterday 11:25 PM	67	502
Schoolwork (1 Viewing) Need help on an assignment? Use this forum to discuss classes	**Tutoring** by nash007 Yesterday 04:16 AM	178	1,094
General Discussion			
Entertainment (1 Viewing) Discuss music, movies, TV	**Britney Spears finally flips** by SeaWolf Today 09:55 AM	287	4,128
Computers, Internet, & Tech (4 Viewing) Have a computer question or problem? Ask right here.	**What do you do to protect...** by complich8 Yesterday 11:31 PM	416	4,725
Religion, Philosophy, & Politics (15 Viewing) Open-minded discussions about anything you care to believe in...	**Gentilemans we may have a...** by mthed4 Today 09:39 AM	1,058	18,116
Dating, Sex & Relationships (4 Viewing) Sex Stuff, Relationship Problems, Tips and Tricks	**boob jobs at Purdue** by nikster521 Today 01:13 AM	217	7,179
Sports Discuss all sporting related things here	**Does Purdue get into The Big...** by megabass31	139	1,663

Soap box 2.0 is a forum-based system devoted to finding rides for Lafayette students. It includes blogs, groups, photos and podcasts. It has a effective calendar making it easy to pick travel dates. It requires a user to sign in using a password. Soapbox 2.0 has many problems with it, and there have been no posts to the website yet. This is may be caused by a lack of awareness by students. It is not reputable with people since no one currently uses the website (Soapbox 2.0 website, Main Page) The image below illustrates the lack of posts by any Purdue students.

Soapbox 2.0

Home Blogs Groups Photos Polls Podcasts Categories

User login
Username:

Password:

Log in

Secure login

Get creative
create content

Browse archives
« March 2007

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Home » groups

The Lafayette College RideBoard

No posts in this group.

Submitted by kheraja on October 4, 2006 - 4:17pm.

XML

printer friendly version | 735 reads

(categories: travel)

Now that I have researched the systems incorporated at Purdue, I decided to research the options for the location of the ride board. Should the ride board be online or in a physical location? The first option would be to put the ride board system in a physical location. This would make it very easy for anyone to understand. A possible problem to this system is its lack of accessibility for many students. The ride board system is used across many universities.

Today, much information can be found online. The Internet allows anyone the ability to find information quickly and efficiently. To try to find a ride, users go to the website to search for a possible ride. A way of solving the problem of not knowing information about the student driving is by posting a profile. All of the websites currently in place have already done this to some extent. The ride board that was located in the Union did not do this.

After researching the location of the ride board, I decided to research the costs for both the University and the students for implementing a ride board system. The costs of creating this ride board would only be the cost of its physical implementation. The costs for the University to create a ride board system online will be minimal as well. The first expense would be registering

the domain name. The costs of registration are $7 a year (Itap online, registration costs). The cost of developing the web site would be the biggest expense. The website would take about seventy hours of time to create costing Purdue approximately $1,000 according to Stormfront productions. Stormfront has been delivering website products to Purdue (Stormfront Productions website, Costs). This makes them relevant to Purdue. According to Purdue University, the total cost of hosting the website through Purdue will cost $30 a month (Itap online, student website hosting). The costs for the students will be drastically reduced since students are driving students in a non-for profit environment. The average cost for a student to be driven to Chicago is $15. This is according to preliminary research of various sites such as hail.purdue.edu, and purdueonline.com.

After analyzing the costs of hosting, it became clear that in order for any ride board system to work it would need to be advertised. My first question was how would people find out about the ride board. I then decided to analyze the different opportunities to advertise to Purdue students. I turned to the Purdue website and found various advertising options through Purdue directly. A possible option would be to submit announcements to the Boiler Television Network. An option would be to have the announcement in the form of slides that continuously play. Another option is to put links on Purdue's web page providing access and advertisement to Purdue students directly (Boiler Television Network, Advertising). Another option to raise awareness would be to place flyers throughout the campus before breaks to raise awareness. After analyzing the safety issues of a ride board, it then became necessary to research how to advertise the ride board.

A possible problem that I began to recognize was the safety concerns of traveling with a stranger. There are two main safety concerns. One risk that we cannot respond to is the fact that

car accidents sometimes happen. Unfortunately, there is little that can be done to alleviate this risk. There are many possible solutions to the other safety problems that exist. These problems include the lack of knowledge one has before driving with someone, and the risk of assault by the other individual. One solution is to require students to identify themselves by using a Purdue ID. If it turns out that the online ride board is the best option one would be required to login with their career account. People can then be sure that only Purdue students or staff is posting rides. User feedback could help insure quality. After people ride with the student they could post feedback. This is similar to eBay's selling strategy of allowing a user the ability to rate a merchant. The outcome of this would be that more people would be willing to ride with people who have positive comments. A way to record information for all rides would be to set up a database. All completed arrangements could then be electronically stored, where one can then review the route, the people involved and all other information.

Purdue students without cars have a great deal of difficulty in finding rides home. My initial research question was is there a need for students to find transportation. Through my research, it became clear to me that there is need for students to find rides home. The cost of the alternatives became one of the biggest limiting factors for students. As my research continued the alternatives became clear. An online or physical writing board would most likely benefit students. My main research question was, should Purdue should reinstate a ride board? I never intended to fully answer this question, but to look at the problem in parts. The unforeseen consequences of a ride board still need to be researched. Based on preliminary research there are two options available. Either Purdue needs to post a ride board online, or post it in an assessable physical location. The need for a ride board became clear to me, but the exact way to implement

the board must be researched further. I still need to further research the costs, safety, advertisements, and the physical location of the board.

Annotated Bibliography

Anderson, Paul V. <u>Technical Communication</u> New York: Wadsworth Publications, 2007.

>   I used this source to provide a concrete ethical analysis of usability. It helped answer my
>   questions on what users need and want from a website. It is credible since the book is
>   both up to date and written by a scholar. The main audience of this book is scholars and
>   website designers. The purpose is to make a usable website.

Amtrak. <u>Reservations</u>. 2006. 5 Mar. 2007.

>   <http://www.amtrak.com/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=Amtrak/HomePage>.
>   This source outlined the costs for students to ride Amtrak. I was searching for the costs of
>   this type of travel for students. It is credible since they publish their own costs. The
>   audience is people searching for traveling options by train.

Budget Rental Agency. <u>Rental Policies</u>. 2007. 5 Mar. 2007.

>   <https://www.budget.com/budgetWeb/home/home.ex>.
>   This source outlined the costs for students to rent a car to get home. I was searching for
>   the costs of this type of travel for students. It is credible since they publish their own
>   costs. The audience is people who are looking to rent a car.

Express Air Coach. <u>Trip Costs</u>. 2007. 5 Mar. 2007 <http://www.expressaircoach.com/>.

>   This source helped me learn the costs of express air coach for students. I was searching
>   for the costs of this type of travel for students. It is credible since they publish their own
>   costs. The audience is West Lafayette residents looking to go to Chicago O'Hare.

Gocitybus. <u>City Bus Rates</u>. 2007. 5 Mar. 2007 <http://www.gocitybus.com>.

>   This source gave me the schedule of hours for CityBus. Since the source is directly
>   representing them it is credible. I wondered how often the buses ran. I was trying to

determine if there was more need for transportation options at Purdue. This showed me

that the cost is free for students and faculty.

Hail. Purdue University Hail. 2007. 5 Mar. 2007 <http://www.hail.purdue.edu>.

I researched different websites that offer ride boards for Purdue. This website provided

me a view of one type of ride board available to students. It showed me the lack of a fully

functioning, and usable ride board system. The audience is Purdue students looking for

rides home or Purdue students looking to drive another student.

Lafayette Limo Shuttle. 2006. 5 Mar. 2007 <http://www.lafayettelimo.com/>.

I used this source to find the cost of the Lafayette Limo. It answered the question of the

cost to get to Indianapolis. I used the quote to help compare different ride options. The

credibility is high since it is they are advertising their prices. Most people reading the site

are setting up a trip home.

Purdue. Purdue Help Desk. 2006. 5 Mar. 2007 <http://www.purdue.edu/helpdesk

pages/survival_guide/faq.html / >.

Purdue University outlines the ride board that they say is currently implemented at

Purdue University. My purpose was to learn more about the Purdue ride board and its

features. I wondered what the pro's and con's of the physical ride board. In reality

through physical observation the board no longer exists in the Union.

Purdue Online. Purdue Online Forum. 2007. 5 Mar. 2007 <http://www.purdueonline.com>.

I was searching for different ride boards at Purdue. This source outlined one such ride

board that is currently used by Purdue students. It had many usability flaws that lowered

its overall credibility. This site is dedicated to Purdue students searching for a ride home and for Purdue students who are looking to drive people home.

Purdue University Housing and Food. Frequently Asked Questions. 2006. 5 Mar. 2007
<http://www.housing.purdue.edu/HTML/FAQs.htm >.

This source explained who can bring a car on campus. I used this source to find which students can park on campus. I found that no freshman and some sophomores cannot park on campus. The audience is Purdue students researching campus policies regarding cars on campus.

Soapbox 2.0. Soapbox 2.0 Main Page. 2007. 5 Mar. 2007 <http://www.soapbox2.0.com>.

This source provided information on a current ride board system in place at Purdue. I found this website while searching for ride boards that Purdue students use. This ride board has very little credibility or reputation with Purdue students since no has yet posted to it. This site is designed for Purdue students looking to find rides home. The main audience of the site is Purdue students searching for rides.

Stormfrontproductions. Cost Quotes. 2007. 5 Mar. 2007
<http://www.stormfrontproductions.net/>.

I was interested in the costs of website production. This site answered my questions regarding the costs of producing a ride board online. It is a credible production company since Purdue uses them. The audience is anyone who wants a company to create them a website.

Stormfront Productions. Personalized Website Development Quote. Wilmington, T, 2007. 5 Mar.
2007 <http://www.stormfrontproductions.net/>.

My question was regarding the costs of producing a website. This source provided the costs for producing a website that would produce a ride board for Purdue. It is credible since the quote was provided directly by Stormfront productions.