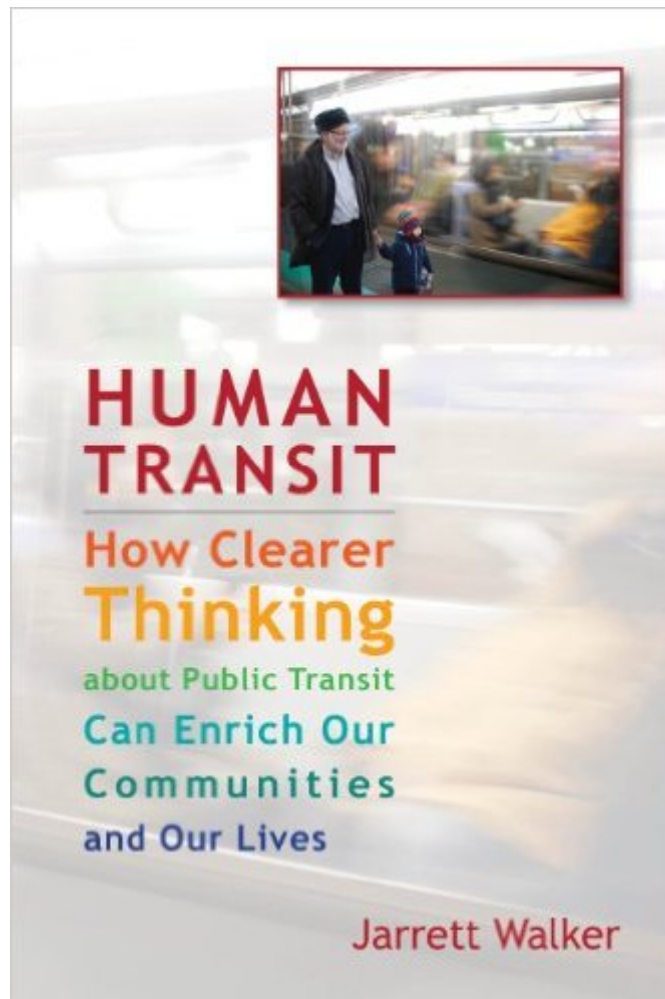


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# Human Transit: How Clearer Thinking About Public Transit Can Enrich Our Communities And Our Lives



## Synopsis

Public transit is a powerful tool for addressing a huge range of urban problems, including traffic congestion and economic development as well as climate change. But while many people support transit in the abstract, it's often hard to channel that support into good transit investments. Part of the problem is that transit debates attract many kinds of experts, who often talk past each other. Ordinary people listen to a little of this and decide that transit is impossible to figure out. Jarrett Walker believes that transit can be simple, if we focus first on the underlying geometry that all transit technologies share. In *Human Transit*, Walker supplies the basic tools, the critical questions, and the means to make smarter decisions about designing and implementing transit services. *Human Transit* explains the fundamental geometry of transit that shapes successful systems; the process for fitting technology to a particular community; and the local choices that lead to transit-friendly development. Whether you are in the field or simply a concerned citizen, here is an accessible guide to achieving successful public transit that will enrich any community.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Most public discussion of public transit is not particularly sophisticated: much public discussion is

limited to "for it" or "against it", or perhaps focused on the virtues of bus vs. rail. Walker reminds us that there are a wide variety of tradeoffs even if we agree on these basic issues. For example, should we provide a few routes that run frequently, or a larger number of less frequent routes? Should routes stop every block or stop every several blocks to make service faster? To what extent should routes be concentrated in peak hours? Walker suggests that our strategies should depend on our goals. Is it more important to provide service for everyone who can't drive, or is it more important to maximize ridership in order to reduce pollution? If the latter goal is more important, frequency and speed matter more- if the former, it is better to have a larger number of routes even if they run more slowly. Walker addresses a variety of other interesting issues. For example: \*Why don't transit agencies use smaller buses? If (as Walker suggests) transit operating costs are primarily labor costs, transit agencies don't save much money by operating smaller vehicles. \*Why does New York have much higher transit ridership than Los Angeles, despite the latter region's higher average density? Walker points out that New York has more people living at the highest densities, while Los Angeles is more dominated by mid-density neighborhoods that are just barely sparse enough to be car-oriented.

This book will give you talking points that are both solid and intuitive. For example the when thinking about a route it is all about geometry, not vehicle type. Or that most decision makers are motorists so they tend to think (unintentionally) like motorists so they value speed of frequency. This is a well written book, I know the author works in the Pacific Rim but I like to see some more thoughts on Eastern U.S. transit systems.

I read this book before taking a graduate public transportation planning class, and I'm glad that I did. Mr Walker's book reads EXACTLY as he describes up front - he explains in extremely plain yet precise language the theories that underlie how transit systems operate, the decision points that planners face, and most importantly, the real-world impacts of those decisions. I learned FAR more from this book than in an entire semester of grad class - I was equipped to take in the theoretical stuff the professor taught, and quickly translate that into how it might have real-world impacts on how people travel. For anyone interested in understanding the different ways that transit operates, and how there are so many decisions that can impact how much utility your community gets out of it, **MUST READ.**

As someone who primarily uses a car and occasionally uses transit, I felt that this book opened my

eyes to the possibilities of transit. Some big tools that I'm already putting to good use: (1) make sure new development is "on the way" of a transit system; and, (2) frequency is freedom. This book is a must for those involved in development (or redevelopment) of their town. Smart decisions now can mean big savings and a better lifestyle in the future.

I heard this author speak at a panel discussion about urban transportation, and I knew immediately that I wanted more of his clear thoughts. I am not a transportation planner nor much of a user of transit systems. Yet I found this book fascinating all the way through. Walker writes clearly and divides his topics into chapters, each focused on a specific issue, in a way that the whole picture unfolds easily and naturally. Any politician or urban planner could benefit from Walker's insights. He does not prescribe solutions, but he describes the crucial choices that are always made, either by design or default. I hope that transit leaders in my home town of Seattle have this book handy when they are thinking about the future of our city.

If you've ever wondered why your own city's bus maps are confusing, or why your bus is late, or what makes London so easy to get around, this is the book for you. Walker's straightforward descriptions of how transit actually works can help you understand your city, your bus, and your neighborhood in ways you never could. Get a head start on a lifetime of transit system planning and consultation experience with this accessible and readable book.

Jarrett presents the issues faced by anyone who cares about transit (and I include laymen, citizen activists, planners and politicians) in clear - and occasionally stark - terms that anyone can understand. He avoids jargon wherever he can: and when he can't, he defines the terms he must use well. I particularly appreciated his simple diagrams which he skillfully combines with real world examples. Finally, he (at least in this book) isn't partisan. There are tough decisions faced in considering transit, many of which are between two (or more) contradictory goals. He explains them well, but doesn't try to force you towards his preferred answer. Indeed, he explicitly recognizes that these are fundamentally political decisions and, as such, lays out the planner's duty to both inform the politicians on the need for (and consequences of) fundamental decisions and to design a system that follows once the political decisions are made.

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