
CDTA Content Strategy Brief

Capital District Transportation Authority

Maggie Morgan | June 4, 2026 | Channel figures as of June 4, 2026, from CDTA's public channels; ridership is CDTA's reported FY2024 total.

Overview & Audit

CDTA is a genuinely compelling transit authority: record-breaking ridership of 18.4 million trips in FY2024, a growing mobility menu (bus, FLEX on-demand, bike share, EV car share), and a clear regional identity. The problem is that its content doesn't yet match the ambition of the organization it's representing. The upside is that it feels more like approaching a blank canvas than reworking an entire social presence.

A review of CDTA's public-facing channels reveals a consistent pattern: content that informs but rarely inspires. The website is functional but written in bureaucratic language. The Instagram account (@ridecdta) has 7,063 followers and 2,672 posts, a volume that suggests activity without necessarily signaling growth or engagement. YouTube exists as an archive rather than a destination. Facebook skews toward service advisories and press-release-style updates.

The good news: CDTA has extraordinary raw material. Real people. A city in motion. Stories about access, equity, and community connection. The gap between what CDTA does and how it talks about itself is the opportunity. Giving the brand a voice and a clear message, through hope, humor, or both, is an achievable fix.

This brief focuses on two channels where targeted, concrete changes would have the greatest impact: **Instagram**, the highest-potential channel for brand-building and audience growth, and **website copy**, the first stop for new riders, where tone and clarity directly affect behavior and trust.

Channel 1: Instagram (@ridecdta)

CURRENT STATE

Active but generic. Posts fall into a few predictable buckets: service announcements, holiday schedules, awareness-day graphics (Earth Day, Transit Worker Appreciation Day), and occasional event photos. The grid is more reminiscent of 2016–2018 Instagram, before the platform started feeling human. Visual style is inconsistent, and captions are short, descriptive, and functional, but they don't invite engagement or tell a story.

Humanizing a clinical organization is increasingly common, especially around current events, and the accounts that do it in their own voice earn attention a service advisory never will. CDTA is posting a lot without a clear voice or strategy driving it. The account feels like a bulletin board rather than a brand. What's missing is a point of view. Transit is inherently human: every bus is full of people going somewhere that matters to them.

RECOMMENDATION: A SIGNATURE CONTENT SERIES

Rather than overhauling everything at once, launch one anchor series that gives the account a recognizable identity. It runs 2–3 times a month alongside existing posts and sets the tone for everything else.

“Where Are You Going?” (think Humans of New York)

A short-form rider portrait series. Each post features one CDTA rider: a nurse heading to her shift at Albany Med, a student commuting to SUNY Albany, a retiree getting to the farmers market, a teenager going to their first job. One strong photo. A 3–4 sentence caption in their voice.

- **It humanizes the system.** Ridership data is abstract; individual stories are not.
- **It reflects CDTA's actual riders:** diverse, local, real, in a way stock photos and templates can't.
- **It's naturally shareable.** People share content they see themselves in.
- **It scales.** Every route, hub, and demographic is a potential subject.

Production is a light lift: a staff member or contracted photographer spends an hour at a busy stop or on a popular route, and one session yields 3–4 posts. Captions come from brief rider interviews.

ILLUSTRATIVE SAMPLE POST (fictional rider, for demonstration only)

Route 22, every Tuesday and Thursday.

Maria has been riding CDTA for six years. She works the early shift at St. Peter's and says the 6:12am bus is the most reliable part of her morning.

"I know exactly when it's coming. I can plan around it. That matters when you're working in healthcare."

Who else is out there making their morning happen on CDTA? Tell us below. Plan your trip at cdta.org.

#rideCDTA #HereToGetYouThere #CapitalRegion #AlbanyNY #PublicTransit

THREE QUICK WINS

- **Visual consistency:** a simple 2–3 color photo filter or graphic template for all branded posts. Consistency builds recognition in a crowded feed.
- **A specific call to action on every caption:** "Plan your trip at cdta.org," "Download the Navigator app," "Tag us in your commute." Generic hashtags are not a CTA.
- **Respond to comments and DMs within 24 hours.** Community management is free and signals a real organization is behind the account.

Channel 2: Website Copy

CURRENT STATE

The site is well organized: routes, fares, accessibility, and the Navigator app are all easy to find, and the functionality is solid. But the writing defaults to institutional language that creates distance between the organization and its riders. The homepage hero reads "JOIN CDTA!" and "DISCOVER DRIVE!", commands that don't tell a prospective rider why they should care. The STAR paratransit description uses dense, qualifying language that is technically accurate and emotionally off-putting to the audience it's trying to serve. Annual-report language ("advancing our commitment to regional mobility and community impact") has bled into the website, where it doesn't belong. Riders want to know: Can I get there from here? How much will it cost? Is it easy?

RECOMMENDATION: REWRITE FOR THE RIDER, NOT THE BOARDROOM

1. Homepage value proposition

CURRENT	REVISED
JOIN CDTA! / CDTA's mission isn't just to move people; it's to move the Capital Region forward with innovative mobility solutions.	Your ride across Albany, Troy, Schenectady, and beyond — by bus, bike, or on-demand. Get where you're going with CDTA.

2. STAR paratransit description

Many of CDTA's most vulnerable riders read this page first. The current copy leads with eligibility language. The revision leads with the service.

CURRENT	REVISED
STAR is Special Transit Available by Request; a paratransit service offering transportation alternatives to people whom at certain times cannot use, or have substantial limited using the CDTA fixed-route bus system because of a disability or impairment.	STAR (Special Transit Available by Request) is CDTA's door-to-door paratransit service for riders with disabilities or health conditions that make it difficult to use regular bus routes. If you need a more flexible way to get around, STAR is here for you.

Campaign Concept: "More Than Just A to B. It's What Happens In Between."

The most compelling thing about public transit isn't the destination. It's everything that happens on the way there. A stranger who offers their seat without being asked. A morning regular who learns your name after six months on the same route. Two people on opposite sides of a conversation who end up laughing together by the last stop. These moments happen because transit puts people in the same space, and a car commute never does. The campaign gives CDTA an emotional territory no competitor can occupy. It's not about efficiency or price. It's about community.

- **“In Between” series (Instagram and Facebook):** short, warmly written posts that capture a single real moment: a driver who remembers a rider’s stop, a teenager helping an older woman with her groceries, two strangers sharing an umbrella. Each ends with the same line: “This is what happens in between.”
- **60-second brand video (YouTube and pre-roll):** no voiceover, no statistics, one morning commute on Route 22 told through the faces on board. The tagline lands over a quiet shot of the bus pulling away.
- **UGC prompt:** “Tell us your in-between moment.” Riders share stories; CDTA reposts the best. Authentic content at near-zero cost.
- **Homepage banner:** “Every ride is full of moments. Plan yours.” with a direct link to the trip planner.

It scales in any direction: bigger with a video budget, smaller with a phone camera and a good eye. We remember the moments, not the miles.

Goals & 90-Day Plan

Proposed targets. Final numbers would be set against CDTA’s own analytics baseline, which I’d request in week one.

Measure	Proposed 90-day target
Instagram engagement rate	+25% vs. trailing 90-day baseline
Instagram followers	+10% (about 700 from the 7,063 base)
“Where Are You Going?” output	6–9 posts published; at least one a month in the account’s top 10% for saves and shares
UGC participation	10+ rider submissions to “Tell us your in-between moment”
Website	Homepage bounce rate and trip-planner click-through improved vs. baseline; STAR page tracked by calls and applications started

Days 1–30	Days 31–60	Days 61–90
Baseline analytics. Rewrite homepage value prop and STAR page. Set visual template, CTA and response standards. First rider photo session (3–4 posts).	Launch “Where Are You Going?” 2–3x a month. Start “In Between” posts and the UGC prompt.	Review results against baseline. Pitch the 60-second brand video. Refine the series.

Summary of Recommendations

Channel	Recommendation	Expected impact
Instagram	Launch “Where Are You Going?”; add visual consistency; strengthen CTAs	Stronger follower growth and engagement; shareable content that builds local identity
Website	Rewrite homepage value prop and STAR description; rider-first tone throughout	Lower bounce rate, clearer path to action, more inclusive tone for paratransit users
All channels	“What Happens In Between” campaign theme	Unified brand voice, civic pride, cross-channel coherence