



Designing Smoke-Responsible Public Spaces

Rethinking Smoking in Public Transport Areas

Focus Areas

Communication & Wayfinding

1.

Spatial Layout & Zoning

2.

Infrastructure & Functional Elements

3.

Behaviour & User Experience

4.

Key Problem Areas Identified Through Research

Ambiguity of Smoking Zones

Public transport environments often lack clearly defined and communicated smoking zones, making it unclear where smoking is allowed or prohibited. This leads to confusion, accidental violations and tension between users.

Passive Smoke Exposure in High Pedestrian Flows

Smoking areas are often located near main pedestrian routes—such as station entrances, exits and waiting zones—resulting in involuntary exposure to passive smoke.

Unintended Smoking in Grey Zones

Smoking often happens in overlooked areas—like corners, walls or spots near bins and benches—where the design can make it easy or convenient for passengers to smoke.



Use design and communication to guide smoke-responsible behaviour.

Communication & Wayfinding

These criteria address how information, signage and visual cues help people understand where and how to behave.

Make smoke-related policies visible and intuitive

Signage indicating smoking and non-smoking areas must be clear, visible and contextually placed to reduce confusing or unintentional violations.

Clarify smoking rules through spatial design

Spaces should clearly communicate permitted and prohibited smoking zones through layout, markings and physical elements (e.g. ground markings, icons and color cues).

Discourage smoking at ambiguous spatial edges

Elements like walls, recycling bins and corners should not become informal smoking zones; use design details and cues to guide behaviour.

Use design and communication to
guide smoke-responsible behavior.



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Signage

Communicating use of alternative products



Bahnhof Aarau
Designated Smoking Area



Mockup for Zürich HB
Designated Smoking Area

Communication & Wayfinding

These criteria address how information, signage and visual cues help people understand where and how to behave.

Spatial Layout & Zoning

These criteria address how space is organized and how passenger flows and waiting areas are designed.

Design spaces that protect non-smokers through smart separation.

Separate smoking areas and non-smoking areas

Smoking zones should not overlap with seating, entrances or passenger flows to avoid unintentional exposure. Create visible or spatial boundaries (e.g. planting, distance, materials) to clearly distinguish between smoking and non-smoking areas.

Ensure separation even under shared shelters

Covered areas must be designed so they do not automatically signal smoking permission; introduce separation with shelter if necessary.

Prevent passive smoke exposure through layout

Ensure that seating and waiting zones are physically placed at a distance from smoking zones, accounting for wind, flow and dwell time.

Design spaces that protect non-smokers through smart separation.



Mockup for Zürich HB
Designated Smoking Area
Created with ChatGPT

Spatial Layout & Zoning

These criteria address how space is organized and how passenger flows and waiting areas are designed.

Infrastructure & Functional Elements

These criteria relate to how the physical infrastructure of a space, e.g. ashtrays, bins, benches, reinforces or undermines smoke-responsible behaviour.

Use infrastructure to reinforce—not confuse—smoke-responsible behaviour.

Discourage smoking in inappropriate areas

Ashtrays must be located only in clearly designated zones to prevent smoking near shared-use infrastructure like bins or shelters.

Avoid reinforcing unwanted smoking behaviour

Infrastructure such as benches or trash cans should not be placed in a way that subtly encourages smoking in undesigned areas.

Provide appropriate disposal infrastructure

Ensure there are ashtrays in all designated smoking areas to reduce littering and reinforce where smoking is accepted.

Infrastructure & Functional Elements

These criteria relate to how the physical infrastructure of a space, e.g. ashtrays, bins, benches, reinforces or undermines smoke-responsible behaviour.

Use infrastructure to reinforce—not
confuse—smoke-responsible behaviour.



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Signage and ashtray



Mockup for Zürich HB
Designated Smoking Area
Created with ChatGPT

Behaviour & User Experience



These criteria reflect how users interact with the space, including how intuitive, inclusive and health conscious the experience is.

Create spaces that guide respectful and healthy behaviour naturally.

Design for vulnerable groups

Protect children, elderly and other sensitive populations by guiding smoke away from commonly used waiting areas or providing protected zones.

Accommodate transient users intuitively

Design should support smoke-responsible behaviour for short-term users (e.g. commuters or tourists) through spatial clarity, visible norms and passive guidance.

Reduce confusion and promote a healthy atmosphere

Create legible, calm and inviting environments that naturally encourage respect for smoke-related boundaries and make healthy choice feel effortless.

Create spaces that guide respectful and healthy behaviour naturally.

Behaviour & User Experience

These criteria reflect how users interact with the space, including how intuitive, inclusive and health conscious the experience is.



Mockup for Zürich HB
Posters

These principles shift the focus from enforcement to empathy, designing public transport spaces that naturally support respectful coexistence and healthier habits for all.



Impressum

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Note:

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