

# Staging a Fun Badge Tour

By Allan Hurst - Version 1.1 – 7/29/19 (original version 8/19/18)

*Note: this document was originally written for the IAGSDC Denver 2020 convention (“Take A Peak”) committee.*

Before reading any further, head to: <http://www.danceinfo.org/articles.html>, where you'll find four documents from prior conventions and one article describing the FBT from a passenger/dancer viewpoint:

- 2005 Santa Clara Fun Badge Tour Route Book  
<http://www.danceinfo.org/uploads/2/4/6/6/24661272/fbt2005routebook.pdf>
- 2005 Santa Clara Fun Badge Tour Script/Run Book  
[http://www.danceinfo.org/uploads/2/4/6/6/24661272/fbt\\_2005\\_script\\_203a.pdf](http://www.danceinfo.org/uploads/2/4/6/6/24661272/fbt_2005_script_203a.pdf)
- 2010 Chicago Fun Badge Tour Script/Run Book  
[http://www.danceinfo.org/uploads/2/4/6/6/24661272/2010\\_chicago\\_fbt\\_script\\_final\\_ver\\_2.3.pdf](http://www.danceinfo.org/uploads/2/4/6/6/24661272/2010_chicago_fbt_script_final_ver_2.3.pdf)
- 2013 Salt Lake City Fun Badge Tour Script/Run Book  
[http://www.danceinfo.org/uploads/2/4/6/6/24661272/2014\\_slc-squeeze\\_the\\_hive\\_fbt\\_script\\_final\\_8a.pdf](http://www.danceinfo.org/uploads/2/4/6/6/24661272/2014_slc-squeeze_the_hive_fbt_script_final_8a.pdf)
- 1999 article about the Los Angeles FBT  
<http://www.danceinfo.org/uploads/2/4/6/6/24661272/lclafbt20.pdf>

You'll want those to glance through as I go through the process here.

The process of creating a Fun Badge Tour starts about two years out, and is part planning (site selection and route planning), part guesswork (will each of your sites be open or under construction in two years?), and part luck.

## Two Years Out

1. **Establish the stops.** I suggest having 3 or 4 stops, *plus 2 "alternate" stops in case any of the planned stops aren't accessible for some reason.* The alternate stops also can be used to fill in time if your FBT runs early. (Which it did in Santa Clara, the only FBT to ever run early AND include all stops, including an extra alternate stop. Chicago and Salt Lake City also ran on time, though not as early as Santa Clara.)
2. **The stops you select depends upon what you're trying to convey.** Think about what your area is famous for, or what it *should* be famous for.

Los Angeles illustrated its place as an entertainment capital by dancing in front of the Chinese Theatre and inside the set of a movie studio, but had a fairly tame script.

Chicago danced in comparatively tame settings, including a gorgeous park pavilion (Humboldt Park Boathouse, the title of which doesn't do justice to the magnificent setting(, the LGBT community center, a beach, and Northerly Island (where the museums are), but we had a script based on a personal tour of Chicago's history by Sukie de la Croix, the pre-eminent Gay Chicago History authority. He made sure we had plenty of juicy gossip to stuff into the script, and people loved it.

Salt Lake City used a combination of funny script (my and Kate's favorite was the chapter on Mormon Swearing) and moderately interesting/fun places to dance (the former railway station downtown).

Santa Clara cherry-picked places people wouldn't expect to find in Silicon Valley (a Rodin sculpture garden at Stanford, an Egyptian Museum in San Jose, rose test gardens, and the dirigible hangar at Moffett Field, among others). What do *you* want to convey about your city or local area?

3. **Think about types of stops.** Water stops (around fountains) are always popular, but be ready for someone to splash into the fountain or fall in or otherwise get wet. Strange museums are great.

Beaches are fun, but there have been a LOT of FBT stops dancing on beach parking lot asphalt.

Parks are always popular.

Streets that have been closed of are always a jaw-dropping stop. LA danced in the street in front of the Chinese Theatre. San Francisco closed off half of Castro Street, and danced in front of the Castro Theatre.

4. **Use local historians if possible.** Chicago's tour script was extra-fabulous because of Sukie de la Croix.

I was, honestly a bit annoyed with Seattle because they had no script, and given all of the incredibly funny books about Seattle by Bill Spiedel (*Through the Eye of the Needle, Sons of the Profits*"), the script would have been easy to write.

If there are any LGBTQ historians in your area, *use them* to help you with figuring out fun/historically significant stops, and with researching juicy stories to put into the script.

## One Year Out

1. **Get permits for stops as early as you possibly can.** This is the most time critical task, because some stops need six months to a year's notice, and other stops may not allow permits closer in than one year. Tell the authorities that you need between 30 and 60 minutes at their stop, including bus unloading and unloading. Be prepared to tell them how many dancers will be on the tour, and that you'll be using amplified music for about 15-20 minutes at most with these folks square dancing. Be aware that not everyone likes square dancers trampling lawns, so you'll need to ask where it's OK for our folks to dance.
2. **Plan the route.** This is pretty critical, because you have to balance travel time and bus accessibility. For example, the Red Rocks and Purple Mountains FBT had one extra-long trek out to Red Rocks (of course!), and compensated for that by having the other stops be fairly close together. Don't be afraid to ask the bus company to help you with bus-friendly routes. Tell them the order of stops desired (and be prepared to swap those around if it's easier for the buses!), and let them tell you the easiest way to route for five or six (or seven or eight...) buses.
3. **Time the route.** Do this several times, and take the average. My husband Randy created the Santa Clara FBT route book by figuring out the route, including my driving the route in a car on an early Sunday morning to simulate what the buses were going to face. While I drove (conservatively, using slow starts and early stops, just like a bus would), Randy sat in the passenger seat with a stopwatch, timing each leg. We added a few minutes to each leg for Bad Traffic Light Karma, and the result was a bus route that had realistic and reasonable time markers.
4. **Contact the police department to ask about paying for a police escort for the tour.** This will substantially shorten travel times. Not all cities will do this, but the ones who will do it, make the logistics a lot easier for keeping buses together. If you have a contact at the local tourism/convention bureau you're working with already, ask them for a referral to a DPD contact.

Note that some cities require permits for this type of tour; the police department should know if such a permit is required.

5. **With the route book in hand, figure out how much travel time between stops.** That tells you how much time you need to fill with script reading.
6. **DRIVE THE SCRIPT WRITERS ALONG THE ENTIRE ROUTE.** Yeah, I'm yelling. This is *super-important*. The script writers need to know what visual cues to use to tell stories.

For example, in Denver if they drive past the Blue Bear they would make a note of the elapsed time, and plan to tell a story about the sculpture, its artist, the

building, and local reaction to the sculpture. This helps the script write itself...honest!

7. **Research stories.** Google yourselves into a stupor. For example, by Googling "denver gossip history", I found a great article about Colfax Avenue's history, including a museum (which might be a good place to dance if they have a large enough area, or simply do a quick walk through visit): <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-denver-colfax-street-20171120-htmlstory.html>

Books about local scandals are also excellent sources of stories for an FBT script. So are local columnist archives (again, like Seattle's Bill Spiedel or San Francisco's Herb Caen).

8. **Write the script.** This isn't as difficult as it sounds. Assume the viewpoint of the passenger. You know how many minutes you have to fill, and you know what visual cues and sights they'll see on the route. If you have a stretch with nothing particularly interesting visually, that's where you fill in with scandal stories and/or local LGBTQ history. You have three examples (four, if you have the 2007 RRPM script) in hand to show you how to do this, including things like trivia games and time-fillers.

## Six Months Out

1. **Read the script.** *OUT LOUD*. Have several people do this, and time each person with a stopwatch. Use the average of those times to figure out many minutes per page (or pages per minute) will be read and adjust each driving segment of the script accordingly.
2. **Revise the script.** You'll find a bunch of changes need to be made to accommodate different folks' reading speeds and abilities. This may include simplifying language, spelling out pronunciations, or making factual adjustments based on feedback.
3. **Recruit HTQs and local drag queens to be bus hostesses.** Alternately, make the hosts and hostesses dress in themed costumes. Nobody can do justice to a good script like a drag queen...and DQs aren't afraid to improvise or embellish.  
*Note: One alternative to using HTQs and DQs...hire local LGBTQ tour guides, historians or history students.*
4. **Pair up hosts/hostesses.** That way they can take turns reading if their voices get tired, and it's easier to count passengers off and on at each stop.
5. **Plan to feed people.** This can be a boxed breakfast/lunch handed out to passengers as they get on or off the bus at the first stop, or a catered setup at one of the stops (see practical considerations, outlined below). Give them coffee EARLY. If the hotel won't make you pay too much for it, look into having coffee available in the loading area. Otherwise, plan to give people coffee and food at the very first stop.

6. **Note where the bathrooms are.** Don't just assume that people know there's a bathroom on each bus. Make sure that hosts/hostesses remind passengers where there are NON-BUS bathrooms available at each stop. A lot of folks don't like bus bathrooms.
7. **Keep it secret.** Keep the script and the stops secret from everyone else, including the hosts/hostesses, until the very last minute. There is a good deal of controversy around this practice, however. Many hosts/hostesses want time to practice reading the script. If you have a bunch of hosts/hostesses that you feel you can trust to not blab about where the FBT is going, then hand 'em the script. Each club handles this in a different way.
8. **Don't forget the danglers.** You'll also need to think about whether you want one dangle to hand out for the entire tour, or a set of danglers with one dangle per FBT stop.

## Other Considerations

Other practical considerations =outlined in the Santa Clara and (to a lesser extent) Chicago and Salt Lake City scripts:

- Get *lots* of water onto each bus to keep folks hydrated.
- If the hotel will charge too much for boxed breakfasts/lunches, *use a local catering firm and have them set up at the first stop, and plan that stop accordingly to give folks time to eat.*  
  
In 1999, Los Angeles did a gorgeous breakfast buffet catered by a movie catering company in the middle of a university quad, with two sets of *long* tables so that everyone could line up on both sides of each set of tables to get coffee, tea, soda, and food. That was probably the best-ever FBT catering setup I've seen.
- Bring trash bags onto each bus and have one of the hosts/hostesses hold up the bag to receive trash as passengers get off the bus at each stop.
- Bring sunscreen. Someone's gonna forget it. Trust me.
- Theme the tour and the buses. Chicago used architectural landmarks. Santa Clara used colors and Science Fiction tropes ("Mars Needs Women!"). Make it easy for people to remember which bus they're on.
- Some FBTs give color coded beads or scarves to each passenger to help them remember which bus they're on.
- Make BIG SIGNS to put in the window of each bus so people can find "their" bus again.

If you read through the three scripts referenced at the top of this article, all of the above will make a *lot* more sense.

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