



TRANSPORTATION



**WELCOME
CIRCLES**
for Refugees

From grocery shopping to medical appointments to a first job, transportation is a key thread in self-reliance and integration. Sponsors often accompany newcomers to their appointments in the initial days after arrival and assist them in the first weeks to get to points of interest, whether to and from work, places of worship, or English language training.

Key Transportation Reminder

For the first days of helping the newcomers with transportation, keep in mind the key mindset of doing *with* rather than doing *for*, and to think about how they can become independent in this task without your assistance. The transportation committee supports the newcomers to achieve the goal of being able to get around on their own when they want or need to, and according to their budget. In the first few weeks, as appointments are made, be intentional about communicating with other group members about opportunities to empower the newcomers with getting to and from their destination without the assistance of a ride. For example, if the newcomers have just one appointment scheduled for the day, practice taking public transit to and from the appointment. Additionally, as the newcomers establish routines, such as going to English language training or work, consider accompanying them the first time to help them build the confidence to make the commute on their own.

Airport Pick-Up

In some cases, sponsors may meet newcomers at the airport. After meeting the newcomer at the airport, transportation will need to be provided, unless transportation has been arranged by the resettlement agency staff or family of the newcomers that already live in the community.

Providing Rides

Like many others in the community, the newcomers and your committee will primarily use public transit. However, there are times when driving the newcomers will be necessary. As your committee organizes for car transportation, consider:

- Which committee members have access to their own car for initial appointments and tasks?
- What is the availability within the committee for weekday appointments?
- Always ensure that committee members transporting newcomers have a valid driver's license, vehicle insurance, and a background check.
- Recruit additional background-checked volunteers with vehicles if needed.
- Set up an organizational system such as a sign-up sheet for posting transportation needs and arranging rides.
- Plan for larger and younger families. For example, you may need two cars to transport large families. Refer to state car seat laws to determine what types of car seats are needed.
- Anticipate that most of the transportation with car rides happens right when the newcomers arrive.
- Arrange to arrive at the newcomers' homes ahead of time to pick them up and transport them to any appointments.
- Be sure to keep good boundaries and respect newcomers' privacy. For example, if arriving to pick up a newcomer and they do not answer the door, wait and call or text a few times. Do not enter their home unannounced.

Public Transit

Before the newcomers arrive, transportation committee members should begin to familiarize themselves with the local transit system and prepare to provide orientation. When the newcomers arrive, practice taking public transit and empower them to use it on their own.

- Look into reduced fare programs and any other possible transportation benefits that might be available.
- When accompanying the newcomers on public transit, refer to the public safety recommendations of all relevant modes of transit (e.g., bus, metro, trains, and ferries) to ensure that the newcomers travel safely and are always aware of their surroundings.
- Equip the newcomers with the tools they will need to take trips on their own. For example, download a transit app on their smart phone to track metro and bus schedules in real-time, see fares, and more. Or, print out maps and schedules of relevant routes, including alternate routes.

Other Ways of Getting Around

As you guide the newcomers in accessing available transportation in their new community, identify all the other ways they might travel, such as ridesharing, bike sharing, taxi, and walking, as well as how each option might be feasible depending on the types of appointments they might have and routines they might establish. Be sure to provide safety orientation for each mode of transportation, for example, wearing a safety helmet when riding a bicycle or sharing the itinerary of a ridesharing trip with a family member.

As newcomers may use ridesharing apps such as Uber and Lyft for key appointments, occasional trips, or emergencies, consider riding with them once or twice. However, be sure to discuss how ridesharing and taxis may be more expensive. Donated bikes, helmets, and locks might be helpful to newcomers but check with them as they may or may not be interested or have space to store them.

“The home of the family was close to public transit, which they took to school and work. They have a car now. Our group provided some information, but a family friend helped them buy the car.”

— David, community sponsor

Car Purchase and Driving

Questions about how to help newcomers access a car may come up within your sponsor group. The request for help buying a car may also come from newcomers. Often, sponsors are not able to assist with driving lessons and purchasing a car as these often fall outside the sponsorship period or car ownership is not within the newcomer's budget. Assess newcomers' interest in eventual car ownership. You can help by having a conversation about the various steps and expenses involved in purchasing and maintaining a vehicle, such as car insurance, registration fees, excise tax, annual inspection, maintenance, gas, and so forth. You can share information about driving schools, local car donation programs, and how to study for the driver's permit test. Some sponsor group members may be able to assist with car purchasing or driving, but this is often through an individual arrangement between the group member and newcomer, and not within the sponsorship commitment. Newcomers often rely on family members, friends, or co-workers for help with studying for a driver's permit or purchasing a vehicle, but this varies depending on the newcomer's previous driving experience or income.



TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES

King County Metro Public Transportation
Website: <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/metro>

Snohomish County Community Transit
Website: <https://www.communitytransit.org/>