

# Bus Training

The bus system is the primary way that the majority of newcomers travel around. However, refugees have no knowledge of how to ride the bus, where to ride the bus, or on which bus to ride. It is important for newcomers to learn the system early on in their time in the U.S. so that they can travel to medical appointments, social services, the grocery store, the public library, etc. It is crucial that newcomers learn how to navigate the bus system independently, otherwise they will be continually dependent on someone else to transport them.

High Point residents use the [Hi-tran](#) (High Point Transit) system.

Winston-Salem residents use the [WSTA](#) (Winston-Salem Transit Authority).

Volunteers' role: Outside of WR Triad's bus transportation classes, refugees often need additional help in understanding the public transportation system.

Volunteers can assist refugees with their transportation needs in the following ways:

**1. Teaching the bus system:** Many volunteers are hesitant about teaching a newcomer the bus system because they themselves are unfamiliar with the system. In an effort to create mutually beneficial relationships, volunteers can learn the bus systems with their partnered newcomers; this way, there will not be any kind of superiority complex, as you will both be learning something new together.

**2. Avoid driving newcomers in your car:** When running errands with newcomers to the bank, the grocery store, medical appointments, try to avoid driving them in your car. In general, refugees do not have access to cars, especially in their first few months in the U.S. If volunteers create a habit of driving refugees, they will become dependent on volunteers and their cars rather than on public transportation. However, as you are building a friendship with refugees, there will be times when driving them in your car is appropriate and healthy, that does not lead to dependency.

**3. Extra appointments/exceptions:** Although we encourage newcomers to rely on the bus system and not volunteers' cars, there are some situations where it is more plausible for a volunteer to transport a client in his/her car. Surgeries, various registrations or important medical appointments would be an example of this. See page ['Appointments'](#) for more information.

**4. Bicycles:** Many refugees enjoy biking around High Point, to and from work, to meet friends, etc. This is a much cheaper option than the bus. Volunteers can consider [donating a bicycle](#) to refugees in order to provide them with transportation to work.

**What:**

Refugees generally need help, either from another refugee or from a volunteer, learning to ride the public bus. It is beneficial to teach newly arrived refugees the bus system with a refugee who has been here awhile and is familiar with the bus system. The refugee who has been in the Triad for a while can relate to the newly arrived refugees and can speak their language. However, volunteers are huge assets in helping newly arrived refugees learn the public transit system, as well.

### **When:**

Volunteers should wait for refugees to purchase a bus pass before assisting them. Within the RAP program, refugees are given one bus pass. Within the Match Grant program, refugees are given monthly bus passes until they have obtained a job.

### **How:**

Once refugees have bus passes, volunteers can help walk them through:

- Where to pick up the bus
- o Show them the bus stops
- o Are there multiple stops or just one stop near their apartment?
- How to pay for the bus (and then whether to sit or stand, etc.).
- How to get off the bus
- Requesting a stop must be done ahead of time
- How to transfer buses
- E.g., how to pick out what bus you need to get on at the High Point station
- How to read a bus map, plan their route, know when the bus will come, etc.

### **Pep-talk:**

If you have never ridden the bus before, don't worry, you can still be an enormous help to the refugee. Don't be intimidated to learn the system with them. [Google Maps](#) is an accurate resource for creating a bus route. Simply click on the bus button above the destinations on the left hand panel. Select the route that is most convenient for their destination. When riding the bus, make sure you have dollar bills since change is provided in quarters (one-way fare is one dollar). Bus stops are found on both sides of the street, so make sure the traffic by your bus stop is going in the direction of your destination. To request a stop there is usually a highlighted panel, rope, or button that you push/pull to alert the driver.

It is best to teach refugees how to ride the bus by going somewhere they will need to go (e.g., to our office, to their ESL class). See below for a list of suggested places to visit. If another refugee hasn't helped them, see if you can find one to come along with you to interpret. Try to explain as much as you can.

### High Point Transportation

Suggestions for places to visit on the bus system:

- Guilford County Health Department
- Post office near newcomer's apartment

- Grocery store near newcomer's apartment
- Library near newcomer's apartment

Please note that all the buses have a 2 bag per person limit. Double basket folding utility carts can help carry more groceries or items. The best place to find a basket like this would be on [Amazon](#).