

**Report: Refugees in Vermont 2014  
Transportation Challenges and Recommendations**

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This report presents the results of seven specific challenges regarding transportation for recently arrived refugees in Vermont. It builds on several community-based surveys conducted by the PI on gaps and barriers identified by members of both the refugee and service provider communities. This is part of an ongoing effort to build and share knowledge regarding refugee mobility for better resettlement outcomes. This is part of an ongoing effort to build and share knowledge regarding problems, solutions, and approaches to solving these issues. Seven groups of Master of Public Administration graduate students (4 in the spring of 2013 and 3 in the spring of 2014) set out to investigate one specific problem regarding refugee transportation. They interviewed service providers, transportation agencies, refugees themselves, and other stakeholders. This handbook summarizes their results, for review and comment by the RISPNet and broader refugee community. We would like to continue this work—either on these specific problem areas or on anything else that might be identified as pressing issues—over the next year. We will also be launching a web portal to publicize all of the data collected over the past five years on research related to refugees by a range of stakeholders.

The specific issues addressed during the course of these studies are the following:

- Access to Employment
- Access to Essential Services
- Medicaid Bus Pass System
- Driver's Licenses and CarShare
- Refugee Transportation Support
- Transportation and Childcare
- Developing a Transportation Toolkit

## **The Impact of Access to Transportation on Employment Amongst Vermont's Resettled Refugee Community: Understanding and Addressing a Complex Problem (2013)**

By Autumn Barnett, Erin Flynn, Seth Jensen, and Alison Maynard

Transportation access to employment is a systems issue that requires better coordination between human service agencies, planning agencies, the private sector, nonprofits, employers, and local communities. This project specifically provides a broad set of eleven recommendations to address transportation as a barrier to employment for refugee communities in Vermont. These recommendations include developing a system-wide initiative to improve transportation access, prioritizing transportation access and refugee communities in the planning process, increasing collaboration among relevant public and private actors, and developing employer-based solutions to address transportation needs not met by the public sector or local nonprofits, among others.

## **Strategies for Non-Car Access to Essential Services (2013)**

By Christine Bellmyer, Rob Fish, Anera Foco, Nicholas Leggett

This project examines access to Shaw's grocery store and the medical offices at Tilley Drive in the City of Winooski as examples of the type of transportation issues faced by resettled refugees in Vermont. These essential services of food and health care are only truly accessible by personal vehicle, yet most refugees rely heavily on alternative modes of transportation (public transportation, biking, walking, etc.). This project recommends a case-by-case approach to making these essential services more accessible by alternative modes of transportation, focusing on redesigning specific transportation routes and infrastructure to these destinations. A long-term solution entails overhauling Chittenden County's land use development plan to incorporate the transportation needs of communities that do not have access to personal vehicle.

## **Medicaid Bus Pass System (2013)**

By Ashley Clark, Brad Luck, Jessica Ricketson, Juan Zhang

In the state of Vermont, Medicaid changed its non-emergency medical transportation benefits in 2012, allowing beneficiaries to receive a 10-punch bus pass for medical travel only. Prior to this change, beneficiaries received an unlimited 30-day bus pass. This change has had an adverse effect on the refugee population who receive Medicaid benefits upon resettlement, creating unnecessary complications for families who are affected by chronic illnesses that require frequent medical care. This project investigated how the Medicaid bus pass system in Chittenden County is working for refugees and explored potential solutions to these new challenges presented by the change. After conducting extensive background research and interviewing key stakeholders, the project group identified and analyzed a range of policy options, which included creating a web-based scheduling portal for Medicaid transportation and creating a feedback loop to improve the system, among others. This also project provided plans for immediate, short-term,

and long-term action to resolve the transportation challenges faced by Medicaid recipients that incorporates these policy options.

### **Vermont Refugee Mobility: Overcoming Challenges to Obtaining Driver's Licenses and Accessing CarShare Vermont (2013)**

By Ben Carlson, Rachel Hanish, Julie Paris, and Brad Patnaude

Refugee communities face several barriers to car ownership, and overcoming language barriers and acquiring sufficient training to obtain a driver's license represent the biggest challenges. DMV assistance programs and nonprofits can help refugee and immigrant communities overcome these barriers towards car ownership and accessing programs like CarShare Vermont. This project surveys DMV language assistance programs and nonprofit programs in 45 states to assess current practices and trends across the U.S. The survey's findings show that current DMV assistance programs in Chittenden County are not sufficient enough to meet the mobility needs of the refugee population. Recommendations include providing translated driver manuals and offering the written portion of the licensing test in languages besides English.

### **The Resettled Refugee Population in Vermont: Public Transportation Orientation and Accessibility (2014)**

By Ann Hoogenboom, Chad Cosgrove, and Sara Chesbrough

This project examined several transportation workshop programs from across the country as potential models for addressing refugee mobility issues in Chittenden County. This project also identifies potential strategies to close the gap between existing transportation services and the level of use by refugee populations. These strategies include the following: (1) surveying clients and service providers to evaluate the effectiveness of transportation services, (2) facilitating community workshops to inform refugee communities of the full range of transportation options of transportation options, and (3) develop a system of transportation mentors to build upon and reinforce the topics covered in the workshops. See the full report for a more detailed account of the project's recommendations.

### **Get There! By 5 Survey: 2014 Mobility Issues in Chittenden County (2014)**

By Shanai Herber, Brady Hoffman, and Pam Smith

This group developed a survey to gather data that supports the anecdotal evidence surrounding transportation difficulties for low income and refugee families with young children. Initial surveying revealed many individuals and families are indeed highly dependent on public transportation to meet their childcare needs. Data collection and analysis is currently ongoing. The outcome of this project will hopefully allow the Get There! Transportation Group, a network of community stakeholders, to use the survey results to acquire funding for transportation assistance for this specific demographic.

## **Building a Toolkit: Mitigating Transportation Barriers for New Americans in Chittenden County, Vermont (2014)**

By Jordan Posner, David Volain, and Alexandra Zipparo

This project develops a framework for transportation toolkits for resettled refugees, as well as service providers and planners. A toolkit for refugees includes a series of transportation workshops and a comprehensive list of transportation options and services available in Chittenden County. This toolkit would allow for refugees to better utilize the transportation services available to them and reduce transportation barriers. A toolkit for service providers and planners is designed to inform the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, city officials, and other community stakeholders of the gaps that exist in transportation services for resettled refugees. With these perspectives taken into account, this second toolkit would allow community stakeholders to identify and develop a more practical system of transportation services to address the challenges related to refugee mobility

