Transportation is a factor that everyone has to face when navigating their way to work, school or recreation. Figuring out which method of transportation to use, the expense involved, the effort involved in using it and the availability of it, are all aspects that are considered. For some, transportation options are plentiful and for many, transportation options are scarce. The barriers vary from no household car, lack of public transportation, safety, and not having funds to use the public transportation systems in our communities. Whether it is getting to school, the mall or to just hang out with friends, youth have to navigate these options each day. This issue carries over into their young adult life. Transportation is needed to get to and from work, the classroom and any other activity that youth are involved in. In this article we will discuss some of the transportation barriers that youth face and we will provide ideas on how your organization can help.

The uniqueness of Youthbuild programs can cause all sorts of travel issues for its participants. The programs located in the inner-city have issues such as traffic, insufficient parking, safety, and poverty. The rural and suburban youth do not have as many outlets to public transportation and still have the same attendance requirements without having as many options. If a young person has to desire to participate in the program, eliminating transportation as a barrier is critical. By overcoming this barrier, additional opportunities for jobs, school and other leadership opportunities become available to them. The youth that participate in these programs often do not have many resources at their disposal. Some of those resources that are available are public transportation, personal bike usage, and getting rides from family or friends. Although, those options do help but tend to pose other problems; public transportation can be costly, riding a bike can be dangerous and not everyone has one and relying on other people for a ride can cause all sorts of delays.

There can be several different transportation barriers that could potentially impede a youth’s progression. This could cause youth to be late, miss training, class, or an interview, or a day at work. One of the major barriers is cost of public transportation. Many of the youth participants are low income and usually do not have the family income to support their transportation needs. The stipend they receive for participating is often not sufficient to cover their transportation costs and other living expenses. Another example of a barrier is the lack of adequate transportation within the programs area. In the inner cities there is a wealth of public transportation options, but move farther out to the suburbs and rural areas and it is a different story. In most places public transportation does not reach out that far and if it does it is scarce. Living outside the city, options are limited to your own personal transportation, trying to work around a staggered public transportation schedule or walking. Having reliable and affordable transportation options is key to the youth’s success.
There are several things your organization can do to connect participants to transportation options. Examples include:

- **Start a Bus Pass or Token Program**- establishing a partnership with the local public transportation authority for free or reduced fair passes can go a long way in enabling the youth to be able to reduce some of their cost in purchasing passes. The agency can also purchase tokens in bulk and provide a designated amount each week to participants to get them to and from training and the work site.

- **Purchase Cab Vouchers**- this can be more costly than the bus pass program but maybe an avenue to explore. Deeply-routed community cab companies usually have reduced rate cab vouchers available for purchase. Partnering with one and asking that they donate some vouchers is also an idea.

- **Car and Van Donation Centers**- most communities have organizations that collect or receive donated vehicles from people. Getting a vehicle donated to the organization allows you to transport the youth to and from the center and work site.

- **Reach out to local shuttle services**- some local shuttle services may be willing to provide a one-time pick and drop off of students to and from the work site. This possibility could work as it would be good public relations for the company.

- **Create or partner with a used bike program**- reach out to your community to solicit bikes to be donated to your organization. Visit the bike repair shops and local flea markets for good deals or possible donations. Another option is to contact the Bikes Not Bombs program in your community. Bikes Not Bombs programs are bike recycling centers and at these locations a person can donate an old bike and it will be repaired and then a participant can either purchase it or earn the bike after achieving a certain level of participation at the program. Check out this link to a [community bike program locator](#).

- **Partner with another local non-profit**- research other non-profits in your area that may have a van and establish a partnership with them to transport the participants.

- **Start a ride share program**- communities across the country offer these type of ride sharing or carpooling services. It may be possible to provide the designated person with a weekly gas card to re-fuel their vehicle.

- **Mobility Services**- Contact your local public transit system to learn about their mobility services for individuals with disabilities.
Some of the resources mentioned may require establishing partnerships. With any partnership comes advantage and disadvantages. These include:

**Advantages**
- Having transportation at your disposal so you can get participants to and from the work site or training.
- Being able to reduce some of the costs that youth may incur purchasing bus passes and tokens.
- Provide a safe method of transportation for the youth to their destinations.
- You can alleviate the burden of students having access to get to the center or work site.
- It can boost your performance measurements, including attendance, retention and overall learning levels.
- Expand your partnerships and community collaboration.

**Disadvantages**
- Managing the partnership.
- Relying on the partnering program to maintain timeliness.
- Liability of transporting participants.
- Accessibility – devising a schedule that works for everyone involved.
- Trouble establishing the designated partnership lead.

Although transportation can be a major barrier to participants, there are solutions. Between what the youth can do for themselves, the ways programs can assist, and the types of services available in the community, there are options. Consider creating a partnership with one if the identified resources or strategize today and create your own solution!