

Alternative Transportation Options

by Kailan Bergstrom

Staying socially engaged, cognitively stimulated, and physically active are three key recommendations for supporting brain health and overall well-being. If you don't drive, however, getting out in the community can feel like a challenge. Fortunately, there are some alternative transportation options available in many areas.

As with any new habit, getting the hang of alternative travel takes time. It's great to start developing new strategies for getting around and building those routines into your procedural memory. Whether you want to plan ahead, or you've been looking for options for a while, here are some tips for you or your loved one with dementia.

For individuals with mild cognitive impairment or early-stage dementia, riding the bus may be an option. King County Metro offers free one-on-one transit instruction for older adults and people with disabilities. They can train you on a particular route you want to learn or on how to use the bus system in general. They will keep working with you at your own pace until you feel ready to travel independently. Many transit agencies provide this type of service, such as Community Transit serving Snohomish County and Pierce Transit serving Pierce County.

When navigating a bus route becomes too challenging or the bus stop is too far to get to safely, people living in King County have the option of applying for Access. This program is King County's ADA Paratransit program and is operated by King County Metro. Access provides door-to-door service to get you where you need to go within a ¾ mile range of an existing regular metro bus route. For people living in certain rural parts of the county with no regular bus service, Access has extended service through the help of local community funds.

Access can also provide an additional level of service called Hand-to-Hand, for those who cannot safely be left alone and are deemed eligible. With this service, Access will pick you up from your caregiver or loved one and hand you off to the person ready to meet you at your destination. This can be a great option for those who need a little extra support to make sure they get where they are going and home again safely.

In some neighborhoods of King County, there is also the Hyde Shuttle. Operated by the non-profit Sound Generations, the Hyde Shuttle is a free community shuttle that helps older adults and people with disabilities travel throughout their neighborhood.

Ride hailing options such as Uber and Lyft have also become popular options for getting around. If the rider doesn't have a smartphone, there are some other options for requesting rides. Uber and Lyft both have options to request a ride on behalf of a loved one. For an extra fee, a company called GoGo Grandparent helps older adults book rides themselves on Lyft or Uber over the phone without needing a smartphone.

Many people also get around through the support of local volunteer organizations, community groups, and family and friends. One example of community-based support for people aging in place is the Village to Village Network.



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These “villages” are part of a world-wide movement to encourage intergenerational interdependence and support people as we age in place. They are membership-driven, grassroots and nonprofit organizations that provide volunteer and discounted services to older adults in neighborhood regions. There are currently 13 established villages across Washington state.

Local officials are taking notice of the importance of transportation for older adults and people with dementia. In 2017, the Seattle City Council and the Seattle Mayor adopted a resolution to become an Age Friendly Community. This designation, based on the 8 Domains of Livability defined by the World Health Organization, understands transportation as one of the crucial elements in a community that is livable for all ages. With more attention being paid to the need for safe and reliable transportation we hope to see more options as time goes on. •

- King County Transit Instruction: (206) 749-4242 or <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/transportation/metro/travel-options/accessible/programs/accessible-bus/transit-instruction.aspx>
- Hyde Shuttle: (206) 727-6262 or <https://soundgenerations.org/our-programs/transportation/hyde-shuttle/>
- GoGo Grandparent: (855) 464-6872 or <https://gogograndparent.com/>
- Washington Community Living Connections: 1 (855) 567-0252 or <https://washingtoncommunitylivingconnections.org/consite/connect/>
- Community Transit <https://www.communitytransit.org/>
- Pierce Transit serving Pierce County <https://www.piercetransit.org/about-pierce-transit/>