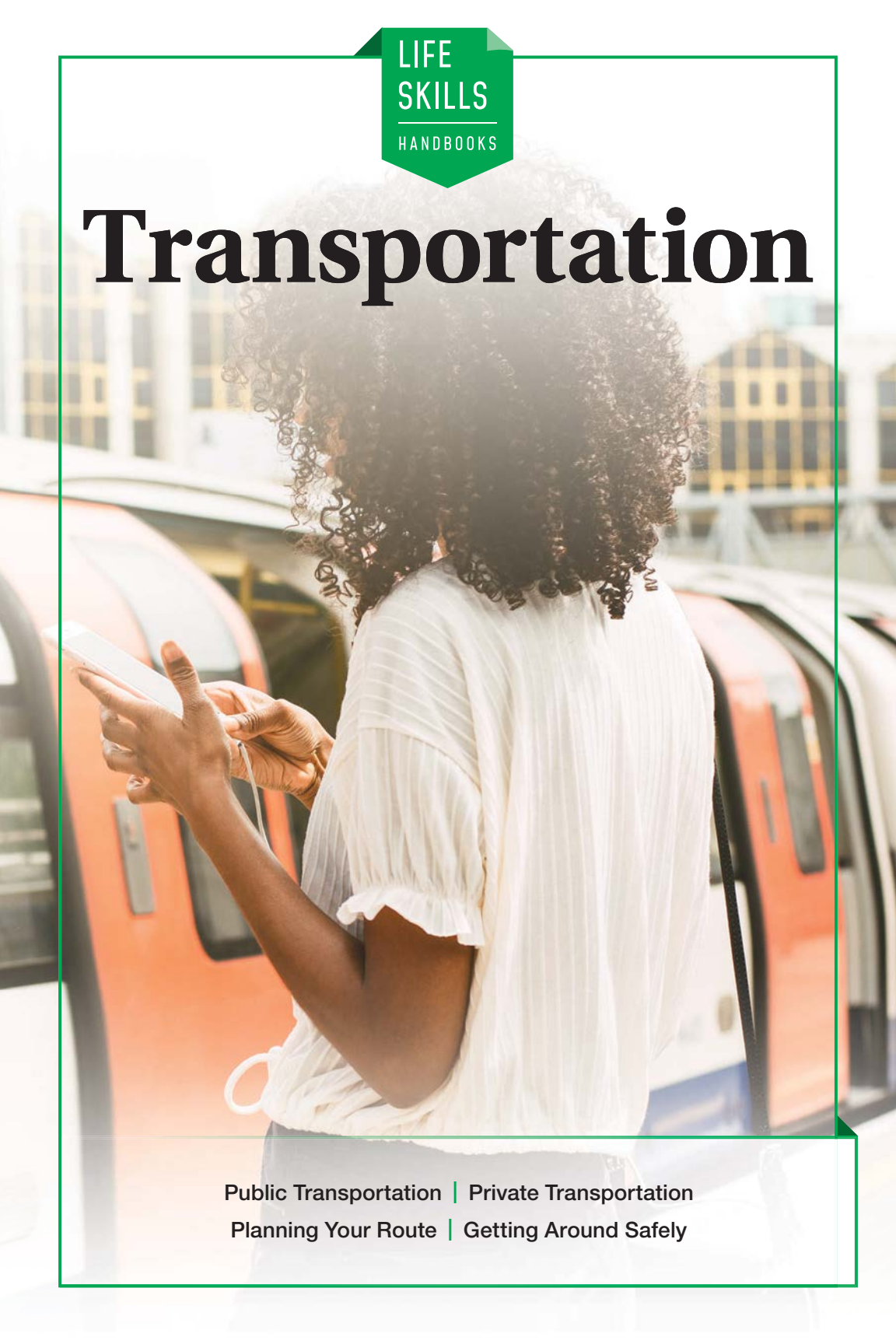
LIFE SKILLS
HANDBOOKS

Transportation

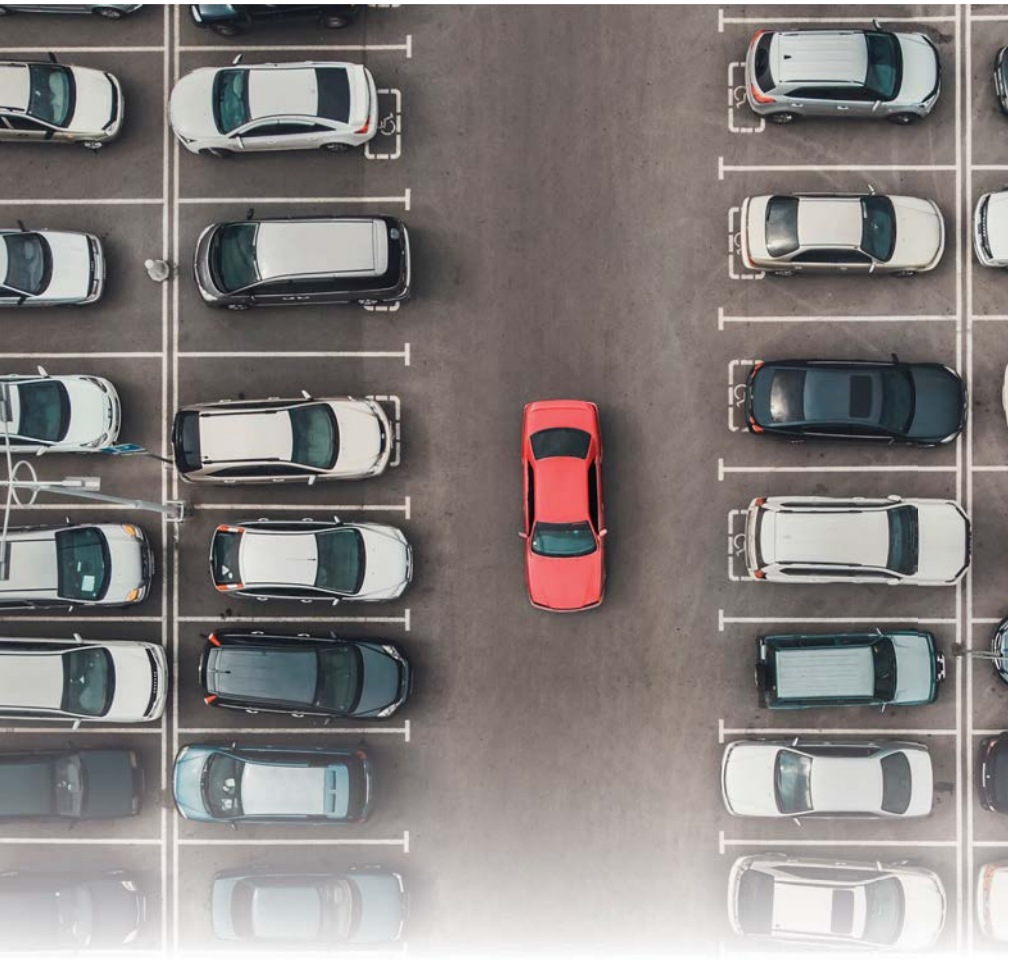


Public Transportation | Private Transportation
Planning Your Route | Getting Around Safely

SECTION 1

Public Transportation

How to get to and from work or school is a decision most people make daily. Depending on where you live, you might have several transportation options. You could drive, walk, ride your bike, or take a bus. Another option may be to share a ride with fellow students or coworkers. When making your choice, it's important to consider not only **convenience** and cost but safety too.



Making the Daily Commute

Andy has lived in the city all his life and never owned a car. He really doesn't want a car, even though he could now afford one. First of all, where would he park it? His neighbor Sarah owns a car. She has to get up early every morning to move it. Sometimes, Sarah drives around for over 15 minutes looking for a new place to park. On weekends, she finds it almost impossible to get a spot within a block of the apartment.

Sarah often jokes that parking her car far away is how she gets her daily exercise. Not moving it in the mornings would mean getting an expensive ticket. The parking restrictions in the neighborhood are tough.

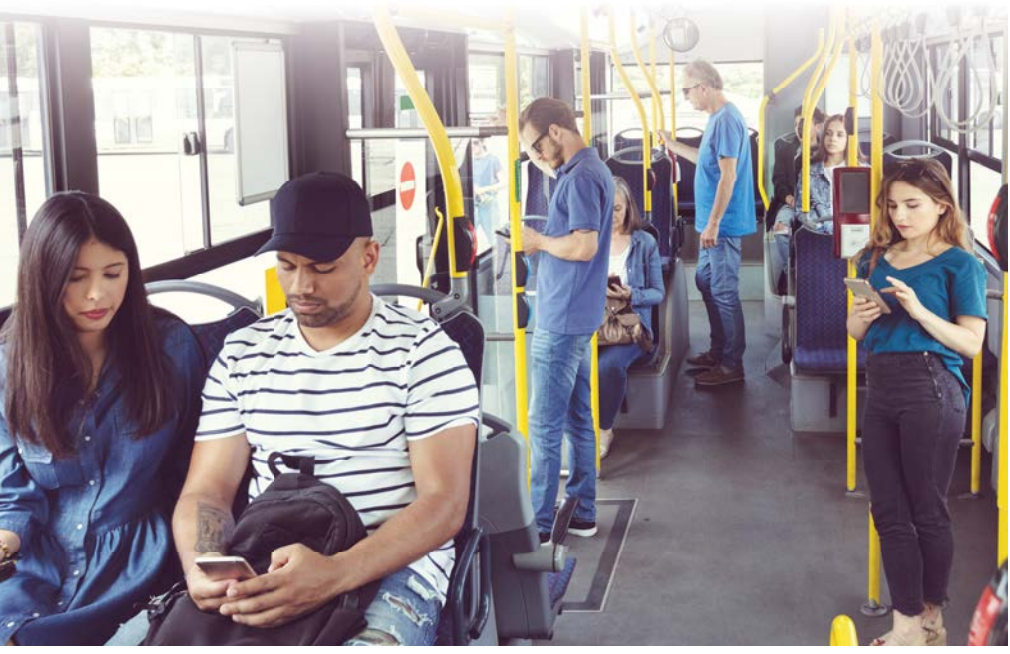
Second, Andy doesn't really need a car. The office where he works is across the city. It's easy to get there by bus or the subway. During his **commute**, Andy is usually able to fit in some reading too.

Chapter 1

The Benefits of Public Transportation

Public transportation is important to millions of Americans. It helps them not only get to school and work, but it also connects them to friends, family, and opportunities. In 2019, people in the U.S. took nearly ten billion trips on **public transit** systems.

Using public transportation also saves people money. By selling one of their cars and using public transit, a household could save around $10,000. Getting a yearly bus or train pass can cut down expenses even more.



Taking the bus or other public transportation saves lives too. The American Public Transportation Association did a study. It found that using public transportation is ten times safer per mile than traveling by car.

Public transportation is a green option as well. Around 4.2 billion gallons of gas are saved each year by people using public transit. Studies also show that carbon **emissions** can be lowered by 37 million metric tons a year by investing in public transit systems.

Early Mass Transit

Public transportation in the United States dates back to the early 19th century. Back then, several horse-drawn forms of mass transit operated in New York City:

- Large stagecoaches called omnibuses ran regular routes. Some could hold up to 42 passengers. A driver knew when to stop to let passengers off when someone pulled a strap on his ankle.
- Streetcars were pulled along a track sunk into the road. They held more people than omnibuses and provided a smoother ride. Passengers got their driver to stop by ringing a bell.

Horse-drawn forms of mass transit faced several problems. The horses were slow and had trouble climbing hills. Pulling the coaches was so hard that most horses could only work for a few years. City streets were also left covered with manure. In 1872, an outbreak of the horse flu killed many of the animals used for public transportation in New York City. This unfortunate event showed city leaders that they could not rely on just one form of public transportation.

The United States' first public bus service started in 1905. Today, buses are one of the most popular types of mass transit for city dwellers. Many cities also offer some type of train or rail transportation. Elevated rail lines (often called el trains) and subways carry passengers on electric-powered trains. Subways are trains that run beneath street level. El trains run on tracks that are above street level.

Types of Public Transportation

Most cities in the U.S. offer a variety of public transportation, including:

- buses
- light rail
- subways
- commuter trains
- streetcars and trolleys
- cable cars
- ferries and water taxis
- paratransit services
- monorails and tramways

Elevated trains and subways became popular in the latter half of the 1800s. Large cities grew fast. This made traffic a huge problem on city streets. Transporting people above the streets and below the ground was a solution. In 1871, the first elevated train system in the United States ran in New York. The first subway opened in Boston in 1897.

Another type of railway is light rail transit (LRT). It also operates using electricity. The power is usually provided by an overhead electrical line. LRTs often run on tracks in the middle of a street or beside a street. They may have one car or several cars and carry up to several hundred people per trip. LRT is seen by many as a clean, modern form of mass transit.

Over the years, LRT systems have replaced streetcars, trolleys, and trams in many cities. In 1981, San Diego, California, became the first U.S. city to have light rail. Since then, many U.S. cities have built LRT systems.

In rural areas and areas with low demand for public transportation, demand-responsive transit (DRT) systems are sometimes available. DRTs allow people to call for or book rides when needed. They are somewhat like a rideshare but on a larger scale.