



## **Village Letter from President Sorgatz Regarding Migrant Buses**

On December 30, 2023, one bus transporting migrants arrived from Texas at Winfield's Metra station to board a train into Chicago. This has raised some questions in our community. The Village's primary concern is for the health and safety of our residents, and anyone – including migrants and their families – who pass through our community.

As you may be aware, the City of Chicago recently adopted an ordinance requiring a "structure" with respect to how buses transporting migrants arrive in Chicago, including requiring advance notice, specifying the hours when buses will be accepted and setting a limit of two buses per hour. As a result, the Governor of Texas has redirected these buses to suburban train stations to facilitate migrant transportation to the Ogilvie Transportation Center in Chicago.

Buses have arrived without notice in many Chicagoland communities, including DuPage County. According to the DuPage County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (OHSEM), 72 buses transporting 2,988 passengers have arrived at DuPage County stations since December 14, 2023. These buses generally carry 30 to 50 passengers. Each bus arriving in DuPage County has been staffed with a bus company "handler" to provide Metra tickets and assist the boarding process.

In Winfield, the one arriving bus carried approximately 35 passengers. Fewer than five were met by private automobiles and transported by friends or families to other locations, with the remaining passengers boarding a train to Chicago.

### **The Village Response**

The Winfield Police Department has increased its monitoring of the area around the Metra station to help ensure officers are aware of an arriving bus and can facilitate the safe and orderly transport of passengers to their destination in Chicago. The Village has expended very few resources on this matter, and no incidents have been reported in connection to any of the DuPage County drop-offs that would indicate a threat to resident safety.

Although a small number of communities have adopted emergency ordinances requiring bus companies to provide advance notice, I believe such an ordinance is not necessary at this time and may in fact cause unintended consequences. Just as Chicago's ordinance resulted in buses being directed to the suburbs, a Winfield ordinance may result in buses discharging their passengers further from the Winfield Metra station and being told to walk to the station. It does not serve our residents or migrant families for them to walk through unfamiliar settings in dangerously cold weather and potentially miss their train to the city.

I am grateful to our concerned residents who have expressed a desire to offer support. The current plan is for migrant passengers to remain on their buses until the train arrives, so they do not have to wait on the platform before boarding. Government and nonprofit officials have also advised that the passengers should not acquire additional belongings to take onto trains. Rather, their needs will be best accommodated upon reaching the centralized welcome center in Chicago.

OSHEM and the City of Chicago ask anyone wishing to assist migrants with food, clothing or household items to visit:

<https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/texas-new-arrivals/home/donations.html>

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I appreciate the community's concern and caring as we continue to monitor and respond to this issue. If circumstances change, we will adapt as needed in close coordination with other local, county and state governments. I assure all Winfield residents we are prepared to take whatever steps are necessary to protect the health and safety of our community. In the event of any significant changes, information will be posted on the Village's website and social media.

Sincerely,

Carl Sorgatz  
Village President