

## **Transportation**

Transportation is essential to working or going to school and is a necessity in maintaining contact with the community. For many people with spinal cord injury, the best means of transport is by automobile since bus, subway, and rail is often inaccessible (though public transportation in many areas of the country is becoming more accessible). An automobile is safe, comfortable and usually reliable. A key to the rehabilitation of any person with a spinal cord injury is the development of transportation options that satisfy the needs of the person.

### **MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATION**

#### **Driver Evaluation and Training**

Depending on the level of injury, nearly all persons with spinal cord injury can drive their own automobile. People with good, functional upper extremities can drive a hand-controlled vehicle with ease and safety. Those with limited use of their upper extremities can also be good drivers using power assisted adaptive controls in motor vehicles.

When traveling by automobile, position your body comfortably and securely in the seat. Remember to stop periodically on long trips for weight shifts (pressure relief). Bring a supply of food, water, or some kind of liquid with you in the automobile. Always keep an emergency medical supply in the vehicle. Installing a cellular car phone or CB radio is advisable, as well as a special seat cushion (sheepskin) to avoid skin problems.

The Connecticut State Department of Motor Vehicles provides free driver training for person with disabilities. For further information, contact:

Connecticut State Department of Motor Vehicles  
Driver Services Division  
60 State St.  
Room 1093  
Wethersfield, CT 06161  
860 566-1690

In addition, there are other settings that provide driver assessments for persons with disabilities. Driving assessments use standardized measures and devices that can include Driving Simulators to test abilities in vision, strength, dexterity, reaction time, and cognitive and perceptual skills. The actual on the road assessment utilize vehicles equipped with hand controls, specialized equipment, and an instructor's brake. For further information contact:

## **Driving Assessment Service**

Gaylord Hospital  
Box 400  
Wallingford, CT 06492  
(800) 64-REHAB x2820  
FAX:(203) 284-2813

Easter Seals Mobility Center  
158 State Street  
Meriden, CT 06450-0182  
(203) 237-7835 (203) 237-9187  
FAX: (203) 237-9187

Automobile Club of Hartford  
Driver Services Department  
815 Farmington Ave  
West Hartford, CT 06119  
570-4235

A limited number of commercial driving schools offer driver training with hand controls and/or appropriate equipment. A physician's statement may be required to initiate lessons. Refer to the Yellow Pages of your telephone directory to identify driving schools offering this service.

## **Licensing, Plates, and Privileges**

In Connecticut, persons with disabilities wishing to obtain a driver's license must first obtain medical clearance through their physician. Forms for this purpose are available through the Connecticut State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

The DMV Handicapped Driver Training Section offers specially equipped vehicles and staff instructors to assist people with disabilities in becoming familiar with adapted driving equipment. There is no fee for becoming familiar with adapted driving equipment. The fees for testing and licensing are the same as those for all other drivers in Connecticut.

Handicapped plates are provided based on the physician verification of a significant disabling condition. Information is available through the Department of Motor Vehicles.

If an individual with a disability does not drive, parking cards are available for use in vehicles transporting the disabled person. Pending physician verification of a severe and/or permanent physical impairment, these cards may be obtained from the Handicapped Parking Permit Section of DMV (860) 263-5703 or (860) 263-5154 or any DMV office.

## **Hand Controls**

There is a wide variety of adaptive driving equipment on the market with many differences in safety, reliability, design, and price. The type of equipment needed is dependent on

the strength and abilities of the driver. Since each person has unique requirements, it is extremely important to obtain the correct equipment. Seek the advice of people experienced in the field of handicapped driving equipment before buying any piece of adaptive driving equipment.

### **Common Types of Hand Controls**

#### Push-Pull (push for brake, pull to accelerate)

*Disadvantage:* can either accelerate or brake but not both simultaneously, which is needed when the vehicle is at a stop on an incline. Also, this type of hand control requires functional grip.

#### Push and Twist (push for brake, twist to accelerate)

*Advantage:* Can accelerate and brake simultaneously.

*Disadvantage:* Can not be used by people with limitation in wrist rotation or less than good grasp.

#### Push and Right Angle (push for brake, accelerate at right angle)

*Advantage:* Any person needing hand controls can use this type of device. Push and right angle hand controls are the most sophisticated.

*Disadvantage:* Compared to the other common types of hand controls, the Push and right angle type of hand control is the hardest system to learn.

### **Distributors & Installers of Driving Equipment for Cars and Vans**

#### **CUSTOM COACH COMPANY**

2211 Meriden-Waterbury Road  
Meriden, CT 06444  
860 621-7645 or 203 621-5514

#### **EAST COAST VANS**

148 Richard Court  
Newington, CT 06111  
860 666-2971

#### **ADVANCED WHEELS OF TECHNOLOGY, INC.**

15-F International Drive  
P.O. Box 908  
East Granby, CT 06026  
877-WHEELS3 877-943-3573  
860-653-8064  
860-653-4331 (FAX)

#### **RIDE AWAY HANDICAPPED EQUIPMENT CORP.**

104 Pitkin St.  
East Hartford, CT 06108

860-282-8202  
888-495-9555  
860-282-8163 (FAX)

249 East Washington Street  
North Attleboro, MA 02760  
888-868-0009

51 Wentworth Ave  
Londonderry, NH 03053  
888-743-3292

### **Funding Sources**

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) will often pay for driver training evaluations; lessons and adaptive equipment when the driver is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services and when the need is do to vocational objectives (i.e., vocational training, school, or work). Ask for more driving information at your local BRS office:

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)  
1-800-537-2549

In addition, some private insurance companies will also pay for evaluation, training and equipment. Also, the Veteran Administration will fully fund motor vehicle adaptations pertinent to a service connected disability.

## **PURCHASE OR RENTAL OF MOTOR VEHICLES**

### **Guidelines on Buying an Automobile**

\*\*\*The following are features recommended when purchasing a vehicle:

:

- 2-door sedan for wheelchair user (wider doors, no center post)
- Service available in most towns
- Intermediate or standard sized vehicle
- Comfortable seats and interior
- Maximum visibility form driver's seat
- Power brakes
- Power steering
- Power windows
- Power seats
- Power locks
- Tilt steering column

- Good safety harness
- Adjustable split seat; enough room between back and front seat, when seat is forward to permit wheelchair to enter when folded, and enough space between back of front seat when it is all the way back to contain a wheelchair transit.
- Seat height should be approximately the same height as the wheelchair seat to make transferring easier.
- Side and rear view mirrors
- Air conditioning
- Front wheel drive
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- \*\*\*Modification or equipment that can be installed:
  - Dimmer switch on dashboard, turn indicator lever, or steering wheel
  - Hand controls
  - Swing away or removable headrests to permit throwing left arm over back of seat to load wheelchair
  - Hand operated emergency brake
  - Hand operated clutch
  - Transfer hand grips

\*\*\*The location of the adaptive equipment should not interfere with the operation of the vehicle by an able bodied person.

### **Information on Purchasing Vans**

Many quadriplegics find it difficult to transfer to and from an automobile. Some quadriplegics find it easier to drive a van from their wheelchair, using an automatic lift or ramp to get in and out of the van. There are numerous other companies throughout the United States that convert and/or service vans for persons with disabilities. In some cases the cost of modifications to van or car may be less. Before making a commitment to long distance installation of adaptive driving controls or vehicle modification, consider the ramification of obtaining service for this equipment. Many local companies may either not repair equipment installed by other suppliers.

### **Funding Sources for Automobiles or Vans**

Until there is completely accessible public transportation, the need for an automobile or van with a lift is important part of a person's independence and total integration into society.

For most people, this can be another unforeseen financial burden. The following are some suggestions from people that may be able to assist, in whole or partially, with the financing of an automobile or van.

To raise money, try contacting:

1. Family members, friends, or neighbors to have a block party to raise money. Police and town officials can be of help with this.
2. Local women's Clubs, Jaycees, B'nai B'rith, Knights of Columbus, and Church groups.
3. Foundations: Food Foundation, Carnegie Foundation (use your local library to find the names of other funding sources).
4. The Adaptive Equipment Act.
5. For persons with service-connected disabilities contact the Veterans Administration.

### **Auto Insurance**

Many insurance companies will insure drivers with disabilities without putting them in an assigned risk category. For further information, contact your local insurance agent, some larger insurance companies, or the State of Connecticut Commissioner of Insurance.

### **Rental of Automobiles or Vans**

To rent automobiles with hand controls make reservations by phoning the national toll-free telephone numbers listed below. Advanced planning is essential as each rental agency has different requirements and all companies have a limited numbers of cars with hand controls available. In addition, they may not be available at all locations. Be sure to be explicit about your limitation and subsequent needs.

***NATIONAL CAR RENTAL*** - To make reservations, call at least 72 hours in advance. All vehicles are left-hand controlled. There is no deposit required and no extra charge for the equipment. National Car Rental also offers TDD reservation service and cars equipped with special mirrors for the persons who are hearing impaired. The National Car Rental reservation number is 1-800-CAR-RENT and the TDD number is 1-800-328-6323.

***AVIS RENT A CAR*** - Reservations should be made at least 24 hours in advance. Avis has left and right hand controls. There is no extra charge for the equipment and no deposit required with a credit card. Avis's reservation number is 1-800-331-1212.

***HERTZ RENT A CAR*** - To rent a vehicle, make reservations five days in advance and return the car to the same rental location. Hertz has left and right hand controls. There is no extra charge for the equipment. There is no deposit required with a credit card. A \$25 deposit is required without a credit card. Hertz has TDD reservation service and special mirrors for the hearing impaired. The Hertz reservation number is 1-800-654-3131 and the TDD number is 1-800-654-2280.

There are various accessible van rental locations located around the country. The following are some available for the general public:

Wheelchair Getaways (available Nationwide)

Corporate Headquarters: [wheelchair-getaways.com](http://wheelchair-getaways.com)  
800-456-1371  
[sgatawood@aol.com](mailto:sgatawood@aol.com)

Airport Leasing, Inc.: 15 F International Drive, East Granby, Ct 06026  
860-653-6093 or 888-334-7981  
[vanrental@awtwheels.com](mailto:vanrental@awtwheels.com)

## **OTHER TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES**

ABLEDATA Database <http://www.abledate.com/index.htm> (800) 227-0216

Access Unlimited <http://www.accessunlimited.com> (800) 849-2143

ABED - Association of Driver Education for the Disabled P.O. Box 49, Edgerton, WI 53534 (608) 884-8833

Disabled Dealer [www.blvd.com/ddm](http://www.blvd.com/ddm)

National Mobility Equipment Dealer's Assoc. - NEMEDA 909 E. Skagway Avenue, Tampa, FL 33604 (800) 833-0427

The following automobile dealers offer rebates on the installation of adaptive equipment for their vehicles:

Chrysler Crop Auto mobility Program (800) 255-9877 Ford Mobility Motoring Program (800) 952-2248

General Motors Mobility Program (800) 323-9935

## **OTHER TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

### **Public Transportation**

Federal law requires that providers of mass transit services who receive federal financial assistance must certify that they provide people with disabilities full and equal access to the same services and accommodations as persons without disabilities. One of those services is public

transportation. The U.S. Department of Transportation's Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA), the funding source, allows local areas to select one of a few acceptable options to meet that requirement. These options allow:

1. The operators to ensure that at least 50% of the fixed route buses running during service hours are lift equipped.
2. The operator to establish a Paratransit or special system which is known as "door-to door" or "dial a ride", on a demand responsive basis.
3. The operator may establish service that is a combination of the other two options listed (1 and 2). Whenever a special service is employed, that service, as a whole must meet certain criteria of comparability with the service available to able-bodied persons.

Anyone who would like to use the ADA Paratransit service, must be certified ADA Paratransit eligible. Information and/or an application can be obtained by contacting:

The Central Connecticut Paratransit Service office  
225 North Main St., Suite 304  
Bristol, CT 06010-4993  
860-589-7820 or 860 224-9888.  
FAX/TDD 860-589-6950  
WEB - SITE - [www.ccrpa.org](http://www.ccrpa.org)  
E - MAIL - [ccrpampo@ct1.nai.net](mailto:ccrpampo@ct1.nai.net)

#### ADDITIONAL SERVICES AVAILABLE:

BRISTOL: Bristol Community Organization (BCO) Dial-A-Ride - 860-589-6968  
Monday through Friday 8:30 A.M. to 2:45 P.M. They prioritize medical trips. Rides are free, donations are accepted. (Contact - Judith Grenier)

BERLIN: Senior Center Dial-A-Ride - 860-828-7006  
24-hour notice required, 48-hour notice required for people using wheelchairs. For 1 way trip'in Berlin -50 cents one way. The will go to New Britain for medical trips only. Cost \$1.00 round trip. (Contact - Ellen Rukowicz)

PLAINVILLE: The Senior Center-860-589-6968 provides rides for members in conjunction with Bristol Community Organization. (Contact - Shawn Cohen)

NEW BRITAIN: The Senior Center - 860-826-3555  
Monday through Friday 8:30 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. Rides are provided for seniors age 60+ and persons with disabilities age 55+. Rides are prioritized as follows: 1. Medical/Dental; 2. Weekly Grocery Shopping; 3. Trips to Senior Center; 4. Personal Appointments; 5. Seasonal & Special Group Tours. Cost \$ 1.00 a trip. (Contact - Dennis Oakes)

PLYMOUTH: Dial-A-Ride (860)283-0060

Available to elderly and disabled persons around Plymouth and other towns. Disabled persons continue to receive top priority as well as those in need of medical care. Service available Monday & Tuesday 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. Wednesday to Friday 9:30 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. and Sunday 8:00 A.M. to 11:00 P.M. for church services. Service is free. (Contact - John Sorbo)

SOUTHINGTON: The Employment Development Center (EDC) -860-620-5166  
Provides "Access Shuttle Service" for the elderly and disabled residents for \$2.50. ID Card is required for trips which can be obtained at the - - - -. Service available Monday through Friday 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. Service operates in concert with United Way (860-628-4565) (Contact- Jeane Benny.

#### LOCAL TAXI:

Bristol Taxi: 860-582-2885

Burlington Taxi: 860-582-1899

CWS: 860-793-3400 (Plainville area)

Town & Country Taxi - 860-224-9032 (New Britain) Southington Taxi - 860-628-6321

If your transit provider discriminates against you, ask your operator for a copy of the UMTA certification. Check the UMTA certification with the State Office of Protection and Advocacy for Person with Disabilities 1-800-842-7303.

Many cities and towns, as well as some non-profit agencies operate special services for persons who are elderly or disabled. Most non-profit agencies limit the use of their special services to medical or shopping trips for which modest fees are charged. To obtain information on service available in your area visit your town or city hall or contact the local regional planning agency listed below and on the next page.

REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCIES:

Capitol Regional Council of Governments  
241 Main Street  
Hartford, CT 06106  
(860) 522-2217

The Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency  
225 North Main Street  
Bristol, CT 06010  
(860) 589-7820

Central Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments  
20 East Main Street  
Waterbury, CT 06702  
(203) 757-0535

Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning agency  
525 Water Street  
Bridgeport, CT 06604  
(203) 366-5405

Mid-State Regional Planning Agency  
P.O. Box 139  
Middletown, CT 06457  
(860) 347-7214

Northeastern CT Council of Government  
P.O. Box 759  
125 Putnam Pike  
Dayville, CT 06241  
(860) 774-1253

Northwestern CT Council of Government  
17 Sackett Hill Road  
Warren, CT 06754  
(860) 868-7341

Southwestern CT Regional Planning Agency  
1 Selleck Street  
East Norwalk, CT 06855  
(203) 866-5543

Valley Regional Planning Agency  
12 Main Street, Derby Railroad Station  
Derby, CT 06418  
(203) 735-8688

Windham Region Council of Governments  
968 Main Street  
Willimantic, CT 06226  
(860) 456-2221

### **Private Transportation**

Private livery services operate in some parts of the state. Many are available for long distance as well as local trips. A list of these services is in the Yellow Pages of your telephone directory under Wheelchair and Invalid Transportation. Call for fee schedules.

### **The 16(b) (2) Program**

The Federal Government, through the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation, will provide 80% of the cost of purchasing a special vehicle for persons with disabilities with 20% of the balance of the cost provided by the sponsoring private non-profit corporation. The 20% balance must be paid in cash before actual receipt of the vehicle. This applies only to private non-profit organization and is not available to individuals. But, you as an individual can influence local organizations to obtain accessible vehicles (i.e., vans). These vehicles transport the elderly and persons with disabilities where mass transportation services are unavailable, insufficient or inappropriate. For further information about the 16(b) (2) program, contact the U.S. Department of Transportation.