



## **Transportation Issue Brief: Transportation for All: What about Taxis?**

### **Lack of Accessible Taxis Slows Economy, Hurts Many**

Over 250,000 Connecticut residents have a physical disability. These residents have jobs, families, classes, meetings, travel plans, and other activities that keep them on the move. They need transportation, including taxicabs, to help them get where they are going. Think about it: thousands of fares just waiting to give you their business!

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is civil rights legislation that guarantees people with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in society. This opportunity is not fully realized, however, due to a lack of accessible, affordable, and reliable transportation. By increasing accessible transportation options, more individuals with disabilities will have what they need to become more independent and productive members of society.

### **Barriers in Connecticut's Transportation System**

Public transportation services are available for people who cannot or choose not to drive because of a disability. These services include fixed route bus service and rail/train services. There is also ADA paratransit services for people who are unable to use the bus as long as the origin and destination are within  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile of a fixed route bus route. However, people with disabilities who do not meet these requirements, are home-bound and isolated. **Those who use wheelchairs do not have the option of taxi services because there are NO accessible taxis in the state of Connecticut.**

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services' Connect to Work Center, in the Department of Social Services, received a grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to support the competitive employment of people with disabilities, facilitate enhancements to the State Medicaid program and services, to promote linkages between Medicaid and other employment-related service agencies, and to develop a comprehensive system of employment supports for people with disabilities.

According to a recent national study, inadequate transportation service continues to negatively impact some six million Americans with disabilities. A Needs Assessment conducted by the University of Connecticut Health Center in August 2006 confirms the finding that reliable and accessible transportation continues to be the #1 employment challenge for people with disabilities, preventing them from securing and maintaining employment and contributing to the state's economy.

### **A Solution Exists: Accessible Taxis**

Fixing many existing transportation issues could involve changing funding rules that prevent accessible public transportation and buses from crossing municipal lines, but there is a simpler solution.

Wheelchair accessible taxis offer a convenient, spontaneous, and affordable transportation option to individuals with disabilities. Taxis are public transportation and operate under the jurisdiction of the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

The broader availability of wheelchair accessible taxis could reduce the demand for ADA paratransit services, saving local transportation agencies both capital and operating dollars. Wouldn't it be easier to pick up the phone and call a local cab company for a spontaneous accessible taxi trip? Think about it: Thousands of fares just waiting to give their business.

Significant growth in the number of wheelchair-accessible taxi vehicles in the years ahead may make it easier for workers with disabilities to enter the labor force or return to work.

### **Let's Make This A Reality**

The Connecticut Department of Transportation and other transportation stakeholders have received numerous comments about the lack of taxi service for people with disabilities, and more specifically, people using wheelchairs. The Connecticut Public Transportation Commission, in their *2006 and 2007 Annual Report and Recommendations*, has proposed that the Connecticut Department of Transportation implement an accessible taxicab requirement.

Connect-Ability supports the implementation of accessible taxis for people with disabilities in the State of Connecticut. For more information contact Connect-Ability at: [www.connect-ability.com](http://www.connect-ability.com) or 1-800-844-1903.

You can help make accessible taxis a reality by sharing this issue brief with people with disabilities, transit agencies, transit and disability advocacy organizations, legislators and other stakeholders working to provide transportation for all, including people with disabilities

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**See the ability. See how we can work together.**