



# Wheelchair Getaways®

Quarterly Customer Newsletter

**July 2005**



**Come see us at Abilities Expo Metro Detroit!  
August 26-28, 2005 Booth #131**

## **When Paratransit Is Not An Option**

Over 54 million Americans have disabilities, making wheelchair accessible transportation a major concern in every community. While the majority of public transportation vehicles are equipped for people in wheelchairs, lack of accessible transportation has been a contributing factor to nearly 35% of people with disabilities reporting noninvolvement in their communities and a disabled American unemployment rate of nearly 75%, according to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA).

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), public transportation agencies are required to provide complementary paratransit services along fixed routes for individuals who cannot access buses on some or all of the regular routes. Other efforts to make public transportation more accessible have been modifying buses to include wheelchair lifts and cutting curbs at points of entry for bus stops and transit stations.

The Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program, "Section 5310", has appropriated more than \$1.2 billion dollars for the purchase of vehicles, equipment, and services to increase the mobility of persons with disabilities and the elderly, since the program's inception in 1975. Unfortunately, even with this amount of funding and the ADA's involvement, public transportation is rife with obstacles for people in wheelchairs, not the least of which is the fact that according to the FTA's most recent report, almost 60% of the vehicles purchased under the "Section 5310" program were in need of repair.

In addition to the inherent problems with paratransit service, such as the limited number of vehicles, vehicle capacity, service time periods, entry/seating requirements, and maximum ride times, many disabled Americans simply do not have access to public transportation. Half of all adults in the United States cannot utilize public transportation because service is not available in their area (American Housing Survey, 2001). Service availability is particularly

problematic in rural areas and small towns. According to the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), 40% of the country's transit dependent population, including seniors, persons with disabilities, and those with low incomes, live in rural areas where public transportation is limited or non-existent.

In order for disabled citizens to remain active in their communities, participate in the economy, and lead independent productive lives, they must have convenient, reliable, transportation alternatives to public transportation. Many people with disabilities are reclaiming their independence by procuring their own wheelchair accessible transportation. While purchasing an accessible vehicle isn't always feasible, renting a wheelchair accessible van is one alternative. Wheelchair Getaways, the largest wheelchair accessible van rental company in the United States, rents modified vehicles throughout the country, and has been an alternative to the lack of public transportation for many disabled individuals.



"Public transportation is not always an option for people in wheelchairs," says Richard Gatewood, president of Wheelchair Getaways, "If you are in a wheelchair and live outside of an area with public transportation, your transportation options become very limited. By renting a wheelchair accessible van, you have access to transportation 24 hours a day, no matter where you are located."

Wheelchair Getaways provides both short-term and long-term rentals of vans equipped with raised roofs or lowered floors, wheelchair lifts or ramps, plush interiors, and tie-down systems. Some vehicles are also equipped with power doors, outside-entry controls, six-way power seats in the driver's position, and hand controls to maximize independence. Customers rent vans for a variety of reasons, including vacations, shopping, medical visits, and replacement of vehicles that are being repaired.

"Wheelchair Getaways is happy to provide a service to a group of individuals often neglected by the transportation industry," continues Gatewood, "Until vast improvements are made in the public transportation system, wheelchair users need as many alternatives as possible."

**Have a Great Independence Day!**

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