

Equity in Transportation for People with Disabilities

Though people with disabilities live in every community, our transportation policy has undermined the Americans with Disabilities Act's (ADA) promise of equal opportunity in transportation for people with disabilities, resulting in isolation from jobs, housing, health care, and education. As policymakers discuss such important issues as how best to rebuild and repair our nation's roads, bridges, railways, and ports, and where and how to prioritize investments in public transportation, it is vital that they take into consideration the needs of people with disabilities.

- People with disabilities make up about **6 million** (40 percent) of the almost **15 million** people in this country who have difficulties getting the transportation they need.¹ Because many people with disabilities do not have the option to drive cars, lack of access to other modes of transportation disproportionately harms them.
- About **560,000** people with disabilities never leave home because of transportation difficulties.²
- Twenty years after passage of the ADA, transportation choices for people with disabilities are still extremely limited. The ADA has led to major improvements in transit systems across the United States; however, there are persistent gaps in compliance that continue to create significant barriers for people with disabilities.
- Accessible transportation options—including accessible buses, railway systems, taxis, and paratransit—allow people with disabilities important opportunities in education, employment, health care, housing, and participation in community life.
- People with disabilities who live in rural communities face even greater barriers to accessible transportation. A significant lack of funding to rural communities means that public transportation, and especially accessible transportation, is often in very short supply.
- The unemployment rate of people with disabilities is **12.9 percent**. The unemployment rate for people without disabilities is **8.7 percent**.³
- The lack of transportation options in many communities is a major barrier to employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Without access to transportation, people with disabilities will not be part of society's economic environment and will continue to be alienated from the economic mainstream, thus causing a myriad of other problems, like homelessness and institutionalization.
- Safe and accessible rights-of-way are essential elements of community life. Rights-of-way include streets, sidewalks, crosswalks, curb ramps, crossing signals, street parking, and other public infrastructure, and are crucial to viable transportation for people with disabilities.
- Because many individuals with disabilities have increased health care needs, isolation from providers can have a profound impact on quality of life, health, and safety. Accessible transportation options can make the difference between health care access and isolation for adults and the children in their care.

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation: Bureau of Transportation Statistics. (2003). *Transportation Difficulties Keep Over Half a Million Disabled at Home*. Retrieved from http://www.bts.gov/publications/special_reports_and_issues_briefs/issue_briefs/number_03/pdf/entire.pdf

² U.S. Department of Transportation: Bureau of Transportation Statistics. (2003). *Transportation Difficulties Keep Over Half a*

Million Disabled at Home. Retrieved from http://www.bts.gov/publications/special_reports_and_issues_briefs/issue_briefs/number_03/pdf/entire.pdf

³ United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Jan. 2012 at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t06.htm>