



The following excerpt has been taken from the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation Paralysis Resource Center website.

[http://www.christopherreeve.org/site/c.mtKZKgMWKwG/b.4453469/k.8F9D/Cars\\_and\\_Driving.htm](http://www.christopherreeve.org/site/c.mtKZKgMWKwG/b.4453469/k.8F9D/Cars_and_Driving.htm)

## **Cars and Driving**

Driving a car can become a reality for many people who are paralyzed, even people with very limited hand and arm function. There is a wide range of driving equipment and vehicle modifications on the market today.

The first step in the process of learning to drive with paralysis is to get a thorough evaluation from a qualified driver trainer to determine your basic driving set-up, specific modifications, and driving equipment. An evaluation includes vision screening and assesses muscle strength, flexibility and range of motion; coordination and reaction time; judgment and decision making; and ability to drive with adaptive equipment

To find a qualified evaluator, contact a local rehabilitation center or contact the Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists (ADED – see below), which maintains a list of certified specialists throughout the country.

As for getting a drivers license, states require a valid learner's permit or driver's license to receive an on-the-road evaluation. You cannot be denied the opportunity to apply for a permit or license because you have a disability, but you may receive a restricted license, based on the use of adaptive devices.

Once you get the go-ahead from the evaluation, it's time to think about the kinds of vehicles that suit your abilities and needs. Selecting a vehicle for modification requires collaboration with the evaluator and a qualified vehicle modification dealer. The following questions can help with vehicle selection and whether you can adapt a car you already own.

Does the necessary adaptive equipment require a van, or will a passenger car suffice (will you be driving from a wheelchair or can you transfer to the car seat? If you can transfer in and drive a car your choices are much wider.

Can the vehicle accommodate the equipment that needs to be installed?

Will there be enough space to accommodate other passengers once the vehicle is modified?

Is there adequate parking space at home and at work for the vehicle and for loading/unloading a wheelchair or walker?

If a third party is paying for the vehicle, adaptive devices, or modification costs, find out if there are any limitations or restrictions on what is covered. Always get a written statement on what a funding agency will pay before making your purchase.

The cost of modifying a vehicle varies greatly. A new vehicle modified with adaptive equipment can cost from \$20,000 to \$80,000. Therefore, it pays to investigate public and private opportunities for financial assistance.

There are programs that help pay part or all of the cost of vehicle modification, depending on the cause and nature of the disability. Contact your state's department of Vocational Rehabilitation or another agency that provides vocational services, and, if appropriate, the Department of Veterans Affairs. Also, consider the following:

- Many nonprofit associations that advocate for individuals with disabilities have grant programs that help pay for adaptive devices.
- If you have private health insurance or workers' compensation, you may be covered for adaptive devices and vehicle modification. Check with your insurance carrier.
- Many manufacturers have rebate or reimbursement plans for modified vehicles.
- Some states waive the sales tax for adaptive devices if you have a doctor's prescription for their use.

You may be eligible for savings when submitting your federal income tax return. Check with a qualified tax consultant to find out if the cost of your adaptive devices will help you qualify for a medical deduction.

Find a qualified dealer to modify your vehicle. Ask questions, check credentials and references. Do they work with evaluators? Will they look at your vehicle before you purchase it? Do they require a prescription from a physician or other driver evaluation specialist? Do they provide training on how to use the equipment? Do they provide service? What is the cost? How long will it take to do the work? What is the warranty?

Sources: U.S. Department of Transportation, Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists

### **Web Sites**

[www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/rules/adaptive/index.html](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/rules/adaptive/index.html)

### **National Highway and Transportation Safety Administration**

Offers advice on driver training, vehicle selection and modification. Brochure on Adapting Motor Vehicles for People with Disabilities.

[www.nmeda.org/](http://www.nmeda.org/)

### **National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association (NMEDA)**

A trade group of companies that sell adaptive driving equipment.

[www.driver-ed.org/](http://www.driver-ed.org/)

### **The Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists (ADED)**

Certifies driver trainers who are experts in adaptive driving and vehicles.

[www.adamobility.com](http://www.adamobility.com)

### **Adaptive Driving Alliance**

A nationwide group of vehicle modification dealers.

<http://www.catea.gatech.edu/quickrefguides/guides/LiftsRamps.pdf>

### **Vehicle Lifts and Ramps: Vehicle Modification Series**

Tech Connections is a collaborative project of the United Cerebral Palsy Associations and the Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access (formerly CRT) at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

[www.wheelersvanrentals.com](http://www.wheelersvanrentals.com)

### **Wheelers Accessible Van Rentals**

Wheelers offers wheelchair and scooter accessible transportation by the day, week, month and longer. Rental facilities are located in more than fifteen states nationwide. Telephone 1-800-456-1371.

[www.accessiblevans.com](http://www.accessiblevans.com)

### **Accessible Vans of American (AVA)**

AVA rents and sells both full-size and lowered floor minivans, through a national owner-operated dealer network. Whether you need a van for business, vacation, a replacement vehicle or to evaluate before purchasing, AVA can serve you. AVA maintains a network of dealerships across the nation. Click on the link to find a nearby location or call (888) AVA-VANS (282-2867).

<http://www.wheelchairgetaways.com/franchiselocations.htm>

### **Wheelchair Getaways: Wheelchair and Scooter Accessible Van Rental**

Wheelchair Getaways® is dedicated to providing the very highest standards of quality and service in accessible van rentals. Our goal is 100% customer satisfaction. Rental facilities are located nationwide. Click on the link and select a state from the web page listing or call (800) 642-2042.

<http://infinitec.org/live/driving/drivingintro.htm>

**Infinitec**

For information on adaptive driving, please visit the Infinitec website, which includes a great deal of information on all types of assistive technology:

<http://www.disableddealer.com/>

**Disabled Dealer Magazine**

You may also want to check with the Disabled Dealer. There are classified ads in the print version and on the website.

<http://www.craighospital.org/SCI/METS/readyForAVan.asp>

**Craig Hospital: Am I Ready for a Van?**

[www.ThePumpGuide.com](http://www.ThePumpGuide.com)

**Michigan PVA's Pump Guide**

An online directory of gas stations serving drivers with disabilities in Michigan.

[http://sci.washington.edu/info/newsletters/articles/02fall\\_driving.asp](http://sci.washington.edu/info/newsletters/articles/02fall_driving.asp)

**University of Washington School of Medicine** article on New Driving Technology for People with SCI

<http://www.disabledriders.com>

**Disabled Riders of America**

For disabled motorcyclists.

**Funding resources** for the purchasing or modification of your automobile is difficult to obtain. Here are some avenues that you may use in order to obtain financial assistance.

[www.travisroyfoundation.org](http://www.travisroyfoundation.org)

**Travis Roy Foundation**

c/o Palmer & Dodge LLP

111 Huntington Avenue at Prudential Center

Boston, MA 02199-7613

(617) 239-0100 (v)

(617) 227-4420 (f)

Email: [Administrator@travisroyfoundation.org](mailto:Administrator@travisroyfoundation.org)

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/index.html?src=mr>

**Rehabilitation Services Administration**

Your home state Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services also provides assistance with vehicle adaptation when the person with the disability is trying to maintain employment, or continue their education.

[http://www.ucp.org/ucp\\_channel.cfm/1/19](http://www.ucp.org/ucp_channel.cfm/1/19)

### **United Cerebral Palsy**

Provides information on transportation, wheeled mobility, and funding.

<http://www.cartalk.com/content/features/Special-Needs/mobility-links.html>

### **Car Talk: Special Needs Zone**

<http://www.mobilitymotoringprogram.com/modifyresources.mob>

### **Ford Mobility Motoring: Adaptive Resources Locator by State or Zip**

<http://www.hyundaiusa.com/financial-tools/mobility-program.aspx>

### **Hyundai Mobility Program: Assistance for Persons with Special Physical Needs**

<http://www.vpgautos.com/>

### **MV-1**

The *MV-1* is the only purpose-built vehicle that was designed from the ground up for wheelchair accessibility.

[www.project-track-champion.com](http://www.project-track-champion.com)

### **Project Track Champion: Wishes on Wheels**

Durham, ON, Canada

Phone: 519-369-6349

Project Track Champion is dedicated to the promotion of accessibility for persons with a disability in the racing environment. Project Track Champion is committed to creating, promoting and securing measures to remove barriers that would normally restrict a person with a disability from having an interactive roll within the racing community and other non-related venues.

## **Articles**

“Funding Your Van”. *New Mobility* August 2003 p. 29-31, 62.

“When Your Plan is a Van”. *Quest* March-April 2004 pp. 20-21, 24, 26-27.

“As the Wheel Turns: Safety in Your Chair Means Safety on the Road.” *Quest* March-April 2004. pp.30-32.

This article discusses the importance of tie-down and lockdown systems for those who drive or travel in their chair.

“After the Stroke, Behind the Wheel.” *Stroke Connection*. Jan-Feb 2005 pp. 24-25.

UAB article on Driving Safely After a SCI

<http://www.spinalcord.uab.edu/show.asp?durki=21424>

The following books and videos are available for free loan from the PRC library. For more information, please see [www.paralysis.org](http://www.paralysis.org) and click the Lending Library tab.

### Books

- **Disabled Driver's Mobility Guide.** Heathrow, Fla.: American Automobile Association, 1995. Includes sources for adapted controls, etc.
- Edds, James. **Driver Rehabilitation: Gateway to Independence.** ST. Louis, Missouri: Gateway Publishing, 2002.
- Pellerito, Joseph Michael, Jr. **Driver Rehabilitation and Community Mobility: Principles and Practice.** St. Louis: Mosby, 2006.

**The following streaming videos from the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation can be viewed for free**

[www.paralysis.org](http://www.paralysis.org), click on top right See All Videos, click on Paralysis Resource Center tab

Hot Rides

- Part 1 features unique vehicles.

Hot Rides 2

- Part two in our series featuring unique and unusual modified vehicles.

Advanced Driving Controls: Funding & Evaluation

- Learn about the wide variety of hand controls and modifications that are available.

Advanced Driving Controls 2: Control Options

- Part two in our series featuring the variety of control options available.

Stop & Go

- Do you miss your manual transmission? Ever want to fly a plane? See these and more unique hand controls available for your vehicle.

**The information contained in this message is presented for the purpose of educating and informing you about paralysis and its effects. Nothing contained in this message should be construed nor is intended to be used for medical diagnosis or treatment. It should not be used in place of the advice of your physician or other qualified health care provider. Should you have any health care related questions, please call or see your physician or other qualified health care provider promptly. Always consult**

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