



Forum of Mobility Centres

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES

Adaptation Guide Number 10

Wheelchair accessible vehicles (also known as WAVs) or WPVs (Wheelchair purpose vehicle) are designed to enable a wheelchair passenger to access a vehicle and travel whilst seated in the wheelchair.



The main principles of a WAV are that wheelchair access is provided either by ramp or lift at the side or at the rear of the vehicle. There is space for the wheelchair passenger and mechanisms for securing the wheelchair in place. A seat belt must also be provided for the wheelchair passenger.



WAVs are usually converted from MPVs (multi purpose vehicles) or vans. Small MPVs e.g. Renault Kangoo, can take up to three passengers in addition to the driver and wheelchair passenger. Full MPVs, e.g. VW Sharan, can also take three passengers, although some companies may keep the middle row of seats accommodating more passengers, with the wheelchair passenger travelling at the back of the vehicle.



The Largest MPVs, e.g. Chrysler Voyager, VW Shuttle can take up to six passengers and one wheelchair passenger in addition to the driver. Seating arrangements can vary; some of the larger vehicles can be converted to take two wheelchair passengers, e.g. Peugeot Expert.



The position of the wheelchair passenger within the vehicle can also vary. Most WAVs place the wheelchair passenger in the rear of the vehicle; however there are a few WAVs that place the wheelchair passenger up front next to the driver.



Access to the vehicle for the wheelchair passenger is generally from the rear; however there are several WAVs with access from the side; for example Mercedes Vito, VW Shuttle.

It is recommended that customers contact different conversion companies to see what the possibilities are for their requirements from a WAV; it can be useful to discuss seating layout, the amount of head room and ramp gradient if ramps are used. Different conversion companies offer different vehicles as well as different formats of the same vehicle. Most companies will arrange home visits so the geographical location of the company is less important than the services they offer. WAVs are generally bought already converted; it is a much harder prospect to buy a vehicle and then arrange for its conversion as conversion may not be possible on some vehicles.



Some companies also offer **Drive from Wheelchair** Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles or **Internal Transfer** Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles.



Points to consider....

- Purchase price can be expensive
- Choice of vehicle is limited by the requirements of conversion
- Wheelchairs may not be comfortable to travel in for long journeys.
- Parking can be problematic; a WAV will require extra space either at the rear or side for loading and unloading.
- Rear access WAVs cannot be fitted with a tow bar.
- WAVs with under floor lifts for loading may bottom out on speed bumps possibly damaging the lift.
- Wheelchair users do not have to make a transfer from a wheelchair to a car seat if transferring is difficult.
- Wheelchairs do not have to be stowed.
- Luggage space may be reduced.
- Loading a wheelchair passenger into a WAV requires strength and agility; it may be necessary to have a powered winch fitted to assist with loading on WAVs with ramps.
- There can be less strain on a carer using a WAV.
- It can be quicker to load a wheelchair passenger into a WAV than other transfer options.



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