

# THE PATH AHEAD

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# I GET AROUND: FINDING ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Having the freedom to get to the places you want to go to is an empowering experience. Some people who have easy access to transportation may take this for granted. But for those who find it harder to get to places they need to be, the importance of having transportation they can count on is very real.

For many people with disabilities, transportation is a huge issue. This greatly affects people's ability to find or keep a job, to choose where to live, and to determine whether or not they can visit friends and family. These challenges occur because people don't have their own vehicle, or they might have trouble finding a ride. They might also live in an area where public transportation isn't readily available or rideshares are too expensive. And sometimes, people simply don't feel comfortable traveling on their own.



*Abby and Doug*

**“None of us can live a full life without transportation,” says Doug Hunt, Community Program Specialist at Dane County Department of Human Services.**

Fortunately, there are organizations and resources available to help. Abby Tessmann, a mobility trainer and owner of Transit2Go, and Doug have helped many people with disabilities find what transportation options are available to them. They've also helped people develop the necessary skills to confidently use public transportation.

According to Doug, lots of folks can be overwhelmed trying to get transportation. They have questions such as “How do I know which bus to get on and where to get off?” Or they might not know how to find a transportation service that is wheelchair accessible or has a driver who is trained to help you in the event of a medical emergency. Finding a solution that's also affordable is another issue. Doug says a lot of these

questions can be addressed by contacting your local Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC).

**“It’s about matching the right mode [of transportation] with the person’s needs,” says Doug.”**

Once people are able to feel confident about transportation, it can open up new worlds to them. Abby, who is enrolled in the TMG IRIS Consultant Agency (ICA), is a great example of this.

In the fall of 2010, Abby moved from Watertown to Madison to attend Edgewood College’s Cutting Edge Program for college students with intellectual disabilities. Away from home for the first time, Abby quickly realized she needed to learn how to get around town on her own.

**“Mom and Dad aren’t going to be there to get you [to the grocery store],” says Abby.**

As Abby was first figuring out how to use the bus system, a person from the Cutting Edge Program would ride with her to teach her how to get where she needed to go. Soon Abby was riding the bus on her own like a pro. She loved being able to get to work, or go to choir practice, or get to her favorite ice cream shop.

As a way to share her success, Abby started Transit2Go, where she teaches other people how to ride the bus and get around town. They learn how to become familiar with their area, how to map out their route, how to come up with a backup transportation plan and other important skills, like time management, so they feel comfortable riding on their own.

**“It’s figuring out how to get from point A to point B,” says Abby. “We start [by asking] ‘Ok, do you want to go here?’ Then we ask, ‘What thing do you need to do first, and what things do you need at the end of your trip?’ Finally,**

**‘What’s your reward going to be?’ That’s a good thing.”**

Of course, Abby and Doug understand that people who live in rural areas usually don’t have access to public transportation. Some people use their IRIS budget to pay someone else for mileage if the transportation is necessary to help meet a goal and funds from other sources aren’t available.

It’s also important to find ways to advocate for more accessible transportation near them. Organizations such as People First Wisconsin and the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR) are involved in advocating for better access to transportation for people with disabilities. Contact them or your local ADRC to find out about advocacy efforts that are happening near you and learn how you can help out. Because everyone deserves to get to where they want to go.



## MEET ADAM: ON THE ROAD AGAIN

There's nothing quite like a good comeback. It's a testament to the determination of the human spirit, and a reminder of why second chances can be a great thing. The beauty of a comeback is that it happens in many forms. It could be an athlete getting back on the field after a major injury, or a determined older student going back to school to finally earn their degree. For Adam McCullough, it's finding his way back into the driver's seat.

For most of his life, Adam, 28, lived without a disability. He grew up in Holmen, WI, and played college football at Macalester College in St. Paul, MN. After graduating, he got a job at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture as a hydrologist, where he'd gather samples of water from lakes and rivers and test what was in them.

But on December 26, 2016, Adam was driving home and crashed his car after hitting an icy patch on the road. The accident left him paralyzed from the chest down.

At first, Adam's main focus was learning how to navigate life in a wheelchair. Simply getting around his parent's home on his own was a challenge. He set his sights on building strength through physical and occupational therapy, and took part in trial studies for new treatments. Over time, he regained some movement in his hands. As he became more independent, he realized just how much he missed driving.



Adam and his TMG IRIS Consultant, Julie

**“Little things pop in your head,” says Adam. “If I want to go to the grocery store by myself, I just don’t have that option. It’s been limiting, you know? I think anyone can picture that.”**

Having made so much progress in other areas of his life, he started wondering if there was a way he'd be able to drive again. After talking with his doctor and doing some research, Adam told his TMG IRIS Consultant, Julie, of his new goal. They started this journey by first getting Adam an accessibility assessment to see what he would need to do to drive again. They then got Adam a learner's permit so that he could practice driving an accessible vehicle. Adam also needed to take a driver assessment to determine the exact equipment he would need in his vehicle so that he could safely and easily drive. Finally, he will have to pass the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) road test to get his license.

Through it all, Adam and Julie have worked closely together. They spent time looking into funding options to cover the driving assessment and equipment, and options to purchase a van. Even when the road got long, they knew that together Adam could reach his goal.

**“Julie is there every step of the way,” says Adam. “We educated ourselves and researched everything together. Without Julie, I wouldn’t be talking to you [about driving] right now.”**

Of course, Julie is quick to say that Adam has been the driving force behind making all of this happen. His grit and persistence to get back to driving and regain independence is amazing, and she says it’s been wonderful to watch him continue to make progress in many different areas of his life.

**“Adam has a passion for self-direction,” says Julie. “He’s coming to me saying ‘This is what I need, this is what I want.’”**

In January, Adam was finally able to drive for the first time in two years when he test drove accessible vans to figure out which equipment worked best for him. The driving consultant feels confident that, after a few more sessions, Adam will be able to pass the DMV’s road test and get his driver’s license. He says he was thrilled to be driving his dad around for a change.

As Adam gets closer to getting his license, he’s excited for all the possibilities that will open up. Driving his dogs out to the dog park; getting himself to work on his own; visiting far-away friends. However, more than anything else, he’s simply excited to be behind the wheel again.

**“When I get the car, I’ll turn the radio volume up all the way and just drive around by myself for an hour,” says Adam. “My dog will have her head out the window. Me just driving around and torturing people with my singing voice!”**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **Autism Society of Wisconsin Conference**

April 11–13, 2019  
*Kalahari Resort  
Wisconsin Dells, WI*

### **Circles of Life Conference**

May 2–3, 2019  
*Holiday Inn –  
Convention Center  
Stevens Point, WI*

### **Wisconsin Employment First Conference**

May 15, 2019  
*Kalahari Resort  
Wisconsin Dells, WI*

### **Alzheimer’s Association Conference**

May 19–21, 2019  
*Kalahari Resort  
Wisconsin Dells, WI*

# According to the 2018 Wisconsin Transportation Survey by the Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations:



**83%**  
say their current  
transportation  
options **limit  
their community  
participation.**



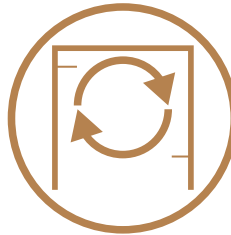
**61%**  
say their current  
transportation  
options **limit their  
access to medical  
care.**



**59%**  
say transportation  
is **not available  
at the times they  
need it.**



**55%**  
say transportation  
**doesn't go where  
they need to go.**



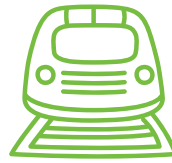
**47%**  
say transportation  
**must be scheduled  
too far in advance  
to accommodate  
changes** to their  
schedules or  
needs.

# TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES

One of the major challenges that many people with disabilities and those who are aging face is finding reliable and accessible transportation. We're here to help! Whether you're looking for transportation options, need helpful tools or want to connect with advocacy groups to learn more about this issue, here are a few resources to make your journey a little smoother. To find the links to these websites, visit

[tmgwisconsin.com/transportation-resources](http://tmgwisconsin.com/transportation-resources).

- **Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC):** Your local ADRC is a great first stop to find out about all of the available transportation options and advocacy efforts happening near you.



- **Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW):** This statewide advocacy organization provides information, referral, advice, investigation and, in select cases, legal representation to help people with disabilities have equal opportunity to transportation.
- **Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR):** Learn how to navigate the unique transportation challenges that people who are aging might run into. GWAAR offers a training toolkit for people who rely on paid and volunteer drivers, as well as other helpful transportation resources.
- **People First Wisconsin:** This is a statewide organization that helps people learn how to advocate for themselves on important issues such as transportation. Be sure to read People First's position paper on transportation on their website.
- **Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP):** This national volunteer program, with local project sites throughout the state, is for people 55 and older who are looking to give back to their communities. One of their many volunteer efforts is providing free rides. Look for an RSVP site near you if you need a ride, or if you'd like to give rides to others.



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## WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

At the TMG IRIS Consultant Agency (ICA), we value the fact that our employees live and work in communities all around Wisconsin. Our Area Associate Directors provide local leadership for our TMG IRIS Consultant Teams throughout the state. If you have questions about TMG and the services we provide, please contact us at [info@tmgwisconsin.com](mailto:info@tmgwisconsin.com).



For information about the TMG IRIS Consultant Agency, visit: [tmgwisconsin.com](http://tmgwisconsin.com) or [facebook.com/TMGWisconsin](https://www.facebook.com/TMGWisconsin).

Or call our toll-free number: **(844) 864-8987**.