THE MOBILITY ADVOCATE

2ND EDITION · JUNE, 2025

In This Edition: Accessible Roadside Assistance and Rescue



Roadside Assistance: A Real Need for Wheelchair Users

Roadside assistance has long been a significant concern for individuals in wheelchairs who silently bear the anxiety of a potential breakdown.

The underlying problem in the market is that there are limited NEMT (non-emergency medical transport) carriers authorized to transport in certain areas of the map. Some accessible roadside rescues can still result in inconvenience, if not hardship, for consumers.

Case Study: How quickly can a pickup be expected?

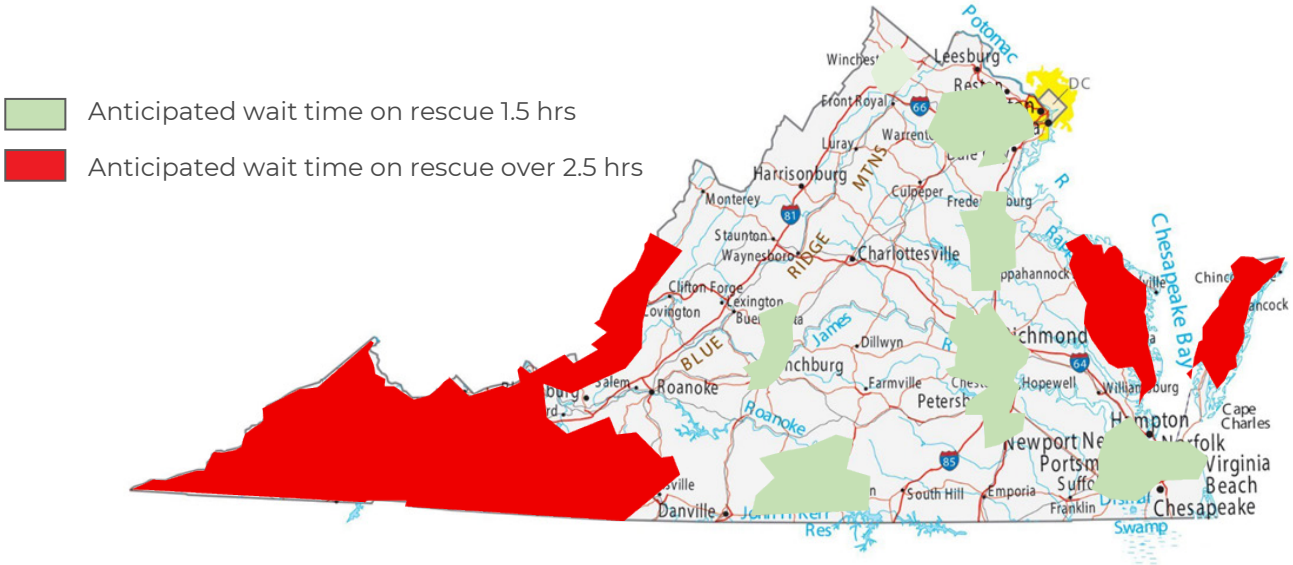
In 2024, My Mobility Path LLC, mymobilitypath.com, a consumer advocacy company, gathered information on the locations of all NEMT Common Carriers in the Commonwealth of Virginia to determine if statewide carriers were properly dispersed for a reliable roadside assistance program. Compared to states nationwide, Virginia carries an average population of individuals with disability. It holds an average demographic size with typical population densities throughout the state. The study findings are stated below:

- 154 carrier companies had both the proper insurance and the proper licensing from the state to conduct a “same day pay, NEMT courier service.”
- 73 of the carrier companies were in 3 Counties (Fairfax, Southampton, and Prince William).
- The 3 counties referred to occupy only 3.4% of the land area in the state.

The study concludes that in Virginia, the main thoroughfares in the southwest region of the state did not have adequate access to carriers and mobility dealerships for timely roadside rescues. The same held for travel to the mid-latitudinal shoreline areas. See Map I.

Map 1

The map below suggests the anticipated rescue times throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia:



The study indicates that a broken-down traveler can expect an accessible emergency pickup time of approximately 1½ hours (average, during non-rush hours) across 19% of the map area. In 50% of Virginia's land area, the required pickup time increases to about 2 hours. In 31% of the map, the average wait time for an accessible pickup will be at least 2½ hours. Notably, the longest delays occur in important travel areas along highways in the southwest region connecting Virginia to 3 states, and in destinations associated with vacations and tourism on the eastern shore.

Despite any cautions insinuated in this study, there is an industry momentum with roadside assistance that is embracing a more collaborative effort with mobility dealerships and NEMT Carriers. The mobility industry is at a point where roadside assistance should get serious consideration. The only advice - manage your expectations; a roadside rescue may still take significant time.

The Contribution of Mobility Franchise Dealership, Mobility Works

A successful initiative requires support from a framework of mobility dealerships. Larger franchise dealerships have a built-in advantage with this. Mobility Works (mobilityworks.com), the largest franchise in the accessible transportation sector, has partnered with Axiom Products (axiomadmin.com) to establish a structured breakdown service, called Protection Works, for its customers. While Axiom handles tire repairs and a tow of the vehicle, Mobility Works focuses on the safe pickup of individuals in wheelchairs and their companions.

With over 100 mobility dealerships scattered throughout the US, Mobility Works Franchise has an impressive support system of dealerships to assist with an emergency pickup. This gives Mobility Works the advantage of timeliness provided the breakdown occurs near one of their dealerships. With minimal reliance on statewide carriers, a noteworthy concern is the timeliness of rescues outside their serviceable radius of the dealerships.

Mobility Support Solutions, Utilizing NEMT Carriers

Mobility Support Solutions, also called M Solutions, has an impressive presence with accessible roadside assistance (mobilityroadsideassistance.com). Considering the humble if not rocky beginnings of this 13 year old company, the perseverance they have shown has allowed them to front an increasingly strong reputation today. Mobility Support Solutions relies on a comprehensive network of NEMT Carriers and partnering mobility dealerships throughout the continental US. Last year, M Solutions launched a campaign towards customer satisfaction by increasing their partnerships with mobility dealerships nationwide. This program has been successful in drawing needed sales representation, and in providing added outsourcing for faster accessible pickups. The approach by Mobility Support Solutions gives promise to a real solution in accessible roadside assistance - an accessible breakdown service that utilizes all available resources.



Mobility Dealerships and Small Franchise Options

Some smaller mobility franchises and privately owned dealerships offer informal roadside assistance to their customers, often providing a 24-hour hotline for breakdowns. These programs are typically not well documented during the vehicle's purchase process. This lack of documentation allows dealerships to manage their liability, but in reality, this type of service handling is done at the expense of the consumer, who is left uncertain about the level of support they can expect.

The Cost of Roadside Assistance

Roadside Assistance Programs cost the consumer $200-$350 yearly. When a breakdown occurs, depending on the plan chosen, there is likely to be either a deductible or added cost stemming to the residual expenses from a payout cap. When taking into consideration all the costs, accessible roadside assistance has a price tag that is 3 & 1/2 times the cost of non-accessible services. In light of the expense and expertise needed to take care of an accessible vehicle breakdown, this price discrepancy is understandable. As you gauge if a program is right for you, it is important to consider all relevant factors. Do you have to buy a more expensive vehicle? Will the price go up after the first year? Does the area where I live have strong accessible pickup support? Don't be hesitant to ask questions about rescue timeliness and unexpected costs.

Lack of Checks and Balances from Competitive Providers

In a large market service, there should be more than two options available. While consumers explore accessible roadside assistance they may find many choices. A closer look will reveal that nearly all the services originate from a single underwriting source - Mobility Support Solutions. Relying on a single source can pose risks related to market dominance. In comparing the pricing with the reasonable market rate determined in the My Mobility Path study, both Mobility Works and M Solutions have kept their pricing at or below the the expected rate.

Consumer Feedback

Commercial groups entering the roadside assistance market still maintain a limited online feedback presence. Gathering consumer feedback is crucial in any industry, but it is especially vital in accessible services. Without a more transparent way to represent “satisfaction feedback”, it is impossible to gain a real understanding of the consumer experience and the value of the service.

Note to Newsletter Readers

Our free signup to The Mobility Advocate will be necessary to get the full content of future Newsletters. If the link below does not work, you can also go to https://www.facebook.com/MyMobilityPath/ and signup.

Free Sign Up – THE MOBILITY NEWSLETTER.

No Credit Card Needed, just first name plus choice of text or email



Written by:
Stephen Chandler

Veterans: Your Benefits Are Within Reach!



To those of you actively pursuing home modifications, an accessible vehicle, or a pension increase- my hat goes off to you.

If you are 100% service-connected due to loss of limb use, impaired vision, severe burns, or ALS, you are entitled to a vehicle allowance of $26,417.20. Veterans with ALS or those rated 100% service-connected for limb loss are also eligible for reimbursement of the handicap conversion and the adaptive equipment added to the vehicle.

Every two years, you can trade in your accessible vehicle, use thefunds from the trade to buy a new chassis (an unconverted vehicle), and have that chassis upfitted to meet your disability needs. The Prosthetics Office refers to this benefit eligibility as “Service Connected.”

For all other veterans-including those rated 100% service-connected for reasons unrelated to mobility-you are considered “Non-Service Connected” for auto-adaptive purposes. In these cases, the VA will not pay for the vehicle itself. However, if you have mobility limitations that prevent safe entry and exit (“ingress-egress”), the VA will cover adaptive equipment necessary for vehicle access and travel. This includes wheelchair-compatible features prescribed by the Prosthetics Department.

Adaptive equipment can range from a full lowered-floor conversion to something as simple as a grab bar.

The approval process for adaptive equipment is overseen by the Prosthetics Department and has fortunately become less complicated over the years. Most Prosthetic Chiefs aim to keep requests moving efficiently. In many cases, an assistant to the head of Prosthetics manages Non-Service Connected (NSC) benefits. Regardless of who handles it, the key to smooth approval lies in clear communication between you, your mobility dealership and the prosthetics officer.

To initiate the process, the mobility dealership must submit Form 10-1394 to the VA. However, dealers are notorious for installing the equipment without first contacting Prosthetics. The unsigned form should be submitted with ample lead time-three weeks is a good rule of thumb-to allow for necessary communication and coordination.

A reputable mobility dealer will document your physical and travel needs clearly and relay that to the VA Prosthetics team. The better the communication, the fewer complications with installation and payment. Final approval of Form 10-1394 happens after the equipment installation is complete.

If you believe a lowered-floor conversion is necessary, a driving specialist from the Prosthetics Department will evaluate you. Their recommendation is then reviewed by the prosthetics officer and an FSS contractor. Throughout this process, make sure your voice is heard. The Prosthetics Office is trained to put veterans first.