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Helping Disabled Riders Navigate Public Transit: Cameron on Transportation

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Imagine being afraid to ride the bus, or being unable to read a timetable. Can you think of what your life would be like without access to a car or mass transit?

There are hundreds of our neighbors who live in isolation because they are physically, emotionally or mentally unable to ride the bus or train.

Some have physical handicaps while others are autistic or have learning disabilities. Shouldn't they be able to travel like the rest of us?

That's the question the nonprofit [Kennedy Center](#), based in Trumbull, asked when it was founded in 1951 to assist children with disabilities.

Since 1991, the center has offered the Travel Training Program to teach children and adults how to be independent by using mass transit.

Qualified instructors work one-on-one with clients for days or weeks, teaching them how to get from their homes to doctors' offices, school or jobs. They show them how to read timetables and escort them onto the trains and buses for dry runs until they're ready to fly solo.

Bus drivers seem eager to help those in need of a little help, whether it's getting their bus to "kneel" for the elderly, lowering a ramp for those in wheelchairs or just reassuring an autistic teen en route to school.

The Kennedy Center's travel trainers work with 200 clients a year while another team of mobility ombudsmen conduct community outreach, speaking at senior centers and veterans homes, educating folks on how to get around.

There are ParaTransit services available, but they require reservations as much as weeks in advance and cost the rider double the transit fare. They are also subsidized by taxpayers to the tune of \$55 per ride. So getting those riders onto regular trains and buses saves us all money.

For these disabled residents, money is usually an issue, especially if they're unemployed or living on government assistance. That's why the Kennedy Center also conducts outreach to help the disabled and seniors qualify for half-price fares.

Cameron on Roads:

- [CT's Lousy Job of Selling Itself to Potential Tourists at Darien North Rest Stop: Cameron on Transportation](#) (June 24)
- [How Uber and Lyft Are Disrupting the Taxi Industry in CT and NYC: Cameron on Transportation](#) (March 28)
- [Buses Popular with College Students and Not Just for the Poor: Cameron on Transportation](#)(March 9)
- [No Free Ride: Connecticut Needs Tolls and Gas Taxes: Cameron on Transportation](#) (Feb. 25)
- [Predictions for Roads, Rails and Air Transport in 2018: Cameron on Transportation](#) (Jan. 21)

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