

New disability coalition calls on auto industry to reverse decades of discrimination, build fully accessible vehicle for personal use, ride-hailing, and AVs.

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[AUTO INDUSTRY CEOs],

We, the members of the disability rights advocacy community who make up the We Will Ride coalition, write to you with an urgent demand in pursuit of a more just and equitable world: Accessible vehicles.

Accessible transportation is a cornerstone of participation in today's society, and present options are failing us. No major manufacturer is producing a vehicle for public consumption that can accommodate a wheelchair user—and we see no signs of action to rectify this problem. Instead, the average wheelchair user is forced to spend between \$10,000 - \$30,000 on substantial modifications to make a standard car accessible. This price tag is often too high for the average person.

For the millions of Americans with significant disabilities, this challenge is urgent. As baby boomers age and become users of mobility equipment such as wheelchairs, the need for accessible vehicles grows.

Individual consumers aren't the only ones affected by the current market gap: Ride-hailing and ride-sharing companies incur additional costs to enable their fleet to serve wheelchair users and others with a diverse range of accessibility needs. Public transportation agencies face the same unreasonable costs, and modification expenses are ultimately passed along to American taxpayers.

As a result, we rely on limited mobility options that limit our agency. With this transportation deficit, it's no surprise that a wheelchair or scooter user is 50% more likely than the average American to live at or below twice the poverty level.

This isn't a new problem: We're facing the same discrimination from the auto industry today that has existed for decades. Automobile designers have historically declined to take the needs of people with disabilities into account. It's little wonder, then, that the disability community continues to be left out and left behind.

Now is the time to right past wrongs and prioritize accessible vehicle designs. **We call on you to design accessible vehicles for the public now.**

We are at a pivotal moment in history. Technology and innovation in the auto industry are at an all time high. As industry leaders, you see the future in autonomous vehicles. You speak of the

potential of this technology to empower people with disabilities and help seniors, but we are concerned that the promise of AV transportation will be just as exclusive and discriminatory as in the past.

We worry that self-driving cars will fall short of the mobility promise they hold because we see no signs that auto manufacturers are developing a fully accessible passenger vehicle that is able to serve wheelchair users and others with a range of disabilities.

We have the opportunity now to incorporate accessibility into the design of autonomous vehicles from the very beginning. Self-driving cars have offered us a rare opportunity to completely revolutionize auto design. Let's take advantage of this blank slate and consider accessibility from the very first design phase.

Accessibility starts with design and intention. Auto designers in the vehicle modification field are already taking on this challenge. The solutions they have already discovered should serve as an inspiration and starting point for our work.

The choice is yours. Increasing availability of fully accessible vehicles will mean that a greater number of people, young and old, will be empowered to accomplish their goals. With accessibility built-in from the beginning, the cost of vehicles—for personal use and for public transit, for private transportation and ride-sharing services, for the future of mobility in autonomous vehicles—can be reduced significantly.

By including accessibility into your design from conception, you will win the growing accessibility market and help build a more just and equitable America.

Accessible AVs start with an accessible vehicle.

That's why we're demanding universally accessible vehicles now.

We look forward to working with you on this critical project.

Sincerely yours,

We Will Ride Campaign Members

Full list of automotive manufacturer addressees:

Ford Motor Company,

General Motors,

Honda,

Toyota,

Hyundai,
Nissan,
Chrysler,
Volkswagen,
Volvo,
Subaru,
Volkswagen / Audi,
Range Rover/Jaguar,
Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers (autoalliance.org)
Association of Global Automakers (globalautomakers.org)

About the We Will Ride Campaign

The We Will Ride Campaign was founded by leaders in the disability rights movement to ensure that the coming transportation revolution of autonomous vehicles reaches its potential to serve all Americans.

We work to develop a constructive conversation around the needs of Americans with disabilities and how automobile manufacturers and other key institutions can meet them.