

Advantages of Rear Loading Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles

- Many wheelchair users use rear loading vehicles in their personal lives (e.g. through the Motability scheme) and will be confident and comfortable using them and this may be their preference
- Easier to load/unload in some locations compared to side loading vehicles (e.g. private driveways and locations where there is no kerb)
- Easier for driver to load as:
 - a) some models can be fitted with an assistance winch
 - b) the angle at which the wheelchair user is loaded is smaller due to the floor in most of these vehicles usually being lower
- No need for driver to turn the wheelchair 90 degrees inside the vehicle which can be difficult for many drivers
- More suitable for some people using larger, heavier electric wheelchairs
- Provides disabled people with an additional transport option when booking (some wheelchair users find the side loading vehicles difficult to access)
- It is hoped (but not guaranteed) that the number of 'fully wheelchair accessible' vehicles in the fleet would be boosted
- Considerably cheaper to purchase from new as prices currently start around £19,000 as opposed to the side loading vehicles that start around from £30,000 to £46,000
- Petrol and hybrid options are available which may be less polluting than diesel variants
- Can carry passengers in a forward facing position which is a requirement for certain specialist wheelchairs. Note that existing 'fully wheelchair accessible' vehicles all carry wheelchairs anchored in a backward facing direction

Disadvantages

- Where there are no dropped kerbs it could be difficult or uncomfortable to move a wheelchair bound passenger off a kerb on to the road
- Loading in the road puts passengers and drivers at greater risk from other road users
- No additional space on most designated hackney carriage stands to accommodate rear loading vehicles (up to 3000mm space is needed for rear loading)
- As rear loading vehicles are cheaper than side loading vehicles, it could result in the entire fleet being rear loading

- In most cases these vehicles are smaller and carry fewer passengers than side loading vehicles
- In pursuing the goal of increasing the number of fully wheelchair accessible vehicles in the fleet, compromises may be needed in relaxing certain standards such as minimum usable luggage space