

U.S. Department of Transportation has set into Motion the Plan for Allowing a Wheelchair spot on Commercial Aircraft

For Immediate Release

FRISCO, TEXAS , TX, UNITED STATES, October 15, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [All Wheels Up \(AWU\)](#), the first non-profit organization in the world to fund research for a wheelchair spot on commercial aircraft, announced today positive progress following AWU's Global Forum in Boston that will eventually lead to implementation of a wheelchair spot on commercial airline flights.

A recent presentation by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) at AWU's Global Forum has put the organization on a course for achieving their goal of allowing those using a WC-19 rated wheelchair to fly on an airplane. The conference presentation, heard by 130 industry stakeholders, has provided optimism for a change in how wheelchair user's travel. The U.S Department of Transportation is currently in the process of setting parameters for testing and certification starting in 2025.

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Michele Erwin CEO



AWU logo

With the guidance and partnership of Paralyzed Veterans of America and [The National Institute of Aviation Research \(NIAR\)](#), the long road to a wheelchair spot on commercial flights may soon be complete.

“This has been a 15-year journey that we have worked so hard to see come closer to fruition,” said Michelle Erwin,

CEO of AWU. “We are so grateful for the support of so many stakeholders, most notably PVA and NIAR to get us to this point. There is still work to be done, but it’s not a question of why or how anymore, it’s a question of when.”

This meaningful benchmark is important on many levels. With federal action imminent, the work is about to pay off.

“Progress like this does not come easy or quickly. There are many moving pieces,” said Heather Ansley, Chief Policy Officer for PVA. “Working with All Wheels Up and other key stakeholders we are very hopeful that all of this positive news will eventually lead to safe and dignified access for wheelchair users in air travel and emerging modes of transportation.”

While progress is happening that can be celebrated in the short-term, the end goal of a wheelchair spot on a commercial aircraft will require further research and advocacy.

“This is exciting, but there is still a lot of work to be done,” said Stephen Cullen, AWU Board Chair. “We have collaborated with many stakeholders to transform this grassroots effort into a project that is nearing the goal of having a wheelchair spot on commercial aircraft.”

For Erwin this is a personal issue. Her son utilizes a wheelchair, and she has seen firsthand the challenges of traveling with someone who uses a wheelchair.

“This is exciting news for all of us,” said Erwin. “This is huge progress, but it will take time. We are so close.”

This news comes on the heels of the 2024 bipartisan Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act, which was signed into law last May by President Joe Biden. This bill authorizes funding for the FAA to continue its role and responsibilities for five more years and includes several disability-access measures that wheelchair users have wanted for years.

“Testing will focus on tie-down devices that provide safe travel for wheelchair passengers,” said Erwin.

While testing has been done to ensure safe travel for wheelchair users, the recent news will hopefully encourage stakeholders to work together to expedite its approval and implementation.

“I am happy that our previous testing has answered many engineering questions and has allowed us to move forward,” said Luis Gomez, Manager at Advanced Virtual Engineering and Testing Laboratories. “Our work with All Wheels up and continued testing is a validation for the need to have policy changed.”

While a lot of research and development lies ahead, the new progress gives advocates like Erwin hope for the future of air travel.

“We want to let this testing and research take its course,” said Erwin. “We know this will take a lot of investment and effort from the FAA, the Department of Transportation, the airlines, our organization and our advocacy partners.”

With a resolution to a decades-long problem on the horizon, AWU is hopeful that these recent announcements will culminate in the organization’s goal for a wheelchair spot will be achieved.

“It is amazing to think we are getting so much closer to accomplishing what we set out to do,” said Erwin. “It has been a team effort for all stakeholders. I am so proud of the progress made and confident we will finish the job.”

Attention Reporters and Editors: All stakeholders in this release are all available for interviews. Please contact AWU Publicist Robb Leer at 612.701.0608 or robbl@leercommunication.com

About All Wheels Up:

Established in 2011, All Wheels Up (AWU) is the first non-profit organization in the world to fund research and development for a “wheelchair spot” on commercial aircraft. The not-for-profit organization works with airline carriers, aircraft manufacturers, and lawmakers to make airplanes wheelchair accessible for the millions of people who depend on them for mobility and safe seating. AWU’s mission is to forge a future with safer and more dignified accessible air travel through research, advocacy, and community outreach.

About Paralyzed Veterans of America

Paralyzed Veterans of America is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, and the only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated solely for the benefit and representation of veterans with spinal cord injury or diseases. The organization ensures veterans receive the benefits earned through service to our nation; monitors their care in VA spinal cord injury units; and funds research and education in the search for a cure and improved care for individuals with paralysis. As a life-long partner and advocate for veterans and all people with disabilities, PVA also develops training and career services, works to ensure accessibility in public buildings and spaces, and provides health and rehabilitation opportunities through sports and recreation. With more than 70 offices and 33 chapters, Paralyzed Veterans of America serves veterans, their families, and their caregivers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Learn more at PVA.org.

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