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Wow, Now There's an Alternative!

Finally, four wheel drive vehicles adapted for someone who uses a wheelchair! Would you drive in a mini-van, IF you could drive in a truck? For years, wheelchair users have not had the option to drive a 4 x 4 truck or suburban; however, a company out of Fort Wayne, Indiana, GoShichi LLC, has changed the playing field, and as they put it, it's not level.

There are other conversions for people with disabilities who are ambulatory or able to transfer onto a six way power seat and maintain their balance; however, there have never been any trucks where you can take the person and their wheelchair directly into the vehicle!

People can have a choice for a rugged GMC Sierra 2500 Crew Cab, Chevy Silverado Series or the 1500 Series for the Sierra or Silverado. People can now have a Pickup Truck, "pimped out" with all the toys, including a navigation system, three zone climate control, awesome stereo with subwoofer, a rearview camera, and chrome and outside lighting package that will definitely catch the eye of passersby!!



Crew Cab Passenger Side Accessibility

The vehicles are ideal for anyone who rides on rough roads, or anyone who might want to tow a boat or trailer. GoShichi engineered a lift system that is the smoothest that I've ever been on. The center arm is attached directly to the frame; and therefore, the vehicle does not bow even with 600 pounds torquing on one side.

As previously mentioned, GoShichi can convert GMC Sierra's or Chevrolet Silverado's, as well as suburban's. The crew cabs ensure there's enough room for the wheelchair, lift, the driver and up to 3 more passengers.

Not all wheelchairs will fit into the trucks. For example, a manual wheelchair would be way too wide by the time you add the wheels and push rims; however, most power wheelchairs are less than 26" wide and the Sierra 2500 has 59" of headroom, so it should accommodate most tall people.

Shoppers Home Health has the Canadian rights to sell the vehicle; however, they are not actively marketing the product in my opinion. The vehicles are not that expensive when compared to Van conversions. For example, a converted Van, depending what features you put in it, would range between \$60,000.00 and \$80,000.00; whereas, the GoShichi conversions can range between



\$70,000.00 and \$90,000.00. The actual Van conversion cost would average around \$20,000.00; whereas, the GoShichi conversion is approximately \$30,000.00. I first found out about the vehicles when I was doing some online searching. I discovered that Shoppers had the exclusive rights in Canada; and therefore, I went to their Automotive Shop in London, Ontario. They had countless wheelchair accessible vans on display; however, they had the GoShichi Truck parked out back. The 1500 series vehicles have been crash tested in Canada; however, they're waiting for the 2500 series to be approved. The crash testing is scheduled for November this year. They had a 1500 Chevy Silverado with a driver-side conversion. It was a little cramped for space getting around the steering wheel and seatbelt. The lift's pan was sculpted out to contour the engine's console, which also created restrictions.



I then went to Ft. Wayne, Indiana to see their plant and vehicles first hand. I was able to converse with the GoShichi Staff, including Mr. Steve Kitchen, Owner and Fellow Quadriplegic. It became obvious that the 2500 offered more headroom, and they are flexible in adapting their conversion. They were prepared to reconfigure how the seatbelt and the lift's arm would be covered to provide more room while travelling in their converted vehicles. The Vehicles also come with an EZ Lock Tie down System to ensure safety when people off-road.

The vehicles can be built and shipped anywhere in the United States; however, until the 2500 series is crash tested in Canada, Shoppers will not be actively promoting their conversions.

As a businessman, I am always looking at different angles. As I mentioned, the cost is approximately \$80,000.00; however, by establishing a lease and monthly payments, an individual would not have to pay for the vehicle out right, and any of the leasing costs would be a direct tax write off. In addition, wheelchair accessible vans hold their value. For example, a 2005 Chevy Uplander with 150,000 km, would not garner more than \$3,000.00; however, with the wheelchair accessible conversion, it could potentially sell privately on Craigslist or Kijiji for up to \$17,500.00 based on the demand. GoShichi has only been in business since 2009; and therefore, there is not a lot of history with them, but I assume their converted trucks and suburbans will also hold their value.

If you live long enough, anything's possible!

Take care and keep on truckin!

Handwritten signature of Dan Thompson in black ink.

Dan Thompson, RRP, RVP, CLCP

