STATE OF CONNECTICUT

GOVERNOR NED LAMONT

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Governor Lamont Announces Expansion of Virtual Mobility Assistance Pilot Program to Bradley International Airport

Aira Service Now Available at New England's Second-Largest Airport, Increases Independence for Passengers Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision

(HARTFORD, CT) – Governor Ned Lamont today announced that the State of Connecticut's 18-month pilot program offering Aira at no cost for individuals who are blind or have low vision has been expanded to now include Bradley International Airport.

Aira is a virtual interpreting service that uses a smartphone's camera to stream live video to an agent who uses the live video to narrate and interpret what they see, giving users instant access to visual information about their surroundings.

The pilot program **originally began** on October 15, 2021, and covered bus and train public transportation systems in Connecticut. Additionally, Aira can be used for essential tasks, such as grocery shopping or a health care visit. Since its launch, users have made nearly 900 calls and logged more than 10,000 minutes through Aira. Starting today, the no-cost service is available at Bradley International Airport. Users can use the Aira app as soon as they arrive to the airport.

While visual interpretation is available at some private sector establishments, Connecticut is the first state in the nation to provide this type of service to members of the public for free.

"Whether it's accessing a ticket vending machine or navigating one of our busy train stations, over the last several months this pilot program has made a difference in

people's lives," **Governor Lamont said**. "By leveraging new technology, we can help travelers access vital services in our state. As one of the region's premier airports and with more people traveling, it's great news that Bradley International Airport is joining us in this innovative pilot program."

The Aira service allows users to stream live video to an Aira agent who will in turn provide navigational or other support. At the airport, this may be particularly useful for navigating the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) security checkpoint and screening process, interacting with ticket and gate personnel, exploring retail and dining options, and general terminal navigation.

"We are pleased to be joining this pilot program which will enhance our ability to offer exceptional service to our passengers," **Kevin A. Dillon, executive director of the Connecticut Airport Authority, said**. "At Bradley Airport, we strive to make travel easy and convenient for everyone and it is our hope that with the introduction of Aira we will provide a more seamless experience and independence for those traveling who are blind or have low vision."

The Aira pilot program is a collaboration between the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Connecticut Department of Aging and Disability Services. The pilot is being administered by the Connecticut Transportation Institute at the University of Connecticut and is being funded through federal research dollars, making it possible to offer an 18-month subscription at no cost to the user.

"We're excited to have Bradley Airport now included in the pilot program," **Connecticut Department of Transportation Commissioner Joseph Giulietti said**. "Expanding the use of the Aira app increases access, safety, and independence for those with visual impairments. No matter how someone travels in Connecticut, we want them to reach their destination safely."

"We are thrilled to see this innovative technology expanding to Bradley," **Connecticut Department of Aging and Disability Services Commissioner Amy Porter said**. "This public transportation app enhances ease of travel and greater independence for individuals who are blind or have low vision."

The goal of the pilot program is to evaluate the Aira service and its effectiveness in providing travel assistance when using public transportation in Connecticut, as well as access to essential services. A complete report and evaluation of the service will be available at the end of the pilot program, continuing through March 15, 2023.

For more information on this program and instructions on how to sign up, visit **ctrides.com/aira-en**.