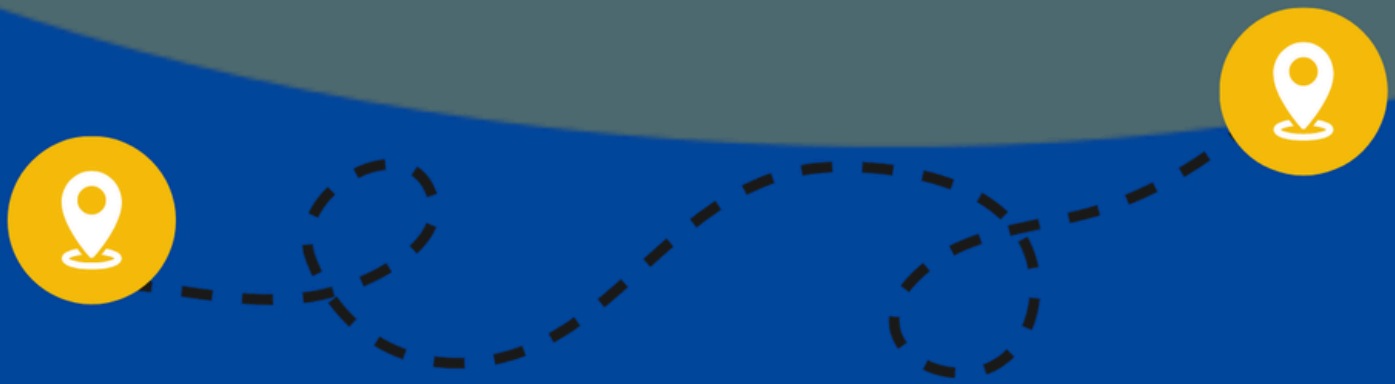
RehabGroup

Investing in People, Changing Perspectives

Barriers to Accessible and Inclusive Transport



Rethinking Transport Accessibility for Disabled People

To build a transport system that truly serves everyone, it is essential that accessibility becomes not just a legal obligation but a lived reality.

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The Verdict

Core Findings

- Unaffordable transport, despite travel passes.
- Unreliable transport cuts people off from employment, medical appointments and social life.
- The infrastructure itself is a barrier.
- Inconsistent communication about accessibility features.
- Zero real-time support when lifts fail or wheelchair spaces are taken.
- Locked out of spontaneous travel by rigid advance-booking rules
- Need for transport alternatives, including financial support for driving lessons.

Spotlight on Local Link and Rural Accessibility

Local Link is a vital rural lifeline, connecting people to hospitals, support centers, and social services. For many, it is the only option, and it is falling short. Passengers consistently report that infrequent schedules and limited routes leave them isolated. To bridge this gap, immediate investment is required to expand coverage and lock in consistent accessibility standards.

From Rights to Action

Accessible transport is the ultimate enabler of independent living.

Inaccessible transport traps people with disabilities in a cycle of structural poverty and isolation. By locking them out of the job market—making it nearly impossible to reach interviews or workplaces, it enforces financial exclusion.

Beyond the economic hit, the lack of transport cuts people off from basic, everyday joys like shopping, cultural venues, and socialising. The ultimate cost isn't just a missed trip; it is a profound level of social isolation that severely damages mental health.



In 2025, the Rehab Group's Advocacy team conducted 90 focus groups with over 600 people supported by RehabCare and the National Learning Network. This massive collaborative effort gathered firsthand accounts of daily transport barriers alongside concrete recommendations for urgent, systemic reform.

These findings expose the stark gaps and failures across Ireland's public transport network. Echoing urgent warnings from national and EU bodies, they prove that our current transport infrastructure is failing its most vulnerable passengers. This isn't a problem that can be patched with ad-hoc fixes; it demands an immediate, systemic overhaul to deliver consistent, inclusive, and user-informed transport solutions nationwide.

Our Stories

Accessible Buses - Inaccessible Stops

Nicola's Story

The Limerick-to-Waterford Expressway Route 55 highlights a gap. Bus Éireann made the fleet 100% accessible, but left the infrastructure behind. Out of 20+ stops, only the terminals in Limerick & Waterford can accommodate a wheelchair.

"I can't use this service due to how difficult it is. I have to give at least 24 hours' notice just so a seat can be arranged for space on the bus. Also, I can't disembark at my stop in Carrick because the bus stop isn't wheelchair accessible."

Eoin's Story

Earlier this year, Eoin Harte, a wheelchair user who attends RehabCare The Waterfront in Carlow, launched a campaign to expose the local accessibility barriers impacting his independence and safety. By filming a powerful "day in the life" video navigating Carlow town, Eoin grabbed major online attention and sat down directly with local officials.

The Result

Carlow County Council listened. They have officially installed a brand-new pedestrian crossing and started work on two more to make the town safer for everyone.

Our Stories

Niall's Story

Niall Connor, a former RehabCare service user, acquired his disability after falling from his bike at age 14 without a helmet. His significant head injury has driven him to campaign for cyclist safety regulation, including mandatory helmets and high-visibility jackets.

With support from RehabCare staff in Dundalk, Niall met with Sean Canney, Minister of State for Road Safety, in Leinster House. He shared his story in a Road Safety Authority video to raise awareness of safe cycling.

The Case for Change

In Ireland, wearing a helmet while cycling is not a legal requirement for any age group. However, the RSA strongly recommends helmet use. Niall believes the law should change and that young people must be made aware of the risks of cycling without proper safety equipment.

Cyclist Spotlight Report: Fatalities & Serious Injuries 2020 - 2024

Between 2020 and 2024, 45 cyclists were killed and 1,278 cyclists were seriously injured. An average of 9 cyclists were killed, and an average of 256 cyclists were seriously injured each year during this five-year period. Cyclists represented 6% of fatalities and 18% of serious injuries during this time period.

Hidden Dangers

Poorly designed transit is a systemic barrier, not a minor flaw.

Hazardous footpaths turn a routine walk to a bus or train station into a high-stakes safety risk. Without a safe route to a bus or train, independence vanishes, forcing people to rely on others or face total isolation.

Blind and deaf pedestrians are left blind to oncoming traffic, while wheelchair users, blocked by broken or missing kerbs, are routinely forced off pavements and straight into active traffic. Our streets are actively pushing the most vulnerable into harm's way.

For people with disabilities, a missing dropped kerb, a broken pavement, or a silent crossing isn't an inconvenience, it's an active hazard. Every single day, flawed infrastructure forces vulnerable pedestrians to gamble with their lives just to cross the street.

Wheelchair users highlight a distressing reality: poor safety and inadequate infrastructure at bus and train stations are actively putting passengers at risk and disrupting their daily lives. When our infrastructure fails to accommodate everyone, we strip away a fundamental human right and replace it with an exhausting daily battle just to move.

When buses fail there is no back-up. In some areas, accessible taxis are non-existent

The pedestrian crossings are being left unfixed, buzzers are not working etc. I'm visually impaired and rely on the sound to tell me it's safe to cross.



Left Stranded

You cannot plan a life around a system you can't trust.

Despite being the most vital transport methods, accessible buses, trains, and taxis are in critically short supply. For rural communities, these stark deficiencies lock people out of education, healthcare, and daily life.

The social cost of irregular transport is missed time at centres and other activities. Respondents are left in the dark by an inadequate TFI App. Buses carry only one wheelchair at a time. If two people with disabilities wish to travel together, they are prevented.

Long waits and packed buses are driving the demand for change. Respondents are asking for an overhaul: shorter, optimised routes, and reliable scheduling.

A cancelled bus makes normal life impossible.

"Public transport that I use - is a total disaster. Buses cancelled no notifications on their app ... many times I have had to walk a couple of kilometres as the bus was a no show and I have training for the Special Olympics to go to"

"Rural transport is really poor, and you still need a lift to the pick up stop. We need more bus stops."

"It's a game of luck to get the bus."

"It's disappointing that our service is provided by Local link and yet they will not accept my free travel card, so we all have to pay. Some people are being charged up to 80 euro per month to travel to their day service."

"When using public transport - more often than not, I am left waiting more than an hour (for a bus that is meant to come every 15 - 20 mins) i.e. 45A - sometimes it is cancelled without any notification on their app."



Access Denied

Wheelchair users face broken journeys before they even reach a bus stop.

When buses fail there is no back-up. In some areas, accessible taxis are non-existent, low-floor buses are scarce, and drivers lack the necessary training and patience.

The rail network is locking out passengers. Wheelchair users face a double barrier: poorly designed carriages without proper ramps, and staff who aren't trained to support them. Wheelchair users must still book 24 hours ahead just to guarantee a ramp, and they are hit with unfair service charges despite holding free travel passes.

Reaching the stop is just the first hurdle. Faulty ramps, limited spaces, and broken lifts derail the rest of the journey.

"We are lucky to have public transport on our doorstep, but the footpaths are what are causing us the issues."

"There is a bar on public buses in the wheelchair area that makes it difficult for motorised wheelchairs to fit in the space."

"The DART can also be challenging for motorised wheelchairs as a result of the bar in the wheelchair areas."

"Currently there is only one wheelchair accessible taxi in Castlebar. This taxi operates Tuesday to Saturday. There are no options the other 2 days."

"The lift at the DART station is never working."



From Rights to Reality

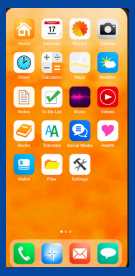
6 ACTIONS FOR ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT

1



Reliable & frequent accessible transport

2



On-demand travel & real-time info

3



Continuous consultation

4



Inclusive design at every step

5



Launch Transport Support Scheme

6



Public & private coordination

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United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability