

# Transport to health

## Public consultation results

Access to healthcare depends on more than the availability of clinical services. How people travel to appointments shapes their ability to receive timely care, stay well and avoid conditions becoming more serious.

We are developing a transport to health strategy for the South East of Scotland. To support this work, we recently ran a public consultation to help us understand more about the barriers and issues, and where improvements are needed.

## Why transport to health matters in our region

- Around **130,000** outpatient appointments are missed every year. Transport is not the only reason, but it plays a major role.
- Missed appointments may cost the NHS between **£4.1** and **£31.3 million** annually.
- Over **1,500** local residents took part in our public consultation.
- One third of respondents have missed or delayed appointments because of transport problems. In NHS Fife this rises to **more than 40%**.

## Who is most affected?

Older and disabled people face the greatest transport challenges, including long walks to bus stops, difficulty boarding buses and limited accessible taxi options.

Communities with lower car ownership experience longer, more complex journeys.

In the most deprived areas, almost half of households don't have access to a car.

Rural and semi-rural communities experience the longest travel times and the weakest public transport connections.

Women make up **73% of unpaid carers** supporting others to attend appointments. This group faces additional pressures where journeys are long or complex.



## Travel time challenges

- Using public transport to get to hospital takes **2 to 4 times longer** than by car.
- Journeys to GP practices by bus take **2 to 3 times longer** than driving, even in urban areas.
- In Clackmannanshire, public transport to hospital can take more than **4 times as long** as the equivalent GP journey.
- Several areas in the region have **no direct public transport link** to a major hospital at all.

## What people told us

**Long and indirect journeys:** Many people rely on two or more buses, long walking sections or long waits between services to reach care.

**Infrequent services:** Hourly or less frequent buses make it hard to reach early, late or time sensitive appointments.

**Parking pressures:** Patients who need to use a car often struggle to park at major hospitals. This creates stress, early arrivals and delays.

**Cost barriers:** Although most people do not report cost as a major factor, those who do are often without car access or without a free bus pass. Long trips involving taxis are particularly expensive.

**Accessibility issues:** Disabled people, older adults and those with long term conditions commonly report that available transport is unsuitable or difficult to use.

## What would help?

- More direct public transport routes to hospitals and clinics.
- Better coordination between different transport services.
- More demand responsive and community transport options.
- Clearer travel information in appointment letters and online.
- Improved hospital parking management.
- More use of virtual and telephone appointments where clinically appropriate.

