TRAM TRAVEL
INFORMATION SHEET

Trams are a popular way to get around in towns and cities and can be a convenient, affordable alternative to car or train travel. They offer level access at many stops, frequent services, and step-free boarding.

This guide provides information for people with spinal cord injury (SCI) and Cauda Equina Syndrome (CES) when using tram systems.

We'll explain how to plan your tram travel, book tickets, and manage your equipment and personal needs during your journey.

- You may also find it helpful to connect with people who can share their experience and advice via your local SIA Community Support Group.
- Also, have a look at SIA's travel and mobility video series.
- Check out SIA's Access All Areas podcast: Episode 3 - Everyday travel.

# TRAM SERVICES IN THE UK

There are tram services in the UK in the following areas:

- Blackpool Tramway
- Edinburgh Trams
- Croydon Tramlink (South London)
- Greater Manchester Metrolink
- Nottingham Express Transit (NET)
- Sheffield & Rotherham - South Yorkshire Supertram
- Birmingham–Wolverhampton - West Midlands Metro
- Docklands Light Railway (DLR) (East London)
- Newcastle upon Tyne & Sunderland - Tyne and Wear Metro
- Glasgow Subway

Find up-to-date information online using the service name to search.
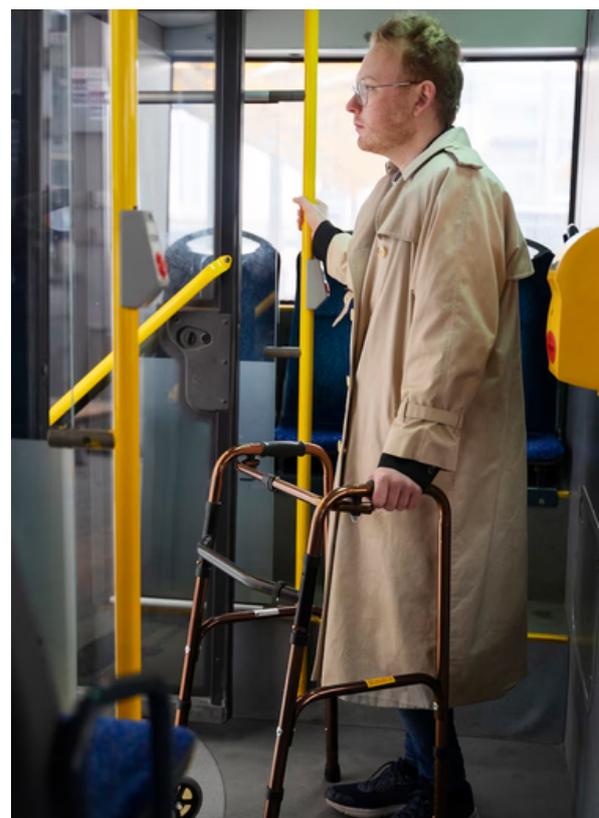
Local tourist information centres can also be helpful sources of information on tram services. Be online or in person? (See 'buying your ticket' and 'passenger assistance').

PLANNING YOUR JOURNEY

Whether you use a wheelchair full-time, or part-time with walking aids, tram systems are generally designed to make travel safe and straightforward.

Planning ahead will help your journey go smoothly. Here are some things to think about when planning a journey by tram.

- Most modern tram systems in the UK are accessible, with low-floor trams and level boarding at stops.
- Platforms may still vary – check the website of your local tram operator for detailed access information. Allow extra time for reaching the platform – some stops may involve slopes, crossings, or lifts.
- Check in advance if your local tram stops are step-free and have lifts if needed. Tram services' websites or AccessAble guides are useful sources of information.
- If you drive, check whether there are Blue Badge bays at tram park & ride sites.
- Some tram systems require you to buy a ticket before boarding, using a ticket machine, app, or smartcard.
- Contactless payment is accepted on many networks – a good option if you find reaching a machine difficult.
- There is usually a dedicated wheelchair space, on trams, which may only accommodate one or two wheelchairs per carriage. If the space is taken, you may need to wait for the next tram.
- If you are new to tram travel, try a short, local journey first to get used to boarding and seating.

Think about ...
- How steady you feel when standing on a moving tram?
- Are you able to walk a short distance to a seat, or would it be safer to ask the driver to wait while you sit down?
- If your walking distance is limited, consider using a wheelchair or mobility aid for longer journeys or busy times.

YOUR PERSONAL AND CARE NEEDS

- Pack a bag with personal care supplies (catheters, leg bags, wipes, gloves), spare clothing, and any medication.
- Think about journey length and timing to plan your care routine to fit with this where possible.
- Most tram services do not have toilets on board. Check where accessible toilets are available along your route or at your destination.
- For most accessible toilets, you'll need a RADAR key (see Motability's guide)
- For longer days out, check Changing Places toilets along your route (see Changing Places on our travel hub)

If you can walk short distances, consider whether you could use station or nearby toilets if needed. Consider whether steps or walking distances would make this difficult.

MOBILITY EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Preparing to travel
- Think about your energy levels, balance, and walking distance when deciding whether to take a wheelchair or walking aid.
- Some tram systems allow mobility scooters if they meet size and weight limits – always check in advance.

During the journey
- All wheelchair users must position their chairs in the marked wheelchair space and apply brakes.
- Some operators provide a strap or support bar for extra stability.

If your mobility is limited, a small aid like a folding stick or rollator might make tram boarding easier and help with balance. Consider bringing a wheelchair if you plan a full day out to reduce fatigue.

TICKETS AND PAYMENT

Most tram systems operate on a 'buy before you board' rule. You can buy tickets at machines on the platform, via a mobile app, or with a smartcard. Staff are usually available at larger interchanges to help if needed.

- Ticket machines: Most tram stops have machines at platform level. Many are designed to be accessible, with lowered screens, touchpads, and contactless options.
- Contactless payment: On many tram systems you can just tap in/out with your bank card or phone (check your operator).
- Mobile apps: Many operators (e.g. Manchester Metrolink, Nottingham, West Midlands Metro) offer mobile ticketing, which avoids queues and reaching machines.
- Concessionary passes: Check if your bus pass, railcard, or concessionary travel pass is valid on the tram. In many regions, disabled concessionary passes allow free or discounted tram travel.
- Some regions also offer a Companion Pass, so a friend, carer, or family member can travel with you at no extra cost.
- Ticket checks: Trams don't always have barriers – instead, staff check tickets onboard. Keep your pass, card, or app handy.

If reaching ticket machines is difficult, using a mobile app or contactless card may be easier.
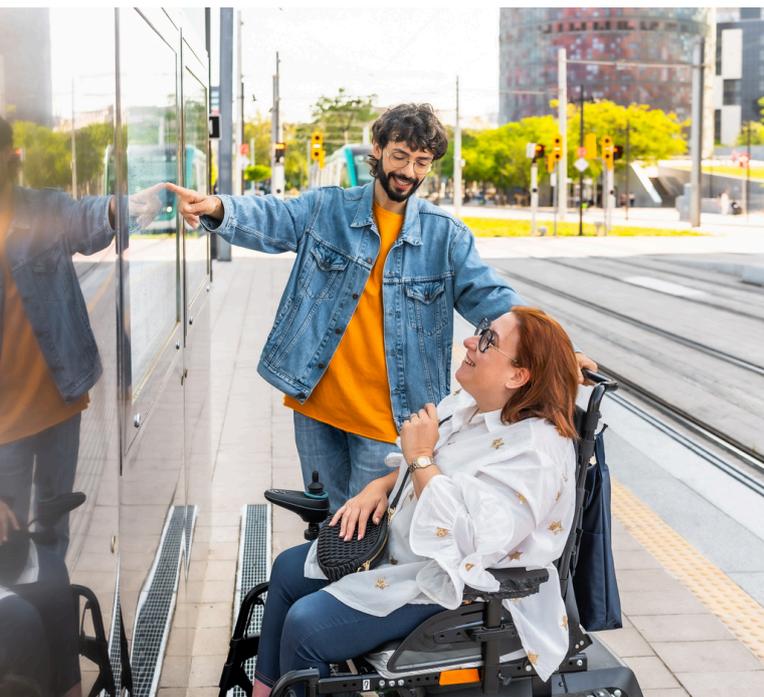
GETTING ON BOARD

- Most UK trams have level boarding from the platform. Occasionally there may be a small gap or step.
- Drivers are usually able to wait while you board safely and position yourself.
- Boarding can be busy at peak times – let other passengers know you need space.

How do I get assistance?

- Tram drivers and staff can usually deploy ramps if there is a small gap between the platform and tram.
- They are not expected to lift you or your equipment, but they can explain boarding safely.
- Most tram operators have an accessibility phone line or email – you can contact them in advance if you want reassurance about your route.

Step carefully onto the tram, using handrails if available. Ask the driver to wait until you are seated if you feel unsteady.

SAFETY AND COMFORT DURING TRAVEL

- Always position your wheelchair in the designated space and apply brakes.
- Keep mobility aids (sticks, crutches, walkers) close to you so they don't become a trip hazard.
- Hold onto handrails when walking to or from your seat, as trams can start moving quickly.
- Store bags securely on your lap or under your seat, not in the aisle.
- If you feel unwell or unsafe, alert the driver or use the emergency intercom.

Choose a seat near the door to minimise walking distance. Keep your walking aid within easy reach.

ARRIVING AT YOUR DESTINATION

- Use maps and apps to check accessibility at your destination stop.
- Plan ahead for onward travel: taxis, buses, or walking routes.
- Think about return travel, especially at peak times when wheelchair spaces may be full.
- Always have a backup plan if you face disruption (e.g. an alternative stop or different tram line).

TOP TIPS FOR A SMOOTHER JOURNEY

✅ Check live updates on the operator's app or website.

✅ Position yourself near the wheelchair symbol on the platform where the accessible doors stop.

✅ If walking with aids, allow extra time to board safely.

✅ If in a wheelchair, don't hesitate to ask politely if someone is in the designated space.

For more information, visit our Travel Hub or contact us at:
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e: travel@spinal.co.uk   t: 0800 980 0501 (freephone support line: Monday - Friday 10.00am-4.00pm)

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