

# **The future of transport outside cities: a report on roundtables held by the University of Hertfordshire Smart Mobility Unit**

**This report documents a series of roundtable discussions on the future of transport outside cities in July 2022 organised by the Smart Mobility Unit (SMU) at the University of Hertfordshire to inform the Government's Future of Transport Rural Strategy and capture information on some of the key issues and innovative schemes underway in areas outside of cities. The format for the roundtables was 120-minute virtual meetings via Zoom. The meetings were sponsored by the Department for Transport, Hertfordshire County Council and England's Economic Heartland Sub National Transport Body.**

The term 'rural' has specific connotations, whereas the broader definition 'outside cities' includes outer suburbs and other kinds of places like new towns, market towns and places at the edge of city regions. In 2020 the University of Hertfordshire Smart Mobility Unit ran some roundtables on the future of transport outside cities. There has been limited focus on this in transport research and policy, and these roundtables were an attempt to begin to redress the balance. The roundtables contributed to the DfT's call for evidence on the "Future of Transport: Rural Strategy" ([www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-transport-rural-strategy-call-for-evidence/future-of-transport-rural-strategy-call-for-evidence](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-transport-rural-strategy-call-for-evidence/future-of-transport-rural-strategy-call-for-evidence)). In supporting the DfT in finalising this strategy, the SMU ran a further series of online roundtables in 2022 to update the previous ones and to explore further aspects of rural transport. The strategy is due for completion in late 2023.

The 2022 roundtables looked at

- Improving freedom of choice and availability of transport
- Accessibility and Inclusivity
- Decarbonisation and Adaptation
- Deliverables and Use Cases.

Those invited included representatives from local councils, central government, sub-national transport bodies, technology companies, transport operators, consultants, researchers and NGOs. Papers were circulated in advance to support more focus on discussion and questions. This report includes the detailed discussions, anonymised except for the speakers, and takes points and references put in the online chat as well as in the discussion itself. For roundtables 2 and 3, a summary of the discussion is provided as well as the detailed notes. As in 2020, the discussions were very rich with a number of key points, which are summarised and discussed at the end. It should be noted that this report represents the key points made by participants during the roundtables, and are not the views of the sponsoring organisations.

### Acknowledgements

The roundtables were chaired by Stephen Joseph, professor at the Smart Mobility Unit, and notes were taken and written up by Susan Dye, John Conlon and Alex Buckland-Stubbs. The director of the SMU, Dr Scott Copsey, and other SMU staff – Sue Walsh, John Conlon and James Cecil – supported the organisation of the events and Alex-Buckland-Stubbs helped to pull this report together. Thanks also go to the Dean of the School of Life and Medical Sciences, Dr Richard Southern, and others at the University, notably Professor Michael Page, for their support.

# Roundtable 1: Improving freedom of choice and availability of Transport in Rural Areas

30 June 2022

## Participants

There were 24 participants. Sectors represented were national, sub-regional and local government, technology/innovation, transport consultancy, academic research and non-governmental organisations. Stephen Joseph chaired the discussion.

## Aim

The theme for this roundtable centred on four questions:

- How can central and local government improve the freedom of choice and availability of transport in rural and remote areas?
- How can other transport modes (public transport, shared mobility, DRT and active travel) be supported so as to improve access and availability for rural communities?
- What is the role of new technologies in solving long standing challenges such as car dependency and how can local authorities and communities be supported to embrace these?
- What infrastructure improvements can help integrate travel modes?

## Papers circulated in advance

- Richard Dilks, Chief Executive of CoMoUK  
Shared mobility outside cities: challenges and opportunities.
- Keith Kelly, Enterprise Car Club  
Deliverables and Use Cases

## Presentations

### Richard Dilks, CoMoUK

- 1 Collaborative Mobility UK (CoMoUK) was founded in 1999 and is the UK's national charity for shared transport's social, economic and

environmental benefits. Collective memberships include car share, bike and e-bike share, e-scooter share, DRT and lift sharing.

- 2 Car club membership has increased to a total of 784,122 (24% increase over 12 months), with 450,231 active members (90% increase over 12 months). There are 5,806 car club vehicles in the UK. There is strong growth across the country. Low car lifestyles are supported. Shared cars are the predators of private cars. Each car has 150 users. The positive impacts of this were summarised. Bikeshare is a powerful catalyst for getting people back in the saddle. Many users go on to purchase a bike. Strong mental and physical health benefits recorded as a result of riding a bike.
- 3 Rural transport options vary greatly. Successful initiatives are small scale and scattered across the UK. ComoUK aims to coordinate these by working together to address issues e.g. insurance. There is an opportunity to select a few schemes and develop them.
- 4 DRT can sometimes provide a better user experience than fixed route buses. There are many use cases. Starting points were noted, including developing innovation pilot areas and bringing congruent services together to provide a package of options. Future potential research in Scotland is planned.

**CONS1 [CHAT]:** We are developing a village-focussed PAYG back-to-base e-bike scheme [www.communityebikes.org](http://www.communityebikes.org). It'll launch in Staveley, Cumbria in the next month with an aim to translate to other villages in Cumbria. One aim is testing the carbon reduction potential modelled by CREDS <https://www.creds.ac.uk/publications/e-bike-carbon-savings-how-much-and-where/> of e-bikes in (more) rural areas - as well as providing healthy transport and tackling car ownership. It \*looks\* viable on a spreadsheet so we'll see how things unfold.

- 1** ECC is part of Enterprise Rent-a-Car, which has 450+UK-wide locations, with 94% of the UK population living within 10 miles of one. Two services are available to tempt drivers from their vehicles. Car Club members receive a discount on car hire. Customer pick-ups are available. Car clubs need to be made available to the maximum number of people.
- 2** New approaches include bringing the surrogate driver scheme into the car club and making vehicles available to those without a driving licence to support mobility. Car clubs are based at many stations. Customers travel great distances by train and with reduced carbon. The leisure angle is important. It is a community resource. It is now working with ferry companies on the Isle of Wight.

**ACAD2 Q:** For disabled customers how successful has the scheme been? On what scale? **A:** It has yet to be launched publicly. It is available at all branches. Vehicles do not have to be modified because an able-bodied person will do the driving.

## Overview of discussion

The following abbreviations indicate the sector making comments:

**ACAD** Academic

**NGO** Non-governmental organisation

**CONS** Consultant

**CC** County council

**REGG** Regional transport body

**GOV** National government.

**INNOV** Innovation sector

**MOB** Mobility

**[CHAT]** denotes written contributions made in real time during the spoken dialogue.

The discussion is summarised as follows

## Sweating the Assets

**Q: How can central and local government improve the freedom of choice and availability of transport in rural and remote areas?**

**A: INNOV5** By focusing on local pilot schemes and innovations. However, it is not something that is in place yet. Scotland has made more progress on the policy front than the rest of the UK. Recently, in rural areas, there has been a trend of doing more than one thing at the same time. This is a test of the positivity of the direction of travel. All shared transport user research over the years confirms this – they do not just use one mode. The only dominant mode is the private car. Different options will work for different journey needs. A roll-out across the country, though desirable, would not be as effective as a more concentrated approach in, for example, just three areas. Active participation of key stakeholders from the local authorities' highways planning department would be essential. Aggregators such as universities and the NHS must be engaged. For lift sharing and DRT options for the journey to work, a team is assembled and then have a decent run at it. Earlier Total Transport pilots were not run for long enough. A reasonable time frame (three years) and funding are required. What is not working well can be adapted, rather than waiting for the project to end.

**ACAD1:** Innovation partnership was an interesting way to do this. Experiments and innovations have been supported but then, at the end of three years, they tend to fall over when funding runs out. Is focusing on local well-monitored, well-timed pilot schemes feasible?

**CONS4:** More learning needs to be taken from what is going on abroad where we see things working much better if they are scaled up.

**CONS1:** Stability is needed when piloting these things. However, if we are not careful, we just spend our time running pilots. The SMARTA programme<sup>1</sup> shows that we just need to get on with stuff. If one thing can be asked for, it is 'can we just learn from the pilots, scale everything up and stop running pilots'. They are still needed but we have learnt enough already. Beyond cities, how do we sweat assets more efficiently, so that transport beyond cities is perpetually marginal and stable? The vehicle bought as a bus can't be used as a taxi or a car club car or the car club car can't be used as a taxi

<sup>1</sup> <https://ruralsharedmobility.eu/>

or a bus. There is inefficiency in the use of assets because of the lower densities outside cities. Is there a way to pilot a relaxation of regulations in order to allow the vehicle assets to be used more efficiently in less dense areas?

**CONS4:** In agreement. There are many regulatory problems with densification. A pilot in Hertfordshire has run into these problems because it wants to use other vehicles from within its fleet, but the regulatory framework is hampering this. The pilot involved Hertfordshire receiving DfT rural transport funding, involving three minibuses, expanding to five in the second year, covering a large area of villages and hamlets, around the market town of Buntingford. The DRT is configured so as to access stations or travel locally. The initial year has been successful. Interesting patterns have emerged. The user group is much younger than was originally anticipated, including commuters and college students. The routes have been reconfigured to add semi-fixed routes to get students to college, thereby not relying on lifts or taxis. Simultaneously, there is a move to put the local access dial-a-ride buses on the same platform and add them to the offer, so that they can be used interchangeably. These five minibuses are covering 400 square miles of territory. The vehicles are licensed under section 19, so it is not yet possible to enable them to be used interchangeably within the fleet for DRT within the area.

**CC2:** This type of problem has been an issue for some time e.g. when attempting to get community transport moving in Oxfordshire. The legislation causes challenges.

**CONS5 [CHAT]:** I've been talking about maximising assets for years. I've been involved in a project recently focusing on DRT for people and parcels. This takes place overseas and we used to have the PostBus etc, but the legislative framework creates barriers for initiatives to share transport assets on the road in ways that maximise efficiency and reduce carbon.

**CONS5:** The legislative framework in Scotland does not help but it is a UK-wide issue. Vehicles carrying combinations of people and goods is nothing new but there is more awareness of it. Bus operators are looking at this, because they realise that DRT on its own does not stack up. How do you change the business model when funding is for a fixed time only? Internationally, Japan has 90 MaaS projects, but they do not use the word pilots. The mindset has to be changed that a project lasts for six months. What about three years? Travel behaviour change does not happen overnight. Legislative restrictions are not just around DRT. More widely, frameworks and legislation impact on car users. It is not just about getting rid of the car; in rural areas, it is

about maximising the use of the car that's there. Ownership is essential and you will never get away with it or without it. They need it for the inclusivity, but how do you afford to pay for it with the current fuel crisis? It has become something of a middle-class problem. It is only now that the politicians are hearing about it because voters are voting with their feet. Many people have two cars. The mindset must be changed, and we need to change the legislation to allow the flexibility we see overseas. There is more maximisation of assets in other countries because they don't have the red tape.

**CONS1 [CHAT]:** So a targeted regulation pilot sounds like a useful idea. The idea that emerged from the first set of roundtables was a "chameleon car" - is it a (small) bus? a taxi? a car club car? a CT bus? a (small) DRT bus? ... relating to local demands, it shouldn't matter.

**ACAD1:** The theme emerging is to avoid arguments with the Treasury and instead consider sweating assets.

**NGO3:** Three points:

- 1 Hope Valley Climate Action is interested in decarbonisation and transport in one of the three main themes in their work. DfT has supported a pilot to look at what can be done in a small geographical area. An integrated approach is essential to include cars, public transport, walking and cycling. The perspective is community, not the local authority or private sector. Relevant to the discussion is that visitor travel as well as local travel is important to the area. Transport provision is predicated on considering local residents. The ratio of visitor travel to local travel is 2:1, so visitor travel is important.
- 2 Another feature of current thinking is about certain aspects of infrastructure. Walking and cycling for everyday purposes cannot be developed unless you have safe and attractive routes. They can become complicated and expensive. Another aspect of infrastructure is looking at shared mobility and DRT. This complements fixed routes and fixed timetable services along with the rail and bus services. To be high quality, affordable and accessible are all important. Sometimes the bus services do not always deliver this.
- 3 Finally, long-term change is more important than a successful pilot. In the UK, the means of government coordination is inadequate compared to other European countries like Switzerland. What is required is for government at a national and regional level to get a firmer grip on the issues and to look comprehensively

at how we travel within a given area, through a more comprehensive approach for walking and cycling, planning for public transport provision and being ready to grasp the nettle in rural areas of managing car use. It is assumed people can travel to popular rural beauty spots and park close by, when the reality is very different. Consideration must be given to the consequences of this.

**CONS1 [CHAT]:** Another answer to the question - mode agnostic information for rural communities of possible transport options and how these (best) work together. A lot of development is bottom-up and communities just are not aware of what is possible.

**ACAD6 [CHAT]:** The University owns and has operated a fleet of c.75 vehicles for c.30 years ([www.unobus.info/](http://www.unobus.info/)). The managers are interested/keen to explore 'maximising assets'/shared mobility alongside its 'traditional fixed timetable operation/DRT option that has been mentioned. Through the SMU ([www.herts.ac.uk/study/schools-of-study/life-and-medical-sciences/business-support-and-consultancy/smart-mobility-unit](http://www.herts.ac.uk/study/schools-of-study/life-and-medical-sciences/business-support-and-consultancy/smart-mobility-unit)), we are building applied research that builds in long term behavioural/business models, using the University as a rural 'Mobility hub'/Rural MaaS that includes student learning in the MSc ([www.herts.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate-masters/msc-transport-planning](http://www.herts.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate-masters/msc-transport-planning)). Interesting presentations and comments very much back this thinking up and SMU colleagues would be interested in building collaborative research links.

**NGO4:** An important point to consider is around sweating the assets and long-term funding costs. Understanding the cost of a car club or mobility hub provision e.g. in Flitwick, Bedfordshire, so that it can be factored into the long-term public transport provision is a struggle for local authorities. Broad clarity about the costs would be helpful, which could then be fed back to the local authorities, so that there is a broader understanding of how it works.

**MOB1:** On the issue of transparency of costs, Flitwick is an example of where, if a connection can be made between Enterprise and the community, there is an Enterprise branch in Leighton Buzzard close by and a vehicle could be delivered. If there is demand in Flitwick, this need can be facilitated and turned into a benefit for the community. Looking at Portsmouth, where there was no community car club; within 48 hours there were 14 requests, so now there are two cars and vehicles at the local leisure centre in the middle of that community without any subsidy. Local authorities like to create barriers and bureaucracy. Regulation creates issues. Enterprise

can trial something for 12 months and this can lead to long-term operations e.g. in Leeds. There is a need to get on with things and break barriers down.

Liftshare and NHS Trusts have been contacted in the past about a model with cargo vehicles during the day, which perform a business travel need for an NHS Trust that could be located in the evenings in rural communities, where NHS employees are clustered and thereby provide a service to the community. The barrier there was that the Treasury and HMRC viewed that as a benefit in kind and was therefore taxable. This then makes it unsustainable to operate for any operator because we are being taxed out of a sustainable solution.

**MOB1 [CHAT]:** Enterprise and Liftshare have looked into connecting car club and car share with vehicles used during the day by employees of, for example, an NHS trust for business travel, with the asset moving at night, weekends and holidays to rural communities. One challenge has been Benefit in Kind taxation regulations on the non-corporate use, making the model more costly to operators than necessary!

**REGG2, Midlands Connect:** Rural Mobility and Decarbonisation

- 1 Midlands Connect is a national transport body that covers the East and West Midlands area voluntary partnership, comprising the local transport authority, business and stakeholder groups, LEPs, highways etc. The role is to provide research expertise within the partnership. There are rural areas in the Midlands, e.g. Herefordshire and Lincolnshire, plus more urban areas like Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.
- 2 Rural Mobility was initially looked at in 2019. A toolkit was developed. One way to improve places was to look at rural hubs. This is not just transport hubs, bundling transport demand to get people out of areas, but also trying to deliver services into the hubs themselves. Detailed guidance was developed in support of this, for local authority partners on how to identify the right location and conditions for rural hubs and then how to make them commercially viable. Rural hubs could really regenerate market towns and villages with enhanced transport connectivity, but also to make it easier to access services and reduce the need to travel in the first place.
- 3 With this guidance, desktop studies were carried out in four different locations. Funding was allocated to two local authorities, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, to apply the guidance and feedback was generated. Nottinghamshire's



focus was on the northeast districts of the county, with some sparsely populated villages, linked largely by country lanes and enabling people to connect with bus services and to access the bigger towns and beyond. Several possible locations were identified where bus routes cross over and where there was already infrastructure suitable for businesses to interchange. Ollerton was identified as the hub location for a range of reasons e.g. demographics, existing transport services, more seamless links from the town to attractions. An outline business case was written for the introduction of the DRT services in the area that included services such as car clubs, community functions such as health care and shared workspaces etc.

**CONS5 [CHAT]:** On pilots there's also the mindset change required on what success looks like. Not £1 in and £1.20 back but I say time and time again about the social, environmental and economic gains. In Japan DRT services have 9 people per day and they see that as success, they do not cut the project.

## Mobility as a Service and Data sharing

**ACAD2:** Three points:

- 1 Research was shared on recent offerings and small-scale pilots in smart labs. Issues arose around expansion into the real world when they seemed not to work. This has been called the Frankenstein monster syndrome because it is a hopeful monstrosity based on various elements, such as Mobility as a Service (MaaS). The idea for research is that, when in a pilot, you are basically a network of suppliers that deliver a service. When you get out of the pilot and into the real world, the network has to be duplicated in a wider scale. What has been said so far about regulation is important and is an issue.
- 2 There is also the issue of collaborating e.g. sharing data, with larger operators. In the press it is reported that train and bus companies are reluctant to share data with MaaS applications. The research looks at how this duplication can occur. E.g. how can a MaaS provider establish a wider network outside a pilot? Regulation could support that e.g. local authorities could encourage providers to share the data and to adopt the common standards. Regulators and local authorities need to be looked at as catalysts to try to encourage the formation of networks due to the lack of will of some members to interact. This is a good direction of travel to take. We know pilots can be successful and can deliver some

environmental benefits. However there is the monster in the room. The question is how can it be accepted by consumers and potential partners and providers?

- 3 A recently submitted paper provides a frame for the research. Colleagues in this group could be called on to be providers and authorities and to ask what can be done to try to foster the creation of networks outside of pilots.

**NGO3 [CHAT]:** Our experience is that peer to peer car share is more realistic in a dispersed rural area rather than a car club.

**CONS1 [CHAT]:** In principle, peer to peer (P2P) should work in less dense areas, but evidence shows it hasn't taken off. P2P is similar use cost as dedicated car club vehicles due to P2P insurance costs.

**CONS4 [CHAT]:** P2P features in the project we are funding with Derbyshire for our rural mobility competition winners

**NGO3 [CHAT]:** Will the high cost of EVs change the dynamic of vehicle sharing?

**MOB1 [CHAT]:** You can request an Enterprise Car Club vehicle at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PX5NN59>

**ACAD1:** Data sharing is recognised as an issue.

**CONS5:** In the research for a new paper on MaaS, it transpires that the data issue is not unique to the UK. What is unique is how it is managed by the UK and how stakeholders are brought together. Obviously, there is a public/private split with how transport is delivered, and it is somewhat different to many other models around the world. That is a huge stumbling block. The commercial element wants to be part of the process, but it always comes down to priorities and who funds it, while at the same time dealing with the pandemic and needing to get people moving. The data is bigger and is not just about APIs talking to each other; it's about the people and the user. Many MaaS projects globally have not taken into consideration the users and instead have made assumptions. Several elements need to be considered. We are not alone with the challenges.

**ACAD1:** This topic will be covered in more detail in the fourth roundtable.

**CONS1 [CHAT]:** Do we yet have evidence that that service integration in rural areas (MaaS or otherwise) leads to better viability for the individual parts? i.e. attract more types of people / more often etc...

**CC2 [CHAT]:** For info the Herts CC Bus Service Improvement Plan includes further development of our DRT offer in the southwest of the county. My view is that as a society we need to decide if the health and climate benefits of sustainable travel are of enough value to us to warrant a sensible level of public subsidy that supports the behaviour change needed.

**MOB1:** There is agreement on the data issue. The data is not the issue; it is the commercial value placed on the data that is the challenge for the operator. Additionally, there is also the perception of 'what's in it for me'. In the UK, with the balance of public/private operators, the private operator will say 'if this ticket is booked, through the MaaS app, with a cost to the operator, I would want them to use the app directly because the margins are greater'. That is the commercial reality. It is easier to square the circle in Europe because there are fewer players and stronger state regulation. That framework does not operate in the UK.

**INNOV5:** The word 'pilot' was not meant to be triggering for colleagues. The goal is to look beyond the pilots. They are a stress test to see what works, what does not work, then to modify it to make it work, otherwise change cannot be sustained. The rest of Britain outside urban areas cannot be ignored on transport decarbonisation to get there on the numbers alone because it won't work. There are equity and fairness issues that need to be considered with that kind of rural exclusion. The data side is definitely difficult, but, taking the pilot idea, instead of waiting to 'get all the ducks in a row' before starting any such scheme, which is impractical, possible collaborations have to have a litmus test to assess if it is good enough or not and should the scheme go ahead or not, whereby stakeholders then agree to share data. This might then be a basic version of what might become the design, where the UK government is needed to set some new rules of the game that we don't have at the moment. Opportunities exist in the UK, but they are disaggregated; the proposed Transport Bill is looking to introduce a permitting scheme for shared micro-mobility. That will require a data sharing standard to be introduced and agreement will have to be part of that if it is to be a success. The next few years will see bits and bobs of this. This is why it will come back to the government's doors, and it won't be good enough. The response needs to be more coherent. MaaS is a single front with which to unify all of this. There is nothing in the MaaS code of practice consultation recently that goes anything like as deeply as is required.

**CONS4:** The challenge with MaaS is that, from whatever perspective you take, the UK is relying on

privately initiated MaaS schemes. On the continent, there is more advanced MaaS underway. It's much more embedded in the different transport systems, but both still focus on the centre of cities. We have a problem with people coming from the rural areas into the centre of cities and creating congestion, parking and air quality issues. No one has addressed the fact that the rural areas generate traffic for the city centres and there are no mechanisms to redistribute money for public transport outside of city centres or legal frameworks that enable equity. The nearest is Nottingham with its workplace parking levy. That is an isolated example. No one has cracked the rural MaaS conundrum yet.

**CONS1:** What about social enterprise in more rural areas and its role to be the integrating body at the community catchment scale, to bring together different services, to hopefully maximise potential for viability?

**NGO3 [CHAT]:** Need to be clear about what we mean by 'social enterprise'. If we mean trading operations, that's what [for example] community transport can deliver.

**CONS4 [CHAT]:** Will be good to see examples - it is the interconnectedness with the bigger system and the super dense urban areas that I'm not seeing. Private MaaS relies on dense urban areas and the successful European things spread between cities. Seeing really good DRT and other low-density services that connect broadly to many services would be good.

**ACAD1:** This was discussed during the Total Transport pilots, involving UH and other universities, about running a social enterprise holding company that would be made up of local authorities, NHS trusts etc. with the idea of pooling transport funding and creating services, so that better services would result, including transport for non-emergency patients. Unfortunately, it never got going, but it was a model for rural areas that could still be called upon for the Hope Valley scheme. It is a possibility. Social enterprise relates to trading operations. It's about 'holding the ring'.

**CONS1:** Conversations and triangulating around MaaS continue as it emerges from the urban areas. The fragility of the viability of various services, the benefits on integration to try to contribute to viability; therefore in the context of more rural areas, the leading bodies are different to those in more urban areas. So, if a social enterprise at the community level is the leading body, how do all these things start mixing together to maximise benefits? The answer is not apparent.



**NGO3:** Social enterprise is a useful term, however social enterprise might be effective in running a particular kind of trading operation e.g. a community transport scheme or developing a mobility hub. In a different sense, social enterprise is more akin to what Hope Valley Climate Action is doing, via Travelling Light, trying to bring together in the local area from a community base all the different stakeholders (parish councils, tourism businesses, local interested people, public authorities, etc) to think about what is done to bring this all together. This community base may unlock perspectives, connections and resources that would be difficult for a public authority to unlock, such as how to address road pricing or traffic restraints. Politically, local authorities will find it difficult to get involved. Community groups can get involved to influence opinion in a way that is easier than for an operator to do. The achievement is not social enterprise in its purest form but is much more about what can be done from a community base to bring together different issues and stakeholders to achieve beneficial change. So far, local groups can make significant progress by bringing the different players together to consider the way they operate e.g. Northern Rail to consider their services in the area or the county council considering a transport hub.

**CONS5 [CHAT]:** In 2018/19, we created a social enterprise to take forward MaaS in a rural area. Collaboration, funding and reinvestment in an area fits the social enterprise model.

**CONS5:** It cannot be assumed that all information is available online. A lot happens on the ground that does not necessarily get exploited commercially online. Pilot websites disappear when they cease to be supported financially. The social enterprise model was reviewed in 2017 and a model was developed. The stakeholder piece is crucial to any success within rural areas. This led to the setting up of SRITC <sup>2</sup> to bring all the stakeholders together with expertise in each field, leading to people being more willing to use those services. There are projects out there looking at this that are not in the mainstream at the moment.

**ACAD1:** The social enterprise discussion is closely linked to the hubs.

**REGG2:** Social enterprise is one business model to be explored but there are many different models for running hubs. They need to be commercially viable, unless they are to be subsidised like any other public transport service. In the Derbyshire project, a lot of analysis was carried out around the socio-economic context and travel patterns. As expected, there was

incoherence and gaps in the sustainable transport vision. There were many providers. There were Covid-19 related behaviour changes. These were threatening the already fragile transport provision, including visitor numbers to the area. Thought was given to creating physical hubs around which the mobility offer could revolve. They looked at Buxton Station and the future health service there. They looked at Hope Station. The projects involved a lot of engagement with stakeholders. Lead partners were identified who would then take the hub forward. A hub would only succeed in the long-term if there was a driving force that would anchor all the other aspects, in this case the NHS at Buxton Station, where there was going to be a health centre, a permanent fixture of the hub around which everything else would revolve.

Further potential was identified for a fully integrated operating model of DRT. It was put forward for the next phase of rural mobility work. A rural mobility feature was launched via competition; practitioners were asked to come up with a one-page summary of an innovative idea. Three were shortlisted. With some funding, they were tasked with coming up with a usable idea in that area that would be scalable in the future. Derbyshire was the winner of the competition. The prize was £100k. Their solution was to work with Cenex to develop their proposal, which was an online EV charging and car sharing platform. Different initiatives were integrated, including car sharing, EVPHP, along with whatever other initiatives were going on in the region. The pilot runs for a year and it will be interesting to see what comes out of it. The hope is that it will be self-funded in the future.

**MOB1:** Enterprise has a couple of car club vehicles at Buxton Stations, and they are popular with small businesses and social enterprises operating in central Buxton. This means that use case scenarios need to be considered. Looking at the booking data, they are used by people who live in Buxton. Businesses that operate in Buxton would be challenged to survive if they had to own a vehicle but can actually share a vehicle and become sustainable as businesses, providing employment, making sure the economy of Buxton is thriving and generating employment skills opportunities. All of those are not carbon arguments but are arguments for car clubs in rural locations in particular, supporting employment and commerce. This is not always the language that is used about car clubs in rural locations.

**ACAD1:** That link of vehicles with businesses is interesting. Comment has been made about the

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<sup>2</sup> <https://ruralmobility.scot/>

linkage of goods, transport, bus passes etc. Is this translatable for England's Economic Heartland?

**REGG1:** Yes, it is. Picking up on the conversation around business models for mobility hubs, EEH is about to start a project with both WSP and CoMoUK around a piece of work and a toolkit for local authorities when they are potentially considering looking beyond mobility hubs and considering the location. EEH is conducting a supporting piece of work on web tech compliant business cases. It might be interesting, when the commission starts, to see if we get to a point where the social enterprise model could be, if not a competing model, then another model that local authorities could consider when they are looking at mobility hubs. Looking at the Midlands Connect model, there are great synergies in the heartland area for the work that Midlands Connect has done. Lots of authorities are talking around current mobility hubs as a focus in terms of rural transport issues, but there is still a lot of work to be done before we start to deliver these things.

**ACAD1:** Norfolk has done a lot of work in this area.

**REGG3:** Transport East is the lead sub-national body on rural transport for Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Thurrock and Southend. Transport East, as part of the business plan, is looking to taking some work forward in this area, being the lead on work around rural mobility. This work is trying to engage with partners to develop a task force that will look at projects that have been rolled out across the country. The successful ones that are sustainable could be taken forward and rolled out elsewhere.

The next stage is to look at a costed delivery programme for doing that and to look at how that investment might be drawn down. Looking at the Norfolk experience, following the pilots, it has been the case that if they are funded then they work, but they require funding to be ongoing and local authorities cannot always provide this, so there is a need to look at sustainable models that can be self-funding and taken forward. That is what the Transport East work is about.

**CONS4:** On the subject of social enterprise and involving people, from personal experience, having a good idea and sharing it in the local area, there is the feeling sometimes of not being embraced, even when all the requirements of the council, government, net zero carbon requirements etc have been met. It sometimes feels like a fight to do the things you are doing. This issue has not yet been cracked within local authorities, to embrace the people that are going with the flow and getting those people to be proper champions. Being self-employed allows more independence. There are people locally

who wish to effect change and work on mobility and travel hubs, who all work full-time and have families, and yet they are expected to devote time to everyone else in their lives. We are not always embracing those people as closely as we should on subjects such as low traffic neighbourhoods and moving road space from cars to bikes. Those people should be key allies, yet they have to struggle to get modest funding for e.g. bike parking at the local school, so what lies ahead? How do we change this to develop these good ideas? That is the way to get things done without getting the backlash.

**REGG2 [CHAT]:** I attended a CIHT webinar yesterday about vision led planning which featured a project between TPS and the Royal College of Art which had a really interesting approach to community engagement.

**ACAD1:** Is this a community transport point that could go to champions and people with good ideas to make things happen? Is this something that sub-national bodies would be able to do more easily than individual local authorities?

**REGG2:** It is more of a local authority than a regional authority initiative, because they are much closer to the community. Our audience is very much the local authorities.

**ACAD1:** Many of the initial agenda questions have been addressed in the course of the discussion. In the previous roundtables, there was discussion about community not mobility hubs for the reasons raised above. From the DfT perspective, the idea of hubs that are not just bringing together transport but services as well, using technology to do that, might be something that the rural strategy might want to pick up on.

## Drop the Pilot?

**NGO4:** This brings the discussion back to the original issue about pilots. As a public transport provider, you want to provide a service that has the opportunity to make inroads to address issues around the lack of rural transport. If a rural delivery hub could be delivered that provides opportunity in terms of self-financing, if you contract services with Enterprise or an e-bike firm, they need the assurance that the opportunities are long term, and they will then be willing to make the investment. The issue is if we do not give those long-term guarantees, it is difficult to incentivise the providers to establish a hub in a rural setting. That's why the work being done by EEH is trying to say that if you had a mobility hub in a rural location, these are the costs that would have to be addressed and here's how you might go about that. It is a piece of work that, it is hoped, will be valuable.

It will not answer every question. It will clarify some of the issues that authorities are struggling with.

**ACAD1:** Final questions were invited.

**NGO4: LCWIPS – Local Cycling & Walking**

**Investment Plans:** where does rural mobility stand with regards to public transport provision or the wider active travel agenda, EVs, climate change emergency etc? For example, if you had an opportunity in a rural community, with a car club, e-bike provision, a small parcel pick-up and drop-off, community coffee shop, that's supportable when you have motorised or EV availability, but what is done to support more active cycling and walking? It is still a question that authorities are struggling with, in terms of how you connect rural communities outside the normal road network. Is rural connectivity focused on DRT and car clubs or is it about walking and cycling?

**INNOV5:** Point noted about making life hard for people who want to do the right thing. This happens elsewhere. It is something for DfT to reflect on. It is hoped that the local transport plans can provide a way. It looks encouraging where things are proven to decarbonise and are valued in local authorities. Hopefully, in time, funding will be attached to those values. That would drive a different mindset in authorities. That is not throwing them under the bus, when most of them are very supportive. It can be a battle. There is a need for structural change in the authorities and the systems within rather than the individuals. The idea of small scale 'get-going' funds is welcomed to ease the burden on people being able to just get on with their ideas.

**NGO3 [CHAT]:** Vital to look at all the elements together: active travel, excellent public transport, reduced use of private vehicles.

**REGG2 [CHAT]:** Following Derbyshire's feedback we are revamping the guidance, which will go into the rural mobility Centre of Excellence we are developing for our partners alongside some case studies etc.

**ACAD1:** It is noticeable in the roundtables to look at what happens when transport is mentioned in the mainstream media in below the line comments. It is noticeable that it does not matter what the politics of the relevant mainstream media is, virulent comments are received in the Guardian and the New Statesman when you suggest that single occupancy car use in rural areas is a bad idea and there might be something to provide an alternative to. E.g. 'it's all very well for those in London or Manchester where there is public transport, but in the country, everyone has to drive SUVs everywhere.' The point of the roundtables is that that does not have to be true. We have heard that today, with lots of good

projects underway. The challenge for the Future of Transport Rural Strategy is to try and articulate how government can support people trying to do the right thing in various ways, whether it is at the community or local authority level. There is a lot of good practice to call on, along with issues around regulation and other things that have been picked up on. The themes of finding ways to sweat assets that are already there and getting on and doing things have come out in the roundtable.

**GOV2:** The conversation has been very helpful and informative. The themes addressed are relevant. E.g. data sharing relevant to rural principles that was applicable to rural challenges and commercial conflicts of interest have to be addressed. Some of the more important points that came out included: We cannot ignore the importance of car ownership in rural areas and work is needed to support other modes and credible alternatives to car ownership. This has to recognise that there is not always viability in replacing car ownership. The mobility hub conversation is relevant because consideration is being given to what mobility hubs and workstreams would look like within DfT. There are opportunities to aggregate community services, transport modes and transport links. The Midlands Connect toolkit was useful here. Future work on mobility hubs will be watched with interest. There are clear challenges with infrastructure in facilitating active travel and the uptake of micro mobility, in conjunction with mobility hubs. Challenges are noted. Encouraging a collaborative approach is important.

**ACAD1:** In summing up, proposals for targeted, focused and long-term pilots that lead somewhere are noted. Social enterprise was discussed as a way to bring things together as a way to address some of the commercial confidentiality issues – they need to be further developed.

**MOB1 [CHAT]:** Tripping over payment in kind rules, this has been raised within DfT and HMRC who have requested evidence.

Colleagues were thanked for their participation.

# Roundtable 2: Accessibility and Inclusivity

6 July 2022

## Participants

There were 19 participants. Sectors represented were: national, sub-regional and local government, technology/innovation, transport consultancy, academic research and non-governmental organisations. Stephen Joseph chaired the discussion.

## Aim

The theme for this roundtable centred on three questions:

- How can the Future of Transport Rural Strategy ensure that the future rural transport system is accessible and inclusive by design?
- What should the Government do to promote digital inclusivity, to ensure that those without smartphones aren't left behind?
- How far does transport outside cities meet the needs of older people and those with disabilities, and how can they be given greater consideration in transport planning (design of roads/streets, public transport services etc)?

## Papers circulated in advance

- Katie Pennick, Transport for All  
Future of Transport Outside Cities: Accessibility and Inclusivity
- Lucy Taussig, Streets for All  
Rural Transport from a Gender Perspective
- Beate Kubitz, Consultant  
DRT: Too many regulatory regimes spoil the bus?

## Presentations

### Katie Pennick, Transport for All

Stephen presented Katie Pennick's presentation in her absence.

Transport for All campaigns for the transport needs of people with disabilities, which includes 20% of the UK population. Of those with disabilities 42% have no access to a car and therefore use taxis and active travel more than other people.

There is an appreciable drop in the number of trips taken by people with disabilities compared to those without, and in particular a very noticeable gap for the over 65s. While this gap exists across most geographies it is larger in rural areas.

The proportion of taxis which are wheelchair accessible is lower in rural areas (10%) than in London (17%). Digital exclusion for people with disabilities is 23% and 38% for people who are blind or partially sighted.

Transport for All recommends a social model of disability which shifts the causes of exclusion from the individual to the environment. The pan-impairment approach locates these barriers in the financial, communications and physical infrastructure environment.

There is a need to engage people with disabilities in consultation through accessible channels. This requires outreach and a co-production approach to fully understand and include the views of people with disabilities. People should be paid to contribute their insights and expertise.

### Lucy Taussig, Streets for All

Stephen presented Lucy's presentation in her absence.

There are a series of parliamentary acts and duties on Local Authorities to provide fair and equal access to transport. Section 508A of the Education Act (1996) covers sustainable travel and transport to schools. The Health and Social Care Act (2012) provides a duty of health for all. The Equality Act (2010) protects people with four characteristics: age, ethnicity, sex and pregnancy/maternity status. These categories are often ignored in transport planning and provision. Children and young people should routinely be consulted.

Local Transport note 1/20<sup>3</sup> is new advice used to assess the application of funds for active travel and refers to including the needs of protected groups.

There are visible and hidden equality impacts of transport policy. The visible ones include physical access issues. The hidden impacts include reduced access to services and opportunities, climate change and air pollution.

The National Transport Survey 2019 shows that children, women and older people make shorter trips, but they need the right conditions to shift to walking and cycling more.

There is a major focus on commuting in transport planning but from the National Travel Survey commuting only represents 15% of trips (12% post Covid). Transport professionals measure, fund, plan and design for the commute very well. However, education, escort trips and leisure trips are seriously overlooked. Non-commuting trips now represent 88% of the total and are often forgotten in planning terms.

The failings of the UK highways system are compensated for by the unpaid labour of adults, mostly women. Women commute less than men but undertake more escort trips, as measured both by trip numbers and distances. We can think of these journeys as representing 'mobilities of care'. In one car households women and children often have no access to a car in the daytime so alternatives are essential.

Medium distance trips could be walking and cycling providing the conditions are right. Interurban routes need to be better for cycling so that children and carers can enjoy transport independence. Every intersection of a highway with a footpath or cycle route should have a crossing which gives legal priority to those crossing. Women (often encumbered with children and shopping), disabled and older people need safer routes and longer times allowed at crossings than the default engineering practice allows. The share of cycle trips by women is 29% in the UK compared to 55% in the Netherlands.

Over recent decades there has been a very substantial decline in the number of children travelling independently to school by walking or cycling while the vehicle distance travelled has risen relentlessly.

Approximately 50% of children want to cycle to school but traffic danger prevents this.

Unlike commuting data there is a shortage of data on travel to schools. National school travel data has been dropped from the school census. Local authorities differ on whether they hold travel to

school and postcode data and access to this data is often difficult.

British children are more likely to be killed in traffic but spend less time in traffic and cross roads less frequently. Older pedestrians are over-represented in accidents at intersections particularly on wide multi-lane roads. We need a social model of vulnerability, akin to the social model of disability. The physical infrastructure and legal context are equally important barriers.

### **Beate Kubitz DRT: Too many regulatory regimes spoil the bus?**

Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) intersects with accessibility because it could adapt to meet the needs of many different types of people including wheelchair users. There are major barriers to DRT caused by regulation.

There are nine different transport regulatory frameworks and DRT sits at the intersection of many of these different regimes.

Problematically, each regulatory regime has different conditions and some exclude DRT. The priority for rural transport is to optimise resources, in particular to ensure that vehicles are in use for as much of the day and week as possible. People and projects in rural areas are very willing to share resources if given the opportunity.

- 1 Public bus services are governed by the Public Service Vehicle (PSV) operator licence and registered with the Traffic Commissioner and the Local Authority which impose 60 and 28 day notice of service changes. There are penalties for not fulfilling the notification requirements. On the plus side, routes and prices are in the public domain and fares do not attract VAT. Public bus services qualify for the bus services operators grant.
- 2 Section 19 transport includes school travel, social welfare or other transport for community benefit. It does not allow the wider public to use the services. Small vehicles (up to 17 passengers) can be registered solely with the Local Authority, whereas larger vehicles must be registered with the Traffic Commissioner.
- 3 Section 22 transport services (community transport) are open to the public. These must be registered with the traffic commissioner and cannot make a profit unless for private hire which does not compete with commercial

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120>



bus services. Some public bus services are run under section 22 regulation by 'not for profit' organisations. The taxi and bus sectors have mounted legal challenges over the profit motive of some community transport and DRT.

- 4 Taxis are licenced by Local Authorities. Some DRT schemes use taxis but these are limited by regulation to carrying no more than 8 passengers. Fares and other requirements for operators and vehicles vary by Local Authority.
- 5 Private hire vehicles (which must be pre-booked) are also licensed by Local Authorities but without control over fares. There are no accessibility requirements. Private hire vehicles are often used for smaller DRT schemes, but these have to charge VAT. The turnover of even small DRT schemes do tend to exceed the VAT threshold.
- 6 Flexible bus services are open to the public, must be registered with the Traffic Commissioner and must be pre-booked. Other passengers can be carried but the route cannot deviate to accommodate them. Fares must be displayed but cannot be reduced as more passengers board. Flexible buses qualify for the bus services operators grant unless the stops are more than 15 miles apart.
- 7 Liftshare schemes cannot be operated for profit yet the platform providers charge a fee to the organisations (most often employers) who operate the services. The platform provider's services incur VAT.
- 8 Work shuttles must comply with PSV licensing for vehicles carrying over 9 passengers but are exempt from bus registration and without obligations to notify service changes. Platforms allow employers to specify requirements and book coaches to pick up and drop off workers to suit shift times. Some employers allow a group of workers to use a shuttle bus like a digitally enabled coach service, often with the benefit of a subsidy. These services are similar to DRT but without the obligation to be registered.
- 9 Car clubs are where the provider owns and rents the vehicles to individuals. These can be commercial, subsidised by Local Authority and/or community run. Most incur VAT. They can be used informally by small groups of commuters for shared rides. An example is six people in rural Fife hiring a car club vehicle together and sharing costs and the driving for daily travel to work in St Andrews. This leaves a car unused all day which

is inefficient. There can be 'benefit in kind' issues if the car share is organised by the workplace.

So there is regulatory complexity especially when trying to maximise the use of the vehicle.

Research studies into best practice overseas show that in order to make best use of DRT vehicles, different solutions are needed for different times of day. Small vehicles (8 seater and less) suit early and late shift workers travelling outside the normal bus service hours of operation. During the peak single decker buses on a semi-fixed route are required. On demand commuter shuttles could be successfully integrated with DRT or hybrid services but regulation prevents this.

To summarise, establishing a regulated bus service is a major undertaking and the Traffic Commissioner expects it to be run for profit. As such it is not able to take on the burden of carrying extra passengers off route, whereas private hire vehicles can carry no more than 9 passengers and incur VAT. Yet neither a stretch limousine carrying 10 people, nor a public bus service with only 2 passengers incur VAT. This makes it hard to set ticket prices for DRT. Also shared car-based services for work are treated as benefits in kind for tax purposes.

In Hertfordshire Padam mobility <sup>4</sup> has worked with Uno bus to provide a rural DRT. They could provide fully accessible buses but can't make them open to the public due to the service licensing. This is very annoying as some buses are full and others are unusable due to regulation.

The regulatory sandbox approach created for e-scooter trials should be used for Demand Responsive Transport outside cities. The trials could be in very controlled situations where the Local Authority requires full data sharing and the Local Authority procures the vehicles.

## Overview of discussion

The discussion is summarised as follows.

### Qualities of Rural Communities

Rural communities are innovative and resourceful and some have high social capital, especially where there are hubs like a local shop or pub. Village communities are proud of their knowledge and welcome being consulted and asked to contribute to finding innovative solutions to local transport problems. This should be acknowledged and built upon.

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4 <https://blog.padam-mobility.com/en/2022/05/19/launching-drt-in-hertfordshire-hertslynx-an-operator-perspective/>

## Transport Operations: Barriers, Opportunities and Innovation

Demand Responsive Transport projects can serve rural populations previously without public transport services and reveal unmet demand. The Rural Mobility Fund has supported pilot projects which have potential to become commercial or semi-commercial supported schemes – an example is HertsLynx<sup>5</sup>, a Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) project in rural Hertfordshire, which has found a demand for fixed and semi-fixed route services for young people to access college. College students were telling their friends that they could get the bus and they weren't relying on lifts any more.

Community transport and community car share schemes are diverse and numerous, meeting a large and otherwise unmet need, but there are misunderstandings about these and who these services are for. There is some overlap with DRT projects. The sector is taking the lead in driver training to set standards on accessibility and inclusivity. Driver training becomes of critical importance with the NHS beginning to use private hire and taxi vehicles for emergency transport. Informal community car sharing helps the most marginalised sectors of society, yet is very poorly understood.

New mobility enterprises are finding creative ways to make the most of vehicle assets. Commercial operations such as Tandem<sup>9</sup> provide access to a flexible vehicle fleet to meet variable demand. The “Chameleon Car” is a community-led concept that emerged from the previous roundtables. It involves rethinking how a multi-purpose vehicle (MPV) in a Cumbrian village could be used around the clock. There was consensus that both kinds of approach would benefit from a regulatory sandbox (as mentioned in the previous roundtable) to unlock maximum efficiency and financial viability. A “safe commercial space” could allow operators to work together, as with the “Go-Hi” app for integrated transport in the Scottish Highlands.

Previous transport initiatives from central government are rich resources for contemporary projects to draw upon. Many participants recommended the ‘Total Transport’ projects<sup>6</sup>, which were designed to enable collaboration between different transport providers within Local Authorities and the health sector to save costs, improve services and use resources better. It was

suggested that there should be a list of ideas to pilot to ensure transport assets are used more effectively, including some suggested in a 2008 Commission for Integrated Transport (CfIT) report<sup>7</sup> which could be taken up. It was noted that business cases for these would be stronger now. Encouragingly there is some evidence that the NHS is now more open to collaboration over transport services.

However, there was concern about the constant focus on innovation, looking for novelty when sometimes what is really needed is to dedicate resources to improve something which already exists or scale up what already works. Available at <https://www.transportforqualityoflife.com/u/files/A%20New%20Approach%20to%20Rural%20Public%20Transport.pdf>; see also <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20100919023856/http://cfrit.independent.gov.uk/pubs/2008/rpt/index.htm> works. It was suggested that even transforming a ‘1 driver and 1 passenger’ community transport scheme into a successful ‘1 driver, 2 passenger’ scheme would make a very significant difference.

Transport services are complex, locally diverse and often not well integrated. Local transport authorities can play an important role in making sense of this complex field for the public and assuring quality, accessibility and safety. The possibility of common branding for car clubs to assure quality was mentioned.

There is an issue of digital exclusion – the Government could tackle this by funding training programmes for older people and other marginalised groups, and “bridge” or “gateway” services to help access for people without computers or smart phones. This would enable transport providers to reach the most excluded in society.

### Inclusive and Accessible by Design

To design inclusive and accessible mobility outside cities requires that, alongside people's mobility needs, their psychological and social needs are also understood. Owning and driving a car is about more than mobility. Cars signal social status and driving confers an important role identity. These factors affect older people's preferences for transport when they can no longer drive.

Social discrimination drives the personal safety needs of protected groups and creates barriers to accessing transport. Diversity is typically lower in

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.transportxtra.com/publications/local-transport-today/news/71473/hertslynx-case-study-drt-serving-local-?etid=4189500&artid=71473>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/total-transport-feasibility-report-and-pilot-review>

<sup>7</sup> Available at <https://www.transportforqualityoflife.com/u/files/A%20New%20Approach%20to%20Rural%20Public%20Transport.pdf>; see also <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20100919023856/http://cfrit.independent.gov.uk/pubs/2008/rpt/index.htm>

rural areas and it was suggested that minorities suffer more personal safety problems as a result. Using a sociotechnical systems approach, research can identify and suggest ways to overcome barriers to transport accessibility and inclusivity. Location and lighting are very important for safe waiting places. Opportunity for social interaction with drivers is very important for older people. Mobility providers are not incentivised to minimise wait times at pick up and drop off points, yet these are important moments of vulnerability for travellers. Data on “chain trips” or linked trips with different journey purposes and on accessibility and inclusion is missing or incomplete in many cases, yet is very important for understanding the constraints on women’s and older people’s travel behaviour.

There was strong agreement that including communities in the design of transport services and infrastructure should be more widespread. There are good examples of co-design in Scottish MaaS which could inform a programme to fund rural pilot schemes elsewhere, and also a “Back Roads” project where communities map local back roads as active travel routes. In assessing transport schemes, the DfT should assess the impacts and opportunities to improve transport access for people with protected characteristics.

### Active Travel

Safety was a common theme in relation to walking and cycling outside cities. Encouragingly there are some signs that e-bikes of all kinds are opening up opportunities for older people and the disabled. Local authority budgetary constraints mean that lighting and well-maintained surfaces for walking and cycling are under threat. There was also an issue of constructing active travel routes: compulsory purchase orders, diversion of bridleways to provide more direct routes or changing footpaths to bridleways are all challenging legally.

### Planning

There was a lively discussion about the perils of retiring to the countryside only to become marooned when no longer able to drive. Can we use the

planning system to nudge more sustainable location decisions at key life stages? There was a suggestion for a transport accessibility rating for properties and designated “key settlements” and rural hubs for transport investment and services.

### Conclusion

Complex regulation exacerbates the challenges of delivering transport services outside cities. A regulatory sandbox trial for rural transport could reveal ways to achieve step change. Innovation need not be limited to emerging technology. There is value in doing the simple and effective things better, coordinating services and promoting co-design. It is also important to set ambitious standards for people emerging as providers in the transport sector, as well as existing operators. Often data on accessibility and inclusion in transport is missing or incomplete.

### Useful resources highlighted in the detailed discussion

- Community Transport Association (CTA) minibuss driver awareness scheme<sup>8</sup>.
- Tandem<sup>9</sup>
- Total Transport pilot projects 2019 DfT report<sup>10</sup>.
- Mobility Centres<sup>11</sup> offer support for families with older drivers who need to give up.
- research on personal safety and older people<sup>12</sup>
- French hitchhiking platform<sup>13</sup>
- Research on “Chain trips”<sup>14</sup>, linked trips for different purposes.
- on data and gender: Caroline Criado Perez in *The Invisible Women*<sup>15</sup>.
- case studies on co-design with young and older people in rural Fife<sup>16,17,18</sup>
- “The ladder of co-production” for cooperative design of services<sup>19</sup>
- Back Roads project working with community cohorts to map local backroads as rural active

8 <https://ctauk.org/training/midas/>

9 <https://www.ridetandem.co/>

10 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/total-transport-feasibility-report-and-pilot-review>

11 <https://www.drivingmobility.org.uk/>

12 <https://bura.brunel.ac.uk/handle/2438/1312>

13 <https://rezopouce.fr/>

14 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/509447/nts-trip-chaining.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/509447/nts-trip-chaining.pdf)

15 <https://carolinecriadoperez.com/book/invisible-women/>

16 <https://youngscot.net/ysobservatory/navigogo>

17 <https://www.the-espgroup.com/project/car-freedom/>

18 <https://www.linkedin.com/in/steve-cassidy-aa042a7/> and <http://www.sympatric.co.uk/>

19 [https://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/\\_assets/TLAP-Ladder-of-Coproduction-Landscape-Poster-A3.pdf](https://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/_assets/TLAP-Ladder-of-Coproduction-Landscape-Poster-A3.pdf)

travel<sup>20</sup>, see also Quiet Lanes in Suffolk<sup>21</sup>

- Go-Hi app for integrated travel in the Scottish Highlands<sup>22</sup>
- Kirkby Stephen travel poster produced by residents<sup>23</sup>
- research on use of e-bikes by older people<sup>24</sup>
- Adapt-E work with older people and people with mobility issues<sup>25</sup>
- 1960s Devon local planning policy on 'key settlements' in rural areas<sup>26</sup>, like 'Rural Service Centres' in the spatial strategy of the Lake District National Park Local Plan.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> [www.backroads.org.uk](http://www.backroads.org.uk)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.quietlanessuffolk.co.uk/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://gohi.app/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.kirkby-stephen.com/app/uploads/KS-Travel-Timetable.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349573533\\_E-bike\\_use\\_in\\_the\\_Lake\\_District\\_During\\_Covid\\_-19\\_insights\\_for\\_sustainable\\_transport\\_green\\_recovery](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349573533_E-bike_use_in_the_Lake_District_During_Covid_-19_insights_for_sustainable_transport_green_recovery)

<sup>25</sup> <https://adapt-e.co.uk/>

<sup>26</sup> [https://fsj.field-studies-council.org/media/343187/vol5.3\\_141.pdf](https://fsj.field-studies-council.org/media/343187/vol5.3_141.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/planning/planningpolicies/local-plan/policies/policy-02-spatial-strategy>

# Roundtable 3: Transport decarbonisation and adaptation to climate change in rural areas

7 July 2022

## Participants

There were 20 participants. Sectors represented were: national, sub-regional and local government, technology/innovation, transport consultancy, academic research and non-governmental organisations. Stephen Joseph chaired the discussion.

## Aim

The aim of the roundtable was to explore adaptation as well as mitigation and assist the Department for Transport to finish developing its Future of Transport Rural Strategy. The theme for this roundtable centred on four questions:

- How can transport innovation help to meet transport decarbonisation goals?
- What is the role that shared mobility, shared/active travel and other innovative modes can play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions?
- What are the challenges facing rural areas in embedding transport adaptation to climate change?
- What role can transport innovation play in helping the rural transport system adapt to and build local transport system resilience to climate change and extreme weather events?

## Papers circulated in advance

- Ali Clabburn, Liftshare
- Monika Buscher, Decarbon8
- Alistair Kirkbride, Consultant
- John Lamb and Hugh Deeming, Consultants

## Presentations

**Ali Clabburn - Average commuter emission levels and Liftshare's response to the future of transport rural strategy.**

This presentation highlights some of the key aspects from the response to rural transport problems.

In particular, the presentation covers the role of the private car in rural areas, and how it is wrong to think of the private car as the enemy, as it instead needs to be viewed as a part of the solution.

First of all, nationally over 50% of people have got no active travel or public transport option for the journeys that they do. So, in terms of where their emissions come from, over 50% of their journeys cannot be done by walking or cycling or via public transport currently. And that being the case, we have got the choice of either widening public transport offers to more people, or persuading people to move closer to where they need to access, but both of those choices have challenges, particularly around occupancy. And it's really important that everyone understands about occupancy, because the average bus at the moment in the UK is no more efficient than a private car.

The average bus pre-covid contained eight people, and this has gone down now as a result of the pandemic. And the average car has between 1.5 and 1.6 people in it. And at those levels, the average bus per passenger mile is no more efficient than the average private car. So, the idea of adding more public transport services (in the way of buses) in rural areas where you will have lower occupancy levels would be a mistake. That's not to say that buses don't have a role to play in rural areas, they definitely do. Where we've got enough critical mass of journeys going from A to B, and where you can get enough people on those buses then you



absolutely need buses. And in the same way, you absolutely need active travel for shorter journeys. But there is definitely a role for the car. And the challenge at the moment is that cars are being used incredibly inefficiently, and average occupancy, particularly during covid, has plummeted. However, this is looking at commuting which is typically our focus.

Car sharing/lift sharing is already four times more popular in rural areas than travelling by bus, so lift sharing is not a niche thing. Four times more people lift share to work in rural areas than travel by bus, so it is already more popular and it has huge potential because there are over 9 million empty seats in rural areas going to work, in people who are living in rural areas travelling to their workplace. So there is a huge opportunity from something that people already do, but the challenge is that people are very often unaware of the services out there or how lift sharing can benefit them.

As a suggestion, rather than trying to think of how we can massively increase bus use (and the graph indicates that bus use and train use is much higher in urban areas than in rural areas), while we do need to absolutely make sure that we have efficient services, rather than focusing on increasing bus services, I propose that we focus on other aspects such as supporting working from home with better broadband, increasing car occupancy and increasing active travel wherever it is applicable and making sure that we have got decent footpaths and cycle paths into work.

The difference between rural and urban is clear, particularly on travel to work. Pre-pandemic working from home in urban areas was 4.5% and in rural areas it was 9.5%. Many more people worked from home in rural areas and during covid that has increased even higher. The proportion has stayed the same but many more people are working from home in rural areas now. And again, if you look at bus use as a method of travel to work, it was 8.6% in urban and 2.4% in rural. Lift share was similar, about 10% in both. But single occupancy travel to work was 50% in urban and 64% in rural areas. So, there are lower car occupancy levels in rural areas currently, but also many people who could be sharing.

The best bit of research that has been done in rural areas was done in Yorkshire with all of the bodies there, getting ITP to do a great bit of research. It is ten years old now, but the data is still very relevant, and basically they were looking at all of the members of the lift share schemes which was 18,000 at the time, as well as doing public consultation too and looking at why people do or don't car share. And very simply, people share cars because it is

convenient, because it is cheaper and because it is more environmentally friendly. And right now, we need things that are going to save people money because the cost of travelling in rural areas is extortionate. When looking at those people who do share cars and whether they like it, you can see that whether you are an informal car sharer only doing it with friends and family, or whether you are a formal car sharer as a part of a scheme, the levels of satisfaction in daily journeys was incredibly high, with very few being either dissatisfied or neither satisfied or dissatisfied. So, in general, once people start lift sharing they really like doing it.

#### **And the key barriers were:**

- A perception of a lack of suitable people that they can share with/a lack of awareness of who they can share with.
- A perception of loss of convenience because of a lack of flexibility of working hours, which has become a whole lot better during Covid, because now employers can typically tell their employer when they want to travel rather than being told when they need to travel.
- There were very few people concerned about safety issues or lack of access to the internet or anything like that.

#### **The key conclusions from this research were:**

- 2/3 of adults were already regularly sharing journeys, mostly with friends and family and mostly for leisure trips, so this is not something that is new to people.
- There were higher sharing levels in deeper rural areas.
- There was interest in more sharing, and there are huge opportunities for doing much more of it in rural areas.
- There was very low awareness of formal schemes, and very little had been spent on promoting and increasing public awareness of lift share schemes.
- There was high satisfaction amongst registered sharers.

#### **The summary of the research was that:**

- 1 Car sharing has a valuable role to play in rural communities
- 2 Things aren't as effective as they could be, but it is still a very cost-effective tool

- 3 Smarter investment – car sharing should be a regional priority
- 4 Co-ordination of resources and delivery
- 5 Introducing new and different forms of marketing
- 6 Piloting of a 'car share demonstration town/region' to see what can be done in these areas.

On things like social isolation, we've got members right across the country who are picking up neighbours who basically don't speak to anyone else for the rest of the day, who are living alone, and their trip to work sharing with others is the most sociable things that they do.

The key difference on our work on Mobilityways over the last couple of years has been that rather than just promoting lift sharing, we are working with companies and communities to analyse where people live, where they work, and all of the options of travel to available to them, and then based on that come up with a strategy to get down to net zero. And the uptake from the employers that we have worked with, having got this data of the options and the art of the possible has been immense. We are doing exciting projects now that aren't just gathering the data but are changing behaviours. We had a team from the DfT go to Prologis, one of our largest client sites, to look at some of the really interesting work that we are doing there now, where we're working with Stagecoach, National Express, Zeelo, Liftshare and Sustrans, all trying to help Prologis to get better transport services into their site based on the data of where people are travelling from. So, rather than just having empty buses driving around, maximising occupancy based on routes and matching them all up together.

In addition, ACEL is a tool that has been developed which people will recognise as being similar to an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for buildings. ACEL aims to make it easy for any business or community to track their commuter emissions levels. ACEL stands for Average Commuter Emissions Level and it's based on the average emissions from commuting, based on population size. The national average is 600 kilos per person. If you drive to work alone it's about 1000 kilos, and if you walk or cycle then it is nothing. So, what we've been doing is taking the learnings from EPC and trying to shift them across to being used in transport, because the EPC has been incredibly effective at driving down emissions from buildings, and energy used in buildings has gone down 60% in the last twenty

years, whereas emissions from transport haven't gone anywhere. So, we've tried to take that learning and develop this tool that is now being adopted rapidly by lots of these companies.

Very simply we took travel survey data and turned it into an average emissions level, and it also helps companies to see where their emissions are coming from. And we've done it on a business basis, but we've also done it right across the country, in rural and urban areas. And giving this one example of South Cambridgeshire, 56.67% of their workers drive alone to work, they cause 44,000 tons of emissions out of a total of all commuting in South Cambridgeshire of 50,000. So approximately 89% of commuting transport emissions in this area come from people driving alone to work, yet in this area 90% of their staff have one or more people within walking distance of their house that they could share a car with. If you are looking at a rural area, you can go to this free service on [Mobility Ways \(www.mobilityways.com/map\)](http://www.mobilityways.com/map) and there is a map on there that will show you where your commuting emissions come from and how you can best target them to reduce them down. And in this area 95% of people could typically lift share. Getting down to zero carbon commuting is possible using the ACEL tool, and ACEL can provide a mapped-out strategy to reach zero carbon commuting within a certain timeframe.

### **Monika Buscher - The Decarbon8 programme on place-based decarbonisation across the North of England and its implications for rural areas**

These are some emerging thoughts from the Decarbon8 project<sup>28</sup>. Decarbonisation is important and it's complicated and we have already talked about that. There are huge opportunities for reducing carbon in rural areas. The place-based carbon calculator has been developed by Malcolm Morgan and other colleagues in Leeds; it basically calculates the performance against carbon budgets in different areas, broken down, and you can see how urban areas have performed quite well and rural areas have not.

Using this, I want to have a look at some rural areas. For example if we look at the data for Workington, you can see how driving, car-ownership, car emissions and also the share of journeys and the share of passenger journeys in terms of people sharing lifts and working from home are all low. If we go to the other end of the country and look at Salcombe in Kingsbridge, which is a similar area, they are at the same carbon level overall, but in this

<sup>28</sup> <https://decarbon8.org.uk/>

place driving is much higher. So, there are huge differences between areas, in different places that might look quite similar.

This has implications of what we do around it, and the carbon calculator also shows you some of the reasons behind it, so you see that there is very little public transport in Kingsbridge for example. The calculator also kind of implements the fifteen minute city concept and allows you to explore it, so you can actually see when you look at it what people can reach within fifteen minutes by walking, by walking with transit, by cycling and by cycling with transit. And it also explores what the opportunities are for improving active travel, for example what could be done to improve roads for cycling. And you can explore differences between places here, so this is raising a lot of questions of what makes places different, and what should the responses be in terms of how we respond to these differences of place.

As we have already heard, it is difficult to decarbonise transport in rural areas, because there is car dependence, which is an effect of this kind of vicious circle of weak public transport, which pushes people to enter cars. 95% of rural households have access to a car compared with 66% in urban areas<sup>29</sup>. How are we going to use or build a digital infrastructure to enable people to use public transport as a way of travel? And who is going to be able to use it? What jobs are people doing to be able to move some of their travel online?

We also need to consider businesses; many of the businesses in rural areas are micro-businesses and depend on goods and freight transport, and plans for decarbonising goods movements may disproportionately impact rural economies (CILT, 2021)<sup>30</sup>.

Missing data hampers new services such as DRT. There is a lot of work going on now to collect data to try to actually understand how people would travel if there was a better service and ability to travel, and how might communities change as a result of this.

I am sure that we are all aware of how urgent it is; some of the things that we are doing, like the electrification of vehicles, are actually going in the wrong direction, because people are buying very big electric vehicles. This is something that I feel quite passionate about; we really need to realise that technology is not the answer. RAC data from 2022 forecasting the total fuel consumed by all petrol

and PHEV cars in the UK shows how much you are actually going to save through electrification, and their data shows that by 2035 maybe we will have around 323 billion electric vehicles, but we will still have around 13 billion petrol and diesel cars and fossil fuel consumption would be 32% at best and 60% at worst of 2019 levels, so it's not going to fix the problem, and we know now that social and cultural change is a critical part of the answer.

In this paper (Barrett et al, 2022)<sup>31</sup>, Greg and his colleagues talk about how transforming energy demand can allow us to meet zero targets. I slightly disagree with Ali, although I'm not trying to bash the car; we actually do need to think about car ownership and changing how we think about the car. There has to be a use reduction or a use maximisation of cars, because the current inefficient use of cars is impossible.

One key question for me and my team is, is society ready for this? According to the Climate Change Coalition surveys, 70% of British people want urgent political action to tackle climate, and over 6 in 10 adults expect rising UK temperatures will directly affect them by 2030<sup>32</sup>. The zero carbon Cumbria partnership have commissioned a carbon budget that showed that to meet the zero carbon goal there has to be a 79% reduction in residential car use in Cumbria, and this is spoken about as if it is impossible, and yet it must become possible. There are a huge number of people who are really deeply committed to making the impossible possible, and the question for us in DecarboN8 is how we can support people to do this.

Like Ali, we have come up with a similar kind of way of thinking, developing a gauge or a way of measuring the readiness of society for innovations: how ready are innovations for society, how ready are they for people to practically incorporate them into their everyday lives? How good are they for society? How can we improve this? We are trialling this "societal readiness gauge" with the zero carbon Cumbria partnership, and it logically leads into an iterative collaborative design process of engaging with stakeholders and assessing how solutions can be fitted into everyday life and what the unintended consequences are, and how they are future proofed also in terms of adaptation and crisis. The outcomes of these discussions around societal readiness are often visions of what different mobility futures could look like. This goes much wider than

29 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2018>

30 <https://ciltuk.org.uk/News/Latest-News/ArtMID/6887/ArticleID/33668/THE-OPINION-Giving-a-voice-to-rural-communities-and-economies>

31 <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41560-022-01057-y>

32 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/worriesaboutclimatechangeinbritain/septembertooctober2022>

just building public transport or electric vehicles, it goes into transforming the mobility system, including rethinking road building. I have included the statement from one of the recommendations of the Copeland People's Panel (2021) to show how keen people are for transformative transport policy. We are going to have a workshop with zero carbon Cumbria in September with the DecarboN8 project, but that is a broad overview.

### **A new approach to visitor travel – and factsheet on carbon and visitor travel – Alistair Kirkbride**

I'm going to shift the attention to leisure, and specifically to visitor travel to national parks. Leisure travel represents 40% of miles travelled or 50% if including shopping as leisure travel. Leisure represents big volumes, but these volumes happen in a kind of policy and strategy vacuum, and it doesn't have to. If we look at the total carbon budget for Cumbria, and Monika has already shown some of this data in a different form, visitor travel to and from Cumbria (excluding international travel) consists of 17% vehicle fuel, 8% car manufacture and maintenance and 2% trains, buses and other transport. So significant portions of Cumbria's total carbon budget is visitor travel to and from the county. If we look at the carbon budget of the Lake District, visitor travel is an even bigger proportion of it.

These big carbon emission volumes are happening in a policy vacuum; there isn't anyone that's particularly responsible for them. Will technology solve them? If we are talking about protected landscapes, they can still be congested with lots of electric vehicles. Just switching everything to zero tailpipe is not going to solve the problem when we are talking about visitor economy. It's not just about carbon, it's also about access to cars.

We've spoken about this, not just in terms of household income but also about the high proportions of white British appearing in all of the data. Once you get away from white British, the availability of the car is even less. So, there are not only people that can't get to a lot of places for leisure because they don't have a car, but there's an increasingly large cohort of young adults that are becoming increasingly economically active, for whom a lot of these places are very hard to get to. I've spoken in the past about national parks becoming the next coastal resorts. So we do need to consider who can get to these places if they are very car dependent.

Approximately 18 million people accessed the Lake District by car in 2018 (this is deliberately data from pre-covid-19). And to compare scale, if you look at the total station exits for the key railway stations in

the Lake District, about 10% of the total amount of people who visited the Lake District for all purposes got out of those stations. If you look at the total capacity of all of the buses coming into the southern Lake District, it's tiny. If you look at coach volumes, there aren't any - National Express do not go to the Lake District. If you look at total passenger numbers of all of the West Coast Main Line for similar times, and this includes everyone going from London to Glasgow, it was 37.5 million people between 2019 and 2020.

I am just trying to illustrate here the problem that we don't have capacity on alternative modes at the moment to significantly shift people from driving to the Lake District and I won't suggest what the solutions to that are here, but in the paper, I start to speculate. But I would say that certainly in the short to medium term increasing the capacity of cars to places such as the Lake District is kind of our only option in the near future, simply because we don't have the capacity at the moment to get people there in any other way. We don't have a coherent meaningful dialogue around leisure travel and visitor travel at the national scale, even though an awful lot of miles are driven for leisure, and a huge amount of place-based carbon is emitted from visitors approaching those places. A national park authority is not responsible for those miles, the local transport authority certainly aren't, and at the national level there isn't a ministry that is looking at the carbon emissions of leisure travel, and so it is falling between the cracks. So, who's going to do that and how is it going to be done?

There are however significant opportunities for new types of ways of increasing capacity. Where are all of the new coach models that are going to appeal to these young adults? They won't look like National Express coaches, so who is going to nurture those sorts of opportunities? Where are the large-scale campaigns to get social networks sharing cars on a routine basis, and how do we maximise rail capacity in order to get them there?

There are massive opportunities, and people are up for this. Once you start looking in destinations, when people radically constrain car access to places, the public are ready for this, and they want to be led. We need to be much more confident at changing how we manage visitor access and leisure travel more generally.

So my two main points:

- at a national scale there is a need for coherent, meaningful dialogue around leisure and visitor travel at the national scale



- there are opportunities for new capacity for long distance leisure travel e.g. rail, coach or rideshare. There is a wide-open goal waiting to be filled in terms of how we try to start influencing these longer high carbon journeys.

### John Lamb and Hugh Deeming - Highway sector resilience and response: The need for next-generation resilience

**John Lamb:** when we suddenly lose the infrastructure upon which people rely on and on which communities travel and services travel on, it results in isolation. On Boxing day in 2015, in Calderdale, six bridges were lost across the whole of the Calder Valley. In Cumbria, due to bridge collapses, there was a 35-mile diversion that had a major impact.

These energised me to focus on what I felt was a policy gap, as well as an operational gap, in what local authorities should be doing and need to be doing on a more regular basis. The impact of a changing climate is getting worse. The intensity and the frequency of extreme weather means that we need to look at not just decarbonisation, i.e. stopping the problem from getting worse, but to adapt to the legacy emissions that are already baked in, and the impacts that are already playing out in our communities up and down the UK and globally. There is a lack of narrative on this fundamental issue that looks at the average rainfall, then looks at Storm Desmond, and then looks at Storm Desmond plus 30% which is what DEFRA and the Met Office say that we have to prepare for.

This means a threefold increase in terms of the intensity of rainfall and the frequency at which it is hitting any part of the UK, and there's a chance of a major repeat event equivalent to Storm Desmond or worse once every three and half to four years somewhere in the UK. This is the stark reality. In terms of the additional context, and why this is increasingly relevant, there has been a policy gap. The Pitt Review<sup>33</sup> on flooding, which was published in 2007, has been rather diluted in terms of the funds that have been allocated to it, and it's also rather dated. There have been a series of reviews largely looking at the railways, motorways and strategic networks between our major areas. The Pitt review, the Quarmby report<sup>34</sup> and others provide a context, and local authorities have responded well, certainly in terms of things like the amount of salt piles that they have got and the amount of gritters and snow ploughs, but that is for

one particular type of event that is actually reducing in frequency and reducing in intensity. The last major snowfalls in the UK were back in 2010. Forget the mini beast from the east and the beast from the east – yes, they were severe, but for five days or so, and then the snow melted. There are certain examples, in certain rural communities in particular, where it was a bit more pronounced, but the key point is that we are getting warmer, wetter and windier, and local authorities and the DfT are not geared up for the kind of challenge that is expected of us in the National Flood resilience review and in the National Infrastructure Commission review, which again, focused on Network Rail, rail services, and the motorway. It mentioned local councils once, and yet local councils account for 98% of the local roads within England, and slightly more than that when you add in Northern Ireland and Wales.

The independent assessment of climate change risk has shown that it is getting worse, so there has been a policy gap. I was president of one of the national sector bodies, and the DfT and I commissioned Dr Deeming to say what was going on between 2015 to 2020, and the DfT published this document<sup>35</sup>. It's an independent review, and I think that it challenges everything that we know about modern society upon which we are based.

As transport geeks and professionals, we know that the lines of communication over the last 2000 years have built on the crossings of the rivers. Londinium was based around the crossing and even modern day international communication such as at Heathrow. These are agglomerations of economic activity that are the crossroads of international trade routes, but it's important that we understand that these are built on sand. If you look at the impacts that have occurred, for example in Belgium and Germany, which are nearer to London than Edinburgh, you can see this is one synaptic weather system;. You can look at Portugal forest fires, and we have them here in the fells of Northern Britain. You can also look at flooding in London 12 months ago over a wet weekend, and the mayor's office has identified that there are 45,000 London basement properties.

So we need to respond to the impacts of this, but people would have forgotten about Storm Desmond, Storm Eva, and Storm Arwen, if it wasn't for the fact that Hugh Deeming, I, and a few people in the DfT have been really championing responses. At a technical level, there is a need for local authorities

<sup>33</sup> [https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20100702215619mp\\_/http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/pittreview/\\_/media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/flooding\\_review/pitt\\_review\\_full%20pdf.pdf](https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20100702215619mp_/http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/pittreview/_/media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/flooding_review/pitt_review_full%20pdf.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> [https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20111014014059mp\\_/http://transportwinterresilience.independent.gov.uk/docs/final-report/](https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20111014014059mp_/http://transportwinterresilience.independent.gov.uk/docs/final-report/)

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lessons-learned-from-extreme-weather-emergencies-on-uk-highways>



to respond through the principles of integrated emergency management, but local government and transport operators are not thinking about this; we have still not really read and digested the DfT independent review. We are still fixated on a kind of response that is about snow, and grit and the number of ploughs.

We are therefore working with the DfT to improve the local authorities' and sub-national transport bodies' understanding of the need to become more resilient. This is not just about local authorities, it's also about communities. The communities of Calderdale and West Yorkshire are better places with their community flood wardens; some places in Greater Manchester are ten years behind where West Yorkshire is. In terms of levelling up, some of the Mancunians just need to get over into Leeds and actually see what they are doing over there, because there is some brilliant best practice, and certainly Yorkshire Water have gone from the basis of not really getting it, to now being pretty good, as are Northumbria Water,

The important concept here, and Hugh Deeming's international research has shown this, is the principle of community lifeline infrastructure. Society depends on blue light services, food distribution, healthcare, energy and power, and you realise that when a bridge is destroyed you have got 35 bits of infrastructure that go beneath the roads that are shut off for a period of eight weeks into rural parts of the upper Calder Valley. Communications are impacted, which means that there are no blue light services for 48 hours because they've lost communication. We and the transport fraternity know and love the networks, but it is the ring that binds all rings, without transport, you lose everything else in society. And that is what happened in terms of the rural isolation that hit Calderdale for eight weeks and hit Workington over ten years ago when they lost a bridge and it required a massive diversion.

We are losing ten bridges per year randomly, and we are also doing the managed decline of about 35-50 bridges per year, but the impact is far greater. We cannot harden all of those assets, because realistically we don't know which assets are going to go next because we don't know where is going to get hit next. So, what we do need to do is liven everyone up to be anti-fragile, to be nimble and to be flexible.

One of the key principles here, and Hugh has done this in some international research, is to look at the damage, but also realistically look at the consequence of it. If Hammersmith bridge is impacted, there is another bridge down the road, so travel can easily be diverted, and we all know that 40% of trips evaporate and a few others just divert from peak hours. But in a

rural area, the consequence can be a major diversion, especially when you've got societal issues at play, access to health care, or access to critical national infrastructure. 25% of a bank's UK back office was hanging by a thread by one of the bridges that had collapsed in Calderdale. It was ok because they had got a resilient network, but we are nowhere near as resilient as we need to be.

We have been working to try and get to a situation to actually be able to survey, assess and prioritise information on local resilience for the local authority and ultimately for the DfT. There is a fundamental role here; the DfT should not just be an insurer of last resort, they need to be a part of what's going to be a seismic shift in response from local administrations, local councils and sub-national bodies like Transport for the North.

The good thing is that the DfT are leading a debate across the UK on this through the UK Roads Liaison Group, so it is happening, but it is happening far too slowly. For me it's a bit of a plea; there is nothing new in this data that we are sharing, but there is a problem there, and the DfT are stepping up, but the DfT itself is vast and broad and there are actually big chunks of the DfT who have not even read Dr Hugh Deeming's report. People should have a look at it and we really need to start a national conversation. Another Desmond, or a Desmond plus 40% could hit anywhere in the areas that you live or in terms of the areas where you have a professional involvement.

## Overview of discussion

The discussion is summarised as follows. Detailed comments are recorded in section 6.

### Commuter Emissions Levels and Lift Sharing

There was a lively discussion regarding the extent to which the focus should be on commuting journeys, as a focus on commuting can overlook the importance of other journeys such as journeys done be women and children, and can be exclusionary. On the other hand, commuting is the single largest source of emissions and is the least efficient journey that many of us do. Most emissions don't come from journeys that are under 2 miles that can be walked or cycled, most emissions are caused by longer car journeys, and it is mostly longer car journeys that are causing the problem, and many of those are commuting journeys. Several leisure journeys are already shared, but very few commuting journeys are. It was said that the transport profession is obsessed by the commute, and the appraisal process guides people down that route. It was suggested that an outcome of this roundtable could

be an understanding that the profession needs to do more about how it values societal and other effects.

Other trips beyond commuting tend to be overlooked, and the profession has been obsessed with commuting to the exclusion of others, but also, there hasn't been enough done on commuting and commuting needs to change. There was agreement that commuting is a good target for lift sharing and that ride share should be integrated alongside other modes in rural areas.

However, it was also argued that there is a need to understand the purpose of rural community trips, and we need to consider other factors such as logistics. Commuting is not the main purpose of travel in rural areas and the majority of trips come from complex travel patterns to reach facilities and to fulfil activities; it was said that the problem is that we don't have mobility services that are able to support these type of travel patterns that are arising in rural areas.

The majority of trips and emissions originate from rural areas and move towards urban areas. Some rural areas in terms of their typography, altitude etc. are extremely complex to navigate. And we need to consider the social deprivation statistics that exist within rural areas. There is a deep-seated issue of rural isolation, and therefore whilst the current trends and current funding has caused problems, we do need to look at how rural communities are best served. There was debate about whether and how far conventional bus services are a solution, bringing the need to address the long term underfunding of these, or whether to look beyond buses; there was however agreement that demand responsive transport could be a useful potential solution, but also to look at combining the movement of people and goods, as with postbuses.

At present, all of the thinking is about cities and urban conversations as opposed to rural areas. We need to understand what economic, social and environmental outcomes we are trying to achieve for our rural communities, and then think in terms of what change we need to achieve these outcomes. It was argued that an integrated transport systems approach is needed; it was said that the UK government are decarbonising transport through electrified surface transport, but electric vehicles are unaffordable for many.

We need to consider the bigger picture and make sure that climate risk is viewed and that climate change adaptation and decarbonisation go hand in hand. We should look at climate impacts at a system level and over 50+ year timescales.

## Place-Based Decarbonisation

There was discussion about the links between local economic performance and carbon emissions – places might have a better performance in terms of carbon because they have a poor economic performance, which gives rise to less movement, but this is a danger.

There was agreement that affluence and high second and holiday home rates will influence the local economy and modelling, and that it is necessary to take the relationship with the rural housing market into account.

It was said that the messaging around EVs can make car-based travel appear to be more acceptable because it is 'green', and that some EV vehicles are not appropriate for UK rural roads because they are too big and too heavy. Many agreed that we need to urgently cut car miles by 20% and lift sharing could be a way to increase car occupancy and reduce emissions/car miles.

It was suggested that there is a need for a more coordinated and committed political approach considering the current variation in political structures. The support at a local authority level for measures that would support change is also low when it moves from strategy to implementation.

## Carbon and Visitor Travel

It was suggested that for leisure travel, coaches could help; they are more affordable and can serve more destinations than rail, but they are the Cinderella of transport policy.

The question was raised that if we are trying to reduce our carbon footprint, do we treat the symptom (travel) or the root cause (access to affordable housing next to employment such as hospitals)? It was suggested that we need to think about the user, the place, and the outcome that we are trying to achieve. The visitor travel issue is linked to housing – because of second homes crowding out housing for local people and employees in places like Cumbria and Devon. It was commented that decarbonising, climate justice and social justice are tied together; a Rural Transport Strategy needs to be joined up with housing, economic policy etc. There is a need to look at long-term planning and consider (at least) flood risk and transport systems holistically. Increasing the connectivity of rural communities through public transport will provide a wealth of socio-economic benefits, and potentially increased access to better paid jobs.

It was commented that electric vehicles shouldn't be underestimated. Just about any EV is going to be carbon competitive, in use, with a diesel bus. If we are to have more rural buses, they should be EVs. In response, it was suggested that even if we introduce EV everywhere, not all journeys are able to be fulfilled by current/ near the market technology, and it was also noted that EVs are not at present affordable to most residents in rural areas on their incomes.

It was commented that there isn't a lot of carbon in local journeys in rural areas compared to longer journeys. If decarbonisation is what we are trying to achieve, then the big carbon in a lot of rural areas relates to visitors getting there. One option mentioned was to introduce localised road user pricing in popular rural holiday destinations and then use the income to introduce free bus services in and out of these areas, benefiting both visitors without cars, but crucially also low paid residents working in seasonal hospitality.

## Adaptation and Resilience

There was much discussion about adaptation and resilience. It was agreed that resilience is an essential facilitating action to enable decarbonisation through modal shift. Climate adaptation and decarbonisation are intrinsically linked and should go hand-in-hand – for example people won't use trains if they are disrupted by extreme weather events. It was suggested that those running transport networks need to understand “cascading failures”; for example – if railways are electrified, what happens when there is a power outage? Resilience isn't just about looking at the risk and adapting, it is about ensuring that whatever you're doing, that it will be operable in the face of whatever is thrown at it. Given uncertainties over future weather patterns and responses to CO<sup>2</sup> concentrations, engineers should look at resilience from a whole host of representative concentration pathways (RCPs), so that assets are resilient to whatever warming scenario we are likely to be faced with.

High Reliability Theory was mentioned as a useful instrument to develop thinking, taking in safety culture, redundancy and more, but the importance of identifying the 'risk-target' – the highway sector's resilience remains within its operations rather than within the wider communities it serves. Resilience includes robustness, redundancy and resourcefulness. When discussing resilience, all of the domains of resilience formulated by Bruneau et al<sup>36</sup> should be covered, and resilience is about

safety criticality and defensible decision making. It was noted that the transport sector and wider communities have responded to extreme weather events with great resourcefulness and this too needs to be factored in.

This led on to wider discussions about climate change adaptation, mitigation and investment. For areas like East Anglia with 500 km of coastline, the impacts of climate change are very real. But there was agreement that the current business case approach does not support rural investment, because of the lack of density, and that there needs to be a different way to assess value for money. To be able to address the funding issues and the opportunities in rural areas, we need a different approach from the DfT to be able to assess the value for money for those schemes.

Linked to this was a discussion about the implications of the electrification of the transport system, and the need for more strategic conversations about pricing. This led to a discussion about equity, accessibility and electric vehicles – there was agreement that electric vehicles have equality and accessibility issues. It was pointed out that not everyone can use public transport/active travel, so travelling by car can be the only option, but it was said that the public charging infrastructure is often completely inaccessible; 70% of blue badge drivers are dissuaded from switching to EVs because of the inaccessibility of infrastructure. There was agreement that this is a big issue here with regards to making sure that EV travel just isn't for the affluent and the mobile and that if we are to facilitate behaviour change, everybody needs to be able to access transport. It was said that equality and accessibility is wholly missing from the EV agenda.

The distribution and availability of electric vehicle charging was also said to be an issue. There is now a high concentration of electric vehicle charging in cities and even in towns and rural centres, but the periphery and the edge of the city are being left out. It was suggested that if left to market mechanisms public charge points will not provide the requisite coverage in rural areas or on the edge of cities they will just go where they will be profitable, but the charging network must be treated as a network, with provision outside urban centres.

This was also said to affect freight transport - most of the commercial fleet operators that are doing last mile deliveries are not able to charge on the

<sup>36</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Amy-Frazier-3/publication/284507306\\_Framework\\_for\\_defining\\_and\\_measuring\\_resilience\\_at\\_the\\_community\\_scale\\_The\\_PEOPLES\\_resilience\\_framework/links/565e082408ae1ef92983a0ea/Framework-for-defining-and-measuring-resilience-at-the-community-scale-The-PEOPLES-resilience-framework.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Amy-Frazier-3/publication/284507306_Framework_for_defining_and_measuring_resilience_at_the_community_scale_The_PEOPLES_resilience_framework/links/565e082408ae1ef92983a0ea/Framework-for-defining-and-measuring-resilience-at-the-community-scale-The-PEOPLES-resilience-framework.pdf) and [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/3-System-community-resilience-adapted-from-Bruneau-et-al-2003\\_fig3\\_284507306](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/3-System-community-resilience-adapted-from-Bruneau-et-al-2003_fig3_284507306)

public network because they are larger vehicles. The parking spaces are not designed for vans to be charging on a public network and this is an issue of accessibility. It was said that if freight transport is to be decarbonised the Government will need to enable the provision of a charging network that is fit for purpose for these large goods vehicles that are travelling around more rural areas, otherwise they are not going to be able to operate.

In summary, it was said we need clear articulations of what fair, accessible access and transport services that deliver net-zero look like for the variety of types of non-urban places. There was also agreement that we should think in terms of what users need, what places need and what the outcome is that we're trying to achieve. Better use of data, including mobile phone data for a whole rural town or a rural area, could be used to work out how to better serve that area through a whole range of services, including better infrastructure to enable people to work from home more efficiently.

## Useful resources mentioned in the detailed discussion:

- AsSets project: <https://cp.catapult.org.uk/case-study/assessing-sustainable-transport-solutions-for-rural-mobility/>
- Hugh Deeming report for DfT on resilience of highways: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lessons-learned-from-extreme-weather-emergencies-on-uk-highways> -
- <https://www.mambaproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Mobility-for-All-in-Rural-Areas-1.pdf>: rideshare with other modes in rural areas
- Mobilityways: <https://www.mobilityways.com/map/>
- Carbon calculator: <https://www.carbon.place/> estimates the per-person carbon footprint for every Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) in England
- Blog on transport issues in national parks: <https://integratedtransport.co.uk/national-parks-four-big-transport-issues-and-how-to-fix-them>
- Transport and spatial planning: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2020/june/net-zero-transport-the-role-of-spatial-planning-and-place-based-solutions/>

# Roundtable 4: Deliverables and Use Cases

12 Jul 2022

## Participants

There were 19 participants. Sectors represented were: national, sub-regional and local government, technology/innovation, mobility provider, transport consultancy, academic research and non-governmental organisations. Stephen Joseph chaired the discussion.

## Aim

There are many projects in rural areas which are not well documented or researched. The aim of the roundtable was to allow speakers from a number of these projects to share their experiences.

The following questions were used to guide the discussion:

- what are the lessons from current and recent projects improving transport outside cities?
- what can the Future of Transport Rural Strategy do to support such projects and move them from pilots into the mainstream?

## Papers circulated in advance

- Kris Beuret, Director Social Research Associates  
Stories from Rural Areas - Five Research Challenges
- Neil Poulton, WSP Shift | Trip Toolkit
- Keith Kelly, Enterprise Holdings UK & IE  
Deliverables and Use Cases
- Ali Clabburn, Liftshare  
Evidence to Future of Transport Rural Strategy

## Summary

Experimental and innovative mobility projects are highly valuable for informing policy. This roundtable aimed to examine the role of experimentation in developing new forms of rural mobility.

Digital exclusion is a very significant barrier for some people in accessing transport services outside cities. Interventions such as digital training and involving

the most excluded in the co-design of solutions would be transformational.

The importance of up to date, fine grained data was a common theme. Cheap and effective methods are required to collect data to inform mobility solutions.

WSP's Shift|Trip is a powerful decision tool for local authorities seeking to understand the market potential of travel options in a particular location. A strength of the approach is the use of consumer marketing profiles (personas) to understand whether the people in specified areas are likely to use specified modes. It can also facilitate collaboration and skills sharing between local authorities.

Liftshare works with local government, employers and individuals to reduce single vehicle occupancy, cut carbon emissions and substantially reduce travel costs. Postcode level data and individualised travel advice are key to success. Devon County Council is an exemplar local authority having achieved wide coverage and high public awareness resulting in savings of £7m, 25 million vehicle miles and 5.7kt of CO<sup>2</sup>.

Tandem has pioneered commissioning vehicles flexibly according to demand (asset blending) to provide more frequent services at lower cost. Case studies range from a University shuttle service linking a main campus to a satellite site, to a blended coach and taxi service for a poultry factory workforce.

HertsLynx is a new demand responsive transport (DRT) project for a previously highly inaccessible part of rural Hertfordshire. The aspiration is to blend DRT and existing dial-a-ride vehicles to extend services to industrial estates and rail stations.

Shared micro-mobility has become mainstream in metropolitan areas yet faces challenges in small towns and rural areas where population density is low and safety considerations are a concern. Bird has a track record of innovation and offers an increasingly diverse range of vehicle types. It believes financial viability might be achievable in towns of 10K to 20K population if local companies already running successful e-vehicle rental services



were to expand into e-scooter hire.

Enterprise car clubs operate from or near to approximately 200 British railway stations to provide members the option to integrate with long distance rail. They also provide a service for members with a disability to nominate up to three surrogate drivers at no extra cost, overcoming barriers to rural mobility where no public transport or community transport options exist.

A common barrier experienced by many of the case studies was the problem of differences in regulation and taxation between taxi and bus. This undermines asset blending and flexing and therefore restricted the financial viability of innovative approaches to mobility in rural areas. Regulatory sandboxing is therefore of great interest, was raised in previous roundtables in this series and is an important opportunity for the Department for Transport to explore.

## Presentations

Unlike previous roundtables, this session consisted entirely of presentations of use cases with brief discussion for clarification and comments. Presentations were as follows:

- Research Challenges
- Shift|Trip Toolkit
- Enterprise Car Club
- Liftshare
- Tandem
- HertsLynx
- Bird

Discussion is unattributed. The following abbreviations indicate the sector making comments:

**ACAD** Academic

**NGO** Non-governmental organisation

**CONS** Consultant

**REGG** Regional transport body

**INNOV** Innovation sector

**MOB** Mobility services

**[CHAT]** denotes written contributions made in real time during the spoken dialogue.

### Research Challenges, Kris Beuret

This presentation set the context for the roundtable by highlighting five major research challenges:

- Measuring transport related social exclusion
- Car costs
- Digital exclusion
- The right to rural services
- Land ownership

After over 20 years of research in rural areas Kris has no answers to these difficult challenges but is hopeful that solutions can be found collaboratively.

### Challenge 1 Measuring Transport Related Social Exclusion (TRSE)

How to measure TRSE is a contested subject, in particular how much weight should be accorded to access to different services (employment, education, health).

For example, SRA and Temple carried out research in 2021 for Transport for the North into transport related social exclusion. This included a literature review, secondary data analysis, app-based, online and face-to-face survey work and focus groups. Out of 3,600 interviews 10% were in rural areas and 15% to 20% were outside cities. The proportion of people in the region calculated to be at high risk of transport related social exclusion ranged between 2.1% and 15.6% depending on the methodology used.

TRSE is not coterminous with protected equality status and it is possible to experience exclusion without being in poverty. This is a major area of debate, informed by very little research and without any prospect of short term resolution.

### Challenge 2 Car Ownership

Transport hierarchies in Local Transport Plans place private car use near the bottom, just above aviation. However, many people rely completely on their car for getting to work and for chain trips. SRA research for Surrey County Council draft Local Transport Plan interviewed people who were not online, therefore likely to be more representative of those in poverty. This revealed that many people experience aggression and criminalisation because they cannot afford to run a car legally. High parking charges, road tax, insurance and car repairs are significant problems, as is being fined for driving without road tax.

When local authorities deprioritise the private car they exacerbate social exclusion for people without alternatives. Many people would not be able to work without a car. SRA documented five sharing a car together for the journey to work at an out of town call centre, with one person travelling in the boot.

Another typical example was a woman who had no choice but to deliver a child to school by car because she had to travel to her mother's house to change the bedding daily and then onward to work.

The planning system has failed these people by allowing out of town employment sites without public transport services. Bus fare structures often depend on up front payments and/or being digitally connected and having a bank account. The unbanked are excluded.

### **Challenge 3 Digital Excluded and Unbanked**

Social groups D&E are much less likely to own smart phones (64% compared to 96% for A&B groups) and this difference is more pronounced in rural areas. 50% of children and 20% of over 75 year olds have no smart phone. Two million people have no access to the internet and many regularly run out of 'pay as you go' funds. This compounds with the major problem of job losses in rural areas.

A typical scenario is children reliant on an hourly bus to school, but not a single person at the bus stop having a smart phone able to develop a plan of action when the service fails to arrive. It is common to find people with smart phones who can't use transport apps because they can't afford access to the internet.

There is a clear need for more awareness, research and policy thinking about the transport barriers faced by the digitally excluded and unbanked. There should be no discrimination against people without digital skills.

Policy responses could include training in smart phone and internet use, cheap phone tariffs for the financially excluded and better information at bus stops.

### **Challenge 4 Right to Rural Services**

There is disagreement over how to provide services in rural areas because of the substantial and increasing costs of delivery compared to urban areas. The rural context is one of declining public services (health, libraries, youth services) and an inadequate fixed broadband and mobile phone network. Subsidies for rural bus services are 63% of subsidies in urban areas and falling.

Research shows that people living in rural areas often cannot attend hospital appointments because of limited bus services. In theory appointments could be offered to these people at times when the journey

is possible by bus. Alternatively health services could be taken into rural communities.

Volunteer based transport is good but there are problems with lack of training and questions about the long term sustainability of services reliant on volunteers.

The policy question is whether services helping those facing difficulties in accessing them can be justified on the basis of patterns of 'need'. There may need to be a debate on what is reasonable to provide for people living in rural areas. Should people in rural areas expect to pay more for access to services?

### **Challenge 5 Land Ownership**

The question here is to what extent the pattern of land ownership distorts our vision of transport in rural areas. A vivid case study is a community in a Northumberland village which designed an off road footpath to allow safe access by bike, e-bike and on foot to the nearest town 3.5 miles away. The local roads were too deep to have pavements and were unsafe for cycling. The local land owner refused permission against the will of the Parish Council. Since the landowner was also the freeholder for all the houses in the village the project went no further.

Why can't compulsory purchase powers be used in cases like this to enable rural accessibility? These powers are used for major infrastructure development. Are we subconsciously preventing ourselves from finding creative solutions to transport problems in rural areas? For more on this concept see the works of Nick Hayes.<sup>37</sup>

### **Conclusion**

There is still much we don't know about rural transport and social exclusion. We need to think outside the box in relation to the definition of rural, lifestyle changes, working from home (are we building the right houses?) and planning policies. People need better advice about transport accessibility before moving to rural areas and encouragement to consider the consequences of no longer being able to drive. A transport accessibility rating (akin to the energy performance certificate) for homes for sale could be a valuable policy innovation, directing people to move to better connected locations. There is a case for revisiting the 'Key Village' concept from the 1960s and 1970s, used in Devon to designate settlements for concentrations of services.

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<sup>37</sup> Nick Hayes "The Book of Trespass" (2021) and "The Trespasser's Companion" (2022), Bloomsbury

People most affected by transport related social exclusion often have the best ideas for solving problems. There is a need for experimentation to develop a toolkit for 'quick wins'.

## Discussion

**REGG1:** These issues resonate with the challenges uncovered by an 18 month evidence gathering project in our region to inform a new Transport Strategy. Rural mobility challenges feature prominently and there is a need for more data and definition on transport related social exclusion to make the case for investment. I agree that these issues don't get the weight which other schemes in cities attract. We need more work on this.

**REGG1:** In our region, where we are aiming to create a centre of excellence for rural mobility, twenty four planning authorities need help with planning and transport issues. A recent Cycle Cities conference held a panel on active travel in rural areas which highlighted barriers to expanding active travel for leisure in these areas. Land ownership is a very interesting issue and represents a barrier to be overcome.

**MOB1: [CHAT]** Enterprise operates car clubs across the UK (including outside the large conurbations) and offer a Surrogate Driver<sup>38</sup> programme which can be part of the solution. For people with a disability or limited driving capacity it is possible to become a non-driving car club member with up to three free surrogate drivers. These drivers have their own membership ID and any fees relating to their reservations are debited from the account owner.

**REGG2: [CHAT]** Land ownership is a really interesting challenge. Often in rural areas an active travel scheme, for example, can cover a longer distance than in an urban setting. Therefore the sheer number of land owners can be a challenge. It only takes one or two landowners to object to cause real challenges for a scheme.

## Neil Poulton and Abigail Nichols (WSP & EEH)

"Shift|Trip" is a first mile/last mile toolkit developed by WSP and England's Economic Heartland. Inspired by Transport for London's street typology matrix, it provides data on who makes up a place, the attributes of that place (density, demographics) and its current connectivity. Density and accessibility are the key dimensions of the matrix<sup>39</sup>.

Population density is drawn from the 2011 census. Accessibility is harder to determine and is drawn from a range of sources. For uniform and widespread data the tool uses the DfT journey time in the morning peak (7am-10am) which includes access to food stores, education and health as well as employment. Public transport timetables and average traffic speeds are also included. EEH analysed the MSOA codes for their region and discovered that 99 areas fell into the least accessible category.

Experian's Mosaic data on buying habits are used to generate a map of personas, which are in turn matched to the most suitable transport modes using two variables. A Human Factor Variable reflects the importance of cost, environment, time and health for each persona and a Mode Factor Variable allocates attributes to each mode choice. For example a persona valuing health over time would favour bicycle over e-bike. An e-scooter would not suit an older persona more concerned about safety. Each MSOA is scored on different modes and the size of the likely market for each mode. A traffic light coding shows the propensity to adopt new modes by persona type weighted by potential market demand. Mode solutions will be expanded and updated as new technology comes on stream.

This tool helps local authorities consider where to apply first mile/last mile (FMLM) projects and identify opportunities, for example in new growth areas. The tool is especially useful as the drivers of behaviour differ in rural compared to urban areas. The model will suggest similar areas (based on density and accessibility) where FMLM projects have succeeded in the past and reveals an area's propensity to change and the potential market demand for given modes.

The Shift|Trip tool provides a playbook of options which can feed into informed decisions on where to invest in different interventions. The tool encourages collaboration within a region. There is still a need for council officers' local knowledge to make a judgement between a short list of options, for example insights into where promoting cycling would not be a suitable intervention due to particularly hilly terrain.

The Shift|Trip FMLM tool is a very valuable decision making tool for local authorities. Not all rural areas are the same. Sometimes areas are prosperous and could adopt FMLM measures more easily than others. Examples where the tool has been used include Luton Borough Council understanding the town's MSOAs in preparation for the 2020/21 LTP. The tool helped make the case for different

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.enterprisecarclub.co.uk/gb/en/programs/promotion/offers-incentives.html>

<sup>39</sup> [https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/First\\_Last\\_Mile\\_International\\_Best\\_Practice\\_Review.pdf](https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/First_Last_Mile_International_Best_Practice_Review.pdf)

measures in different areas. Another example was helping a local authority win a grant by showing that DRT was a relevant tool likely to succeed for the locality.

The Future of Rural Mobility Strategy should ensure that the policy document looks across services, and not be restricted to transport services. It is important to take a view across people, places and connectivity. Data is of prime significance. In particular datasets need to take a market/retail approach so that any pilot schemes or projects can be sustained beyond the end of funding.

## Discussion

**ACAD1:** It is important to understand the needs of older and more marginalised people so they are not inadvertently 'designed out' of mobility solutions.

**CONS2:** While the Shift|Trip FMLM tool is valuable it is possibly a concern that it models 'what is' rather than helps to envision what 'could be'.

## Ali Clabburn, Liftshare

Liftshare's key message is that we must not assume that everyone is like us. We must ask our audience what they want and not assume that we know what they think.

Liftshare is a social enterprise and it has always had the vision of being accessible to all. However, many members can't use a mobile phone away from home so it is a challenge. People need access to up to date travel information if they don't have a mobile phone. People also need help identifying someone to lift share with.

A relevant Liftshare case study is a rural hospital whose staff were surveyed before and after Covid and in the second survey also asked about their plans for the year ahead. Unlike other sectors of the economy, travel to the hospital didn't fall as a result of Covid. When people were asked which modes they might consider in future, there was a very positive openness to bus, rising from 3% now to 12% in future (compared to 12% now rising to 40% in the future nationally). Willingness to use electric cars and car share rose, along with a desire for more working from home. When asked what transport modes could they be encouraged to use in future, more than 50% said bus, over 60% chose car share and over 30% were willing to be encouraged to cycle in future. When asked what would encourage them to change many cited discounted bus fares, suggesting this would be a very effective incentive if used by government.

When Liftshare gets it right supporting employers it can work brilliantly, saving over £1000 a year per person. Devon has been excellent at promoting lift sharing for 15 years both via employer and public schemes and 11,000 people are now enrolled. Lift sharing schemes in Devon have an excellent coverage across the whole county and together have saved £7m and 25 million vehicle miles and 5.7kt of CO<sub>2</sub>.

Devon achieved this simply by awareness raising with signs on high volume traffic roads. Awareness rose to 90% on a budget of £16K. This could be replicated anywhere.

Data is key. Individuals must be asked which trips they carry out and what would allow them to fulfil them. Then services need to be provided based on the unmet need and not on guesswork. Whether looking at addressing housing policy, transport accessibility or needs of the elderly we need to focus on data at an individual postcode level not MSOA or LSOA. Every strategy should drill down to this level of detail.

Survey data helps a local authority make decisions and for this it needs to be local and current data rather than the 2011 census. Surveying is now very easy to do. 4000 people joined a lift share scheme in one week as a result of a survey. The employer pays for surveying individuals and staff can then choose their preferred options for next steps. People and companies change their travel patterns to enable sharing.

## Discussion

**REGG1:** Behavioural insights are key. Transport for London paid for an annual London Travel demand survey of 8000 people with behavioural questions probing the barriers to using different transport modes. This survey was important for driving policy decisions and as a design tool for making business cases. In our region we would like the same level of insights as the metropolitan areas and would like DfT Future of Rural Mobility Strategy to fund delivery of this kind of data collection.

**ACAD1:** Liftshare approach is essentially the original work place travel plan concept with better use of data and calculating carbon savings.

**MOB1: [CHAT]** Enterprise operates a partnership with LNER to provide car clubs at rail stations. Vehicles are provided for over 120,000 Enterprise Car Club members within 500 metres of over 181 stations across the rail network. ECC and LNER cross-promote car club and rail travel to complete door-to-door journeys. Vehicles are located at LNER owned stations (e.g. Peterborough, Newark, Doncaster, Durham, Berwick etc.) and close to other



stations on the LNER network (including Edinburgh, Leeds, Newcastle, London and York). In a survey of its members, Enterprise found that the scheme increased rail usage and provided a preferred option for first and last mile mobility. It reported 69% of drivers who used vehicles near stations said they regularly (quarterly or more) combined rail travel with ECC to complete their journeys, with drivers saving an average of 71 road miles per long distance trip.

### Alex Shapland-Howes – Tandem

Tandem is different to standard Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) in that instead of flexing the route according to who books a trip, the route is fixed but the vehicle fleet flexes according to demand. Two contrasting case studies can be used to illustrate the approach.

### University of Warwick

Transport for the West Midlands operates a standard DRT service for the University of Warwick in a zone around the main campus, Leamington Spa and the edge of Coventry. The University also has a satellite campus 15 miles to the south at Wellesbourne. This site was served by an hourly shuttle service because its isolation meant that to include it in the DRT would distort the core service too much. The shuttle service was heavily subsidised due to low patronage. Tandem has provided a completely different approach by guaranteeing a service between Wellesbourne and the main campus every 20 minutes if there is demand. The vehicle depends on the numbers of passengers booking. A typical example of demand might be three people for an 8am departure from Leamington Spa to Wellesbourne for which a four seater taxi would be supplied. At 8.20am the same trip might have a few more people in which case a 5 or 6 seater taxi would be despatched. At quieter times in the middle of the day Tandem can guarantee access to a taxi if there is a need but none will be commissioned otherwise. These are pooled taxi journeys, so if only one person needs to travel, the fare is cheaper than a standard taxi. The fares are comparable to a bus trip. By incentivising shared taxis and only providing services when required the University has saved thousands of pounds with a more frequent service saving unnecessary emissions.

### Banham Poultry

This is a poultry plant in Attleborough employing hundreds of staff in Great Yarmouth 35 miles away. Banham Poultry commissions Tandem to provide vehicles to match the timing and staffing levels of different shifts. Passenger numbers change

according to seasonal demand for chicken. Cleaning shifts are smaller and can be met with taxis rather than coaches. One staff shift ends at 2.15am.

Tandem's philosophy is not to let the 'perfect be the enemy of the good' and concentrate on allowing people to get to work rather than aim to serve everyone and eliminate all transport related social exclusion. Providing a quality targeted solution for workplace travel allows households to move from running two cars to one, delivering major cost savings and emissions reduction. Tandem accepts it cannot serve every use case and cars will still be needed in rural areas for some journeys.

### Policy Asks

Recognise the value of services like Tandem's where there is more demand to travel than car sharing can accommodate. Services like Liftshare and Tandem can be blended together.

Review the historic distinction in regulation between taxi and bus. A taxi being commissioned as an eight seater bus should not be regulated in the same way as a taxi used for private hire. A regulatory sandbox would be very welcome.

### Discussion

**REGG1:** What was the subsidy in each case study above? Could these be financially viable without subsidy in the long term?

**Answer:** University of Warwick satellite service was co-sponsored by Transport for the West Midlands and the university and benefited from being in a Future Transport Zone. Significant subsidy is required but the cost is significantly reduced over the shuttle bus. The Banham Poultry service is entirely funded by the employer which is driven by needing to recruit in a competitive marketplace for talent, especially post-Brexit. Half of the poorest quintile of workers have no car in the household.

**REGG1:** Local employers in coastal towns in our region cite access to skills is a main challenge.

**INNOV1:** Requiring companies to measure Scope 3 carbon emissions might encourage other employers to provide travel to work for staff using Tandem or a similar approach.

**MOB1: [CHAT]** Completely agree with the point about reducing second car ownership. There are also huge potential carbon savings via people driving smaller cars as the norm and only using or renting larger vehicles when needed for that camping trip or family outing.



## Policy Asks

**ACAD1:** The Future of Transport Rural Strategy needs to join up with the 'Commute Zero' initiative in the Transport Decarbonisation plan. There are some excellent case studies for Commute Zero from Liftshare and Tandem.

## Jack Holland at Padam and Ed Cameron at Uno Bus

### HertsLynx

Hertfordshire County Council and Uno launched HertsLynx in September 2021, a DRT covering rural North East Hertfordshire where there was previously no public transport except for an hourly fixed service through the middle of the area. Three vehicles currently serve the rural catchment (rising to five shortly) and provide links to key hubs on the periphery (Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock, Royston, Buntingford, Stevenage and Bishop's Stortford). The technology ensures that the needs of the core rural audience is prioritised over the peripheral towns which are already well linked to each other by public transport. Otherwise the urban demographic would distort the service. There are feeder trips to the urban rail stations.

A quarter of the passengers are Saver Card holders, i.e. 11-25 years old. Bookings are 80% via the app, 15% online and 5% via call centre. The call centre option is important.

The next development will be to blend the dynamic DRT with Hertfordshire County Council Dial-a-Ride service. There are 12 Dial-a-Ride vehicles and in some areas these offer corner to corner DRT. Possible applications for blending Lynx with Dial-a-Ride include an industrial Estate in Hemel Hempstead. At times of day when Dial-a-Ride is not busy the vehicles could be used for DRT.

The vision is for vehicles to be used on the same platform for different needs at different times, for example for industrial estate shuttle services in the early morning peak, then a feeder to rail stations or free floating services in the middle of the day. The personalised door to door element is very important and these vehicles could be brought into the system with higher fees at weekends or early or late in the weekday.

## Importance of Marketing

Padam operates a 40 vehicle DRT scheme on the edge of Strasbourg in France, feeding into the core tram network with 20K trips per month. There is also paratransit<sup>40</sup> across the whole area and the plan is to reduce the fleet and blend these two services and reduce operating costs.

In France, local government historically has had complete control of the transport network and the associated revenue. As a result, they have developed strong expertise in the marketing and growth of transport networks. Post-covid in the UK, local authorities are seeking to share risk with transport operators. In addition on some routes and in many of the rural mobility projects no operator would accept carrying the revenue risk. This leaves a major gap in rural areas if neither local government nor operators have ownership of marketing and building passenger growth. Padam can help by sharing models for growth using, for example, passenger surveys and push notification campaigns.

The former Arriva Click DRT in Sittingbourne<sup>41</sup> reached 100K passengers pa and 75% of commercial viability with six passengers per vehicle per hour. This was with the benefit of a substantial marketing budget.

### Uno Bus

Uno bus is a subsidiary company of the University of Hertfordshire and operates 100 buses, operating in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. HertsLynx DRT is supported by a grant from the DfT Rural Mobility fund. Uno is on a very steep learning curve and Padam have been very supportive and adapted their service to suit our passengers. Ridership growth is slow but steady and a mix of people use the service for leisure, health appointments, college and trips to nearby towns and meeting rail connections at stations. Uno has learnt a lot about customer communications. Some people found it hard to understand whether the service is more like a taxi or a bus and where to board, at a bus stop or street corner or front door. In reality it is a mix of all of these.

In a rural environment like Hertfordshire there are opportunities to integrate with existing rail and bus services. DRT connects at certain points but a more formal integration is required. The ideal would be a booking system to allow a train and DRT journey to be purchased together for the first and last mile to the village. A certain level of information and

<sup>40</sup> Paratransit is another term for Community Transport, typically for people with mobility needs.

<sup>41</sup> <https://cbwmagazine.com/arrivaclick-ends-sittingbourne-pilot/>

infrastructure is important at bus stops. Passengers find it very off-putting when the DRT pick up point is a bus stop yet there is no information about the service at the stop. Transport hubs are needed to increase customer confidence.

DRT using buses incurs the overhead costs of maintaining vehicles and employing drivers even when there are no bookings. Therefore blending is important.

Legislation is a key issue. As a bus operator, Uno has an operating licence with the Traffic commissioner bringing obligations to maintain vehicles and register services. However, the legislation can't cater for blending dial-a-ride and taxi vehicles. Legislation needs to catch up with practice and trialling new legislative approaches would be very welcome.

## Discussion

**ACAD1:** This links to the paper presented by Beate Kubitz in Roundtable 2.

**REGG1:** Integrating with rail and other bus services is very important and it is essential that it is clear which organisation provides the 'guiding mind'. Could the enhanced bus partnerships in the 'Bus Back Better' programme take on this role? Transport for London has the necessary powers to control revenue and cross subsidise services. However, some local authorities are struggling in our region. We can't see DRT ever being sustainable under the current system and attention needs to be paid to this problem.

**REGG1:** We are working with Great British Railways to seek integration between passenger services.

**MOB2:** Agreed, it's a new world now and we have to grow patronage and reach financial viability.

## James Padden, Bird

Micromobility has a long history with small personal powered vehicles evolving from 1881 onwards. The world's first true bike share scheme was 1995, and the first e-bike share scheme in Copenhagen in 2016. Uptake soared in 2017. The sector has professionalised since Bird and Lime launched the first operations in California. Bird now operates in 400 cities and is the biggest global player in the sector with a wide range of vehicle types. Scooters and bikes are now more robust and the fleets are constantly refurbished, increasing sustainability. Bird responded to accessibility regulations in New York with the Whill four wheeled e-mobility scooter<sup>42</sup> for those with limited mobility. EAV Limited have

developed four wheeled e-cargo bikes now in use, for example, at Oxford City Council's covered market. Bird recognises that shared transport can't work in every situation and therefore also sells vehicles direct to the public.

Bird has developed a three wheeled scooter with a seat for the more risk averse and less mobile passenger and e-bikes which resemble motorbikes with pedals. The next ten years will see even more innovation led change in vehicles including fully accessible, ultimately self-driving, pod-type e-vehicles.

A future Transport Bill will create a new vehicle category "Lightweight Zero Emission Vehicle" (LZEV) broadly defined to allow sub-categories to be established under secondary legislation. This will legalise e-scooters, first and last mile e-delivery vehicles and other personal mobility solutions. Freeing the sector from the restrictions of the EAPC (electrically assisted pedal cycle) category will stimulate further innovation.

The shared transport industry is based on a single model: the operator provides the hardware and the public access the services via an app. Shared e-bikes are never profitable so harder to commercialise but they do provide a link to a wider market.

Bird recognises there are passengers without smart phones and/or bank accounts and can provide hire options which don't require these. In house or subcontracted teams can maintain fleets locally. Bird helps local authorities develop policy to find strategic solutions to address local mobility needs.

E-Scooter trials in England started in August 2020 and will now be extended until 2024. The trials have stimulated innovation, with good responses from local SMEs operating Zipp and Ginger schemes. Bird operates projects in places as diverse as Canterbury, a UNESCO heritage site, and Redditch, a small new town in the West Midlands. DfT will publish an extensive report on the trials. The main findings are that the schemes achieved substantial mode shift from the private car, van and taxi, at least outside London. Safety is harder to gauge because the data is sparse compared to the huge data sets used to compile traffic accident statistics. The initial indication is that e-scooters have a similar safety record to pedal cycles. The trips include First Mile/ Last Mile to college and work, with a younger, male and lower income passenger demographic. Within this demographic there is a lot of diversity. Where schemes have been running longer, such as in France and Valencia, women and older people are better represented.

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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.bird.co/blog/bird-scootaround-offer-on-demand-accessible-mobility-cities/>

Does micromobility work outside cities? Bird's e-scooter trial in Redditch consisted of 400 scooters for a population of 80,000 in Worcestershire and nearly reached commercial break even. The Zipp trials included Princes Risborough with up to 40 e-scooters for a population of 8000 and others in slightly larger settlements of High Wycombe (12K) and Minehead (12K). Ginger operate a scheme in Whitehaven for a population of 25,000. The conclusion is that while it's difficult to make e-scooter hire commercially viable in areas of low population density it's probably not impossible. The best prospects are when the scheme is operated through a local e-van hire business to minimise start up costs.

## Discussion

**REGG1:** In Bristol Voi offer a private rental subscription scheme, rather than free floating vehicles which would seem better suited to rural areas.

**MOB2:** Agree, private ownership is probably more sensible in some places and it is likely that e-scooters will be legalised for private use as well as shared use and rental. However, it would be interesting to talk to some of the innovative SME operators from small towns involved in the trials and hear their ideas about making the service financially viable.

## Policy Asks

**MOB2:** The e-scooter trials are largely in metropolitan areas but there is much to learn from trials in smaller towns. We need DfT to commission case study work in these locations.

**NGO2:** The lack of e-scooter trials in Scotland needs to be addressed.

**REGG1:** Do we need a package of measures to break down the safety barriers to e-scooter use outside cities? For example, Wales has lowered the default speed limit in all residential areas and busy pedestrian streets to 20mph. Could this work in the Scottish Borders?

## Kris Beuret Concluding Observations

### Carbon Emission Reduction

Interesting that Jack mentioned how DRT can replace the need for a second car. So these innovative mobility solutions represent a huge opportunity to reduce carbon emissions. We need to be open to this as a goal.

### Digital Training

We need to take a proactive approach to digital exclusion from transport services. The days of printed timetables at bus stops are long gone. The 5% to 15% without access to smart phone and 'internet on the go' need a national training programme. Then we will be able to include everyone's data in transport modelling. There should no longer be sections of society whose needs are overlooked.

### Bring Services to Rural Communities

There's not been enough discussion of solving accessibility problems by taking services into rural settlements. Can we revive the concept of the market day and bring the library, a mobile postal service and a chiroprapist to a village on a regular basis?

### Lifestyle changes

There are major lifestyle changes ahead and we need to hear more about future possibilities. We need a team in a support group around the DfT Future of Transport Rural Strategy, possibly via a chat room, to make this a living document which is constantly updated.

# Summary and conclusions

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This new set of roundtables showed again that there are major transport problems outside cities, but also that there are potential ways forward. As we have noted in our 2020 report, transport research and policy-making has tended to focus on cities, and there is a widespread assumption by many commentators and the public that outside cities cars are universal and that it's not possible to offer good alternatives to personal car ownership and private car travel.

The roundtables showed that this view can and should be challenged. First, there are many people outside cities without access to cars, for reasons of income, disability or age, and without alternatives those people are excluded from society and have difficulty accessing jobs, education or services. There is also evidence of forced car ownership, due to a lack of other transport options. The research for Transport for the North on Transport-Related Social Exclusion<sup>43</sup> suggested that 21% of people in the North of England are at high risk of social exclusion because of transport issues. This is intensifying with the current increased prices and cost of living issues.

Second, there is the impact of climate change. The decarbonisation roundtable heard stark warnings about the impact of extreme weather events on transport infrastructure in more rural areas and the need to plan for this. Furthermore, the significant carbon emissions from transport in rural areas were highlighted as well as the need for different approaches to tackling this and different opportunities to reduce carbon emissions from transport in areas outside cities.

Third, travel patterns in rural areas affect travel in and around cities too. If travel outside cities, especially in the areas next to city-regions (like Hertfordshire or Cheshire) is very car-dependent, then this will result in a lot of extra car traffic into and inside cities, especially for commuting. So tackling traffic and transport problems in urban areas requires action on transport outside cities.

The 2022 roundtables also showed, as the 2020 series did, that it is possible to provide much better alternatives to car use in rural areas and the range of places outside cities. The fourth roundtable in particular heard presentations from a number of practitioners who are actively supplying new transport offers in areas outside cities. These include public transport (ordinary buses but also demand responsive transport services), community transport, car clubs, car sharing and e-bike hire and e-scooters. There are also moves towards bringing these together, linking to local rail services (for example car club cars available at rail stations for visitors to rural areas), and also the role and potential of "mobility hubs" in villages and towns where different forms of transport are available. Some areas are looking at extending the hub concept to incorporate community services, such as cafes, workspaces and parcel collection/delivery points, looking overseas for innovative and effective design and development.

These new transport offers are backed by new forms of analysis, using data from a wide range of sources to improve the planning of transport and indeed access to services for people living outside cities.

The roundtables came up with a number of conclusions.

First, there is a need for **long term plans, strategies and funding** for transport outside cities. City-regions now have five-year funding settlements (CRSTS) and if other areas had them they would be able to plan ahead and develop programmes over a longer term. The new Local Transport Plans are an opportunity to provide longer term strategies and the funding to implement them. This longer term planning and funding needs to encompass funding for maintenance of existing transport infrastructure and for ensuring its resilience to extreme weather events, as well as longer term funding for services and infrastructure.

These new plans also need to take a **holistic approach**, linking transport to (for example) housing markets, planning and employment and

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<sup>43</sup> <https://transportfornorth.com/press-release/over-3-million-people-at-risk-of-transport-related-social-exclusion/>

recognising that these wider factors influence travel. **New approaches to business cases** for transport programmes and projects outside cities will be needed, to recognise the need to fund services that can overcome social isolation and exclusion and also provide an attractive alternative to car use. The use of new data sources should inform these new plans. The public sector could use its duties and powers more strategically to shift travel demand to non-car services.

The Government can help the development of new transport services in other ways, for example through **changes in the tax system**; at present employer-provided public or shared transport services are currently subject to taxation as a “benefit-in-kind”, which prevents some initiatives from developing. The issue of **road pricing**, and how it might impact on areas outside cities, was also raised; some could see benefits but also risks given car dependency in many rural areas.

Linked to the case for longer term planning and funding is the need to **move from pilots to mainstream provision**. Transport outside cities has been the subject of many kinds of pilots and demonstration projects; participants acknowledged that these have been helpful in testing out new approaches and that this is valuable, but there was a call for mainstreaming the elements that have been shown to work and rolling them out more widely. As one participant put it, rather than endlessly piloting things there should be funding to “just get on with stuff”.

There was interest in projects that **make better use of the transport already available** in rural areas – “sweating the assets”. Most rural areas have specialist transport services provided by different public bodies, each with their own fleet – social services, dial-a-ride, special educational needs (SEN) school transport and non-emergency patient transport. Bringing these together, and linking them with conventional bus or demand responsive services could provide better services with more efficient use of public money. This was tried with “total transport” pilots in 2015-17; although silos between different services impeded these, it was acknowledged in the roundtables that the concept was still sound and could be tried again.

It was however pointed out that different transport services are subject to different regulations, making it difficult to bring them together. One roundtable paper identified 9 different regulatory regimes, encompassing buses, taxis, car shares, demand responsive transport, community

transport, work shuttles and others. One practical way forward would be to try **“regulatory sandboxes”** – allowing areas to experiment with combinations of different forms of transport, similar to the Future Transport Zones and the e-scooter trials that have been taking place in some urban areas following the Government’s “Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy”.

Sweating the assets might also encompass **community-based solutions**. The concept of a “chameleon car” emerged from the previous roundtables; this would introduce community-owned vehicles that might be used as taxis, taxibuses, DRT, part of a car club, community transport and other uses; the idea demonstrates the need for innovation in regulation to make it work for modern mobility. They might combine with goods transport, delivering and collecting parcels (“cargo hitching”). More generally, the roundtables heard about a number of community initiatives to tackle transport issues in areas outside cities, and local and national government should support social and community enterprises to implement such schemes.

Part of the opportunity of making better use of existing transport services is about **better integration**, linking trains with buses and other mobility options, and about **better information and marketing**. Cornwall Council’s “Transport for Cornwall” network was used to illustrate this. More support for the mobility and community hubs that can bring services together would be helpful – the Scottish Government is already funding a lot of work on mobility hubs<sup>44</sup> and funding for these should be available in England too.

**Visitor travel** and **commuting** both emerged as areas for attention and also opportunity. There are good reasons for this; analysis suggests that although many car journeys, even in rural areas, are quite short, the longer journeys, although a lower proportion, account for significant carbon emissions, and commuting/business and leisure journeys are the main sources of these longer trips.

On **commuting**, there has been significant growth in interest from employers, both public and private, since the last roundtables, with a greater focus on businesses reporting their greenhouse gas emissions, especially “scope 3” emissions that encompass indirect emissions including those from transport. The MobilityWays programme<sup>45</sup> has engaged with employers, measures their “Average Commuter Emissions Level” and develops plans to reduce these emissions. Other operators are

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/49056/stpr2-phase-1-a-st-project-5-mobility-hubs-3-feb-2021.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.mobilityways.com/>



providing bespoke transport services for employers. Local government, sub-national bodies and the Government are already promoting initiatives in this area (the Government's transport decarbonisation plan promises a "commute zero" initiative) but this could be mainstreamed through central support.

On **visitor travel**, there are a number of initiatives – the "Travelling Light" project in the Hope Valley in the Peak District is one that seeks to promote "an ecosystem of low carbon travel"<sup>46</sup>. This is important both in reducing car mileage, but also in increasing opportunities for those without cars to visit the countryside and National Parks. It is notable that the Travelling Light project is community-led and that public sector and DfT support followed. There are opportunities to reduce car use by visitors once they arrive in an area, for example by giving discounts to visitors arriving at attractions by sustainable transport. However, it is more difficult to reduce the need for long car journeys to those areas in the first place which are a significant yet poorly acknowledged source of personal transport carbon emissions. An increased role for coaches, which were described by one participant as the Cinderella of transport policy, was highlighted as one opportunity. The links between visitor approach travel and in-destination travel was acknowledged. The Landscapes Review, led by Julian Glover in 2019, outlined the need for a different model for transport governance for national parks, proposing a governance "sandbox" pilot for the Lake District<sup>47</sup>. The Government could pick this up and take forward the work that has been done so far in working on the detail of this.

One of the roundtables focused on **accessibility and inclusivity**, and these issues also emerged as a common themes across the roundtables. There was concern that the needs of people with disabilities and of women, children and older people are often overlooked, and the journeys they make – for example parents escorting children, journeys for education and for healthcare, and "chain trips" combining these – are given less weight in transport planning, transport models and in the business cases underpinning transport investment plans especially compared to the more straightforward demands such as commuting; in some cases data on accessibility and inclusion is missing or incomplete. Co-design of services, involving users in creating and designing provision, is useful and worthwhile and the roundtables highlighted some examples of this.

There was also concern that **new transport technology may add to social exclusion**. Electric vehicles are expensive at present and many public EV charging points are not accessible for disabled drivers, who could be shut out of the electric vehicle market if this is not addressed (current EV charging cables are also heavy and can be a struggle for people with limited strength). There is also "digital exclusion" – there are many people without a bank account and others find digital technology difficult to use or access, so transport services based on apps, smartcards and online booking will exclude these people; this becomes worse in rural areas with patchy mobile signal. Digital training was suggested but also it will be necessary to make provision for the "unbanked" and for those without access to the internet or to smartphones; one DRT provider said that retaining a traditional call centre was important. Opportunities for bringing services to people, especially in smaller communities, should be explored as a means of reducing the need to travel.

There are growing opportunities for **active travel** outside cities; in particular, e-bikes are opening up opportunities, including for older people and those with disabilities. However, participants were concerned that these opportunities are not being explored effectively – safer routes, more and better crossings (including longer timings for pedestrians) and the provision and maintenance of pavements and footpaths are all issues that authorities should address. It was also highlighted that the urban-focussed metrics for funding active travel investment make it hard for rural schemes to gain funding, and the absence of rural-proofed investment effectively lock-out active travel development for many rural communities. The advent of Active Travel England gives an opportunity for a focus on these. One specific issue raised was the need for **stronger compulsory purchase powers** to put in good networks of footpaths and cycle routes in more rural areas.

The planning and funding of transport outside cities will require new partnerships and governance arrangements, especially to manage, set standards and share data, for example for Mobility as a Service schemes or for area-wide smartcards. These partnerships have an essential role in "holding the ring" between competing providers.

46 <https://hopevalleyclimateaction.org.uk/travel/travelling-light/>

47 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/833726/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf\\_p112](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/833726/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf_p112)

## Next steps and conclusions

The roundtables were once again widely welcomed as a valuable opportunity to exchange information and good practice among those working on improving transport provision and planning outside cities. This will be continued; a new “Rural Transport Learning Network” is being set up by the University of Hertfordshire, with funding from Transport East, the lead sub-national transport body on rural mobility and will complement the well-established, vibrant Scottish Rural & Islands Transport Community<sup>48</sup>. It is hoped that this network, which will feed into Transport East’s new Rural Mobility Centre of Excellence<sup>49</sup>, will continue the work started by the roundtables in sharing information on ways to improve transport outside cities.

Meanwhile a number of those involved in the roundtables are taking projects forward. The sub-national bodies are promoting a wide range of initiatives. England’s Economic Heartland has recently published guidance on mobility hubs<sup>50</sup>. The South-West STBs have produced a South West Rural Mobility Strategy<sup>51</sup>. A number of local authorities are using the Rural Mobility Fund and other sources to put in place new services, and there are also a number of community initiatives developing on rural transport.

Perhaps one of the main conclusions from the roundtables is **that there are initiatives that can be started now** that will reduce carbon emissions and traffic levels in areas outside cities. Car sharing, especially for commuting, (with appropriate safeguards and safety nets such as guaranteed rides home if problems arise) offers some immediate benefits and opportunities. However, longer term there is a need to create much better transport networks outside cities, using examples such as Switzerland, Sweden and the Netherlands which provide high quality transport services in even quite remote communities that not only provide access and mobility, but support the sustainability and vitality of communities and local economies. The roundtables found some evidence that many people and communities are supportive of such approaches.

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<sup>48</sup> <https://ruralmobility.scot/>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.transporteast.org.uk/rural-mobility-centre-of-excellence/>

<sup>50</sup> [https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Item\\_7\\_Annex\\_1\\_EEH\\_Mobility\\_Hubs\\_Strategic\\_Transport\\_Leadership\\_Board\\_03\\_March\\_2023\\_.pdf](https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Item_7_Annex_1_EEH_Mobility_Hubs_Strategic_Transport_Leadership_Board_03_March_2023_.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> <https://westerngatewaystb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/20220330-WG-PT-Rural-Mobility-Strategy-Final-Draft-Strategy-v1-1-Compressed-002.pdf>

## Notes

## Notes





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