



The Chartered
Institute of Logistics
and Transport

A new approach to solving the rural bus crisis

17th May 2023

Ben Colson and Morag Robertson

bencolson1@aol.com and Morag.Robertson@jacobs.com

CILT Rural Policy Group

ciltuk.org.uk

Rural Policy Group

Role

- To investigate current issues affecting the rural community across all modes and sectors
- To make representations to appropriate agencies e.g., central Government, local authorities, trade organizations and others on behalf of CILT on this subject.
- The Policy Group is intended to work alongside other CILT Policy Groups and Forums

Objective

- To educate and influence government on issues relating to the rural transport agenda, together with thought leadership on creating sustainable, connected, integrated and cost-effective transport solutions for the rural environment whilst being aware of and integrating with overlapping issues of the urban-rural fringe. The Group recognises that rural areas are not all the same and therefore any rural policy solutions should not be either.

The imperative

Almost 5,000 bus routes have been axed since 2012.

Research by the Campaign for Better Transport showed that 27% of bus services, measured by mileage, have disappeared in a decade, while the number of services on official registers in England dropped from almost 17,000 in March 2012 to just over 12,000 last March.

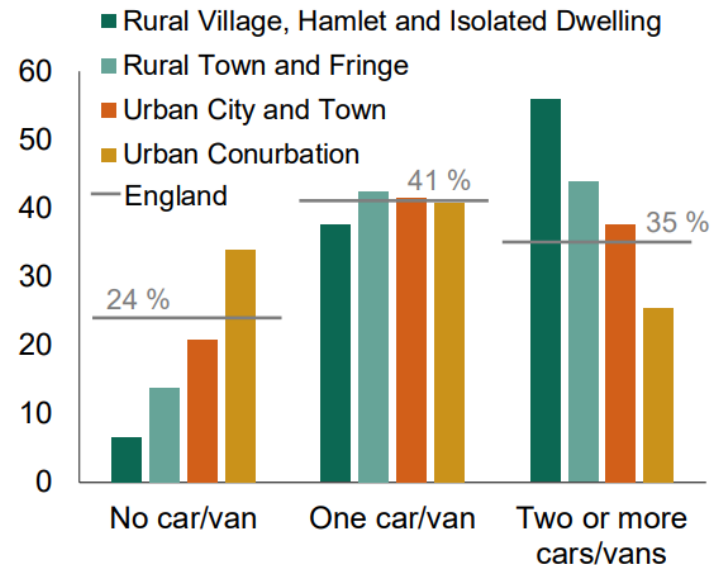
The decline in rural areas is felt acutely when combined with associated issues of social isolation, access to education, employment, and healthcare.



Background

1. Rural bus decline due to dispersed populations, employment versus more centralised service provision (health, education)
2. Bus provision is an agent of **levelling up, decarbonisation** and health and welfare
3. Current funding opportunities do not always support this in rural areas and current regulation is out of date and fails to support the wider benefits of bus usage
4. £2 fare cap has had some success in increasing journeys, but other funded solutions such as DRT have been less successful yet have been a focus for government support

Percentage of households with access to a car or van by rural/urban classifications: England 2017/18



The proposal - delivering on rural bus services

Through the National Bus Strategy and Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), the proposal is to encourage the development of controlled trials in **fare free** rural bus routes. It aims to:



1. Develop understanding of elasticity of demand historically measured at periodic intervals, to identify the motivating factors that will lead to a change of travel habit
2. Create Low risk low cost proposal as an alternative to DRT initiatives
3. Provide an opportunity to understand the dynamic behind the decision-making of rural dwellers, by age, income group etc
4. Include the development of legacy and KPIs to define success (including accessibility)

What we want to achieve

To develop a campaign to escalate, influence and inform the rural bus agenda through an issue specific initiative. We want to achieve this by:

1. CILT more formally engaging with the RSN and constituent authorities
2. Developing an approach to promoting “fare free rural bus trials” which includes;
 - Identification of stakeholders
 - Development of a thought piece based on the above thinking
 - Communication plan with support of the communications team which includes
 - i. Publishing of a paper to all key stakeholders
 - ii. Host a round table for local authorities (transport authorities) to launch the proposal
 - iii. Engagement with DfT which includes offering assistance to government to select an adequately diverse geographical/sociological/economic areas for trial
 - iv. Ongoing communications

Working with RSN – our asks

1. In the short term we look to your support for our proposal
2. Longer term to work with you to develop the rural transport agenda and to help to inform your asks of government

Discussion and questions