



Rural Transport Seminar

**Kerry Booth, Chief Executive
Rural Services Network**

4th June 2025

Rural transport systems are vital for ensuring that all residents have access to essential services, employment, and community interaction, yet they often lack the necessary investment and infrastructure.

The absence of adequate transport options in rural areas can lead to social isolation, limit job opportunities, and increase dependence on private vehicles, which contributes to environmental degradation.

Enhancing rural transport is essential for economic development, social equity, and environmental sustainability.

Three Foundations for Unlocking Rural Prosperity



**Fairly Funded
Rural Public Services**



**Use of the right
measures & metrics
to understand rural
Challenges**



A Rural Specific Plan



**Fairly Funded
Rural Public Services**

In times of austerity and cutbacks, we believe at the RSN that it is even more important to fairly fund services, including those in rural communities.

Every Council deserves to have the resources it requires, to meet the needs of their community.

40% More



**Government Funded
Spending Power in urban
Councils is **40% MORE**
per head than in
predominantly Rural
Councils for 25-26**



Rural Residents
pay **20% more**
in Council tax
per head
compared to
Urban Residents

**Urban Councils budgeted to
spend over 3 times more than
rural on public transport**

Rural Budget



Urban Budget



2024/2025 RA Analysis



**Use of the right
measures & metrics
to understand rural
Challenges**

We must use the right metrics to understand the policy challenges in rural areas and be able to assess if policy interventions are working.

Our rural communities are diverse, and data that tries to capture these communities at a nation, regional or even local authority level often misses the reality of rural life.

There is a risk that metrics are designed to measure urban circumstances and are skewed against rural situations.



Research suggests that about **1 in 4** bus routes have **ceased** in county and rural areas over the eleven years from 2010/11 to 2021/22.

Source: <https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk>

Urban areas (excluding London) have **double** the number of taxis and private hire vehicles as a proportion of population than rural areas.



Rural - 2.6 per thousand people

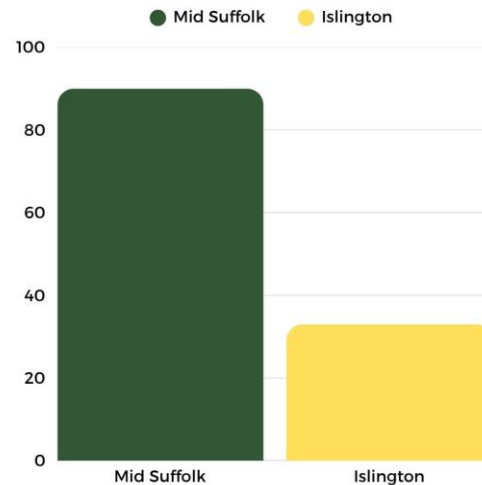


Urban - 5.5 per thousand people

Source: RSN analysis of Taxi and PHV Licensing Authorities, DfT July 2024



90% of households in rural areas like Mid Suffolk have access to a car compared to only 33% in urban areas like Islington



TAPAS Network Analysis of 2021 Census data

17 and 18 year olds are specifically identified as facing ongoing challenges in the National Bus Strategy with limited statutory support

Source: Department for Transport National Bus Strategy

HM Government



PLAN FOR CHANGE

Milestones for mission-led government

5 December 2024

CP 1210

A Rural Specific Plan

Policy must be designed to meet rural needs, not a one size fits all approach, but targeted at overcoming barriers that prevent rural from thriving.

 **HM Treasury** 
@hmtreasury



Today we're announcing £15.6 billion to transform local transport in the North, Midlands, and South West.

This investment comes ahead of the Spending Review where the government will set out plans to invest in Britain's future and deliver for working people.




 **SPENDING REVIEW**

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 **GB News** 
@GBNEWS

'Our great cities for too long have been underfunded when it comes to transport.'

Secretary of State for Transport Heidi Alexander MP details the Government's investment in trams, trains and buses outside of London.



7:55 AM · Jun 4, 2025 · 5,246 Views

[Watch the transport secretary at this link](#)

Press release

Government protects thousands of miles of bus services from being scrapped

Bus Services Bill will give local leaders the power to shape the bus services their communities rely on.

From: [Department for Transport](#), [Heidi Alexander MP](#) and [Simon Lightwood MP](#)
Published 3 June 2025



- bus passengers across the UK – particularly the vulnerable – will be protected from sudden cuts to their services thanks to the Bus Services Bill, which has passed its second reading
- Local Transport Minister visits Blackpool, seeing first-hand how locally controlled bus routes are restoring trust in public transport
- empowering local leaders, government invests recent record £1 billion to improve bus services and drive up living standards by delivering the Plan for Change

Thousands of bus passengers who rely on vital routes to get to work, school or the doctors will be protected from sudden and uninformed cuts to services thanks to the government's Bus Services Bill.

In a move that will protect thousands of miles of vital bus routes, the Bus Services Bill will end the plight of bus routes being scrapped at short notice, tightening requirements for cancelling vital bus routes – especially those used by vulnerable or disadvantaged passengers.

Councils will identify socially necessary local services, and working with bus operators, put in place strict requirements before these services can be changed or cancelled.

As the [Bus Services Bill](#) reached its second reading in the House of Commons yesterday (2 June 2025), the Transport Secretary called for greater accountability and reliability for bus services. MPs have also begun to have their say on proposals to protect vital services and empower local authorities to make the decisions that will benefit their communities.

The bill, which has already passed through the House of Lords, will improve access to opportunities that drive up living standards and so grow the economy, as part of the [Plan for Change](#).

Buses remain the most used form of public transport across England, but approximately 300 million miles of bus services operating outside London were slashed from 2010 to 2024, with passengers left frustrated at the lack of accountability.

MPs also debated how the bill will allow local authorities to emulate the success of locally controlled bus networks.

To mark the milestone, the Local Transport Minister, Simon Lightwood, visited Blackpool last week to hear first-hand from passengers how the locally controlled Blackpool Transport buses have put their needs first to deliver services that allow them to access jobs and social opportunities that drive up their quality of life.

Transport Secretary, Heidi Alexander, said:

“We’re committed to giving local leaders the power to shape the bus services their communities rely on. Our Bus Services Bill is a big step forward, protecting vital services that people depend on to get to work, school, or essential appointments.

Chancellor to announce £15bn for transport projects



| The Very Light Rail tram vehicle on tracks in Coventry city centre

Jennifer McKiernan

BBC political reporter

@_JennyMcKiernan >

4 June 2025, 04:00 BST

Updated 48 minutes ago

Billions of pounds of investment in transport infrastructure in England are set to be announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves on Wednesday.

Trams form the backbone of the investment plans, with Greater Manchester getting £2.5bn to extend its network to Stockport and add stops in Bury, Manchester and Oldham, and the West Midlands getting £2.4bn to extend services from Birmingham city centre to the new sports quarter.

There will also be £2.1bn to start building the West Yorkshire Mass Transit programme by 2028, and build new bus stations in Bradford and Wakefield.

Six more metro mayors will receive transport investments:

- **£1.5bn for South Yorkshire** to renew the tram network as well as bus services across Sheffield, Doncaster and Rotherham by 2027
- **£1.6bn for Liverpool city region** with faster connections to Liverpool John Lennon Airport, Everton stadium and Anfield, and a new bus fleet in St Helens and the Wirral next year
- **£1.8bn for the North East** to extend the Newcastle to Sunderland Metro via Washington
- **£800m for West of England** to improve rail infrastructure, provide more frequent trains between the Brabazon industrial estate in Bristol and the city centre, and develop mass transit between Bristol, Bath, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset
- **£1bn for Tees Valley** including a £60m platform extension programme for Middlesbrough station
- **£2bn for the East Midlands** to improve road, rail and bus connections between Derby and Nottingham.

The transport investment marks Reeves' first open move away from the stringent rules in the Treasury's **Green Book**, which is used by officials to calculate the value for money of major projects.

