The future of transport outside cities

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University of Hertfordshire Smart Mobility Unit

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

- Teaching, including MSc in transport planning, and data unit (LADU)

- Research (developing local, national & international partners/collaboration)

- "Walking the Walk": UH has its own bus company, Uno, and a Travel Plan

- Consultancy State of the Nations Reports 1 & 2– Transport planning for a sustainable future

- 'Masters Seminars Series'/Workshops – Sharing & disseminating best practice

- Multi-disciplinary

- SMU is part of other university teams, including Centre for Climate Change Research (C3R) and Centre for Future Societies

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Transport research & policy focuses on cities but rural and peri-urban areas outside cities need attention

Counties like Hertfordshire or Warwickshire features:

- prosperous, high car ownership and severe traffic congestion

- no large cities but several smaller towns

- edge of city regions

- poor public transport - especially orbital

- substantial planned housebuilding

SMU ran several roundtables in 2020 and 2022 to develop a research and policy agenda for these places, and we are now running more with Transport East as a Rural Networking Partnership

https://www.transporteast.gov.uk/rural-networking-partnership/

https://www.herts.ac.uk/study/schools-of-study/life-and-medical-sciences/business-support-and-consultancy/smart-mobility-unit/Roundtable-research


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Why rural transport matters:
- Social exclusion
- Climate change

- Shire counties transport carbon emissions per head are double those in London and two-thirds higher than metropolitan districts

- Urban/rural districts outside conurbations account for 60% population but 72% of transport carbon

- Transport related social exclusion: lack of transport or affordability preventing people accessing employment and services (21% of people in North of England at risk of TRSE)
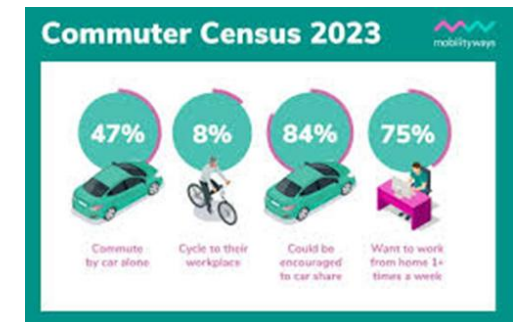https://www.transportforthenorth.com/social-inclusion/

Graph 6.13 – Population at high risk within each domain of TRSE by region
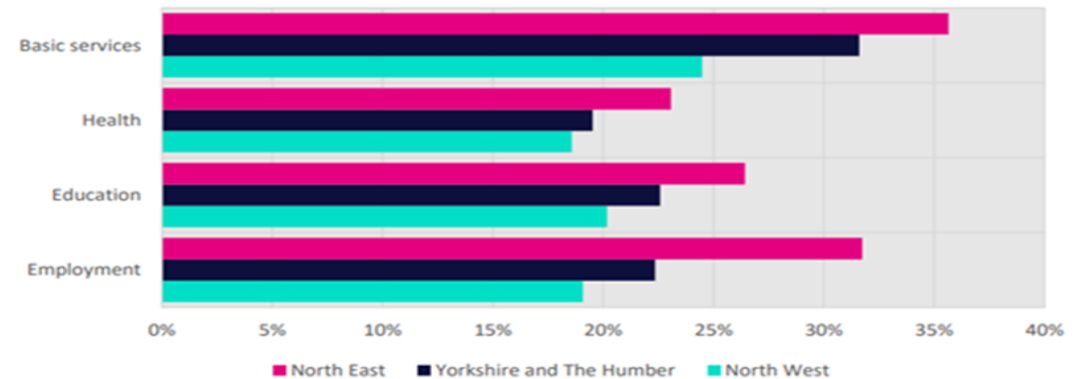
The good news is that there are options for tackling these challenges and impacts

- It is possible to have good rural public transport
- Active travel – walking, wheeling and cycling – can be a real option for travel outside cities
- New technology can bring new travel options
- New housing does not have to be car-based

Commuter Census 2023

47% Commute by car alone 8% Cycle to their workplace 84% Could be encouraged to car share 75% Want to work from home 1+ times a week

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Roundtable findings 1

- Practical ways forward

There are many initiatives and projects that are reducing single-occupancy car use and diesel vans in rural areas:

- Travel plans for commuting to rural workplaces: companies such as Mobilityways https://mobilityways.com/

- Bike hire and cargo bikes are spreading out of cities to smaller towns in rural counties https://beryl.cc/where-you-can-hire https://www.cargodale.co.uk/

- Car clubs and car sharing are now in rural areas/edge of cities e.g. https://www.ourgateshead.org/derwent-valley-car-club

Some of these are private sector initiatives with limited or no council involvement.

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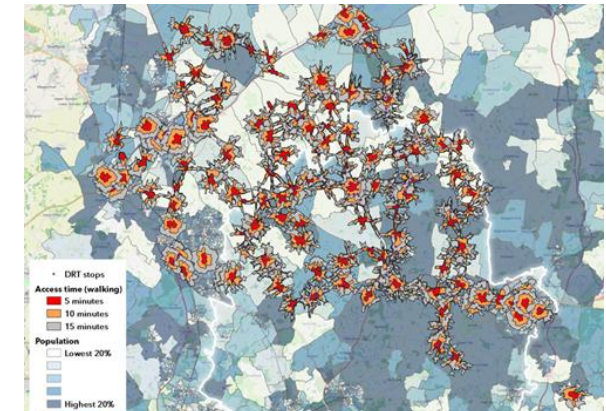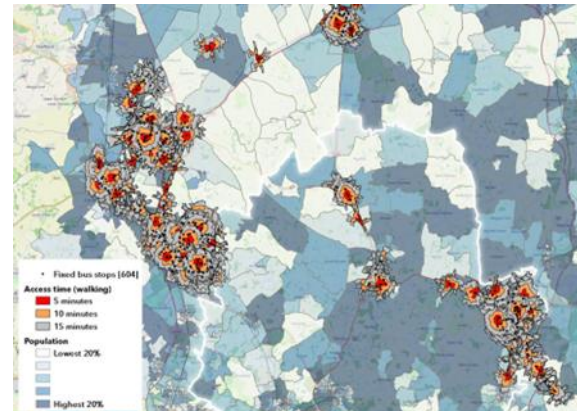TEF Gold Teaching Excellence Framework

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Roundtable findings 2

- Public transport

It is possible to improve rural public transport – **Cornwall** is an example with good interchanges, integrated timetables and smart ticketing www.transportforcornwall.co.uk.

- **Demand responsive transport:** there is debate about this, but there are clear cases for DRT. There are different sorts: **providers** like Ride with Via, journey **aggregators** like Zeelo, https://zeelo.co and Ridetandem, www.ridetandem.com and **software providers** with back-office support like Padam, https://padam-mobility.com/en/

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Roundtable findings 3

- Tourism

Leisure travel accounts for the most mileage in the UK, most by car

This can change: Snowdonia has pre-booked parking, park and ride "Sherpa" shuttle buses and traffic restrictions for those without parking. https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/rules-visiting-north-wales-snowdonia-20695902, and there are local initiatives, see https://situcumbria.org.uk/#vision

New organisations are promoting car free tourism: Good Journey – www.goodjourney.org – and the Eco Attractions group, www.ecoattractions.com

There is international good practice on sustainable tourism and travel, see www.lowcarbondestinations.org, but travel **at** destinations is easier to change than travel **to** destinations, and fragmented governance in areas like National Parks makes action on transport difficult

Roundtable findings 4

- Others

Mobility hubs – bringing transport together with bike hire, car clubs, e-scooter hire and public transport https://como.org.uk/shared-mobility/mobility-hubs

Spatial planning: where new homes are built and the layout and design will have an impact on travel and on carbon emissions but there are ways forward here: https://www.e-rail.co.uk https://www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk/ https://www.createstreets.com/steppingofftheroadtonowhere/

There are many **community initiatives** – community transport, car clubs, local area projects, business groupings - and they are under the radar in some cases

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New ideas

* The roundtables have found many projects that are providing better rural transport and these need to be better known

* There are opportunities for private sector investment in rural transport, such as mobility hubs, and for pooling funding and services

* The Government's bus reforms may be an opportunity to support more integrated transport networks in rural areas – "franchising" doesn't need to be what London/Manchester have done!

Conclusions:

Even without lots of cash there are options for improving rural transport

- The roundtables have found and brought together a wide range of groups and organisations working on aspects of rural mobility, and have been able to showcase many interesting projects and initiatives

- Opportunities exist for joining up and making better use of existing transport; new governance structures, long term funding and revised regulations could help this

- "A just transition"; new approaches to rural mobility need to be inclusive, involve local communities and include needs of women, children and older people and their journeys, and support low-income groups.

- It is possible to cut vehicle mileage and give places outside cities good alternatives to private car use. Universal SUVs are not the only option!

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