

The future of transport outside cities

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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

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>



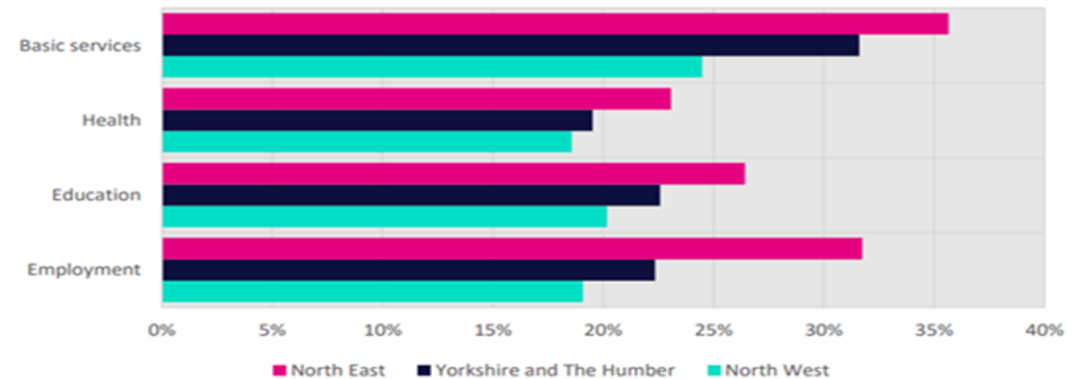
Why rural transport matters:

- 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)

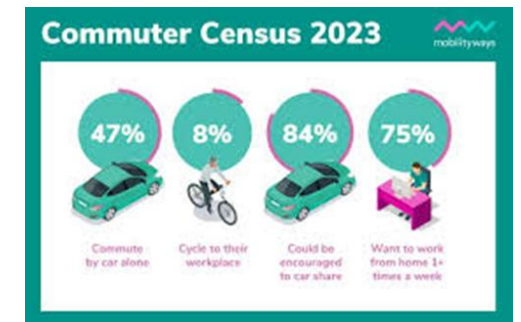
<https://www.transportfornorth.com/social-inclusion/>

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



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>

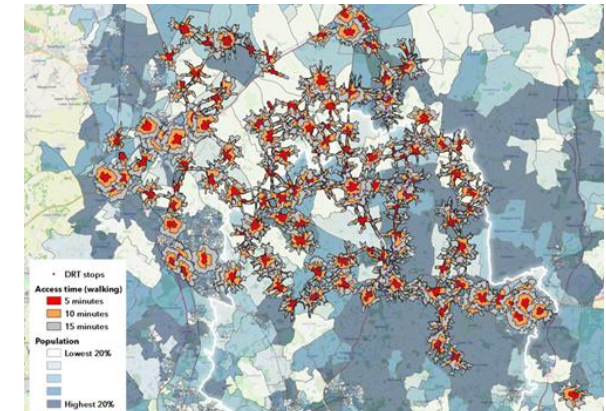
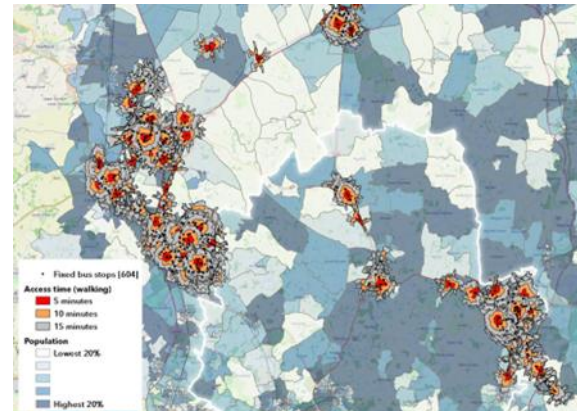
Some of these are private sector initiatives with limited or no council involvement.

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 ViaVan, www.viavan/solutions, 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/>



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.lowcarbontestinations.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>
and
<https://www.englandseconomicheartland.com/evidence-base/mobility-hubs-business-case-guidance/>

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



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!

