CILT (UK) Response to the Transport East Transport Strategy Consultation

July 2023

Introduction

The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT) is a professional institution embracing all transport modes whose members are engaged in the provision of transport services for both passengers and freight, the management of logistics and the supply chain, transport planning, government and administration. Our principal concern is that transport policies and procedures should be effective and efficient, based on objective analysis of the issues and practical experience, and that good practice should be widely disseminated and adopted. The Institute has a number of specialist forums, a nationwide structure of locally based groups and a Public Policies Committee which considers the broad canvass of transport policy. This response has been primarily prepared by our Rural Logistics and Transport Policy Group and our Eastern Region.

1. **What are your experiences of public transport connections in rural and low populated coastal areas in the East of England?**

The following are a few specific comments from a number of members in our region. The main focus of our response will be in the more policy related questions however, even though it is not exhaustive we felt the following may be useful.

Some members in the region have identified opportunities: there appears little regard for other, unmet demand, such as commuter and tourism connections to the rail network, services for evening economy, access to apprenticeships, and (in some instances) poor or non-existent access to local hospitals. In parts of Norfolk, the commercial operator view is to provide what it does and do it well, but the local authority appears unable to identify where the gaps are.

Norfolk has some good examples of rural transport connections, many of which have been developed in recent years. These include routes built successfully on the back of major development section 106 funding, such as those linking villages around Watton and Wymondham into Norwich. Local tourist services have been developed along the North Norfolk coast but lack good connectivity from the outside world which means car use in the area remains high as tourists have no choice but to arrive and leave by private car. Essex has good examples of rural coastal connectivity on route 14 connecting Foulness island, Great Wakering into Southend.

More generally, feedback on bus travel is that the network is limited, but where buses do run, the key element is information on bus running time. Where is the bus, is it on time or been delayed? Real time information is as important in rural areas as in urban ones, but its

role is different, as a missing bus can make the difference between a one or two hour wait time.

However, Local Transport Plans, whether with or without BSIP funding, tend to be focused within local authority areas with little regard for the need for residents to travel across county boundaries. Although outside Transport East's area, residents in the towns of March and Wisbech and surrounding villages in Cambridgeshire, as well as those in South Lincolnshire all access post 16 education, seek employment and attend hospital in King's Lynn in Norfolk, yet those cross boundary links have either been severed or reduced in their scope.

A point that relates to both all the East Anglia region and Cambridgeshire is the impact of very poor east to west connectivity on rural communities. This applies to both Rail and Road network.

In terms of rail network , the East to West lines are the Ipswich to Peterborough/ Cambridge and Norwich to Peterborough via Ely both of which serve only a limited number of rural stations. There is also a Norwick, Cambridge and Stansted and stops at rural area. However, these services are so poor that residents tend to travel West from East Anglia via London, costing them more and therefore triggering greater use of cars for these cross-regional journeys. This may (or may not) be rectified by East-West Rail.

As a general observation the approach to rail needs to reflect the balance between passenger and freight. Train paths are quite limited in the area and we are aware of the contribution that programmes for through container trains will have on the train path situation. There is a major rail bottleneck at Ely and the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement (EACE) scheme has been repeatedly delayed by H M Treasury causing a trans-national impact on local economies as well as travel choices for those living in a wide area of East Anglia, all adding (otherwise unnecessarily) to greater car use.

2. What are your experiences of private transport connections in rural and low populated coastal areas in the East of England?

The following are a few specific comments from a number of members in our region. The main focus of our response will be in the more policy related questions however, even though it is not exhaustive we felt the following may be useful.

From a road perspective, the east to west road network consists of a large number single carriageway roads and in many cases road widening is restricted due to the many water courses across the Fenland and Norfolk although in recent decades the A11 and A14 have been upgraded to continuous dual carriageway.

In rural areas there are the challenges of mixed road use; agricultural vehicles and domestic traffic, causing challenges with competition between different road users (e.g. school movements and farm movement). Whilst rural roads are generally narrow and without pedestrian facilities, they are an essential part of the transport infrastructure for active travel and bus users and their management is therefore essential to assisting and encouraging steps towards Road to Zero government policies.

Yet, despite the generally poor road networks their use continues to grow as use of public transport has declined, much of it due to the disconnect with planning policies which have favoured edge of town retail, employment and health service developments, few of which are easily accessible by public transport.

As an example, Norfolk County Council monitoring shows that use of the A149 between King's Lynn and Hunstanton grew by 32% between 2007 and 2017 yet there is no investment plan for this already overcrowded road. Factoring in the increase in car size (about 0.7% per annum) and the actual increase in demand for road space is in the order of 39%. If local residents are to cross these busy roads either for active travel mobility or to access local bus services, then without a very different mindset it will create a real drag on implementation of Road to Zero policies.

It should be noted that whereas 28% of greenhouse gas emissions nationally are from transport, in Transport East the figure is 50% higher at 42%. Furthermore, the town of King's Lynn, in the A149 example in the previous paragraph, has 1.2% of Transport East's population yet 6.5% of its AQMA indicating the close link between poor understanding of the impact of lack of proper planning in public transport and associated investment in roads.

3. What difference could improving transport connections and services in rural and low-populated coastal areas make?

In summary we know that transport can make a significant different to rural and low populated coastal areas and we need to recognise not just the moral imperative to deliver good quality transport connections but also the role that rural communities plays in creating a strong UK economy.

The rural economy contributes £261Bn (more than a third of that of urban conurbations) but from only 17% of the population (Rural economic bulletin for England, 2019). We cannot neglect the important role that rural communities play in our economy, society and indeed the delivery of the Road to Zero objectives.

Improving such transport connections would enhance quality of life considerably, especially for those for whom transport expenditure is a higher than average proportion of their household income. This is likely to apply to lower paid households (frequently found in rural areas) and young adults. Access to employment, apprenticeships and medical services should therefore be prioritised.

"Inadequate transport has a particularly adverse impact on those who are disadvantaged in any way and on those in society who are most vulnerable. The impacts appear more marked in rural areas where even basic services can prove difficult to access" (Farrell Grant Sparks, July 2000. Rural Transport – A National Study from a Community Perspective).

It is clear that in rural communities the dependence on the car is significant, impacting both travel time and cost. Public transport, whilst often a major option for urban environments, has had less investment in rural areas, and the economics of scale mean that the provision of public transport is often financially challenged.

There is evidence that every pound spent on providing bus facilities will repay many times over: The organisation Greener Journeys has estimated each £1 spent can bring an investment return of some £7 to society. The case for consistent policy and investment in rural bus transport has been repeatedly made in the past decade but during that time disinvestment in it, by local authorities, has reached proportions not witnessed before. As outlined in more detail below, in the decade to 2019 funding fell by 49% in real terms, yet that is a national average – in Dorset, for example, it was an 82% cut.

Bus passengers have therefore experienced higher fare inflation than have motorists (shielded to an extent by Fuel Duty being frozen for over a decade) whilst at the same time

service provision has deteriorated. We welcome the Government's £2 fare cap initiative and especially the announcement of its extension to November 2024 as it recognises that bus using households have been particularly hard hit by the cost of living crisis. Nonetheless, we are concerned that it is for individual operators to decide whether or not to participate, as if alleviating the cost of living pressures is at the decision of commercial organisations. We believe that this is wrong and note that in low-wage West Norfolk the two main bus operators have declined to be part of the scheme, leaving residents there considerably worse off than they would otherwise be.

We also welcome the Department for Transport's announcement on 26th June that it will statutorily require the provision of socially and economically necessary bus services in England if BSIP funding does not achieve material change in the current situation. This is a reflection on the inadequacy of section 63 of the 1985 Transport Act, for which organisations such as Bus Users UK have been calling for reform, and a tacit admission that it accepts that the bus network is failing to meet the social and economic needs of households. Transport East should champion the change to the baseline definition and amendment of the 1985 Act without delay, as any benefit derived from BSIP funding is necessarily likely to be short lived and therefore insufficient to change travel habits and modes for the medium or longer term.

Rural industries (such as farming, food processing, and health care) tend to be particularly dependent on freight movements compared to, say, office or education organisations. UK food resilience and security is an increasing issue where rural areas have a significant role to play, both in terms of employment and economic value.

Often, when considering transport in rural areas, there is a focus on passenger. However, the existing and growing demands of freight and logistics in rural areas present challenges and opportunities that need to be met. As it stands, this consultation doesn't reflect the needs to freight and logistics and the important role the sector plays in delivering a quality of life and economic value to rural communities.

As we see it there are four key ways in which better transport connections could make a difference to rural environments:

- reduced dependence on the private car
- improving access to vital services
- improving access to employment
- reducing social isolation

The following looks at these areas in more detail:

Dependence on the car is a critical issue affecting access to employment and services as well as the challenge of addressing the need to decarbonise. The dependence on the car and this is borne out of a number of issues:

- **Limited alternatives**: This may be a "Catch 22" as alternatives are limited because of the dominance of the car. 95% of households in rural areas (outside of towns) have access to a car, compared to 66% in urban conurbations. 75% of trips in Rural areas are made by car, compared to 52% in urban conurbations (DfT, 2018) and (Government Office for Science, 2019). Despite this, where bus services are poor or non-existent, lower income households with one car experience real transport poverty in what CPRE in a report in 2019 described as "transport deserts". Reducing car dependence therefore means tackling first the reason for multi-car households and developing policies that reduce the need for second (or more) cars by investing in alternatives that remove that need. This may, for example, be by supplying good quality home to school transport beyond the statutorily required minimum.

- **Increased regulation and reduced public funding**: Funding cuts by central government have resulted in some 30% being cut from bus service budgets after adjusting for inflation. The National Audit Office report states that funding for local buses outside London has fallen. 2010 to 2019 local authority direct subsidy fell 26%, including the BSOG cut it was 35%. ENCTS fell 18%. Total funding in 2010 was £783m, in 2019 £512m, actual cut of 35% (National Audit Office, 2020). (£783m in 2010 would be worth £1010m today, so the cut in real terms is 49%). Following a legal challenge, advice from DfT to Community Transport Operators in 2018, discouraged them from operating contracted services for local authorities unless they were prepared to do this on wholly commercial terms. This advice was followed by revised regulatory guidance for Community Transport Operators, introduced in December 2020 making the problems of securing rural services even more acute. More generally, though, during the decade that funding was halved, regulatory costs rose across the sector and a growing number of organisations, led by Bus Users UK in its 2019 report, are now calling for regulation to be fit for purpose – a "sandbox" of regulations to apply across the conventional bus, community transport, taxi and social car sectors. Regulation by sector ownership is irrational and the way both funding streams and regulation work and interact all add disproportionate cost to rural bus provision compared with urban provision.

- **Accessibility**: Many people have difficulty using public transport because of age and disability. This is evidenced in reports such as Buses Matter: a report by Campaign for Better Transport (Better Transport, 2011) and The Future of Rural Bus Services in the UK also by Better Transport. Issues such as lack of street lighting, poor pavements, poor staffing at stations, accessible information and poor seating and shelter bus stops make rural public transport inaccessible to disabled and older sections of rural society. For many people, public transport is neither frequent nor reliable enough to enable regular and time critical journeys to be made to the local town or other place of employment. As a result, many disabled people in rural areas rely on taxis either for the complete journey or to link them with a train service, for example. This highlights the issue of equality; such people are entitled to free travel on buses, but if no bus is available, they will often have to pay considerably more than adult bus fares to make their journeys. For those who are seeking employment – and likely to be on low incomes – reliance on expensive taxis can be a major barrier.

- **Generational issues**: Whilst less evidential, there are perceived generational issues. For the older generation the culture of the car is a significant pull on people's behaviour, the car represents independence and status, which the younger generations may not similarly feel, although a lack of mobility is a significant factor behind young people moving out of rural areas. Transport Focus research in 2016 on DRT found that the younger generation is especially averse to using DRT services because of the unpredictable (and often long) journey times as well as a lack of peer status. At the same time, DfT statistics show that fewer young adults are learning to drive, and those that do tend to do so later. This means there is a growing disparity between costs incurred by young adults in rural compared with urban areas, and is probably a factor in younger people brought up in the countryside abandoning it.

Improving access to vital services

- **Education**: The trend to more choice in education has broken down catchment area cohesion, creating more trips by private car, increasing congestion (which has a direct cost to mobility providers) and reducing the number of vehicles required to mass-transit schoolchildren. Access to education is an impressive for rural areas to deliver on their economic potential, not necessarily primary, more to do with higher, further education.

- **Improved health outcomes through access to services:** Rural areas are on average nearly twice as far from their nearest services than urban areas, including town centres and hospitals (hospitals by public transport (34mins/61mins) and by car (18mins/26mins)). Access to education and training is similar, with secondary school students from villages, hamlets and isolated dwellings travelling 7 miles on average, compared to 2.8 miles in an urban conurbation. Rural and urban residents have similar travel times to their nearest food store, if travelling by car. However, if travelling by public transport or walking, then rural dwellers are at a clear disadvantage (with 10% of them having to travel over 30 minutes, usually on infrequent services). Building on this, public health facilities and schools have been centralised by specialism into local hubs but these tend to be located away from traditional transport routes making car use essential. The problem is made more acute where catchment areas can be quite different meaning that travelling to one location for one specialism and another for a different one breaks down concentration of demand making it harder to provide viable public transport to them both. This highlights the importance of timing and connectivity of different public transport options and also the pivotal role that NHS and local education authorities have to play in determining the transport network in an area, the level of emissions in local communities and the ability to implement Road to Zero policies.

Improving access to employment

This is particularly important for unskilled, low tech jobs for example in the food and agriculture and hospitality sectors or in low-wage areas. In these areas work is only practically available by car, notwithstanding a limited number of bus service improvements. The operating times of such services need to be flexible to meet the needs of these employment sectors and where this has been provided, such as on the EXCEL service linking Peterborough to Norwich, ridership across the whole day will rise. There is danger that the strategy will not reflect the importance of accessibility to employment by means of cross boundary services. Public transport will continue to be a limiting factor for access to employment, particularly for those with special access needs and younger adults. Bus Users' report Reversing the Decline in Rural Bus Services (June 2019) notes "Lack of transport opportunity is changing the face of rural communities". The challenge though remains in making public transport attractive for younger generations, Transport Focus has also noted that young people find the use of public transport not suitable for their needs (Transport Focus, 2018). A report in 2016 specific to DRT (Transport Focus, 2016), highlighted the reason for uptake was that it was considered inflexible by time of day and lack of prior knowledge how long journeys would take.

Reducing social isolation

Loneliness, social isolation and deprivation are exacerbated by poor public transport access. In rural areas wages are lower than elsewhere whereas costs are, on average, 20% higher, largely increased transport costs. Research by Leeds University in 2013 found that "city centres provide the most even distribution of access modes, with bus and car vying with each other for the largest number of trips" (University of Leeds, 2013). Greener Journeys (Greener Journeys, 2018) found in 2018 that almost two thirds of people and 87% of young adults admit to feeling lonely and that the bus plays a significant part in combatting it. Perhaps the most compelling statistic from their research is that a third of people admit they deliberately catch a bus to have some form of contact (Greener Journeys, 2018). This applies as much in urban areas except that the probability of loneliness is multiplied in rural areas by general lack of nearby population. West Sussex County Council estimated in 2017-18 that for each elderly person becoming dependent upon social service interventions, the cost was £28k a year. The 2019 Transport Survey for the Association of Transport Co-

ordination Officers (ATCO) showed ~~the~~ that typical expenditure on public transport in English County and Rural Unitary Councils in 2017-18 was around £4.50 per person per annum. We don't know about the conditions of the people becoming dependent on social services but if the cost relates largely to lack of mobility and 10 fewer people needed social care interventions because of the availability of public transport £280,000 per annum would be saved for relatively low expenditure, maybe not £450, but substantially less than £100,000 dependent on the number of new services needed.

The UK government has produced a 'Loneliness Strategy' (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2018) which states that people need transport to help combat isolation. More evidence about the cost/benefit of providing rural bus services for isolated people would be useful. The saving to the Health and Social Care sectors may well pay for free concessionary bus travel. This amplifies the need for a joined up, not silo-driven, approach to economic, social and transport provision in this country.

The dependency on the car has particular impact on young people under 17 and others unable to drive or those with no or limited access to household cars. For many this means dependence on parents or others, removing the independence available to their urban contemporaries. This lack of independent mobility for youth is believed to be a significant factor in the out-migration and mental health (Greener Journeys, 2018). It also adds to the challenges of poorer members of society, with no access to a car and neither opportunities to use public transport.

More tangibly, poor accessibility exacerbates the disadvantage experienced by deprived households in otherwise advantaged rural neighbourhoods. For example, research published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2010 found that rural households had to spend up to 20% more to achieve the same living standards as urban households, with the largest portion of this additional expense (60-100%) required for additional transport costs (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2010).

Deprivation related to the accessibility of services is concentrated in neighbourhoods which otherwise experience the least deprivation. Many households in these neighbourhoods will have the resources to be able to overcome obstacles to accessing services. For some households, the additional costs of reaching services - and the disadvantage resulting from not being able to access opportunities - represent important hidden needs. For rural households on low income and 'just about managing', the additional costs associated with overcoming poor access to services and opportunities can quickly become unmanageable. (Suffolk Community Foundation, 2020)

It is also worth noting that wages are comparatively lower in rural areas (average annual wages in predominantly rural areas £22,500 compared to £24,300 for urban excluding London - provisional 2019). Hence there's an affordability issue about access to key services and employment - whether it's by public transport, taxi, car etc - as well as distance and other issues. Fuel costs at the pump also tend to be higher in rural areas. Rural Service Network reports provide evidence that the like for like cost of living is also higher in rural areas.

Other issues to consider:

Decarbonisation and congestion: There are unique and difficult challenges for transport decarbonisation in rural areas. Addressing these challenges needs early and in-depth engagement with rural communities.

Rural industries: A variety of types of goods vehicles are used in rural areas, ranging from traditional HGV's and towing vehicles, through to industrial farming vehicles. The Federation of Small Businesses launched "Going the extra mile" in May 2016 (Federation of Small Business, 2016) which made the business case for improving road maintenance AND better bus services in rural areas. The growth in van use can also be seen and the challenge here is to understand how they are used. Rural vans (which includes the category of pick-ups and SUVs) are actively used for transporting working dogs, fencing materials, tools and implements as opposed to the same types of vehicles being recorded as fashion items in the urban context. Whether vans are being used as an alternative to a family car, movement of goods or service provision will affect the decarbonisation solution.

At the same time the impact of goods vehicles, particularly long distance heavy goods vehicles, may be particularly severe in rural areas, including damage to narrow rural roads through inappropriate satnav routing.

For sound commercial reasons the use of commercial vehicles is high in rural areas, and freight intensive industry is an essential feature of rural economies which must not be neglected whilst acknowledging that shared road space will remain an environmental and planning issue. Some examples are highlighted below.

- The **construction** sector's main production facilities, quarries and cement plants are mostly located in rural areas and can be major contributors to the local economy. Some quarries are small and serve only a local market, but there is a strong trend, driven by economies of scale, to concentrate an ever-greater proportion of output at a small number of super quarries serving a much wider area. Cement plants are always large in scale and distribute over large distances.
- Some **bulk agricultural** products, such as grain, also move on a campaign basis, usually seasonal. This will often be to storage facilities such as grain silos, most of which are in rural areas where the grain is produced. Consumption is usually fairly even through the year and HGVs with bulk tipping trailers will convey grain to flour mills or animal feed mills. Other bulk products, notably milk, are produced throughout the year, albeit there can be seasonal variations in production. Milk is usually collected from farms in dedicated smaller vehicles from which it is transferred to bulk tanker for onward movement to processing plants, for liquid milk or dairy products such as butter and cheese. A small but increasing number of farms have sufficient production – and suitable access – to load to bulk tankers for movement direct to plants. After processing, products are generally moved in chilled/refrigerated trailers to distribution centres near the main urban areas.
- **Tourism** is a vital and growing part of the rural economy (particular post Covid) but over-tourism causes congestion and resentment from local residents. An electric car carrying a family group is an efficient and low carbon means of travel but not as efficient, economically or environmentally, as shared transport, and car parking must still be provided to ensure that the attraction is not spoiled. There is evidence from West Norfolk, Snowdonia and Brecon Beacons that if sufficient car parking cannot be provided close to the attraction, cars will be parked in dangerous places along main roads. This has since the rise of staycations. Park and ride sites some distance away and public transport services into the tourist area are one answer especially if designed as part of the local bus network for residents' use. This may need to be accompanied by restrictions on car access to 'hotspots'. Villages and attractions can provide effective car parking which avoids spoiling the attraction: National Trust properties and many villages do this, while limiting car access in the attraction or village itself. Such car parks can form a mobility hub, incorporating bike storage and hire, EV charging facilities and park & ride such as Tomatin in the Highlands of Scotland.
- **Rural start ups:** whether in the agricultural sector (such as high-quality foods), or in other business areas including arts and crafts or bespoke manufacturing, rural start ups

will be dependent on good access to supplies and to customers. Often this will be provided by parcels companies, but service quality and cut off times need to meet the standards of competitors in urban areas.

- **Home shopping:** The surge in on-line retail market shares has been remarkable during the pandemic, as people have worked from home and been unable or unwilling to visit town centres. Although this may well be reversing now, home shopping remains a key feature of our shopping habits. Vans were already the main growth area in traffic – expanding much faster than the economy at 2.8% for large vans, 5.3% for medium vans and 6.1% for small vans. E-commerce has been estimated to contribute 10% to van traffic and this can be expected to be much higher in a post-pandemic world (RAC Foundation, 2014). The full scope of van activity, especially in rural areas, is an important research gap in the context of decarbonisation strategies combined with the imperative to reduce rural deprivation. Electric vans will be appropriate in the longer term, but longer journey distances, a lack of charging and consequential range anxiety may impact effectiveness. And rural van activity is notably less productive in drops per hour than the urban context. Some consolidation of journeys (at both origin and destination via Mobility Hubs) and the creation of combined bus-freight models offers potential to resolve both freight and accessibility issues.
- **Rail in rural areas:** Rail freight is not generally associated with rural areas, but many millions of tonnes a year of aggregates and cement are transported from rural quarries and production plants to urban areas. Timber and products such as bottled water also move by rail and there is considerable scope for modal switch of bulk agricultural products such as grain and milk to achieve Net Zero 2050. Recent work undertaken by Network Rail as part of the development of a programme business case for the Felixstowe to the Midlands and North (F2MN) corridor suggests that for each additional daily train path provided to and from Felixstowe, around 14,600 single lorry journeys would be removed from the roads per annum. The EACE scheme already referred to is pivotal to this and if these benefits were realised then the number of lorry miles would be reduced by over three million per annum, based on an average trip distance of 210 miles. This would result in socio-economic benefits of £2.8m per annum, reflecting road de-congestion benefits, environmental benefits (reduced carbon emissions and reduced noise and air pollution) and safety benefits.

4. What are the potential solutions to these challenges, and do you have evidence for achieving the intended or anticipated outcomes?

Rural authorities need some autonomy to be able to allocate funding to appropriate schemes for their areas rather than funding that shoehorns them into specific solutions that may not work in their area (e-cargo bike example, centralised)

Integration: Modal integration is currently generally poor, which offers a great opportunity for improvement. Key to this is developing rural mobility hubs in existing communities or new developments. Better coordination, for example to include health services and schools, would also open up new opportunities for integration.

Experience suggests that transport integration has reduced in the past decade~~,~~ as its influence on commercial markets by local transport authorities has diminished in line with funding. However, that simply means that the scope for more effective integration is now greater than ever and the mobility hub concept is the key. This is partly a matter for planning law and best practice as mobility hubs are most effectively provided as part of new residential or commercial developments, with the developer part-funding the facility.

Even when integrated journeys do exist, they are not presented as such, either in operator publicity or planning systems e.g., the National Rail journey planner ignores anywhere not on the rail network, just offering a postcode search for the nearest station, but no other assistance. Local bus stops are seldom signed from stations in rural areas. That said Google Maps, Traveline and a multitude of Local Transport Authority or new ITS mobility apps are increasingly providing good multi-modal journey planners.

Coordination is a key: In deep rural areas there are taxis and minibuses providing home to school transport which often park up for the rest of the day. They could provide local bus type journeys between school start/finish times at a reduced cost if this was coordinated and the regulations made it easy as some local authorities such as Hampshire already do. This role can realistically only be led by the local authority yet in many instances the opportunity has been missed.

Driven by the local community: Rural areas vary in both their needs and their connectivity. The solutions need to be fit for purpose and there is an important role for Parish Councils, maybe working in groups, to input to identifying both need and solutions. Each area need to consider the core needs of people from the villages – access to town / city for jobs, access to food retail (reasonable priced shop rather than smaller, expensive shop), access to a school, doctors, dentist and hospital. Can strategic bus routes link villages to these services in a reasonable timeframe? If not can on-demand community transport, e.g. the Herts Lynx-type service, provide a link to the main bus routes for remote villages that can't be on strategic routes? Can walking / cycling links be provided from remote villages to the strategic bus routes – either using existing PROW routes suitably improved or new infrastructure along side the road routes (whatever is most direct).

It is important to understand:

- Identify real demand (not necessarily what LTAs or operators believe it is)
- Match supply to demand
- Consider mixed fixed and flexible routes to extent regulatory constraints allow
- Set affordable fares
- Promote heavily and sustain for period of time
- Make the case for regulatory relaxation to make the outcomes easier and cheaper to procure

Spatial planning based on the pre-assumption of car dependency, makes it increasingly difficult to provide residual mobility for those remaining in rural areas without access to transport. There is a need to ensure that any economic development proposals, especially in the rural context, in particular land use planning need to be linked to transport planning and need have joined up approach. There is a lack of a strategic approach to the cumulative impact of plans. It's the responsibility of the Planning Authority to see the bigger picture rather than simply individual developments in isolation.

Is there any opportunity to "educate" Planning Committees (all parties not just Officers) on transport consequences? This could be met through partnerships with organisations such as CILT or transport providers. The Dept of Levelling Up has published a national design guide which has a code which supports the consideration of the wider environments in which they operate as well as the National Planning Policy Framework which provides direction on transport sustainability (Section 9) in new developments.

Other issues to consider:

Ability to car share is essential as are Community Car schemes for access to medical services. Car sharing needs much greater organisational emphasis, not only for access to jobs and services but also as a step towards Net Zero and levelling up. There should be greater clarity in the insurance implications of paid-for car sharing (this was first raised in a report to the then Department for the Environment in 1970 which examined the future of rural bus services, focusing on two areas, West Suffolk and North Devon). Local operators ~~to~~ could support and extend the provision.

Shared mobility is part of the concept of the sharing economy and related business models are typically developed through private initiatives. It can denote bike-sharing, car-sharing, car-pooling, or ride-sharing and the fees are generally charged per vehicle. DRT is a more expensive option and sometimes is considered to be the key solution to the contemporary challenges of rural mobility, shared mobility is seen to complement conventional public transport.

Whilst DRT may be a solution in some areas, one vehicle covering a large area means regular and reliable access to employment or apprenticeships is denied due to “first come, first served” booking basis. In this way a bespoke DRT vehicle can often become nothing more than a subsidised taxi and it may be that this represents the future direction in more isolated communities, Much greater co-ordination of provision for mandatory home to school travel with general access travel could make a low cost big difference.

In rural parts of the US delivery companies use a process called On Road Dynamic Transfer whereby larger vehicles drive to a rural location, unload the parcels on to smaller vehicles for onward delivery to the consumer. While this is not common in the UK yet, its implementation is a possibility should the demand for rural deliveries continue. In real estate terms, many existing rural locations could be well suited to this, so long as access and security can be guaranteed. This does not have to be provided in totality by one operating company, it can be co-ordinated between many.

Rural hubs (not just mobility hubs) bring services to people rather than people to the service – delivery lockers, banking, doctors, co-working, online hubs, social for example. Micro consolidation could work in rural areas as they do in urban areas, however, maybe combined with other “value adding” activities to provide economies of scale. If these hubs are co-located with mobility hubs there is clear potential for bus / DRT / MaaS services to be used for last mile / first mile goods transport. The hubs could eliminate the need for multiple different delivery companies to serve every village and every road, with deliveries being made in a zero-emission vehicle, designed for local conditions, and delivered by a local person. These hubs have the potential to expand the “working from home” potential with creation of local work centres in rural areas with fast broadband etc for those for whom home working is technically possible but is limited by poor services or space. Consolidating 'home working' in rural centres would overcome the problem of isolation which sometimes accompanies working from home. Aside from hubs the opportunity for multipurpose centres, such as supporting the return of village shops and more innovative ways of combining village services and facilities (for example a pub that is also a shop and a post office) should be further developed and funded. An example is in the Snowdonia National Park where there is a park and ride at petrol stations out of town. CIC’s – Community Interest Companies, could be the delivery route for such enterprises.

There are ways in which rail freight could potentially play a greater role:

- Trunking of products and goods between national distribution centres and rural logistics hubs with final delivery made using battery electric vehicles.
- Innovative intermodal solutions combining rail haulage and last mile delivery by electric vehicle
- Use of passenger trains for parcels
- Shared use of freight trains but different companies to gain volume

Finally, technology solutions are as much about access to data (enabling collaboration, better route planning). Drones will play a role in deep rural areas or high value/urgent products but hard to see how that will replace industrial freight movements associated with agriculture and mining. But technology is not the only answer – culture, land use, intention/desire to collaborate are essential prerequisites and should not be taken for granted.

5 What would you focus on to improve rural transport?

- National government funding: Highly important
- Role of regional bodies (i.e. Sub-national transport bodies): Highly important
- Role of local transport authorities (county and unitary councils): Highly important
- Role of other local authorities (district and town/parish): Highly important
- Role of public transport operators: Highly important
- Role of charities: Neutral
- Role of private sector: Important
- More focus on walking and cycling: Neutral
- More focus on rural bus networks: Important
- More focus on community transport: Important
- More focus on rural roads: Highly important
- More focus on new technologies: Important

6 Focusing on your top three choices, please explain your answer.

Coordination and collaboration
The key message from the "top" choices is the importance of reducing the siloed nature of land use planning and transport planning. Ensuring that the right organisations are involved in the decision and planning process is critical to ~~solving~~ providing the right solutions for the problems identified.

We know that a feature of the rural environment is there are vast differences between different rural areas. Any average data masks the considerable variations between areas which will impact levels of adoption of transport solutions and change. In developing policy there is often a risk of looking at the extreme ends of the scale of ruralness, and so we need to be conscious of generalising too much and consider solutions along that continuum.

Funding - funding from government is key to engaging the provision of solutions. For example, it is needed to ensure core bus routes through rural areas are maintained. Plus, the supporting infrastructure for on-demand and/or walking cycling infrastructure.

In the short term, we advocate a mix of low cost shared mobility solutions, such as ridesharing, e-bikes and community bus transport mixed in with traditional conventional bus routes, in contrast to DRT which is proving expensive in most cases. There are some limited

successes of DRT but in more populated in contrast to very rural areas. We believe this could be researched in detail to understand the levers to success where DRT can be cost effective.

There needs to be a common approach to funding criteria. Our work shows it may be significantly more cost-effective in some situations to fund free fares on conventional bus routes in rural areas than provide more costly DRT services. Criteria for funding conventional bus by local authorities tends to be based on subsidy cost per passenger whereas DRT tends to be based on the number of people carried seemingly without consideration of subsidy cost per passenger. This difference mis-directs local authority energy and is potentially a wasteful use of taxpayers funds.

Fast fund for shared mobility, ride sharing and subsidy to bus operators to build up core bus structure / trunk routes. A good example of this is in East Sussex, where the county council are funding improved rural connectivity through BSIP to connect rural communities in-between Brighton and Eastbourne/ Uckfield and Tunbridge Wells.

Technology - Mid to Long term (10 year plan), would be technology, automation and driverless to drive down the cost of operating transport, mixed in with a government led road charging model.

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July 2023