TfSE Transport Forum October 2020: Notes from group discussions on rural mobility

Note – Anything in red was most frequently mentioned

	Challenges	Solutions
Restrictions on the provision of infrastructure and services	• Accessibility to health care • Access to / for public & active transport including for disadvantaged groups • Access to opportunities – employment, education, training etc • Connections to Heathrow via rail (multi modal connectivity) • Need to invest in digital infrastructure – broadband • Poor maintenance of rural infrastructure • Digital connectivity is often poor, which makes remote working/WFH a real challenge • Lack of EV charging infrastructure is preventing people from choosing EV's/plug-ins.	• Improve the digital network, which will potentially lead to a reduction in the need to travel and will also provide for new mobility choices emerging e.g. Connected and autonomous vehicles. Mustn't forget those not digitally connected, and they must be catered for. • Think 'outside the box' (Dutch model) for infrastructure development • Repurposing of premises • Hub model offers potential to provide sustainable alternatives including car clubs, e-bikes etc – but need infrastructure to make it viable/attractive
Lack of viable alternatives to the car	• Access to public transport for all, enabling access to public transport for all & enabling disadvantaged groups (young people, older people, etc) to utilise it • Road danger – can't just walk or cycle simple journeys – denying people a choice so have to drive • Differing views & opinions re. solutions • Alternatives to the car are lacking in rural areas – leading to connectivity problems for residents to essential services • Put off using public transport as its not readily available, if you want to go shopping, then you need a vehicle to bring it in with. • Often there is poor connectivity and integration between modes to enable sustainable access to rail stations. Example given of stations with no pavements, parking or bus access, so therefore rail use is low.	• Rail & bus hubs could serve rural communities better, remove barriers to 'hub' use e.g. effective park & ride schemes
Rural policy	• Need for investment in walking and cycling in rural areas.	• Understand what individual people need from transport

	Challenges	Solutions
	• Safety – Default 60mph speed limit, crashing down to 30mph before speeding back up 60mph. • More holistic approach to rural issues needed from all tiers of government	• Data sharing / ride sharing (esp young people) – demand responsive • Re-evaluate what we need from public transport in rural areas, frequency etc, guaranteed levels of transport. • Re-regulation of bus services could enable the LA's to stipulate frequency, level of service and cost. • The end of the sale of internal combustion engine vehicles will drive behaviour change. There will need to be government incentives to drive the change, and support for LTAs with installing charging infrastructure. • Need to consider alternative fuels. • Ensuring everyone pays for the mobility they use is important in driving change, so as fuel duty/VED reduces as we electrify, then a new solution such as road user charging can help drive change. • Integrated transport, paying for the full multi-modal journey with Mobility as a Service will drive change. Placing the user at the centre of thinking and drive user reliability and quality.
Funding and viability of rural public transport	• Challenging environment for operation of public transport (infrastructure & demand/finance) • Expense of travel / price • Rail – balance long distance vs rural demand. Makes it difficult to be cost effective • Initiatives that reduce demand could reduce the viability of some services – local services can benefit, however. • Local authority funding for public transport in rural areas has been reducing over number of years. • Financial viability of both infrastructure and the cost people are willing to pay to use it • Reduction in passenger numbers • Rural mobility is low on the government agenda, with low funding to match. Bus services have been stripped back as financial viability in rural areas is poor	• DRT offers viable alternative to bus services & other shared forms of transport may provide solutions if take up could be maximised • Significant financial investment to improve existing infrastructure • Creating a viable alternative / attractor; Car drop offs rather than car parking; Incentives and disincentives • Restrict car use to popular places (e.g. NT sites) and provide public transport alternatives • Invest in places where stations currently exist and focus on active travel / FMLM around these areas • Park and ride (or cycle/walk and ride) – but needs careful planning • Reappraise the wider value of rural connectivity and apportion funding appropriately

	Challenges	Solutions
	• Rural bus services require subsidy which is challenging financially in the current climate • The cost of transport is very expensive. 11 mile journey is £8.20 on the local bus. Without demand on bus services, then higher fares are needed to make the journeys worthwhile for operators.	• Better leveraging of funding for transport enhancements through planning process (s106 etc) • With a bus service, it could have other uses instead of just passengers. For example, using a bus to carry parcels and deliveries to these areas.
Disconnect between transport and land-use planning	• Behavioural change – both users and planners (transport & housing) • Lack of integration between transport & land use planning – unsustainable development • Many transport issues in existing rural communities are the result of car-centric planning in the past. New-build rural housing estates are being built without adequate sustainable transport options • Integrated land use planning and transport planning is a major issue, with car use becoming locked in for rural residents accessing services including healthcare and employment • Big supermarket chains are a challenge. These have caused major issues in larger towns, the concept of villages has now changed.	• More effective and joined up planning to ensure we don't build the same issues • TfSE should develop a rural transport strategy • Stricter planning policy re: new builds • Focus on place-making to ensure 'planning for people rather than vehicles' isn't just an urban solution
Provision for first mile / last mile leg of journeys	• DRT (demand responsive transport) service – is it a silver bullet? Look at costs – significant challenges to overcome – more expensive than conventional solution • Large number of small/medium villages & towns with dangerous infrastructure connections – makes it impossible to make end to end journey connections (due to road design) • Need better connectivity of rural areas to main corridors • First and last mile legs of journeys can be several miles, sometimes on poor/difficult roads	• Need to provide sustainable connected safe transport network as alternative to cars, providing safe infrastructure for active travel, convenience is key. (Reduce car dependency) • Improving connectivity with rural rail stations can drive up usage for longer distance journeys. • Needs to be integrated. Potential for rail stations as hubs for other services also.
Diverse geography of rural areas	• Extremes of geography of SE, magnifying the rural issue – rural & 'other' isolation issues	• Put key services back into rural areas – but ensure this is carried out holistically with sustainable transport infrastructure installed

	Challenges	Solutions
	• Social split between low income and no access to cars & impact of high dependency on cars for those who can afford them • Physical access / proximity to bus / train routes • Variety of rural settlements – more deprived areas don't have access to cars, limited choice of public transport options • Difference socio-economic status of settlements within the south east – more affluent areas don't use public transport • Biggest requirement for leisure journeys to the rural areas is on weekends at the minute – increased demand at these times. • Rural areas are very extensive. Changes are required to bring people together to in order to make the journeys reasonable. • Rural areas in the South East are significantly different to other regions in the UK. Other areas are a lot more built up than the South East, major roads, villages have become towns. In the South East, the villages are traditional villages and more rural than other areas. • A large amount of protected environment in the South East. A potential reason for the lack of development that we have seen elsewhere.	• Clear on what are the key services that have been withdrawn – health, education, transport, understand the difficulties • Need to consider how whole region connects holistically, urban to rural and rural to urban in a sustainable way – superhighways, e bikes are increasing distances able to travel • E-bikes and e-mobility can be part of the solution, opens up active travel to a lot of new users. • Potential for rural areas to have a pool of e-vehicles which can be used by the community - increasing shared modes.
Socio-demographic characteristics of people living in rural areas	• High levels of car use – both people living in rural areas, but also others accessing rural for leisure • Young people in rural areas particularly are excluded from employment • Access to facilities and opportunities • Extent to which people need to travel – many people in knowledge-based industries who don't need to travel for work. Should focus resources on supporting the people who do need to travel	• Reducing the need to travel through the use of hubs, digital technology can reduce car use. • Click and collect has increased in supermarkets. Maybe we could get supermarkets to use minibuses to run a service from rural areas to the stores.

	Challenges	Solutions
	- People may choose to live further away from work and commute longer journeys on one or two days per week (result of Covid) - Young people more disadvantaged by lack of public transport – reliant upon parents. Car becomes only option once they reach 17+. Opportunities to target public transport – but isn't cost effective. Journeys with parents are 'free' – need to make public transport more appealing (travel to and from education free). - Demographics changing rural areas not as attractive to younger people, or non-car drivers - Many reasons why people want to live in rural areas, many walk and cycle for leisure, but not necessarily for utility reasons. Perceived safety issues often prevent wider use, as well as poor infrastructure. Pavements and cycle lanes are often not economically viable in rural locations. How do we fund them? - Lack of choice for rural residents, but people make their own vehicle sharing arrangements within the community, so the willingness may be there. Mustn't forget the 10% of rural residents with no car access - Social isolation – Unlikely to be commercially viable to run a bus service.	