



The Rural Services Network

National Rural Conference 2024

Delivering for Rural – Unlocking rural prosperity

Thursday 19th September

Rural Transport Session



Rural Transport

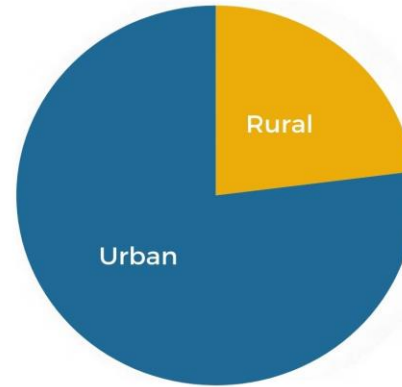


Rural Transport



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 councils budget to spend **3.4 times more** than rural on public transport.

Source: RSN analysis of Revenue Account Budget, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities 2024/25

Over the decade from 2013 to 2023, bus vehicle mileage in predominantly rural areas **declined**.

Local authority-subsidised services

↓ % **19**

Commercial services

↓ % **47**



Source: DfT Public Service Vehicle Survey - Bus Statistics, Annual bus statistics, year ending: March 2023 data tables

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

Rural Transport

Everyone should be able to access employment, education and public services

- Rural areas in particular face challenges such as infrequent public bus services and less Government funding compared to urban regions.
- It's essential for providing access to employment, healthcare, and social opportunities, particularly for those without personal vehicles, and is crucial for local businesses and economic growth.
- However, limited transport options can lead to isolation, especially among the elderly, and increase environmental issues by promoting car dependency.
- Future policies need to balance sustainable transport options like electric and ultra-low emission vehicles with reducing car use in rural areas.

Rural Transport

First 18 months

Deliver an evidence-based Future of Rural Mobility Strategy that acknowledges that buses are essential infrastructure and places a duty on (and allocates funding to) Local Authorities to determine their local need for socially necessary rural buses.

Protect Community transport by creating a larger funding pot which is sustained over a longer period. It should promote the use of community transport schemes which serve outlying settlements and feed into bus or rail routes.

Ensure funding for the Rural Fuel Duty Relief Scheme and the Rural Mobility Fund (without a bidding process) to deliver equality of access. Ensure local authorities are fairly funded to maintain vital rural road infrastructure.

First 3 years

Address the gaps in the National Bus Strategy by producing a Rural Bus Strategy, objectives for rural provision, with funded actions to better serve rural communities and their economic needs on a sustainable basis.

Develop and strengthen the power of Local Authorities to deliver these services by ensuring predominantly rural Local Authorities regain and sustain their ability to offer necessary revenue support.

Create a greener future by undertaking a comprehensive review of the electric grid and, where appropriate, hydrogen supply, to address the risk that the high costs of introducing electric or hydrogen buses and their fuelling facilities could prove problematic in rural areas.

Rural Solutions