

# The Future of Rural Buses

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## Why public transport matters



**Congestion**



**Health**



**Environment and  
net zero**

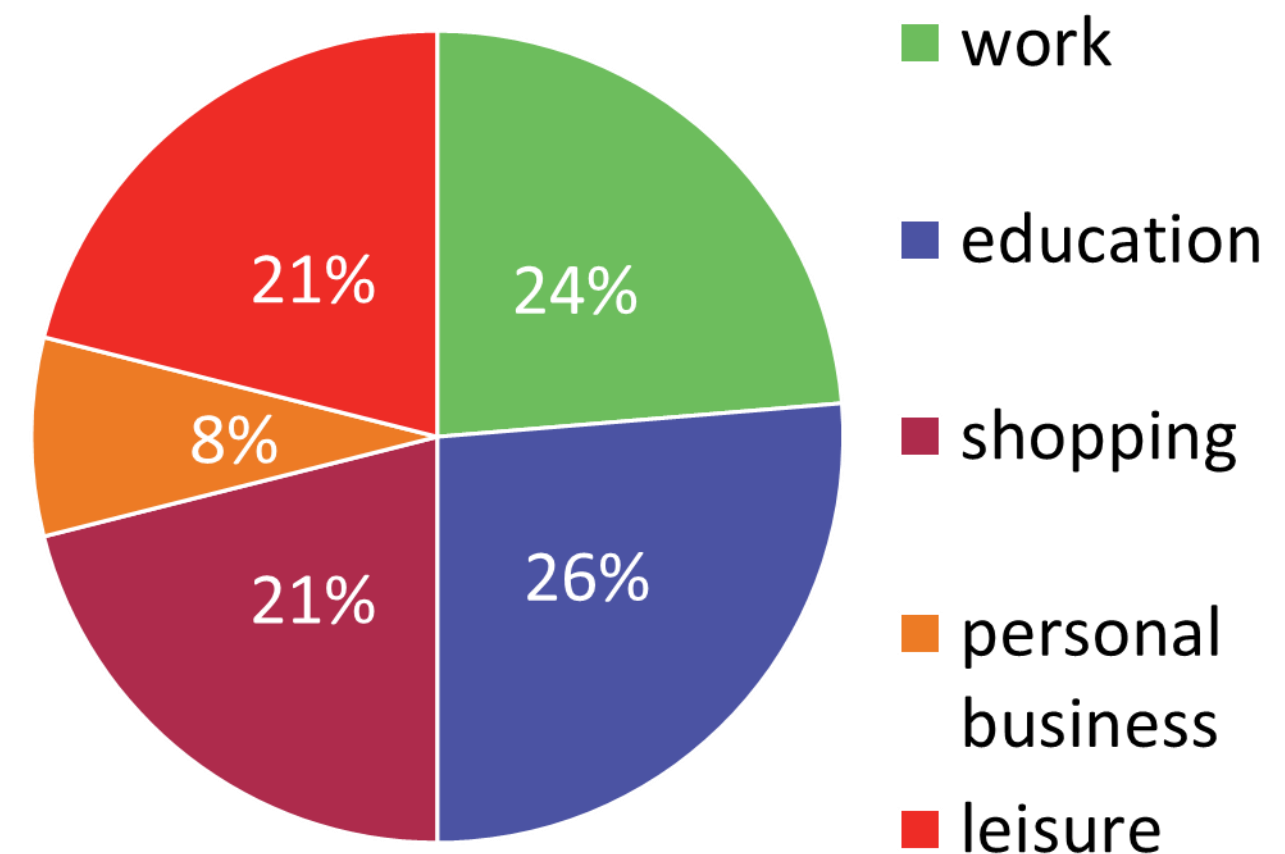


**Wellbeing and  
social equity**

## Who uses buses

- **3.7 billion** journeys in 2022/23 – most used form of public transport
- **Bus users** are more likely to be:
  - Non-car owners
  - On low incomes
  - Women
  - Young people
  - Older people
  - Disabled people

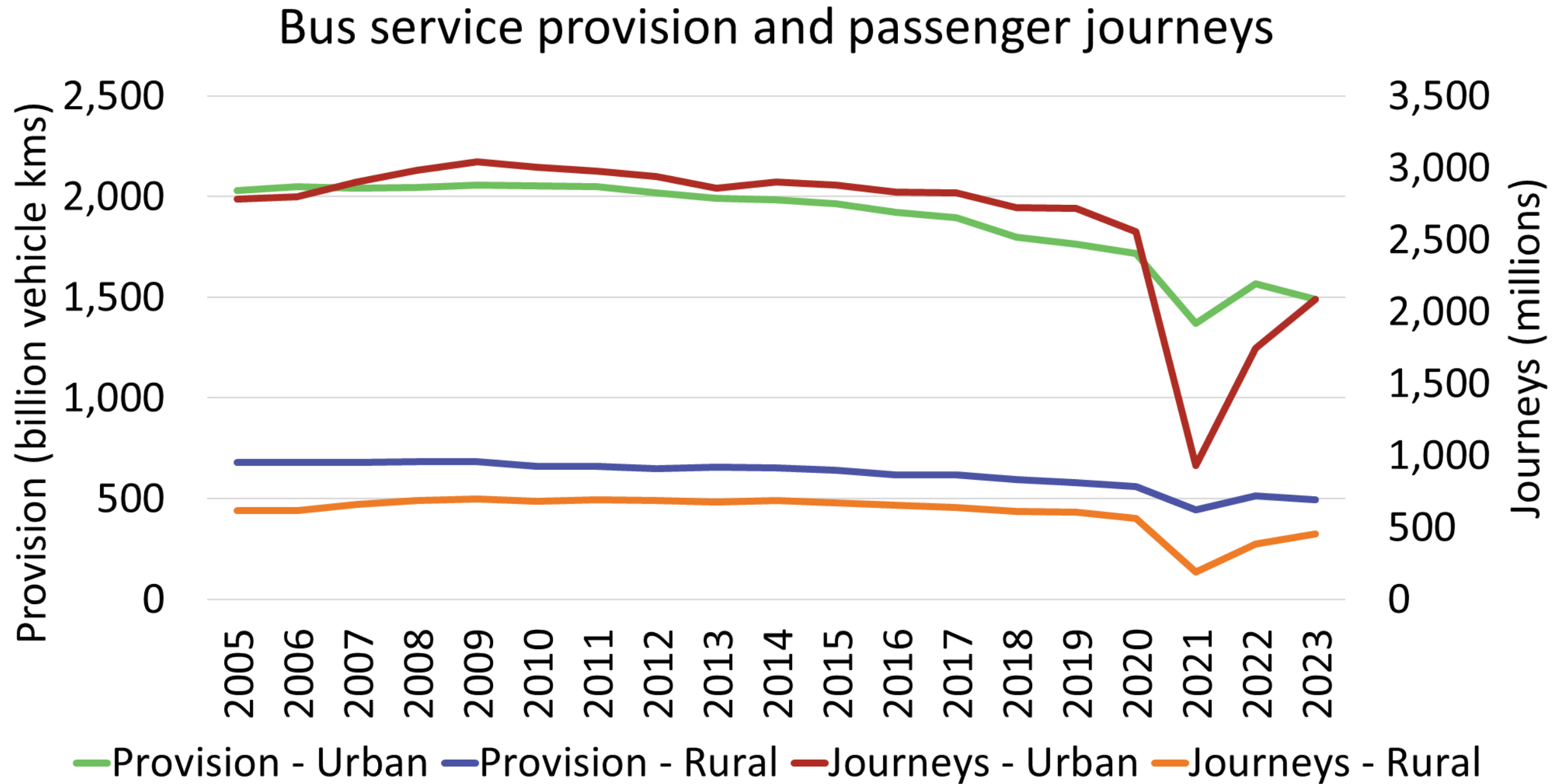
Bus use by purpose (2022)



Source: National Travel Survey (2022)

○ Buses have been on the decline but there is  
ambition to improve

## It is harder to provide buses in rural than urban areas



## The Buses Bill aims to devolve bus services

- The Buses Bill will further reverse the ban on setting up new publicly owned bus companies
- It will provide greater flexibility over bus funding and will take steps to improve bus services for communities who choose not to pursue public control.
- Legislation has been laid before Parliament which gives all local transport authorities across England new powers to run their own bus services – powers previously limited to mayoral combined authorities.
- The move means that local leaders across the country can deliver services in a way that suits the needs of their communities.
- Aims to end the current ‘postcode lottery’ for bus services.

## There have been record amounts of bus funding

| Fund  | Overall amount                                      | Announced                | Years covered | Successful LTAs         |
|---|---|--------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) - capital and revenue | £1.2 billion  | April 2022               | 2022-2025     | 31 (40%)                |
| BSIP+ (revenue only)                                      | £160 million  | May 2023                 | 2023-2025     | Most                    |
| Network North BSIP+ (revenue only)                        | Overall £1 billion (initial £150 million allocated) | October 2023             | 2024-2025     | North and Midlands only |
| Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) 1 (capital only) | £170 million  | October 2021, March 2022 | 2021-2023     | 17 (mostly urban)       |
| ZEBRA 2 (capital only)                                    | £143 million  | March 2024               | 2023-2025     | 25 (many rural)         |
| £2 bus fare cap   | £600 million  | October 2023             | 2022-2023     | All                     |
| Local Transport Fund (local transport including roads)    | £4.7 billion  | February 2024            | 2025-2032     | North and Midlands only |

## Disparity in support and funding

| Urban / Rural Classification | Change in total bus mileage 2019 and 2021 | Total Funding         |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Urban                        | -21%                                      | <b>£3,603,551,025</b> |
| Rural                        | -17%                                      | <b>£447,819,671</b>   |

## But allocations have created disparity across the country

| Council         | £/head | Council                  | £/head    |
|-----------------|--------|--------------------------|-----------|
| Swindon         | £3.98  | Leicester                | £494.51   |
| Dorset          | £4.84  | Cheshire East            | £500.80   |
| Slough          | £4.90  | East Riding of Yorkshire | £510.36   |
| Suffolk         | £5.16  | Derby                    | £634.79   |
| Buckinghamshire | £5.19  | Hull                     | £640.31   |
| Wokingham       | £5.20  | Telford and Wrekin       | £656.35   |
| Southampton     | £5.40  | Stoke-on-Trent           | £671.17   |
| Hampshire       | £5.43  | Warrington               | £685.61   |
| Southend-on-Sea | £5.52  | North Lincolnshire       | £718.13   |
| Surrey          | £6.93  | Blackburn with Darwen    | £830.26   |
| Bedford         | £6.94  | Blackpool                | £863.26   |
| Essex           | £7.02  | Rutland County           | £1,340.16 |

## Buses should be funded as the essential public service they are

*“I rely on buses to access shops and services, including essential services for my child's health and mine. I need buses to take my daughter anywhere, as I live in a rural village and I have not yet been able to pass my driving test, let alone buy a car. Since bus services were cut recently I can no longer take my daughter to the toddler group we had been attending every week.”*

Sarah, Canterbury

*“I relied on the bus to get to work; now the service I used has been cut and I have to get two trains; twice the journey time and three times the cost.”*

Duncan, Melton Mowbray

## What needs to happen

- **Legislate for minimum levels of bus service provision for all communities**
- **Make the provision of socially and economically necessary services a statutory requirement**
- **Fill in gaps left by allocations so all authorities can afford to provide a minimum level of provision**
- **Move to long-term funding settlement for all councils**
- **Move transport element of DLHUC block grant to DfT and ringfence for buses**

○ Thank you!

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