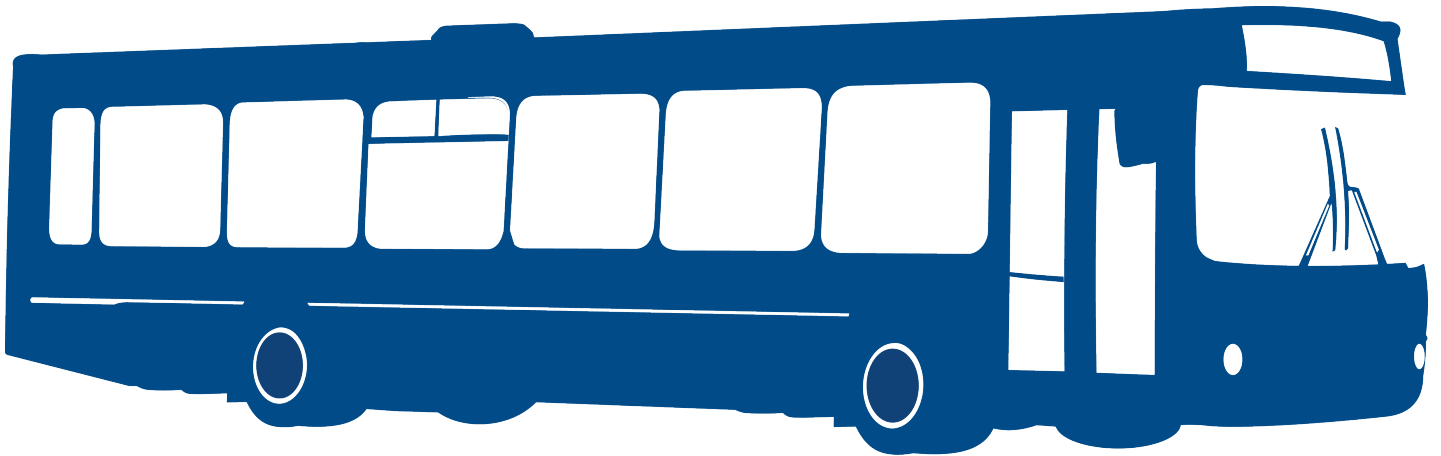


Ticket to ride

A Citizens Advice Rural Issues Group briefing



**citizens
advice**

Summary

The decline in rural bus services is a main concern for people who live and/or work in rural environments. The situation is worsening with changes to post offices and banks. Less than half of people living in small rural settlements have access to a regular bus service.

The Citizens Advice Rural Issues Group carried out research across their network of 157 rural local Citizens Advice and established that Transport (by which respondents mean bus services) is a primary concern for people who live and/or work in rural environments. 62% of respondents to our survey prioritized this issue out of 3 choices - housing came second (52%) followed by internet access (39%).

Case studies

M will walk the 24 mile round trip to attend the initial meeting at the Jobcentre to receive Universal Credit as he is desperate.

C got a job at Warwick Hospital but felt unable to take it because there was no bus at convenient times and the fares would have made the job financially unviable.

Where bus services have disappeared, or reduced to a level where they are not helpful, users resort to using cars where they can. However, there are groups who are less able to do this, such as older people, disabled people, young people and people on low incomes. These people face serious disadvantages if they are reliant on sporadic, unaffordable or non-existent bus services.

- Rural buses serve to get people to work, education and health services.
- They alleviate rural isolation
- They have a wider impact on traffic congestion and the economy
- Losing a bus service can have catastrophic consequences.



There are now 3% less post offices in 2001.



In rural areas, only 65% of people live within 4kms of a GP surgery.

The current situation

Bus services are run on a commercial basis, but mitigated concessionary travel for pensioners and disabled people, and by subsidies - £2.21 billion in 2015/16. Bus services are in decline – under used and uneconomic.

In rural areas alternatives such as walking, cycling or using taxis are unrealistic. Community transport schemes are emerging, but they are not strong enough to address the problem.

Although services are declining, there were 2.24 billion passenger journeys outside London in 2015/16.

Bus services are multifunctional and a matter of infrastructure. “Shopping” and “Personal business” are the main reasons for travel.

Our report research presented other reasons people use bus services:

- To get to job interviews or work
- To attend the Job Centre and/or ESA reviews
- To get to shops, banks, post offices and/or hairdressers
- To go to the doctors and/or the dentist
- To attend school/college
- To obtain advice
- To get to a foodbank
- To reduce isolation

Reasons why rural bus services are failing people:

- There is no bus service in their locality
- Buses costs too much. Demand is much affected by price
- Buses are unreliable – they often run late or not at all
- Buses are not timely – sometimes they arrive after school or work starts, they do not go to and from the same destination in the same day, buses are not daily, or buses do not allow time for an appointment before the return journey.

What needs to change?



Bus services should be available to all – particularly those who are disadvantaged and without discrimination against those who live and/or work in rural environments



They must be reliable, cost effective and timely.

Our recommendations

The Rural Issues Group is campaigning



- *To raise awareness of the problems in Rural Transport*
- *To encourage the development, support and publication of Community Transport Schemes.*
- *To encourage any measures to improve this desperate situation.*

Free, confidential advice



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