

International Review of Rural Transport Practice



Final Report

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1 Introduction and Objectives

This study was commissioned by the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) with the twin objectives of:

- a. Establishing the state of the art in relation to rural transport practice and function worldwide (principally through a literature review)
- b. Developing some practical ideas for rural transport in England in the future

This study forms one part of the series of related pieces of work commissioned by the CRC to shed light on rural transport issues with a view to breaking out of the 'traditional' mould of thinking which equates higher prosperity with higher car ownership with decline in rural bus patronage and resultant requirement for greater subsidy for 'big bus' rural solutions. Given the fact that technological advances are likely to continue and that the current economic downturn means that finance for rural transport will be even tighter in the short to medium term (and maybe long term), it was felt by the CRC that new ways needed to be found to open a debate and put the rural transport issues which would range beyond hitherto conventional thinking providing a series of innovative and constructive models around which rural transport could be structured and financed in the future. In particular the study aims were to:

- Provide a succinct and authoritative account of how rural transport is provided and funded in countries that have rural areas comparable with Rural England
- Provide insights into models of funding and organisation of transport which could provide good accessibility for those without access to cars, as well as encouraging modal shift for those with cars
- Provide insight into ways in which different rural transport modes can be / are integrated in different countries
- Open up a debate on the future potential for funding and organising transport in Rural England
- Provide some creative thinking going beyond conventional wisdom and thought in relation to rural transport supply, in order to present a series of potential future models for the supply, financing and organisation of rural transport in England

- Provide consideration of future proofing these projected rural transport models against likely / potential trends in Rural England and within the (global) economy

It is intended that this study report and the complementary 'Think Piece' published early in 2009 should provide the basis for a discussion and dialogue on future structures in rural transport in England based upon experience and where appropriate best practice from elsewhere in the United Kingdom, Europe and the rest of the world. The Review is not intended to be comprehensive and does not discuss in detail the results / outputs from all documents consulted within the literature review. It seeks to illustrate the current state of the art by reference to those works and studies which are likely to be of greatest relevance to transport developments in the future in Rural England.

In addition to the main report which outlines the findings of the study we have included annexes that provide a fuller bibliography; case studies which have been examined in detail; rough estimates of spending in different areas on rural transport; an outline of how future trends may affect the provision of rural transport; and a summary of legislative frameworks in countries studied.

2 Overview of Findings

The rural transport problem is defined succinctly by White: "The general nature of the problem is clear: a low frequency of service, providing very limited access to activities such as work or entertainment. Even where a particular facility is served, the range of timings may be limited; the length of stay in the market town may not suit all travellers, and statutory school contract buses usually give little opportunity for after-school activities" (White, P. 2009).

Despite the evident need for research, in general the authors found a paucity of research and reporting on rural transport developments throughout the world. Much transport research is devoted exclusively to urban transport (this is the case, for example, with the major transport research archives of the World Conference for Transport Research (WCTR) and for the European Transport Conference (ETC)). Where research into rural transport occurs, especially outside Europe, North America and Australasia, there tends to be an almost exclusive focus on rural transport in its most basic sense, i.e. linking rural areas with local and regional service hubs in order to provide essential services and trade possibilities to rural citizens. In many cases, this entails the provision of adequate roads allied to the most basic of human or animal powered vehicles. Naturally, this research is very valid within its own context, but the authors consider that it has little practical application for Rural England.

Inevitably, the focus was therefore concentrated on Europe, North America and Australasia, but as detailed below in greater focus, rural transport still represents a small part of the body of literature devoted to transport research. Much of the literature relating to rural transport research and rural transport experimentation is found within the UK, and the authors suggest the following explanations:

- The UK has been at the forefront of experimentation in rural transport provision over the past two decades (via initiatives such as the Rural Transport Partnership, Rural Bus Challenge, Kickstart, etc.)
- Rural transport research and experimentation is less prevalent owing to the lower numbers of people benefitting from rural transport as opposed to urban transport

Other European countries (for example, Germany and the Netherlands), have traditionally invested higher expenditure in rural transport and have only recently felt the need to commission rural transport research in order to ensure best value for money within a worsening global economic climate

As this Review is intended to stimulate debate, the CRC and the authors would welcome suggestions and updates about relevant research, articles, reports and initiatives which are not featured within this Review.

Links to the most relevant documents consulted are included within Annex A.

3 Literature Review Overview

3.1 Initial Review of Countries / Regions Reviewed

This section briefly summarises the documents reviewed and organisations consulted within this study. This summary is set out by continent.

3.1.1 North America

The travel distances involved in rural transportation are vast and do not bear direct comparison with England. The most valid areas for comparison are the 'Journey To Work' areas around major cities and metropolitan areas, but in many cases these areas are perceived to be one with the conurbation. The plans for Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs) within the new Transport Act (2008) in the UK to allow them to seek to establish appropriate boundaries based upon the travel needs of local residents and also upon the needs of those who regularly commute to work from adjacent rural areas. In some cases this may lead to ITAs applying to have transport responsibilities transferred from the transport authority currently responsible for the adjacent rural areas, thus coordinating the provision of transport within the 'Journey To Work' area. This would bring the practice more in line with that in North America, could lead to a redrawing outwards of the boundaries of existing ITA areas and could provide a solution to rural transport needs (particularly for access to jobs, education and training) for residents of these adjacent rural areas. If 'City Regions' also apply to extend their operating areas, the access to smaller conurbations, cities and towns from the adjacent rural 'Journey To Work' areas could also be better integrated and coordinated. The Jobs Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Programme financed by the US Federal Government aims to assist the transport needs of poor, rural dwellers (Brown, Amber Waves, Feb. 2004, p11).

3.1.2 Africa

There is a wealth of literature, research and practical aid relating to rural transport in Africa but it almost entirely relates to the provision of basic connections to local towns and hubs to allow rural dwellers to access the most important services. In many cases this is to be achieved through the construction and improvement of roads and in other cases, access to well and drinking sources is the major concern. Transport modes are generally non-motorised (see many references at the Global Transport Knowledge Partnership website www.gtkp.com).

The International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD) has developed the concept of rural transport hubs allowing access to basic services and commissioned pilot studies in Rwanda, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia to investigate the linkages between rural hinterlands and their primary market centre, including modal composition, integration and infrastructure needs. Dispersed and low volume traffic between the rural hinterland and local hubs consist typically of “low volume services, typically intermediate modes of transport (IMT), human portage and pedestrian traffic. Motorised traffic [and transport] is infrequent and usually restricted to villages with high agricultural potential”. (Forum News, Vol 13, Issue 1, June 2006, IFRTD). The hub and service centre style of connection is analogous with the pattern used in certain rural transport projects in England, e.g. InterConnect in Lincolnshire, although the specific service requirements and the mix of modes utilised is vastly different (although the same underlying human requirement of access to basic services and employment are being served).

3.1.3 South America

A similar situation exists within rural transport literature and research in South America. Most transport research concerns urban transport; rural transport research and development relates to connecting the rural population to the most basic of service requirements. Again, the Global Transport Knowledge Partnership (GTKP) and the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD) provide useful information about rural transport developments in South America. It is acknowledged by the IFRTD that firstly, roads must be constructed to link those rural settlements currently without road access and simultaneously, existing road structure must be improved. However, they also acknowledge that transport services are scarce and in many cases, rural inhabitants lack the financial resources to pay for the transport. The IFRTD concludes that “... in these rural zones [of South America] there is a startling absence of public transport policies, supervision, regulations of any type of real support” (Forum News, Vol 7, Issue 2, September 1999, IFRTD).

3.1.4 Australasia

In Australia the geography dictates that extreme transport solutions are required in order to connect rural residents with basic services – in some cases the facilities to be accessed may lie hundreds of miles distant. The implementation of air services and long distance bus or rail services are not directly relevant or transferable to the UK. Although the Journey To Work areas surrounding cities such as Melbourne and Sydney should be able to provide an analogy to the UK situation, we were unable to uncover research and literature about this particular rural transport problem specifically. There

appears to be little or no literature devoted to the rural transport situation in New Zealand.

3.1.5 Asia

In Asia, as in Africa and South America, research and transport developments in rural areas are geared to providing access for rural inhabitants to basic services (often through the provision of more enhanced road infrastructure), rather than the development of new transport services themselves. Much traditional transport research is again focused on the conurbations and metropolises of the Asian continent. In China, transport research has been focused on the cities, although it is acknowledged that there is a considerable rural transport problem. Each major city produces a statistical yearbook (for example, at www.shanghai.gov.cn), but the transport statistics make no reference to the rural commuting area beyond the conurbation.

Similarly, despite the fact that Japan has undertaken some important (rural) transport and sustainable transport initiatives, such as the development of the carbon-emission free island of Yakushima, there is a lack of published material relating to rural transport per se. This may be a reflection of the mountainous nature of the geography of Japan, which means that residential settlements have to be 'squeezed' into a comparatively small part of the territory.

3.1.6 Europe

The authors had anticipated a more lively debate within the research literature in Europe about rural transport, but again we found a surprising scarcity of material. We have selected four case studies from Europe which we set out in Annex B. These are:

- Pilot and demonstration projects funded by the Federal German Government "Personennahverkehr fuer die Region"
- Rural Transport Programme in Ireland
- Integrated rural transport network in Friesland, Netherlands
- Rural Transport Fund in Northern Ireland.

Despite the acknowledged integrated rural transport systems in Switzerland and Finland, there was little research on the individual funding programmes or schemes which could be readily transferred to the English context. The VIRGIL and ARTS projects funded by the European Commission investigated the possibilities for rural transport in a variety of European settings and ultimately developed a guidebook for the establishment of rural transport, based upon the common patterns and factors pertaining across the schemes. The treatment is, however, more suited to the development of individual schemes, rather than to investment programmes which is the

underlying intent of this review. Again, we found little published material on rural transport throughout the Mediterranean and Central and Eastern European regions. The same comment applies to France and Belgium. Those articles and research studies which we discovered and which have some (limited) relevance to this Review are set out in the Bibliography in Annex A. We have also consulted with contacts in a number of European countries including Austria, Denmark, Romania and the Netherlands who either provided us with details of articles included within the Bibliography, or alternatively confirmed that little published material exists on rural transport investment programmes within their own country.

Consultation of the thematic transport research study syntheses produced for the European Commission reveal that most of the material is drawn from the British Isles in relation to rural transport, with a particular emphasis on slow modes such as walking and cycling.

The Transport Knowledge Research Centre produces a series of country overviews available on its website (www.transport-research.info). These provide a useful summary of the major research and development programmes underway in the field of transport, but provide little material of relevance to this Review.

Republic of Ireland

As mentioned above the authors believe that the Rural Transport Programme in Ireland does provide a model for rural transport intervention which could be applied within Rural England. Brief details of the schemes are included within Annex B.

Northern Ireland

Similarly, the authors feel that the continuing investment in rural transport in Northern Ireland under the Rural Transport Fund could, again, provide an investment model for England. Brief details of the initiative are contained within Annex B.

Scotland

In Scotland, the Scottish Executive has embraced the National Transport Strategy which provides the overarching policy for transport in Scotland. The Rural Transport Fund (RTF) comprising the Rural Public Passenger Transport Grant Scheme (RPPTG), the Rural Community Transport Initiative (RCTI) and the Rural Petrol Stations Grant Scheme (RPSG), was introduced in 1998. Its aim was to tackle under investment in rural transport by providing grants to local authorities to improve scheduled bus services, help rural community transport projects and provide rural petrol stations with capital support for upgrading. The Rural Demand Responsive Transport Initiative (RDRTI) was

established in 2003. The RTF and the RDRTI closed on 31 March 2008 and local authorities now have the responsibility for deciding their priorities with regard to rural transport and allocating their funds accordingly.

Wales

There are a number of interesting rural transport developments in Wales, most of which are sponsored by the Welsh Assembly Government. The most relevant to England are the BWCABUS in Carmarthenshire, which attempts to replicate the InterConnect service established in Lincolnshire and the Green Dragon Connect Community Transport service, which effectively provides a feeder service to link into the main line transport operator. These initiatives are interesting examples of community transport development in rural areas, but do not yet provide a coherent programme which could be transferred to the Rural England setting.

England

As this is an international rural transport review we do not intend to reference literature written within the context of Rural England, but we do wish to draw attention to the recent CFIT Report "A New Approach to Rural Transport". This report argues for a demonstration taxi / DRT initiative to link rural communities to mainline rail and bus services, citing examples from Switzerland, the Netherlands, France and Germany. This certainly forms one of the potential models for rural transport which we present later in this report.

In addition to the literature review, we consulted more widely with a set of key stakeholders, this including a study visit to Northern Ireland and Dublin in order to see rural transport operations at first hand and to discuss the experience directly with key stakeholders. Key stakeholders were also consulted in the following countries: Romania, Denmark, China, Scotland, Wales, the Netherlands and New Zealand.

4 Issues Raised by the Research

4.1 Introduction

The key issues arising from the literature review are now discussed - references to the documents are contained in Annex A for those who wish to consult them more fully. The issues arise from the questions posed by the client within the study brief, from the authors' own perceptions of the rural transport market and from the additional key issues which arose during the course of the review itself. References are supplied where issues arise directly from one or more documents consulted. However, owing to the paucity of literature on the subject of rural transport, the authors have generally developed the issues from the library of documents consulted but also from their existing professional knowledge of the rural transport market in England and elsewhere.

4.2 Supply / Problems

4.2.1 *What transport issues are being addressed?*

- Lack of accessibility is caused by a number of interlocking factors
- Most non-mainstream transport is primarily provided for social inclusion purposes
- Generally not for people going to work

Rural transport is generally provided to allow rural residents access to a range of services which they would otherwise find impossible to access for a variety of reasons, often relating to cost, age, infirmity, distance to be travelled, lack of appropriate transport services or a combination of these factors. The range of services to which access may be provided and the balance of priorities between these will be determined by the needs of the population and by the policies of the service funders. The types of transport service / connection provided will be determined by the finance available and the level of technology available within and appropriate to the particular country.

The rural transport schemes contained within the literature review generally relate to the provision of transport services which fall outside mainstream service provision and are primarily concerned with the transport of people for social inclusion reasons, especially elderly and disabled persons. Examples here include the Rural Transport Fund in Northern Ireland and the Rural Transport Programme in Ireland. They are not primarily concerned with providing a transport service to enable people to access work and learning

opportunities, although those journey purposes are not expressly ruled out in most cases. In many examples within the British Isles, rural transport services are being used for essential access to services (for example, health and shopping) and not primarily to reduce carbon emissions through bringing about a modal shift from the private car to public transport. This may arise as a result of the services being offered, although often the structure and operation of the rural transport services is such that access to employment is neither encouraged nor even possible owing to the hours of operation, booking requirements, etc.

4.2.2 Bridging the gap between mainstream and other transport services

- The Access Alliance Programme is unique in its scale within England
- Potential for integrating mainstream and other service provision in rural areas

One initiative funded by the East Midlands Development Agency (emda) through the Alliance Sub-regional Strategic Partnership (ASSP) is the Access Alliance Programme (AAP) running November 2006 – November 2010 which is managed by STAR. The Programme aims to encourage economic prosperity and economic and social inclusion through the development and / or commissioning of sustainable transport initiatives throughout the former coalfield areas of North Nottinghamshire and North Derbyshire. To date this initiative has funded 26 such schemes and a further minimum of 20 schemes are due to be funded before the end of the Programme.

The AAP funding programme bridges the gap between mainstream transport provision (whether commercially operated or subsidised by the local transport authority (LTA)) and the third sector. It encourages partnership working between the sectors and encourages the third sector to think in more enterprising ways. It is not intended to duplicate mainstream transport services, but can be utilised to enhance or develop existing 'big bus' solutions. It also aims to encourage LTAs to think outside the 'big bus box' when evaluating transport financing priorities.

4.2.3 What are the critical rural transport problems?

The critical transport problems in rural areas of England and the rest of Europe are:

- Access to a full range of services
- Addressing economic and social exclusion
- Meeting the needs of all ages
- Addressing the environmental agenda
- Reaching out to disadvantaged / hard to reach groups
- Community empowerment / capacity building

4.3 Benefits

4.3.1 Who are the beneficiaries?

- Primarily disadvantaged and hard to reach groups and individuals
- To a lesser extent, those seeking work and training opportunities

The beneficiaries of rural transport schemes fall into a large number of categories (many of which are overlapping) but which we consider to be in descending order of occurrence:

- Elderly and disabled persons
- Socially excluded persons
- Young people
- Economically excluded persons
- Those without access to a private car
- Jobseekers
- Other hard to reach / disadvantaged groups

The Rural Transport Programme in the Republic of Ireland, for example, provides for over 1 million rural trips per annum. Many of these provide vital connections for the rural population to local and regional services. Some jobs and training trips are served, but these are not the major focus of the programme.

4.3.2 What benefits have been realised?

- Social inclusion benefits are primary
- Economic / financial benefits not widely acknowledged or researched

The benefits realised from the schemes which have invested in rural transport include:

- Reduction in social exclusion
- Reduction in economic exclusion

- Environmental benefits
- Health care benefits
- Financial benefits through cost benefit analysis

These latter benefits, however, are rarely quantified in any detail and are not generally accepted by national, regional or local governments as evidence of benefits provided, as any savings accruing through the provision of rural transport services tend to accrue to a different department / authority / organisation from that financing the rural transport service (or operating it directly). This international review has failed to unearth detailed economic analysis of the benefits of rural transport. An example would be that of the savings to the health sector in not having to provide outpatient transport in rural areas, as this would be picked up by the rural transport schemes – a regeneration or transport organisation would finance the rural transport scheme, but the cost savings in patient transport would be credited to the healthcare department / organisation.

Beecham undertook a review of the benefits of rural transport in 2004 (Beecham, P (2004) *The benefits of providing transport which addresses social exclusion in rural areas*, Draft report prepared for the Countryside Agency by Paul Beecham and Associates)

4.3.3 What level of accessibility has been achieved?

- Social inclusion issues generally well addressed
- Economic / regeneration issues relatively poorly served

From the review it is evident that the majority of rural transport programmes are aimed at addressing social inclusion issues, rather than tackling the economic agenda, for example, addressing unemployment. Accordingly there has been a prioritisation of the needs of elderly and disabled travellers, especially in regard to healthcare, leisure and shopping needs. Conversely, the needs of young people and jobseekers have not been well addressed. The challenge here for future sustainability of rural transport programmes will be to marry these twin objectives in a coherent fashion.

4.3.4 Has any modal shift occurred?

- Not a major focus of rural transport programmes
- Probably has occurred at the margins

The review has not found modal shift to be at the forefront of objectives within rural transport programmes. Accordingly it is difficult to be definitive

about whether such modal shift has occurred; anecdotally, scheme promoters feel that modal shift has “probably” occurred, but only at the margins. Within England, as the RDAs are expected to be required to pay closer attention to carbon-emissions implications of investment policies in the future, it may be that modal shift can be rightly moved higher up the list of programme objectives. Examples where modal shift has been claimed include the Cango service taking commuters to the Andover railhead, and the Cullompton to Exeter inter-urban Kickstart service. Overall, modal shift is likely to be limited as the individual schemes themselves tend to be relatively small scale.

4.4 Funding

4.4.1 What organisational structures are used?

- Many forms of organisational structure
- Funding arrangements depend upon where the funding resides - often this is a matter of chance

A number of different organisational structures recur throughout the rural transport literature:

- National government grants to provide rural transport, or to encourage the development of local rural transport solutions (e.g. Republic of Ireland)
- National, Federal or regional government pilot / demonstration schemes to test innovation in rural transport with a view to promoting replication and sustainability (e.g. Germany)
- Regional government grants to encourage regional or sub regional rural transport solutions (e.g. Northern Ireland, Wales, the Netherlands)
- Government agencies or organisations, such as the English RDAs, which provide finance against grant application for practice rural transport schemes
- Competitive funding schemes are provided where transport organisations bid against one another to obtain funding for rural transport (e.g. Bus Challenge and Kickstart in England)
- Schemes are developed where a managing Agent holds the transport funds on behalf of the funding body, assesses grant applications and oversees the rural transport schemes developed (examples include the Rural Transport Programme in Ireland and the Access Alliance Programme described above)
- Schemes administered by a sub regional organisation directly, for example, the Rural Transport Fund in Northern Ireland

Our view is that funding is best provided at the national level in order to ensure comprehensive coverage and coherence of programme, that policy development is best undertaken at the regional level and that implementation is best undertaken at the local or sub-regional level in order to ensure customisation of schemes and local engagement. The paramount requirement is, however, that organisations, local authorities and other agencies should not seek to evade responsibility for the funding of rural transport by allocating that responsibility elsewhere.

4.4.2 What are examples of the level of resources required ?

- Establishing the appropriate mix of capital and revenue funding
- Building for future service viability

The types of integrated rural transport schemes described above require three different types of funding:

- Revenue for administrative support and management
- Revenue support to provide for the operation of the services
- Capital financing for the purchase of vehicles and other equipment

The funding varies according to the scale of intervention and the geographical area assisted. The Rural Transport Fund in Northern Ireland is projected to receive £3.5m per annum covering the whole of the country; the Rural Transport Programme in the Republic of Ireland is set to receive a budget of €18m per annum covering the whole country; and the Access Alliance Programme has total resources of £1.1m over a 4-year period covering one sub-region within the East Midlands.

4.4.3 What funding streams are used?

- Funding may be national, regional or local
- Where should rural transport policy be coordinated and implemented?
- Who will take responsibility for rural transport implementation?

The funding streams used for the provision of rural transport may be national, regional or local government funds, or a combination of all three. Within England, it is also necessary to consider the contribution of commercial bus operators to the supply of rural transport services. Funding has traditionally been routed through transport policy and planning departments of local government, although there has been an increasing recognition that (rural) transport has a major role to play in the regeneration of (rural) areas and funds are as likely to be channelled through regeneration units or agencies,

such as the RDAs in England. Within Germany a series of pilot / demonstration rural schemes (Local Rural Public Transport – Personennahverkehr fuer die Region) were undertaken and funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Ministerium fuer Bildung und Forschung) rather than the Transport Ministry. Within the Netherlands there has been a trend of devolving (rural) transport funding to regional government rather than providing funding nationally. Annex E provides an overview of the legislative context in a number of countries within which rural transport is operated and funded.

4.4.4 What level of community engagement is there?

- Variable level of community engagement
- Need for local service champions
- Need for community input at all levels

The review has demonstrated a widely varying level of community engagement – those rural transport initiatives which are seen to be more closely related to mainstream transport tend to be imposed from top-down (as in the German pilot / demonstration projects). Those which are seen to have closer links with the third sector and unconventional and non-mainstream transport modes tend to show a higher level of community engagement (as in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland). As set out earlier, the viability of rural transport is likely to improve if local community engagement and service-championing can be secured.

4.4.5 What level of business engagement is there?

- Often provide details of need
- Rarely, if ever, involved in finance of / delivery of transport solutions

Although the business community may often be engaged in order to assess the level of need for rural transport solutions, there is no evidence from this review that the business community is motivated to finance or deliver transport solutions which have any wider significance than their own operations. An example here from the UK context: the Deeside DRT Shuttle has been operating for some years supported by local and national government grants - it carries a significant number of employees to factories, offices and warehouses which would otherwise not be accessible by public transport. Despite the success in linking employers directly with a local workforce (thereby enhancing their productivity) the service operators have been unable to secure any significant funding from the business community in order to bridge all or part of the annual funding deficit. Where employers

feel that transport is required to bring a workforce to their site of operation, they are more likely to secure dedicated transport services themselves, for example by requiring an agent to 'bus' in a workforce (which commonly happens in the case of migrant workers), or by directly purchasing works services from a local bus / coach operator. Partnership working between the business community and Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) will be required in England in order to ensure a more coordinated and rational solution to (rural) transport provision. There was some evidence of limited business engagement in the Rural Transport Programme run by the Countryside Agency; 2 or 3 of the 80 or so Partnerships actually had private businesses as partners.

4.4.6 How 'successful' were the structures, funding streams and projects?

- Dutch regional schemes successful but reliant on high level of subsidy
- German pilot / demonstration schemes were not replicated; few are still viable
- RTP in Republic of Ireland / RTF in Northern Ireland both successful, but at a 'high' cost

The regional transport schemes in the Netherlands are successful in terms of the integration of the voluntary, public and commercial sectors and in terms of their acceptance by the travelling public. They are, however, reliant upon a high degree of subsidy (see Annex C) and central government has been devolving the funding responsibility to the regions. The German pilot / demonstration projects do not appear to have been replicated to any degree – few appear to be still viable. The Rural Transport Programme in the Republic of Ireland, and the Rural Transport Fund in Northern Ireland have been successful, but they will always be reliant upon a relatively 'high' level of funding – the level of funding may be reduced by allowing the organisations operating under the fund to develop trading arms or social enterprise wings (as in Northern Ireland), but there will inevitably be a core subsidy requirement.

4.4.7 What level of resources would be required to address the demand for rural transport?

This question is addressed within the accompanying Think Piece which lays out potential future investment programmes for rural transport..

4.5 Sectors

4.5.1 Widening the role of the third sector in rural transport?

- Use of third sector to complement mainstream services
- Promotion of third sector in order to mainstream some of their transport functions
- Potential of third sector as feeder to mainstream services

Rural transport schemes normally provide funding for the third sector / community transport to continue or enhance their existing transport function. They also often encourage them to mainstream their activities with a view to undertaking transport contracts / services normally seen as the preserve of 'big bus' operators. Such schemes serve to smooth the spectrum of transport services between conventional big bus operation and the community transport sector. In some cases, such schemes are used to encourage the third sector to behave in a more entrepreneurial fashion, encouraging the formation of socially enterprising organisations, with the intention of establishing a more sustainable future for the third sector where it no longer relies almost exclusively on grant funding.

There is evidence within certain of the schemes of the desire to promote greater integration between conventional rural transport supply and services offered by the third sector. In some cases this may take the form of utilising third sector resources to feed into the conventional bus network. In other cases this may take the form of encouraging the third sector actively to supply (some) rural transport services previously supplied by conventional bus operators (under contract). Examples here include the schemes in Wales, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

4.5.2 Benefits / Disbenefits of Demand Responsive Transport

- What should be the role of DRT?
- Importance of appropriate and adequate marketing and promotion
- Establishing the appropriate level of technology

Demand responsive transport (DRT) often forms part of this complex mix of rural transport supply options. This may range from highly sophisticated vehicles with computerised booking systems down to a subsidised taxi service being available (on demand) for designated areas where there is a definite unmet transport need which is not served by conventional transport supply. For local authorities, DRT is seen as a way of providing a (potentially) better service to travellers i.e. through the provision of a transport service which is

present at (all reasonable) times required by travellers and which is able to provide either a door to door service, or a village to hub service, or a feeder service to a trunk haul conventional bus service. Unfortunately many travellers are unable to understand fully the travel potential of a DRT service and are unhappy as they feel they have 'lost' the benefits of a service running to a regular (albeit in many cases infrequent) timetable. This is a matter of marketing and promotion which has to be tackled more pro-actively by those who seek to implement DRT services.

Another factor to be considered is the sustainability (viability) of DRT services. They have often been implemented within the UK as a result of competitive grant funding from national / regional government for a limited time period. At the end of the funding period few DRT schemes are commercially viable (although the best are able to demonstrate a contribution to the financial success of the line haul services into which they feed). All too often, DRT services are either scaled back to better reflect the level of funding available, or are dropped in their entirety. The ideal situation would be DRT schemes being considered as part of an integrated transport solution for rural (and urban) areas, with the involvement of planning and funding authorities together with the public, private and third sectors. This could take place under the aegis of Regional Transport Forums (RTFs) – see below in Annex B. In Finland and elsewhere, DRT is seen as an appropriate way of meeting dispersed and low level rural transport needs.

Another factor affecting the ability of DRT schemes or rural transport schemes in general to meet unmet demand is the difficulty of meeting all transport needs; generally needs are prioritised in favour of access to healthcare, shopping and social activities, whilst trips to work and education receive a lower priority. Within the scale of provision generally found, it is often the case that rural residents are unable to make block bookings in advance for DRT access to work, as the actual vehicle deployment on a given day depends upon the travel wishes of all travellers booking the service on a given day.

4.6 Learning lessons and looking to the future

4.6.1 How sustainable / viable are the projects (delivery models)?

- Low levels of viability of much rural transport (if considered in isolation)
- Establishing appropriate levels of accessibility
- Setting rural accessibility targets

It is unrealistic to expect that the majority of rural transport schemes will be able to achieve self-financing status – they operate, by definition and design,

in rural areas where demand is relatively low and diverse, although the benefits to individuals supported may be great. Within Great Britain and its deregulated transport environment, there is an unrivalled opportunity to observe what the market will provide (within rural transport) and we can observe that many rural areas are not seen as profit-generating by the major transport groupings.

Where rural transport services are operated commercially, they are often operated by local bus operators with a keener understanding of the local market and a lower cost base. Where LTAs secure 'socially necessary' rural bus services, major bus groupings often decline to tender to provide such services, again leaving the field open to local bus operators. It is also reasonable to assume that with the exception of major trunk inter-urban services a large number of commercially operated rural bus services are 'marginal' in terms of their profitability and even if it were allowed by legislation, it would not prove possible to cross-subsidise a rural transport network internally, as any profits generated on the commercial routes would not be sufficient to cover the costs of operation of the non-profitable parts of the network.

The third sector provides services which the commercial and public sectors are generally unable or unwilling to provide, often owing to the potential high cost of service operation by more conventional means. It is, therefore, unrealistic to expect that major parts of the third sector's network of rural services could be sufficiently mainstreamed to achieve commercial viability. Even a well designed and implemented rural transport scheme of long-standing which involves close partnership working between the public, private and third sectors, such as InterConnect within Lincolnshire, runs at a significant annual deficit requiring financial support to maintain existing service – significant additional funding would be required for service expansion. Cullinane and Stokes argue in *Rural Transport Policy* (1998) that a holistic solution should be considered to address rural connectivity, which would involve an integrated consideration of urban and rural transport needs with a view to establishing and implementing 'appropriate' levels of accessibility for rural and urban residents. Recent research undertaken by STAR for the East Midlands Rural Affairs Forum established that rural transport has been 'neglected' within the first accessibility strategies prepared by local authorities and that specific rural accessibility targets should be set in order to ensure the travel and accessibility needs of rural residents can be adequately met.

4.6.2 Achieving viability in rural transport

- Strategies to achieve higher levels of rural transport viability
- Need for partnership working
- Need for local ownership of individual transport schemes
- Desirability of strategic planning of rural transport programmes

There appears to be no 'magic formula' for achieving automatic or immediate viability in rural transport provision, but there are a number of measures which can be implemented in order to encourage higher levels of viability. One example, drawn from the Access Alliance Programme, has seen the implementation of a number of options to ensure the highest level of viability for the sustainable transport schemes implemented:

- To ensure that individual projects funded have an internal forward strategy to ensure the highest degree of viability make individual transport projects viable (this may include projects which are mainstreamed, which become totally commercial, or receive grant support from other sources)
- To lever future funding from county council and Local Area Agreement structures (particularly where transport schemes are contributing greatly to Accessibility Strategy and LAA objectives)
- To ensure local community ownership and capacity, which will enable transport schemes to continue with local support
- To lever private sector support and sponsorship (this will be part of the programme of engagement with the business community proposed)
- To leave the partnership working processes in place which will allow the synergy of partnership working to continue and will allow the project managers and co-workers from the 40+ projects funded over Phases 1 and 2 of the Access Alliance Programme to collectively manage the future programme

It is necessary, however, to realise that there will always be a funding requirement for rural transport so long as it is considered in isolation from urban transport. It is important to bring together practitioners and stakeholders from all three sectors to plan and implement and deliver rural transport to ensure the greatest integration of resources, to deliver the highest value for money and to ensure that the highest number of prioritised rural transport needs are met. Local ownership of rural schemes can also ensure greater viability as communities are empowered to take (some) responsibility for the continuation of provision of their rural transport supply. Naturally local communities should also be encouraged to participate in the planning of transport services through a Rural Transport Forums process. In any funding Programme it is essential to ensure a proper balance between the funding supplied from within the Programme and the matched funding to be

provided by scheme promoters / implementers from their own resources / sources. This kind of funding formula allows for core funding from the Programme upon which funding from other sources can be built.

4.6.3 What lessons have been learnt?

- Importance of marketing and promotion
- Accurate assessment of unmet needs
- Ensuring local input
- Integration of resources
- High level of partnership working
- Flexibility in working

Marketing and promotion are very important in increasing knowledge of and stimulating demand for rural transport services; if residents do not know or understand what services are available, then they will not be able to use the service. Similarly if a new service is introduced, for example DRT, it is important that the information clearly demonstrates how the new service can serve the residents' transport needs – personalised marketing is likely to yield the best results. This is one of the key actions within the German set of rural transport pilot / demonstration projects.

There is a requirement to undertake an accurate assessment of community travel needs which is best undertaken through stakeholder consultation with community stakeholders and community group representatives, as well as with a sample of individual residents. In this way a profile of current transport use, unmet travel needs and potential transport usage can be built up and the resulting rural transport services planned accordingly. Similarly, local input can be very important in ensuring the future viability of rural transport services. The integration of resources, whether that is the complementary use of mainstream and non-conventional transport resources, or brokerage of third sector resources, can ensure the most efficient and cost-effective deployment of rural transport resources. A high level of partnership working is desirable to ensure that services are planned and funding streams secured at the strategic level, whilst implementation and delivery can be ensured at the local / sub-regional level.

4.6.4 What has been replicated?

- Irish Republic & Northern Irish rural transport schemes have been replicated

There is evidence that the rural transport schemes in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have been replicated throughout their territories to achieve a high geographic coverage and also to raise standards of service and delivery to higher levels.

4.6.5 What is potentially applicable to / replicable in Rural England?

From the international review there are a number of rural transport actions which have immediate potential application for Rural England:

- Rural Transport Forums (RTFs) – comprising stakeholders from key sectors with policy-making powers and funding decisions at the strategic level to develop and fund (rural) transport programmes ensuring connectivity between rural residents and services and connectivity between urban and rural transport networks.
- Regional / sub-regional Transport Intervention Funds & Programmes – applying the transport investment options undertaken within the RTFs and applying them at the regional and sub-regional levels in order to develop a series of (rural) transport services to meet the strategic connectivity objectives established at the strategic level.
- Rural transport feeder services – operating as in InterConnect to provide a range of feeder services (buses, minibuses, taxis), operated by a variety of operators (commercial bus operators, third sector operators, taxis) in order to feed rural residents into transport hubs (allowing for interchange to line-haul mainstream transport services and / or direct access to necessary services).
- Coordination of the resources of the third sector and non-transport service providers services – effectively providing a coordination of resources to allow for more efficient usage of transport resources in rural areas to meet those needs not taken care of either by mainstream commercial operations, or by subsidised ‘socially necessary’ bus operations.
- Greater mainstreaming of third sector services – encouraging the third sector to develop a social enterprise instinct and to take on commercial contracts to cross-subsidise their core social inclusion-style operations.
- Higher level of partnership working – enabling a range of funders and stakeholders to develop transport policies and funding criteria; allowing a continuum of service providers from mainstream commercial operators through the third sector to taxis and social car schemes to deliver the (rural) transport operations.
- Encouragement of community ownership / operation of schemes – to provide greater local ownership of schemes, thereby encouraging greater sustainability of the schemes, but also encouraging the development of social enterprise to deliver specific local rural transport schemes.

4.6.6 What are the policy implications?

- Need to encourage partnership working within the Local Transport Bill
- Need to ensure linkage with the LAA / MAA process
- Need to ensure that the RTFs have policy-making / funding powers

The new Transport Act in England aims to assist in the development of partnership working between stakeholders; provided those stakeholders have a desire to promote rural accessibility then this approach will have advantages for the development of rural transport in England, as it can take place within a more coordinated policy-making and implementation environment. The Local Area Agreement process which allows for additional partnership working between all sectors also provides another unique opportunity for the transport and accessibility needs of rural residents to be given a voice. If the Rural Transport Forums (RTFs) posited in the review are to be successful in developing and enhancing rural accessibility and connectivity, it is important that powers of policy-making and funding are devolved to the Forum to some degree to ensure that they do not become mere 'talking shops'.

4.6.7 What was the assessment by stakeholders and end users?

- Little assessment with end users
- Ethnographical study of RTP in Ireland

Generally there has been little active assessment of the rural transport programmes with end users other than a monitoring of the number of passengers carried. An ethnographical study of the RTP in Ireland by Intel (Connections: Mobility and Quality of Life for Older people in Rural Ireland, Intel, May 2007) concluded that the value of the RTP was demonstrated by the fact that it "... provides an essential service to a large population who would otherwise have few opportunities for travel, for social interaction, or for access to healthcare and other important services".

4.6.8 What impact on travel and transport in Rural England will the proposed changes in transport governance have?

- RDAs may devolve all / much of transport funding to LTAs
- New ITAs / City Regions may try to extend influence into rural / Journey To Work Area
- LAA / MAA processes will play an increasingly influential role – structure and policies and delivery of LSPs likely to differ greatly from area to area

It is possible that RDAs in England may devolve most or all of their transport funding requirements (where they still actively undertake this) to the LTAs, although it is hoped that they will continue to hold some responsibility for the policy-making process in relation to rural transport. The new ITAs and City Regions may well attempt to extend their spheres of transport influence into their rural hinterlands in order to create 'Journey To Work' Areas to allow a coordinated approach to transport planning. This is likely to be of benefit to rural commuters in these hinterlands, but may lead to greater exclusion for those outside these commuter areas. The Local Area Agreement / Multi Area Agreement processes may come to have an increasing significance in terms of (rural) transport planning and funding, although this is likely to evolve throughout England on a piecemeal basis, as each Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) tends to opt for a customised structure, set of policies and delivery framework.

4.6.9 What impact will changes in fuel price and other financial and demographic trends have on rural transport supply and demand?

- Potentially need to provide more services locally / provide more responsive and efficient mass transport

In the current economic climate and with the very volatile price of fuel, it is difficult to predict what future financial and economic trends are likely to have on the supply of and demand for rural transport. However, there is no doubt that transport will need to be provided as economically efficiently as possible whilst providing for the highest level of accessibility for rural dwellers. Trip substitution and the provision of low-cost rural feeder services into the main line-haul transport routes would appear to be two ways of addressing future fuel, economic and demographic trends. Further information on 'future proofing' of rural transport is provided in Annex D.

4.7 Other issues

4.7.1 Rural Transport in Developing Countries

- Much of rural transport in developing countries is related to establishing (road) links to service centres
- The same concepts of connectivity to hubs and service centres is applied, but the means of transport vary in contrast to the developed world

In developing countries the majority of rural transport references relate to the provision of more basic transport services relevant to the emerging / developing status of the nation. These rural transport actions include, for

example, paved or reasonable road access to the nearest village, town, trading node or transport hub. The type of transport under consideration will often be walking, with bicycles or animal-powered vehicles as alternatives. In the developing world most public transport initiatives involving motorised vehicles or marketing / information campaigns, which could have potential for implementation in Rural England, are found in towns and cities and have no direct relevance for this study.

4.7.2 What other issues have emerged?

- Growing and developing new transport markets – this is important in order to maximise the market potential of rural transport – two of the German pilot projects (MobiTour and NahviS) aimed at developing new markets for rural transport; the application can take the form of marketing, promotion and market research allied to changes to the service delivery / service pattern to meet previously unexpressed / unresearched rural travel needs.
- Need for integrated approach – rural transport connectivity will never find itself at the top of the transport funding agenda; it is therefore important that an integrated approach to transport funding is established (preferably at the regional level) which can assess and decide priorities for transport funding including urban, rural and inter-urban services.
- Consumer choice – in many cases rural dwellers have no alternative mode to the private car; the development and enhancement of rural transport can boost consumer choice and assist in bringing about a modal shift, providing the transport is geared to the requirements of local residents and is properly and sensitively marketed and promoted
- Push and Pull Measures – incentives to rural transport usage such as promotional fares and ethical discounts may persuade rural dwellers to shift mode provided adequate and appropriate services are provided. Push and pull complementary measures are often more effective than a simple imposition of punitive measures, such as swingeing town centre car park charges, which can have the undesired effect of convincing people to reroute their trips to other destinations such as more distant town centres or out of town shopping complexes without parking restrictions.
- Rural transport nodes – rural transport nodes may offer the best way to provide rural residents with access to necessary services at reasonable cost. The nodes may be local service centres, or rural interchanges along designated trunk transport routes where travellers may interchange in comfort to the line haul transport mode.
- Intermodality – as in the example above, intermodality, whether bus-bus, bike-bus, bus-train or car-bus/train, etc, will be very important to ensure that, wherever possible, rural transport services are provided at minimum cost and avoid duplication of service, whilst ensuring that the best use is made of the particular characteristics of each mode of transport (e.g.

that taxis and community transport minibuses can provide a feeder service for dispersed rural communities, allowing them to connect / interchange with the line haul train or inter-urban bus modes).

- Travel behaviour change – the provision of information can be important in changing people's travel behaviour – if they are unaware of existing services, they cannot and will not use them.
- Trip substitution – the provision of mobile services to rural communities will continue to play an increasingly important role in reducing rural isolation and providing rural residents with access to key services. Naturally, many services cannot be provided in this fashion, but a reduction in the need to travel which also increases accessibility to basic services fulfils many useful social and environmental functions
- Capacity building in rural areas – the third sector is still attempting to come to terms with the need to develop more economically focused services. Training and capacity building is very important to ensure that the third sector is willing and able to expand its operations within the spectrum of (rural) transport service provision.
- Importance of the role of taxis -the role of taxis, as recognised within the recent CFIT report, must not be underestimated. By providing a rural taxi-bus scheme, residents can be transported relatively cost-effectively to their destination whilst enjoying the advantages of a taxi service at the price of a bus fare. Taxis also have key role to play in the spectrum of (rural) transport service provision.
- Rural accessibility targets – recent research by the authors suggested that many local authorities fail to provide explicit rural transport accessibility targets within their accessibility strategy documents; this must be remedied within future partnership working to plan and deliver (rural) transport.
- Engaging the business community - as outlined above, and especially in an economic downturn, it can be extremely difficult to engage the business community to support (rural) transport schemes. The authors have been unable to uncover specific evidence of market failures relating to the productivity of industry and their ready supply of labour, but they contend that this problem does exist (and can only be addressed by adequate investment in rural transport), but that further research is required to uncover and analyse the particular facets of this perceived market failure.
- Integrating economic, social and environmental outputs / benefits – as outlined elsewhere there is a mismatch between the economic outputs favoured by the RDAs in England and the social inclusion outputs which are generally favoured by LTAs. The two sets of outputs are not irreconcilable and the requirements under the new Transport Act for all transport stakeholders to adopt close partnership styles of working could help to ensure that (rural) transport schemes are developed, funded and implemented which meet these two sets of investment criteria.
- Encouraging a more thoughtful and comprehensive approach to service planning – LTAs tend to investigate traditional 'big bus' solutions before

turning to more unconventional forms of transport. This approach can lead to delays in the development of rural transport and to a lack of sufficient prioritisation for the necessary rural transport links. Again the new, closer partnership working envisaged under the Local Transport Act could and should assist in encouraging local authorities to assess rural transport schemes against a full set of transport solutions, not just traditional big bus solutions

4.8 Conclusions

4.8.1 What are the most appropriate structures for the delivery of rural transport?

- Policy to be developed at a high enough level to ensure the strategic view
- Stakeholders at the local level to be involved to ensure transport solution adequately addresses needs and is sustainable
- Local authority boundaries constrain efficient transport planning and delivery

We consider that there are three key structural devices required in order to allow for a rational and appropriate delivery of rural transport:

- planning at a strategic level
- delivery at the local or sub-regional level including appropriate stakeholder consultation and participation, and
- consideration of the transport needs that straddle existing local authority boundaries which currently constrain efficient transport planning and delivery.

4.8.2 What funding streams could be secured to ensure appropriate rural transport supply?

- RDAs
- Regional / sub-regional partnerships
- LTAs / ITAs
- National government funds

RDAs in England might be persuaded to (continue to) invest in (rural) transport in the future, although it would be necessary to ensure that the outcomes of grant programmes were closely aligned with their own objectives. In practice, each RDA operates with a high degree of autonomy and each has adopted a rather different attitude towards and willingness to

fund transport within their region to date. There is no reason to suppose that these regional variations will not continue in the future, even where RDAs decide to be fully engaged within the partnership working anticipated within the new Transport Act, and as set out in the recent Sub-national Review of Economic Development and Regeneration (HM Treasury, BERR, CLG, 2007).

Regional and sub-regional partnerships could be established, either utilising the partnership framework anticipated within the new Transport Act, or utilising the possibilities inherent within the LAA / MAA processes. LTAs and ITAs will continue to provide funding for (rural) transport, but this is always likely to be constrained by their political boundaries unless they can be persuaded or required to take the wider view. It is likely that national government will continue to be the best source of funding for rural transport initiatives - the Think Piece accompanying this document sets out a number of grant programmes which could be established by national government in order to ensure a consistent and efficient enhancement of rural transport throughout England with the highest level of viability. A review which future proofs current funding streams from national government such as Kickstart and Rural Bus Subsidy Grant would be of great value to assess whether they are appropriate tools to deliver rural transport in the medium to long term future.

4.8.3 What can we learn from rural transport delivery and funding in Europe and worldwide; how applicable is that experience to Rural England?

Five of the most important lessons to be learnt from this Review are the:

- Need to invest to achieve social and economic inclusion
- Need to integrate transport planning at a strategic level
- Need to ensure adequate local / community empowerment
- Need to engender full partnership work
- Need to ensure integration of transport resources / integration of different transport sectors

5 Emerging Delivery Models

There are a number of emerging potential delivery models which are developed in further detail within the accompanying Think Piece:

- **Rural Regional Transport Forums (RTFs)**

Regionally-focussed Forums comprising stakeholders from key sectors with policy-making powers and funding decisions at the strategic level to develop and fund (rural) transport programmes ensuring connectivity between rural residents and services and connectivity between urban and rural transport networks

The advantage of this approach would be the development of a body bringing together practitioners at the strategic level, including local authorities, the private sector and the third sector, to debate and develop policies for transport investment and implementation within the region.

- **Rural Transport Programme**

Applying the transport investment options undertaken within the RTFs and applying them at the regional and sub-regional levels, in order to develop a series of (rural) transport services to meet the strategic connectivity objectives established at the strategic level. Alternatively, such programmes could follow the patterns of the Rural Transport Fund in Northern Ireland and the Rural Transport Programme in the Republic of Ireland

This model foresees the development of one or more Rural Transport Programmes which could be applied at the regional level within Rural England. These programmes could operate in tandem with Rural Transport Forums - the latter developing transport and accessibility policies and the former actually implementing the necessary transport and accessibility services.

- **Rural Transport Innovation Fund**

A competitive funding programme akin to the recent Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) funding rounds, which would apply specifically to rural areas allowing stakeholders to apply for innovative funding schemes at a regional or sub-regional or local level

A Rural Transport Innovation Fund would allow local authorities and transport operators to bid for funding to implement innovative rural transport schemes to meet the needs of rural residents, which should involve a high level of partnership working and offer a reasonable prospect of future viability.

- **Regional Transport Partnerships**

Funding programmes to be developed at the regional / sub-regional level to meet the rural transport and accessibility needs of a particular community, especially for access to jobs and training to assist in economic regeneration. An existing example is the Access Alliance Programme in North Nottinghamshire and North Derbyshire

One initiative funded by the East Midlands Development Agency (emda) through the Alliance Sub Regional Strategic Partnership (ASSP) is the Access Alliance Programme (AAP) running November 2006 – November 2010.

- **Programme of Pilot / Demonstration Projects**

A Programme of pilot and demonstration projects to test new concepts in rural transport with a view to establishing viability and replication throughout Rural England. An example would be the Rail Taxi demonstration recently proposed by a CfIT Report and the 10 Pilot / Demonstration Projects in rural transport funded by the Federal German Government 2002-05

This Programme would allow a number of key concepts in rural transport to be tested out in Rural England with the potential for replication of those concepts which prove to be most efficient in accessibility (and economic) terms.

- **'Buurtbus' - Community-based Bus Initiative**

A community-based bus scheme fully integrated with the commercial operations of the private sector. The pattern has been established within the Netherlands of volunteers from the third sector working for commercial operators where the commercial operator has the franchise to provide certain locally / sub-regionally based rural transport services

In the Netherlands a community bus concept, which was originally introduced in Norfolk in the mid 1970s¹, has been rolled out in the more rural provinces, including Friesland. These 'Buurtbus' community buses were introduced when conventional bus services were withdrawn from rural communities. The Buurtbus provides scheduled services, with passengers paying a flat fare to travel.

¹ This concept was introduced by the Eastern Counties company in Norfolk in 1976, using a nine-seat minibus driven by volunteers trained to PSV standards. Peter White (2009), Public Transport – Its Planning, Management and Operation, p172

- **Capacity Building Programmes within the third Sector**

The third sector has begun to embrace the need to explore opportunities which reduce their dependence on grant funding. . Training and capacity building is very important to ensure that the third sector is willing to be socially enterprising and able to expand its operations within the spectrum of (rural) transport service provision.

In order for affordable and efficient rural transport to be made available on the widest basis, it will be necessary to ensure that the third sector is fully integrated within the process and able to offer its services within the spectrum of rural transport services on offer.

- **Rural Kickstart**

A Kickstart programme of pump-priming funding specially tailored to the access needs of rural areas, but also paying attention to the difficulties of achieving viability within the rural context. Although the Kickstart Challenge recently announced by the Department for Transport allows for rural areas and the third sector to be involved and targeted within submissions for funding, the guidelines also acknowledge that viability is unlikely to be achieved unless the local authority is willing to underwrite the future costs of provision after Kickstart funding has ceased. This suggested programme would allow viability to be achieved in more innovative, achievable and appropriate fashions

A Kickstart programme funded by central government would be an acknowledgement of the particular transport and accessibility needs within rural areas. It would allow the pump-priming of accessibility solutions within rural areas, whilst encouraging high levels of partnership working and co-operation to ensure that high levels of viability can be achieved once the initial funding has ended.

- **Brokerage / Integration**

A programme of integration of all resources within the three (private, public, voluntary) sectors, and also of those resources currently outside the transport sector, such as Primary Care Trust transport resources. The aim would be to ensure that primary transport needs can be met by conventional transport resources with the demonstration of maximum cost effectiveness and efficiency, but that those transport and accessibility needs which cannot be met satisfactorily by conventional means would draw upon the other resources available, both in terms of rolling stock, infrastructure and personnel.

This approach foresees an increasing trend towards centralised Public Transport Unit administrations within LTAs supported by a model of main route services support. For people who cannot use conventional vehicles, or for residents of those areas where the main route services are unable to operate on a sound financial footing, joint working should be instituted between commercial operators, the LTA, the third sector and the ambulance service.

6 Emerging Funding Streams

We have identified a number of funding streams for the potential programmes we have set out. These are:

- a. European Union (EU)
- b. National Government
- c. Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)
- d. Shire Local Transport Authorities (LTAs)
- e. Unitary Authorities
- f. Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs) / City Regions
- g. Local Area Agreement (LAA) / Multi Area Agreement (MAA) Processes
- h. Commercial Sector

These are discussed in detail in the 'Think Piece' accompanying this report.

7 Conclusions

In conclusion, the authors consider that:

- There is a need to invest to provide for rural accessibility; comparative national investment is difficult to obtain – some tentative indications are set out in Annex C
- There are some potential initiatives to encourage innovation in rural transport provision
- There is potential to provide a more comprehensive and more viable rural transport service
- It will be important to cover a full range of journey needs (both to satisfy consumer demand, but also to maximise income); currently the majority of needs catered for are for those out of work or retired; the challenge is to cater for journeys to work and training etc
- Climate change, fuel cost fluctuations and other global trends have the potential to overwhelm rural transport initiatives; some of these trends are discussed in Annex D
- The deregulated and privatised legislative framework and operating environment for (rural) transport in England makes the direct transfer of schemes from more regulated environments very problematic (Annex E provides a select review of national transport legislative frameworks)
- There is little direct and relevant evidence from the international review to inform the development of funding and delivery models for transport in Rural England – we cannot simply import a model for implementation. Here in England, we have been good at trying out new approaches but not with the (financial) commitment necessary to make a long term difference
- Some cases study examples, however, have emerged which offer valuable evidence for CRC and Rural England, most notably those in Friesland, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Germany (Annex B sets out these case study programmes)

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Annex B Brief Case Study Outlines

(i) Friesland

Highlights:

- Fully integrated rural public transport network which relates directly to local population sizes
- Experimentation with combining social, health-care and public transport budgets to provide new door-to-door public transport networks
- Extensive provision of dedicated cycle routes and very high levels of cycle use
- Pioneer of new approach to traffic management, in which roads and junctions are designed to encourage informal and socialised interaction between road users

The province of Friesland is a largely rural region in the north of the Netherlands covering 3,400 square kilometres with a total population of 638,000. The provincial capital is Leeuwarden (district population 90,700). After Leeuwarden, there are only two places with a population of more than 40,000: Heerenveen (district population 41,250) and the new town of Drachten (district population 53,000).

Friesland's transport is funded predominantly through franchising. All local bus and rail services are franchised out by the province, other than the rail service between Leeuwarden and Groningen.

Schemes/measures employed in Friesland:

- Public transport information – national public transport information system which links any two addresses in the whole country (phone & internet)
- Rail – high frequency means that the franchise requirement is that no one be left standing in peak time for more than 20 minutes, and not left standing at all at off peak times
- Integration of rail with other transport – TrainTaxi scheme where for a flat fee passengers can share a cab from the station (over 100 stations nationally) to their final destination. Large Dutch stations also have a bicycle storage facility which is a secure, indoor facility with a servicing and bike parts shop
- Express coach service – the routes through the area are part of the national Interliner service which is designed to fill in the gaps in the rail network

- Bus network – 1,100 services run per day in Friesland and use of the network is growing 1-2% a year
- Demand Responsive Services – Two types exist, 'Bellbus' which is a fixed-route taxi sharing, and 'Regio Taxi' which is an 'anytime, anywhere' flexible service
- Community Transport – some districts have services provided by neighbourhood bus services like Buurtbus – scheduled services driven by local volunteers
- Cycle and safe walking routes – many main roads have a parallel local road which mainly serves as a cycle lane, most bus stops also have bike-parking provision
- Traffic Calming – the boundaries of most villages are marked by signs and raised road treatments and approximately 60% of them are designated 20mph zones. Some new areas are built with completely separate cycle paths. Friesland's main town centres are heavily pedestrianised

Friesland demonstrates that a high quality integrated public transport network can deliver increases in bus use, even in rural areas. This is in marked contrast to experience in Britain. Integration of bus services with shared taxis has been a key to the creation of this network, as has the integration of previously separate transport budgets.

The excellent provision for cycling and resulting high modal share shows that cycling can be an important means of transport in rural as well as urban areas. Friesland's emphasis on designing roads in harmony with their surroundings has lessons for villages and market towns struggling to maintain rural character while managing rising traffic volumes.

(ii) Republic of Ireland Rural Transport Initiative / Programme (RTI / RTP)

The Rural Transport Initiative (RTI) arose from a commitment by the Department of Transport in the National Development Plan 2000-2006, where a provision for up to €4.4 million was earmarked to support the development of pilot public transport initiatives in rural areas. The Rural Transport Programme (RTP) was launched in February 2007 following on from the success of the Rural Transport Initiative and puts the former pilot scheme on a permanent mainstreamed basis, with significantly increased funding.

The aim of this funding is "to encourage innovative community-based initiatives to provide transport services in rural areas, with a view to addressing the issue of social exclusion in rural Ireland, which is caused by lack of access to transport".

RTP has achieved good progress since its inception, it has:

- established the provision of rural transport services in 34 rural areas across 25 counties
- involved the provision of 305,000 passenger trips in 2003
- improved access to services, social activities and employment for the 16,000 rural residents that regularly use RTI assisted services
- provided direct employment for 90 people and supported an additional 200 bus drivers
- increased levels of independence and reduced isolation rural residents
- improved access for users to public services such as healthcare, training and education
- higher quality standards in rural public transport through passenger assistants, improved vehicle accessibility and higher vehicle standards
- learning and capacity-building at local level
- management and awareness raising amongst the community and statutory sectors of the transport needs of rural dwellers
- improved co-ordination in rural public transport provision, and between transport and other public services

Main difficulties experienced by groups prior to start-up included recruitment of staff; tendering processes; service planning; engaging suitable commercial operators; and legislative and insurance issues

Difficulties were largely overcome through the commitment of group staff, volunteers and Area Development Management (Ltd) staff

The main difficulties experienced since commencement include linking with other public service providers; lack of availability of fully accessible vehicles; and lower than anticipated demand for commuter services

Recommendations for further development include:

- Continued focus on social inclusion
- Enhance role of community and voluntary sector in the local provision of services
- Clear objectives and targets should be established at programme and project level
- Where possible the existing RTI projects should be extended to new geographical areas currently not serviced
- There is no 'one size fits all' solution to selecting the most appropriate model for rural transport provision so experiment with new ideas
- Greater integration of DRT services with existing public transport services
- Greater levels of policy integration also required

€20m per annum has been set aside for the continuing RTP which now carries 1m passengers per annum.

(iii) Northern Ireland Rural Transport Fund

The Rural Transport Fund (RTF) is administered by the Department for Regional Development and has been in existence in Northern Ireland since November 1998. Its primary objective is to support transport services designed to give people in rural areas improved access to work, education, healthcare, shopping and recreational activities and by so doing assists in reducing their social isolation.

The RTF offers support through two primary means of assistance:

- Subsidy for new rural services provided by Translink which are economically unviable but socially necessary
- Revenue and capital funding for Rural Community Transport Partnerships that offer a range of complementary services to the public transport network for their members

The RTF achieves its objectives through means of a partnership between central government, the public and community transport sectors. The RTF seeks to provide solutions to the transport problems faced by many people living in rural areas. The projects supported by the RTF are required to demonstrate that they fulfil some or all of the following criteria: -

- Target social need by improving rural residents' access to training or employment opportunities
- Complement the work of other agencies involved in the development of rural communities
- Support a wide range of community-based activities and have a broad base of community support
- Encourage volunteering activity

The RTF also provides financial support to the Community Transport Association (CTA) which offers training, advice and information to the community transport sector. Ports and Public Transport Division administers the payment of RTF grant and maintains a close working relationship with Translink's Rural Transport Unit, all 19 partnerships and CTA. Groups seeking funding submit business plans, which are assessed by the Division and outputs and outcomes are regularly monitored.

In 2004/2005 the Rural Transport Fund supported 18 Rural Community Transport Partnerships, and 47 rural Ulsterbus services. Together, these services provided almost 700,000 passenger trips, an increase of almost 10% over the previous year. £3.5m funding has been allocated for the coming financial year (2009/10); the Programme has strong support within the Stormont Assembly.

(iv) Personennahverkehr fuer die Region (Local Rural Public Transport) - Bundesministerium fuer Bildung und Forschung(Federal Ministry for Education and Research)

This initiative, comprising a set of 10 pilot / demonstration projects was established by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research to develop innovation in transport for sustainable mobility. The Programme title may be translated as Local Rural Public Transport – Innovation for Sustainable Mobility. The Programme was instituted in 2001 and ran until 2005; ten separate pilot / demonstration projects were commissioned covering a variety of subject areas intended to revitalise local rural public transport in Germany, achieve wide geographic coverage of the Federal Republic and lay the basis for a sustainable replication of the projects and/ or the most successful parts of the projects following cessation of central government funding.

The Programme did not deliver a comprehensive geographical spread throughout the country as was achieved by the Rural Transport partnership in England. Neither did the Programme set out to test / implement a wide typology of transport modes. The Programme was intended to demonstrate the value of appropriate partnership working to deliver rural transport projects which would ‘grow’ new markets and could provide a pattern for replication throughout Germany. The Programme aimed to work towards a more sustainable (viable) rural mobility. Each of the projects were run locally / sub-regionally by a wide partnership of stakeholders in the public, private and third sectors (as appropriate). In addition, the Programme aimed to develop sustainable mobility in even the most sparsely population areas through the stimulation of public private partnership working. The Programme also aimed to improve the competitive position of German industry and commerce, and improve access to jobs and training for rural residents. In addition to the projects a series of other working groups were implemented to drive the Programme forward: a learning project scheme to ensure the regular mutual dissemination of information between the projects to ensure a harmonisation of approach; close partnership working of practitioners and stakeholders; a working group charged with the elaboration of mobility solutions; a mobility management working group; marketing; and a working group charged with examining and elaborating the legislative and other frameworks, the parameters for action of the projects and the potential barriers to implementation of the Programme. The ten pilot / demonstration projects instituted were:

AMABILE – modelling of alternative forms of conventional and non-conventional transport supply in an integrated fashion

ArMONT – integration of information services for many forms of transport especially within the tourism realm

aufdemland.mobil - development of community-led community transport organisations and services

IMAGO – innovative transport marketing and local transport concepts
IMPULS 2005 – development of a community transport system through the integration of regular and special transport services, e.g. demand responsive buses
mob² – integration and information supply of various transport services through a variety of technological dissemination media
MobiTour – tourism-related transport to boost the productivity of local transport
Multibus – door to door demand responsive transport service
NahviS – integration of local public transport and provide transport (e.g. car sharing) within a tourism context
RUDY – comprehensive information system to be channelled through collective and individual communication modes

Further information is downloadable at

<http://www.tuvpt.de/fileadmin/pdf/PNVRegion/PNVRegionBroschuere.pdf>

Annex C Brief Comparative Review of Transport Investment

It has proved difficult to obtain comparative data about investment in rural transport; the table below sets out the revenue support spend per head of population in a sample of English counties (these data developed by CfIT) and in Friesland (these data contained with the Rural Transport Futures Report).

	Population	Passenger transport revenue support	Revenue spend per head of population
Buckinghamshire	479,000	£3.15m	£6.60
Devon	704,000	£4.65m	£6.60
Derbyshire	735,000	£4.56m	£6.20
Hertfordshire	1,034,000	£5.8m	£5.60
Norfolk	797,000	£3.97m	£5.00
Friesland	643,000	£19m	£30.00

Annex D Future Proofing

Introduction

There are a number of issues which could affect the rural transport programmes set out in this report; effectively these issues relate to external issues over which transport planners have little or no control but which could impact dramatically on the operation and outputs of each of the interventions. This study does not allow resources for a major future-proofing of each scheme, but it has allowed a broad analysis of the likely impacts of 4 major issues which are most likely to impact upon the delivery of the interventions set out in this study. These issues are examined below.

Carbon fuels

Current trends in costs of carbon fuels are likely to continue to rise as the demand for travel increases and as the fossil fuels themselves become increasingly scarce and increasingly expensive to extract and refine. A major increase in carbon fuel costs would have major impacts on the cost of private motoring and on the cost of public transport provision (where fuel and labour account for a major part of service operation costs). In the absence of a breakthrough in the provision of alternative energy sources on a significant scale, we posit that if the cost of a litre of diesel increased to £5 the following impacts would be likely to occur:

- A massive reduction in private motoring
- A dramatic increase in the cost of bus-based public transport provision
- Massive increased demand for bus and other transport usage to access jobs, employment, training and other services
- Reduction in the road maintenance and road build budget
- Recession in the motor industry, oil and petroleum sector and associated trades
- Ability to channel public funds into the provision of public transport
- Increased costs for the consumer to use public transport
- Large growth in car sharing
- Greater impetus for widescale deployment of alternative fuelled private and public vehicles
- Tendency for people to move closer to their place of work; reduction in the daily commute
- Large reduction in the overall private trip rate per person; overall reduction in travel

Recent changes in fuel price in the UK have demonstrated the extreme volatility and unpredictability of the market. Anecdotal evidence suggested that traffic levels dipped significantly, in line with elasticity projections, as the cost of unleaded fuel reached £1.20 per litre.

Global warming / climate change

There is agreement amongst the majority of scientists that global warming and climate change is occurring, and is probably accelerating, and that the major cause stems from human activity. Regardless of the causes, the impacts of the demand for and provision of travel are likely to be equally dramatic as the hike in fuel price outlines above. Unfortunately, there is no consensus amongst scientists as to what impacts global warming / climate change are likely to bring to the British Isles. Some of the most likely impacts are:

- Increasingly hot summers
- Increasingly warm winters
- More extremes in weather, e.g. very cold snaps, very high Summer temperatures, Severe gales and storms, major flooding
- Dramatic increase in the level of rivers
- Dramatic increase in the levels of seas and oceans with associated flooding and change in coastline
- Major decrease in overall sea and air temperature if the Gulf Stream cycle "switches" off which is predicted by some scientists – the Gulf Stream keeps the British Isles considerable warmer than would otherwise be expected at our given latitude
- Impacts of comfort in public transport e.g. lack of air conditioning leads to modal shift to private car
- Severe impacts on transport infrastructure, e.g. buckling and stretching of rails, melting of tarmac, flooding, landslips etc

Some of these potential impacts are mutually exclusive; some are counter intuitive, but no less likely to happen for that. In all cases they would require the following actions in transport intervention:

- Flexibility in provision to cope with changing demand
- Robustness of construction and design, of rail and road based transport systems
- Significant shift in investment into urban and rural areas which do not lie in the coastal basin or along the flood plains of rivers – a major migration would be expected from flooded areas (threatened or actual) to these areas in the process dramatically changing the patterns of service provision both in transport and other public services.

Inward migration

We believe that there was a gap in the supply of labour in the employment market which had been temporarily filled by a wave of migration, principally from Eastern and Central Europe. This inward migration served to effectively hide what would ordinarily be seen by business as a major structural impediment. Currently the business sector does not perceive that there is a major problem in filling jobs, except in certain relatively isolated areas, and

that the issue of transport to work is a problem for the individual to solve, rather than one for the employer. This perception, however, could be required to shift if any or all of the following projections arise in the medium term:

- A shift of migrant workers into knowledge based and more highly skilled occupations, which better reflect the training and skills of many of these migrants
- An exodus of many of these migrants to their countries of origin in order to exploit the economic opportunities arising in their own economies
- A failure of new migrants to arrive to replace returnees owing to the increasingly higher standards of living within their origin countries

This analysis has subsequently been validated by the Report 'Floodgates or Turnstiles' (April 2008) produced by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) which assesses the current impacts of, and future projections for, inward migration to the UK from the 'new' EU countries. The IPPR found that over 1 million migrants had entered the UK since 2004 from the 8 new accession states (i.e. not Bulgaria or Romania), but that over 50% of these had returned to their country of origin. The rate of migration has now slowed. The IPPR believes that the rate will continue to slow and that migration from the accession countries will soon be balanced by outward migration from the UK by recently arrived migrants from these countries. The authors feel there are a number of factors behind this likely trend:

- economic development in their home country which will provide skilled employment opportunities
- changing demographic patterns in the accession countries, e.g. reduced birth rate
- the fall of the £ sterling against the majority of currencies within the accession countries
- diversion to other destination countries which offer the best current opportunities for economic employment

It is now estimated that half of the migrant workers have now returned to their home countries, but the economic downturn has prevented the requirement for locally based workforces to fill the vacancies which occurred as a result. Employers seem to be holding off on recruitment until they are more certain how the economic situation will be resolved. As and when employers decide to recruit again en masse, there will be an increase in the requirement for local, rural transport to take local workforces, without access to private means of transport and without adequate public transport links, to those places of work, many of which are situated on major trunk roads or close to motorway junctions.

Alternative fuel technologies

The implementation of alternative fuel technologies has been slow within the transport industry. Hybrid and electric private vehicles do exist and are increasingly being purchased by those who wish to mitigate the impacts of their travel on the environment. However, these solutions are relatively expensive, and in the case of the pure electric vehicle, still have a rather limited range. Bio-fuelled vehicles are being trialled increasingly within the field of public transport – emda has recently collaborated with the City of Nottingham and Nottingham City Transport to develop and implement the Ecolink bus service in Wollaton using ethanol fuelled vehicles. The intentions are twofold: to demonstrate the technology and to bring about a modal shift based upon an appeal to the environmental conscience of potential travellers. Concern has been expressed in many quarters, however, that a major switch to the use of ethanol fuelled vehicles would have severely negative impact worldwide as major tracts of rain forest would be lost to palm oil producers and associated providers of the raw materials required. Alternatively many food crops could be used to manufacture fuel rather than food.

Local authorities are increasingly experimenting with the use of electric or hybrid vehicles in their cleansing and maintenance fleets, but there are relatively few examples of hybrid or electric vehicles being used in local transport fleets within England (outside of London): two notable examples are electric buses on Merseyside, and hybrid buses serving the Quayside area of Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead. Considerable investment would be required to allow bus fleets to be replaced with alternative powered vehicles and the changeover period would extend for decades.

This issue is handled in detail in the CRC Think Piece “Thinking about Rural Transport: The Implications of Technological Change for Rural Transport” (CRC in collaboration with University of West of England, 2008)

Annex E Transport Legislative Framework

This Annex is a brief review of the legislative framework governing transport in a selection of countries. The thesis we propose of (principally) national government funding, with regional policy development and sub-regional / local implementation and delivery is, perhaps, not so far removed from the European models examined.

For a detailed description of the structure and provision of transport in selected European countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, Greece and France) see the Final Report of Workpackage 1 of the VIRGIL Project (Langzaam Verkeer, Madrid, 2000). Bear in mind that this research was published in 2000, so the situation may have altered significantly in the intervening decade. Similarly, the Final Report of Workpackage 2 of VIRGIL (Langzaam Verkeer, Helsinki, 2000) can be consulted to look at an analysis of rural transport provision and cross sectoral integration within the same countries, but the same proviso applies to the age of the data.

Netherlands

- Netherlands has clear national policies on spatial planning which focus on development in the cities complemented by effective management of rural areas
- The national policies are reflected in every province's 'Streekplan' (regional spatial plan). They also form the basis for executive decisions, action and funding for the development and implementation of national transport policies
- The 2000 Passenger Transport Act introduced the notion of regionalisation and franchising
- Under the Act all local transport will be franchised by the provinces, with the necessary subsidies shifted from national to local government
- Friesland is one of two pioneering provinces, with both local bus and rail now franchised
- Regionalisation also means provinces have more freedom to determine spending, and funding that used to be allocated nationally and now is delegated to the provinces
- As a result of these changes, the provinces now have greater responsibilities but still suffer from a degree of policy and financial uncertainty
- Provinces are not able to raise taxes directly, and most capital transport funding comes out of a block grant from central government

- There are however some separate transport-specific funding streams from national government for the provinces
- These include grants to subsidise the running costs of public transport networks, funding from the sustainable safety programme for specific road safety schemes and funding under national programmes to encourage new ways of stimulating modal shift for short trips
- The shift in national policy towards more road building in the Randstad resulted in projected budget cuts for provincial public transport support of six per cent
- This would have led to significant cuts in services and after lobbying the projected cuts were scaled back to three per cent
- The fall of the national government means that it is unclear whether these budgets will change again
- All provincial transport policy and legislation in the Netherlands is now clouded in uncertainty over what the future direction of national transport policy and spending might be
- This makes planning future public transport franchises difficult, with the provinces unsure of how much money they will have from year to year

Germany

- National government is responsible for planning and financing motorways, long distance roads and main railway lines
- National government also fixes the general budgets for local roads, cycling projects and public transport
- The Federal Government's regionalisation law opened the way for the regions to franchise their local and regional rail services
- Transport infrastructure, including local roads as well as railways, can be funded by the 'financing of community transport' law (known as GVFG). This provides funding for:
 - tramways, metros and private railways
 - bus stops, interchanges and bus workshops
 - infrastructure measures to improve journey times
 - rail / road crossings
 - public transport vehicles (buses, locomotives, wagons and railcars)

- Regions' powers cover most aspects of local and regional public transport, including infrastructure and services
- Actual delivery of services is often at a sub-regional or local level. Development of public transport services is undertaken by the counties (Kreise) who prepare the local transport plan (Nahverkehrsplan)
- They have to ensure that the plans are, first of all, consistent with the region's strategy
- The plans establish priorities for developing local transport and show how proposals will be funded
- Public transport in the region is organised by nine sub-regional Verkehrsverbunde, which are similar to British passenger transport authorities
- They are joint boards of the county authorities and have statutory responsibility for local public transport
- The passenger transport authorities and the counties are in charge of the planning, organisation and co-ordination of public transport
- Their responsibilities include:
 - creating standard ticketing and fares systems
 - co-ordinating and integrating public transport services
 - team-work with neighbouring passenger transport authorities

Denmark

- There is a long standing political consensus regarding the need for quality public transport in urban and rural areas and an approach to privatisation that retains political control over strong quality contracts with bus operators
- Railway privatisation has been carried out whilst retaining the state railway system (DSB) as a competitor for privatised operations
- Underlying all transport policy is an approach to political control through elected representatives and integration with land use planning policy, especially in the finger-plan of the Greater Copenhagen area
- There are three main planning levels in Denmark, one at the national level, one at the regional level and one at the local level
- Each plan has to correspond to the guidelines from the level above

- Every twelve years a new plan is published at the national and corresponding levels, with a revision every four years
- The most recent national plan (Landsplanredegørelse 2000) deals with the broad planning aspects for the whole country, including regional development, environment and transport
- The regional authorities draw up a more detailed plan for their area also every twelve years, with a revision every fourth year

USA

- Many rural transit systems are funded under Section 5311 of the Federal Transit Act
- This Act is a formula grant program that authorises both capital and operating assistance grants to public transit systems in areas with populations less than 50,000
- Such schemes are county-based and tend to be found in the more populated rural areas
- Very few are found in the most rural and isolated areas
- These systems range in size from 1 to over 50 vehicles
- Specialised transportation systems for the elderly and persons with disabilities are available under the Section 5310 program
- This provides capital assistance to States, which in turn distribute to both rural and areas to non-profit organisations or lead agencies in transport co-ordination
- It has been identified that rural transportation requires high levels of co-ordination
- Therefore, the Federal Co-ordinating Council for Access Mobility (CCAM) was established
- This brings together relevant Federal agencies dealing with public transportation including the Department of Transportation and the Department of Health and Human Services
- CCAM provides policy guidance on co-ordinating transit across different Federal programs
- The Federal Government encourages development of new public transportation services and expansion of existing routes for low-income, transit dependent individuals seeking access to jobs through the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grant program

- The JARC was created by Congress in 1998 and is designed to complement individualised transportation assistance provided by human service agencies
- Twenty percent of the funding per year is designated for rural, non-urbanised areas

In summary, it is interesting that the European Union countries in this brief analysis have devolved their powers down to the regional level, whilst the USA retains most control at the Federal level with very little individualisation at the regional and local level. In one sense regional level control is very good because it allows the local governments to tailor their transport to the needs and topography of the area, but as shown with the Netherlands example, this can be a problem because the national government appears to still be in control when it comes to finance.