

# RURAL TRANSPORT POLICY AND EQUITY

A discussion paper prepared for CPRE, the  
Countryside Commission and the Rural  
Development Commission

**CPRE**



*Your countryside  
Your voice*

**COUNTRYSIDE  
COMMISSION**



# Rural Transport Policy and Equity

A discussion paper prepared by Dr. Brenda Boardman  
of the Environmental Change Unit, Oxford University  
on behalf of CPRE, the Countryside Commission  
and the Rural Development Commission

September 1998

ISBN: 0 946044 82 1

Printed on Recycled Paper

---

## Acknowledgements

My thanks go to Lilli Matson of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, Toby Johns of the Rural Development Commission, Ken Robertson at the Countryside Commission and Phil Turner at the Royal Town Planning Institute for asking me to write this paper. It has been a fascinating challenge made all the more enjoyable by their helpful guidance and considerable support. This is a personal assessment of the situation and is not intended, in any way, to represent the policy of these four organisations.

The work has grown out of two studies undertaken previously at the Environmental Change Unit and I am indebted to Amanda Root, William Fielding and Jillian Anable for their contributions to these earlier reports and for the insights these have provided.

My post at the University of Oxford is sponsored by PowerGen, through St. Hilda's College, and I work at the Environmental Change Unit. I am grateful to all three for their support and for the opportunity to write this paper. I hope that it provides a useful stimulus to the debate and results in an easier life for the rural poor.

---

# CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>5</b>
Scale of the problem	
Solutions	
<b>POLICY CONTEXT</b>	<b>10</b>
Rural poverty	
Adequate facilities	
Rural travel costs	
Who has a choice?	
Travel budgets	
<b>SOLUTIONS</b>	<b>20</b>
The role of capital and pricing	
Market transformation	
Policy developments – the March 1998 Budget	
Objectives and policy directions	
Restricting car use	
The strategy	
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>FOOTNOTES</b>	<b>35</b>

---

## FOREWORD

Debates on the costs of travel in rural areas have increasingly come to the fore in recent years, particularly prompted by the Government's policy to increase the rate of fuel tax annually. We therefore decided to initiate a wider discussion on this issue with the aim of developing greater understanding of this important area of transport policy.

We invited Dr Brenda Boardman to explore the issue of rural transport and equity to start the debate and we are grateful for the insights and research she sets out in this paper. We intend to take forward this document in discussion with interested organisations, individuals and Government and would welcome hearing views on its contents.

It should be noted that the views and recommendations in this report do not necessarily represent the policies of any of the commissioning organisations.

---

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In our daily lives we need access to a range of facilities – a bank, a few shops, post office, doctor, chemist, library, pub, job centre. The demands vary in frequency and in relation to lifestyles, but the choice is needed. These facilities may be close by, in urban areas, or more dispersed, in rural ones. Over the past few years, more people have moved into rural villages, increasing the potential market for local facilities. However, perversely, the provision of amenities has declined, making more people more dependent on travelling. The challenge is to reverse this trend and encourage the provision and better use of local facilities.

Another trend has been for public transport in rural areas to decline – at least two-thirds of rural settlements do not have a daily bus service. Those households without a car have been faced with an increased need to travel, because fewer services are available in the village, and with increasingly limited bus services. As a result, they suffer from restricted access to vital facilities – the problem of travel poverty. The solutions require:

- providing more facilities locally, for all, whether car owners or not;
- providing more environmentally-friendly means of travel to non-local facilities, through improved public transport; and
- to reduce the need for car owners to get into their cars.

The theme that unites these solutions is the more efficient use of energy: providing the opportunity to obtain the access to facilities wanted for less fuel. Clarifying the objectives in this way is important, but the timescales of policy mean that the maximum effects will take years to achieve. Meanwhile, there are many people in rural areas suffering from limited travel options for whom individual help is needed. This is the final dimension for transport policy:

- assistance to individuals to reduce their deprivation in the short term; and
- to ensure they have affordable and appropriate access to essential facilities.

This report is about these four dimensions in relation to rural travel, but the objectives are similar for urban areas. These objectives concur with the Government's focus on sustainable development – all income groups, all sectors of the population have to be included, as well as environmental targets.

### Scale of the problem

The rural population is 10-33% of the country, depending on definition. In England, between 1971 and 1995, nearly all the population growth was in rural areas underlining a major factor behind rural traffic increases.

---

The poor and disadvantaged who suffer from restricted travel choices represent significant numbers of households in rural areas. These include the following overlapping, but not identical, groups of households:

- 22% with no cars (in comparison with 34% in urban areas);
- 33%, or more, on a low-income and in receipt of a means-tested benefit;
- 40% who are retired, unemployed or unoccupied (for instance disabled, single-parents, those with long-term illnesses).

In addition, there are individuals with limited travel choices, who come from an even wider range of incomes:

- 14% of rural adults with no driving licence;
- young people who are capable of independent travel;
- an adult at home when the only car is elsewhere (typically with a man at work).

For these reasons, travel deprivation can spread high up the income scale in rural areas. It is the problem of a poverty of travel options rather than necessarily of low-income. The effect of travel poverty is limited access to facilities and cannot be clearly identified from present data, but includes:

- the average rural household spends more on car travel than a family on the same income but in the rest of the country, because more rural households own a car and spend an average of 10% a week more on fuel;
- poor rural households travel about half the distance of better-off rural families;
- non-car-owning rural residents went to only a third of the places visited by car owners in rural Oxfordshire;
- remote rural households in Norfolk without access to a car were three times less likely to visit their GP, given similar levels of need, than urban households with cars.

Detailed policy proposals are difficult because of ignorance about many of the underlying situations, all of which deserve better research, for example:

- the effect on the family budget of having to own a car, for the rural poor;
- what non-car-owners spend on travel by other means, especially in rural areas;
- in what ways the limited travel options of the rural poor is equivalent to

---

real deprivation;

- whether the disadvantaged have to move to urban areas, as a result of rural travel deprivation.

The March 1998 Budget had the right philosophy: raise money from car drivers, protect the poorest households and invest in public transport. However, in detail the impact could cause increasing hardship: raising the price of petrol impacts most heavily on the rural poor, as the urban poor have the choice of public transport and the rich will absorb the price rise. The large amounts of money being raised from the fuel tax escalator mean that more ambitious investment plans could easily be funded. In the past, public investment on infrastructure went mainly on roads. Now what is needed is capital investment in better local facilities and public transport. This should complement parallel land use policies to ensure new development reduces the need to travel.

## Solutions

### Objective 1

**To provide a wide range of facilities in the village, or as locally as possible, and to increase this provision over time.**

There is no definition of what is perceived as an adequate range of services as the 21st century approaches, and a consensus needs to be developed. A dialogue is needed within villages and between the village and the local authority about the need for new facilities and the ways these can be supported. Some initiatives could be sponsored by the village community, some will need local authority support. These could extend to mobile services, like the library, banks, doctors and Job Centres.

All opportunities should be taken to reverse the decline in rural amenities, for instance by requiring proposals to rationalise medical and educational facilities to include statements of the effects on private travel.

The increased price of petrol makes the provision of some services more expensive, particularly those provided in the home by health and social services. For this and similar reasons, support funding for the service providers needs a rural component.

### Objective 2

**To improve bus services to surrounding areas, so that appropriate facilities are easily accessible by public transport. The level of service should improve over time.**

Local authorities already have discretionary powers, under the 1985 Transport Act, to support 'socially necessary' public transport. A revised circular, under this Act, could define adequate access, including what 'access' to a bus service might mean – how far to the nearest bus stop, for what proportion of the population.

To encourage people back onto public transport:

- bus fares should go up less than petrol prices;



- bus routes should be protected from sudden change – continuity is needed to build up trust and reliance;
- the image of bus travel needs to be revitalised, to overcome any present social stigma, through modern equipment, better integration of routes and reliable timetables that are widely available and publicised, and punctual buses;
- many of the travel-deprived are non-car-drivers, so that the solution is not a communally-owned car but a form of public transport.

### **Objective 3**

**To provide financial support for low-income households in rural areas who are not able to afford adequate access at the moment and to ensure that they are protected from the harmful impact of future policies.**

The Budget will penalise the rural poor who own large or inefficient cars. They could be helped to purchase ones that qualify for lower Vehicle Excise Duty. The precedent is the Energy Saving Trust's fridgesavers scheme for claimants to obtain an efficient refrigerator.

The level of means-tested benefits should be increased to compensate for further increases in the fuel tax escalator and paid to claimants with rural postcodes. This will compensate rural drivers and enable all the poor to travel more, whether they own a car or not, thus reducing their present deprivation and providing greater demand for local facilities and transport services. More local facilities and better public transport both enhance job opportunities.

Rural travel cards, at concessionary rates, would enable people on benefit and pensioners, to visit an area which encompasses (a defined) range of facilities. If these are introduced at the same time as improved bus services, there is additional growth in demand for public transport, reducing the need for subsidies.

### **Objective 4**

**To reduce the need for car owners to get into their cars and therefore to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emissions from private car use in absolute terms each year, despite increasing numbers of households in rural areas.**

The increased tax on fuel will make little difference to the driving habits of better-off households. Some people will be encouraged out of their cars by improved facilities and bus services, but additional restraints and incentives will be needed. An education campaign would demonstrate the benefits for the environment and personal health of using the local facilities by walking or cycling, to reduce the number of short journeys by car. These have been increasing and car journeys of less than 2 miles produced 13% of the carbon dioxide emissions in one study.

A wider range of policies would improve the environment and encourage less car use, for instance safe cycle routes (to shops and schools) and speed limits on certain country roads so that walkers and cyclists feel less vulnerable. There may need to be disincentives, for instance to company

---

car drivers: the 14% of drivers who had company cars produced 30% of the carbon dioxide in two Oxfordshire villages. A main role of policy is to restrain the growth in car usage so that reduced travel by some is not used as an opportunity to increase by others. Parking policy will be an important component of this restraint.

### **Objective 5**

**To give local authorities the powers and responsibility to implement a strategy for their region that reduces carbon dioxide emissions from travel each year.**

Local authorities have an important role in devising transport strategies that contribute towards national objectives and integrate local facilities and services, particularly in the proposed Local Transport Plans. The Road Traffic Reduction Act requires them to assess traffic levels and plan for reduction targets set locally not nationally.

The first task of a strategy is to have a method of grading for energy efficiency. Audits of personal travel patterns would provide data on the cumulative impact of local emissions and provide every household with options to travel in a greener way. The choices available to the household would result from the local authorities taking a market transformation approach to the provision of access and services, recognising the interactive nature of policies and the importance of timing:

- the provision of new facilities and services have to be financially supported until they have a certain share of the market;
- education on the environmental impacts of present lifestyles is needed to inform people of the impact of their actions, particularly on future generations, and of the individual health improvements that come from walking and cycling;
- there may have to be regulation to remove the most polluting forms of transport and methods of providing access;
- the real benefit of a strategy is to make clear to all users and providers the direction of change and its timescale.

The population in rural areas is increasing and this provides the right stimulus and opportunity for improving local facilities and public transport: the customers are already there. Reducing the need to travel is the most energy efficient and environmentally sound solution and improving access to facilities overcomes the problems of the disadvantaged and provides them with a better lifestyle. These solutions indicate how rural travel policy could improve equity and achieve environmental objectives.

## POLICY CONTEXT

Over the past 25 years, the distance travelled by car has nearly doubled and projections suggest that traffic could continue to grow. The impacts of increasing traffic are felt in both town and country and manifest in a number of ways. While urban congestion and air pollution are some of the more obvious consequences of increased car use, other less tangible impacts include intrusive traffic noise, road danger to cyclists and walkers and rising car dependency.

In rural areas, traffic growth is linked to a decline in the use of local shops and facilities, reduced public transport services and other factors. This is expected to continue, with traffic estimated to increase by 50% on rural roads and 41% on urban roads by 2021<sup>1</sup>. It is clear, therefore, that rural traffic is an important component of transport policy.

In addition, carbon dioxide emissions from road transport now account for 22% of total UK emissions and are the fastest growing source of this gas. As such, a main aim of transport policy is to reverse the growth in private travel and to limit the emissions of carbon dioxide to reduce the threat of unpredictable and devastating climate change. But all of these activities, now and in the future, have to be undertaken in a sustainable way – recognising the importance of the social impacts, both for the disadvantaged of today and for subsequent generations.

This analysis is contributing to the debate on integrated transport, linked to the publication of the Government's White Paper in July. The objective is to ensure that the environmental goal of reducing car dependence is combined with greater equity: ensuring that the rural population has affordable and appropriate access to the necessary facilities.

As well as the aims for reduced environmental impact and greater equity, the objectives for the transport sector are increasingly derived from its role in supporting wider policies, such as better health and increased local prosperity. It is the interplay between environmental and equity dimensions that are examined in this paper as they affect private travel in rural areas, particularly for poor households. More specifically, the paper examines the present situation and the policy opportunities with regard to:

- adequate local facilities for everyone, to reduce the need to travel;
- the level of public transport, where travel is required, as this is beneficial on both equity and environmental grounds;
- financial support for individuals to ensure they have access to facilities; and

- 
- further restraint for car usage, whilst protecting the poor, to encourage greater use of both local facilities and public transport.

Otherwise, if transport policy is focused solely on the pricing mechanism, the poor in rural communities will, without support, suffer considerable hardship and perhaps be forced to move to urban areas. The aim is to enable both the rich and the poor to enjoy a good standard of living in rural areas.

## Rural poverty

There is no agreed definition of 'rural'<sup>2</sup>. The sources on which this report is based have analysed information on 10-33% of the population or households. According to the Rural Development Commission (RDC), between 1971 and 1995, the population of England increased by 5.4%. This was made up of 21% growth in rural areas and 0.5% growth elsewhere<sup>3</sup>. The past growth in the rural population – an average of nearly 1% per year – may continue because of the continuing rise in the number of UK households. The need for an extra 4.4 million new dwellings between 1991 and 2016 demonstrates the demand being created as the average household comprises fewer people.

The average income per household is similar at £289 per week in rural areas and £282 in the rest of the country in 1994-5<sup>4</sup>, although the household characteristics vary. For instance, there is a higher proportion of pensioner couples and a lower proportion of single pensioners in rural areas.

In the UK, a third of all households are in receipt of one of the means-tested benefits<sup>5</sup> and therefore poor according to an official definition. It is not known how many rural households are recipients of these benefits, but in a survey of selected rural areas in 1990, 23-51% of the households were in, or on the margins of, poverty, depending on the definition used<sup>6</sup>. By 1994-1995, 40% of all households in rural and other areas were retired, unemployed or unoccupied<sup>7</sup>. It is these groups who include the disabled, long-term ill, single parents and others known to be on the lowest incomes. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that about a third of the households are poor enough to receive one of these means-tested benefits and lack capital. Poverty is as extensive in rural areas as in the rest of the country.

In rural areas, the restricted choice of jobs combines with inadequate public transport to limit employment options. This represents a potentially circular problem for residents with low incomes and therefore, unable to afford the purchase and running costs of a vehicle of their own. If someone has no work, he/she continues in poverty, with no opportunity to obtain a car. As a Rural Community Worker in North Yorkshire observed:

*There is not a vast section of unemployment, but there is a great deal of low incomes and low pay<sup>8</sup>.*

Although most of the migration to rural areas is by people from the higher socio-economic groups<sup>9</sup>, the rural population appears to have the same spread of incomes as other areas of the country. One final point, which, though obvious, needs reiterating: the disadvantaged are widely dispersed, living amongst those who are better-off or car-owning. They are rarely

---

concentrated as in urban areas. This means the problems can be hidden, that neighbours might or might not be supportive and that the clear targeting of services and facilities will be problematic.

The rural population is growing rapidly and has similar social characteristics and incomes to that living in other areas – at least a third are poor.

### **Adequate facilities**

Those who live in rural areas are a combination of long-term residents, who wish to stay there or cannot afford to move, and those who have given a priority to a quieter lifestyle rather than be surrounded by the variety of amenities available in urban areas. However, there is a limited debate on, and no agreed definition of, what constitutes an 'adequate' range of facilities, to which a household should have access, wherever they live. This would, however, undoubtedly include a bank, a few shops, post office, doctor, library and Job Centre.

The RDC surveys the provision of amenities in rural parishes, without defining a level of adequacy. They have established that the availability of facilities, such as the post office, bank and shop, is low and still declining. There may be a slight reversal in larger parishes, with a few facilities returning between 1994-1997. However, only about a third of rural parishes have a pre-school playgroup or a parent-and-toddler group, and far less have a resident GP or a branch practice. Only 1% have a Job Centre<sup>10</sup>. For rural residents themselves, health services and schools are accorded greater public significance than are shops<sup>11</sup>.

Residents in rural areas use the medical services, whether GPs or hospitals, less often than urban dwellers and up to three times less frequently for remote rural residents with no car<sup>12</sup>. There is no evidence that this is a sign of better health. On the contrary, much ill health, particularly mental stress, is hidden by people in small communities.

*Strictly speaking we could do with a surgery in the village. We have a village hall and I don't see why doctors couldn't have a surgery there once a week.*

*If you want to go to the doctor you start off at about nine in the morning, and you are lucky if you can be home by four in the afternoon (Parish Council Clerk, Wiltshire)<sup>13</sup>.*

The increasing cost of petrol and diesel will mean that the provision of many facilities in rural areas becomes even more expensive: for instance the local authority costs of providing refuse collection, the health authority expenditure on health visitors. This may be less true of the supply of goods to the shops, because supermarket transport costs could rise even more. The present policies on fuel pricing are at risk of increasing the demise of local rural facilities unless positive support is available, through grants or concessions.

Some minimal range of facilities should be accessible for rural residents, but, whatever the definition, only a small number of these are likely to be found in the local village or parish. The availability of these amenities has declined over the last few years: most rural residents have to travel, even

to the bank or doctor.

### Rural travel costs

In rural areas, there are two main travel options: the bus or the car. Walking within the village provides a limited range of facilities, and not everyone is able to cycle. Even so, for car-less families in two Oxfordshire villages, bicycle use was more important than all public transport, for households below pension age<sup>14</sup>. In England, for those without a car, over half of all journeys were undertaken by walking or by bus in 1990<sup>15</sup>. There are taxis for those that can afford them and lifts with a friend or even hitching.

*Mrs A does not have a car and has always depended on lifts. She has not taken the bus at all for the past year as she has found that since her deeper involvement with the Methodist church in the village she can freely ask for lifts and is freely offered them.*

*Mrs C usually takes the bus and always takes the bus if she is with her daughter. She used to hitch in and out of the village but her 6-year old daughter has become frightened of it and will not go if she knows they are walking and hitching. The bus fare is now 72p adult and 48p child single. Mrs C considers this is expensive<sup>16</sup>.*

Few rural villages are on the railway and where a station is nearby, the main users are commuters going to work. Dial a-ride, community minibus services, social car/car-sharing schemes or supermarket shuttles are each available in 15% or less rural parishes. Many are available only for specific groups of the population (eg the disabled) or for limited journeys (eg medical appointments), so they are not a substitute for inadequate buses services. For the rural poor, the real choice is between the bus and the car.

### Who has a choice?

Inevitably, car ownership is the prerogative of the better-off and many low-income families do not own a car (Table 1). For those rich enough and living in rural areas, the car is seen as a necessity and a protected part of the family budget. For the poor it is a luxury, that becomes more difficult to afford as the price increases<sup>17</sup>.

**Table 1**  
Car ownership, by income group in the UK 1995-1996

	No car	1 car	2+ cars
Lowest quintile	77	21	2
Second quintile	43	52	5
Third quintile	19	67	14
Fourth quintile	8	59	33
Highest quintile	4	35	61
<b>% Total for all quintiles</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>23</b>

*Source: FES p138*

---

Across all income groups, 22% of rural households did not own a car in comparison with 34% of households in rest of the country areas in 1992-1994<sup>18</sup>. The lower percentage in rural areas does not indicate that households are more affluent than in urban areas, merely that more people have had to 'afford' to run a car. Apparently, 12% of rural households (34%-22%) have chosen to own a car, but would not have done if they lived in an area with adequate public transport and facilities, such as an urban area. There is little evidence about the hardship created for rural, low-income families by the need to own a car – this and other data gaps make it difficult to clarify the present problems or appropriate solutions. Suffice to say that some low-income households in rural areas are car-owners when they would have preferred to use their limited budget on other essentials.

### **Non-drivers**

Some people do not own a car because they can not drive one. They may have no driving licence, be disabled, too young, too old or have a long-term illness. None of these are trivial reasons or small groups, but the pensioners are the largest category in rural areas. Those over 65 with no access at all to a vehicle in 1990 ranged from 33% of the OAPs in Nottinghamshire to 63% in Suffolk<sup>19</sup>. The overlap between age, driving ability and income is not well documented, so the reasons for the variation are not clear. However, even if half of rural pensioners are without access to a car, at all times, this represents a substantial group with limited travel opportunities. Many people move into the countryside when they retire, so this will be a continuing problem, as they become older and unable to drive.

In rural areas, 14% of adults in 1990 had no driving licence and three out of four of these were women<sup>20</sup>. A final group of rural dwellers have limited travel opportunities: the second adult in a one-car family. This group is mainly women at home, with or without children, who are left with no private transport if the husband takes the car to work. If they become more affluent, they are likely to want a second car. Some of these women may be those without a driving licence, but again, the overlap is not known.

For all these households, there may be limited opportunities to change their methods of travelling, in the short or even quite long-term. Low income, infirmity and old age are not going to suddenly disappear. Youth and, for the lucky ones, dependence on family members as chauffeurs, lasts until the age of 17 and even the right to drive might not bring access to a vehicle. Meanwhile, young people are confined to reduced educational and leisure opportunities as a result of limited transport choices. This produces frustration and limited aspirations<sup>21</sup>.

To summarise, there is a wide range of households in rural areas who have limited travel choices either because they have no access to a car or because they use the car they have as little as possible. They come from the following overlapping, but not identical, groups of households:

- 22% with no cars (in comparison with 34% in rest of the country areas);
- 33%, or more, on a low income and in receipt of a means-tested

---

benefit;

- 40% who are retired, unemployed or unoccupied (for instance disabled, single-parents, those with long-term illnesses).

In addition, there are individuals with limited travel choices, who come from an even wider range of income groups:

- 14% of rural adults with no driving licence;
- young people who are capable of independent travel, but depend on public transport or family members to be the chauffeur;
- an adult at home when the only car is elsewhere (typically with a man at work).

For these reasons, rural travel deprivation can spread high up the income scale. It is the problem of a poverty of travel options rather than necessarily of low-income. This does not automatically make them deprived, if they have adequate access through other means of transport to the facilities that are not available locally.

### **Bus services**

There is no clear definition of what constitutes an adequate level of bus service, either in terms of frequency, operating hours, route, links with facilities or accessibility of the bus stop to a proportion of the population.

Rural bus services have declined significantly both before and since deregulation. The number of bus kilometres operated has been cut by 25% and the number of passengers has fallen by 75% over the 1950-1990 period<sup>22</sup>. Bus deregulation has produced mixed results in rural areas with a trend towards more services in major rural settlements, but a decline in more sparsely populated areas. In one study, subsidies for rural bus networks fell in all four counties (11-32% in real terms)<sup>23</sup>.

In England, the responsibility for securing 'socially necessary' but non-commercial transport services rests with the appropriate local authority. A survey of bus services to rural settlements in England, with a population of up to 20,000 judged the frequency and extent of the bus service resulted in two main classification groups<sup>24</sup>:

- subsistence service level: any parish with fewer than four return journeys a day and without an evening or Sunday service is below this level;
- reasonable service level: an example is a parish with an hourly service and one evening and two Sunday return journeys.

By this definition, 64% of rural settlements in England did not have a reasonable level of bus service in 1997 (Table 2). There was a positive correlation between settlement size and bus service and between the level of spending and service level: the bigger the population, the greater the spend and the better the level of service.



**Table 2**  
**Bus services in rural settlements, England 1997**

Bus service level	Settlements	Percentage	Average per capita expenditure by local authority*
Below subsistence	767	18	-
Subsistence	1,894	46	£0.70 - £2.36
Reasonable	665	16	£4.01 - £5.66
High service	814	20	£7.31 - £8.96
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,140</b>	<b>100</b>	-

\* for sub-groups in each service level, based on county population

Source: TAS pp36, 39

The proportion of pensioners and households without a car in the settlement increased with the level of service, but only by a small amount:

- at subsistence level, there were 32% of pensioner and 11% of all households with no car;
- at reasonable level, there were 35% of pensioner and 14% of all households with no car.

It is not known to what extent the services have followed the people and the people moved to the services.

When the study area has a smaller population (up to 10,000 people), the number of rural parishes with no bus service of any kind increased by 8% between 1991-1997, at which point, 75% of parishes recorded no daily bus service<sup>25</sup>. This survey demonstrates a worse situation than that in Table 4, partly because all services decline as population density falls. However, both studies demonstrate that bus provision is low in rural areas.

In the past two decades, national bus fares have risen by 60% above inflation, whereas overall car costs are 6.5% below inflation<sup>26</sup>. This will have penalised public transport users, helped those on low-incomes who wish to own a car and generally encouraged car usage. The bus is the public transport safety net as it is mainly used by rural residents who have no other source of transport. There is a social stigma attached that will need to be overcome if bus usage is to grow – many people who deride the service, never actually use it<sup>27</sup>.

Rural bus services are inadequate, by any definition, with up to 75% of settlements not even having a daily bus service. Bus usage has declined despite more people living in rural villages and less facilities being available locally. Logically, both of these trends should have increased bus patronage. The real increase in bus prices will have been a contributory factor to a decline in their use, but the present provision is still depressingly low. At the moment, the trend is of a decline in both the

local facilities and the public transport access, indicating that travel deprivation is worsening each year.

Travel poverty exists when an individual does not have access to an adequate range of services. All of the components of this definition are problematic, but this does not alter the real problem that exists.

## Travel budgets

The amount spent on travel and the benefit obtained from this expenditure varies with income, population density and the provision of services, and car ownership. On average, the poorest households spend less, as a proportion of the weekly budget than other households: 10% instead of 17% (Table 3). This is only because so few of them have cars. For those that have cars, the weekly expenditure is a substantial proportion of the budget. The tiny sums spent on buses are of greater relevance to the poor, though they are less money.

**Table 3**  
Expenditure on travel, by income, UK 1995-1996 (% of weekly budget)

	30% of households with the lowest incomes	Other 70% of households	Average
	£	£	£
Motoring*	7.6	15.0	12.8
Fares & other travel**	2.4	2.0	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>

\* includes the cost of purchase, insurance, repairs, etc

\*\* includes train and air travel

Source: FES p16-17

Many households have more than one car or van. In 1995-1996, all motoring expenditure (including purchase) for households with only one car/van the cost was £39 a week<sup>28</sup>. The problems of car ownership for poorer people is demonstrated by the 30% of the households with the lowest incomes in the whole country who had an average income of £120<sup>29</sup>. For them, £39 would have been a third of all expenditure – a huge burden. Owning a car is expensive and will always be beyond the reach of most poor families, wherever they live. The fixed costs of purchase, insurance and repair are not location dependent, so the bulk of expenditure goes on keeping the car on the road, fuel costs are about a third of the whole and less for those on a low-income. For poor households, the main problem is the need to own a car in order to travel at all – the distance travelled is already low.

The average car driver spends a similar amount on motoring, whether living in a rural area or the rest of the country (Table 4). This is not surprising, as average incomes are similar. The important difference is in

the proportion of households that report these expenditures. In rural areas, 80% report motoring expenditure and 24% bus and coach. This demonstrates the minimal overlap: households with cars rarely use the bus<sup>30</sup> and some people will have reported no expenditure on travel in the week. In other areas, there are both fewer motorists and more people using public transport.

**Table 4**  
Weekly travel expenditure per household, by area, UK 1994-1995

	Rural (24% of households)		Rest (76% of households)	
	households reporting expenditure	expenditure per using household	households reporting expenditure	expenditure per using household
All motoring	80%	£51	70%	£50
Petrol, diesel & motor oils	71%	£18	61%	£16
Train and tube	8%	£10	13%	£9
Bus and coach	24%	£3.40	39%	£3.80

Source: FES, special tables

The real difference occurs in the amount spent by rich and poor. At the same population density – whether rural or elsewhere – rich car owners drive twice the distance travelled by the poor<sup>31</sup>. As income is strongly correlated with socio-economic activity, the differences between the groups in Table 5 identify some of the variation, although within each group, for instance pensioners, there is a wide range of incomes<sup>32</sup>. It is only the part-time employed who spend less on petrol in rural areas, perhaps because they have local jobs – it is not worth travelling far for part-time work.

**Table 5**  
Reported household expenditure on fuel, by area and socio-economic group, UK 1994-1995

	Rural		Rest		Extra rural expenditure
	households	weekly expenditure	households	weekly expenditure	
Full-time employed	49%	£19.70	55%	£18.00	+9%
Self-employed	16%	£21.66	10%	£20.18	+7%
Part-time employed	5%	£12.78	5%	£15.60	-12%
Unemployed	3%	£16.97	4%	£14.70	+15%
Unoccupied*	9%	£16.71	11%	£13.13	+27%
Retired	18%	£11.20	15%	£9.78	+15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>£17.79</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>£16.18</b>	<b>+10%</b>

\* unoccupied includes those not registered as unemployed, for instance the disabled and long-term sick.

Source: based on FES, special tables

---

At any income level, rural motorists drive further. Part of this is explained by extra fuel expenditure (Table 5) and partly because they can use the car with greater efficiency, as a result of lower traffic congestion and faster speed limits<sup>33</sup>. Thus, rural residents are more likely to own a car and they travel further in that car. This picture is confirmed across all forms of travel, with the average rural resident travelling 14,620 kms (9,140 miles) in comparison with 9,830 kms (6,145 miles) for residents in the rest of the country<sup>34</sup>.

The effect of travel poverty is limited access to facilities. This cannot be clearly identified from present data, but includes:

- the average rural household spends more on travel than a family on the same income but in the rest of the country, because more rural households own a car and spend an average of 10% a week more on fuel;
- poor rural households travel about half the distance of better-off rural families;
- non-car-owning rural residents went to only a third of the places visited by car owners in rural Oxfordshire<sup>35</sup>;
- remote rural households in Norfolk without access to a car were three time less likely to visit their GP, given similar levels of need, than urban households with cars<sup>36</sup>;
- current national usage indicates that rural residents use the bus on average less than once a week, this is probably results from a quarter of the population using the bus four times a week<sup>37</sup>.

## SOLUTIONS

The practical situation has been described and now the policy opportunities can be explored. Behind all the policies proposed here there is the need to use energy more efficiently: to get to the facilities we want, whilst causing less pollution. This involves two types of changes to our present way of living:

- behavioural – choosing to walk to the shops instead of getting into the car; car sharing. In the longer-term, this could include moving to be nearer to facilities and less dependent on the car. These changes do not require any investment and result in lower running costs. However, they are easily reversed (it is raining), so cannot be guaranteed. These actions always reduce energy consumption;
- capital investment to achieve greater efficiency – this will save on running costs and is irreversible. There is no need to change behaviour, just purchase and drive in a more efficient car which uses less fuel to do 1000 km (or more mpg). This requires investment, often substantial sums and will result in energy savings, provided behaviour stays the same and the amount of travel does not increase.

The two main aspects of sustainability – social and environmental benefits – are both attained through using energy more efficiently. The more efficient use of energy can be achieved in a variety of ways, but, in this context, the most equitable ways involve reducing car dependency and improving public transport and facilities. The roles of capital and price rises are crucial in this debate and the concept of market transformation explains the benefits of a strategic approach. Both are described below to provide a theoretical structure to the analysis.

### **The role of capital and pricing**

There are analogies between the new concerns about social equity and travel and the much older debate on the problems of the fuel poor. The solutions to fuel poverty are clearly understood to depend upon capital investment in the energy efficiency of the housing stock, so that the most disadvantaged can have affordable warmth. Increasing the price of fuel, through VAT or otherwise, results in greater deprivation for those already cold and only limited investment in insulation and more efficient appliances by the better-off households. Direct capital investment is a quicker route to energy efficiency improvements in the homes of low-income households than price rises. The policy dilemma is how to raise the capital to invest without disadvantaging the poor.

For rural households who suffer from travel deprivation, the problem is compounded. With heating the house, it is possible to lower the thermostat by 1°C, so that there is still some heating, but less. With a journey to work or to school, it is difficult to reduce an 18 km trip to a 17

km journey: the householder has no choice but to obtain the extra costs from another part of the household budget. For the poor, this is likely to mean further hardship, as the budget is already tight, but the type of hardship may be difficult to identify.

In the transport debate, the price mechanism is seen as the primary lever to get people to change their present habits, out of cars, travelling by other methods and purchasing more efficient vehicles. The other side of the equation, the role of capital has received less attention. This is not a debate solely, or even primarily, about more efficient cars. These are an important component of greener travel patterns, but they are of less value than the environmental gains available from switching between different forms of travel. The ideal, from an efficiency perspective, is to enable people to obtain access to the services that they need for as little energy and pollution as possible. If 30 children go to school by bus, the carbon dioxide emissions could easily be reduced to a sixth of that created if they had individually gone with a parent in the family car<sup>38</sup>. The complexity comes from the switch that is implied from private to public capital investment.

In the past, there has been a great deal of public investment focused on new and improved roads – a now devalued policy. This enabled people to go further and faster in their private cars and discouraged the use of rural buses (Table 6). The new focus needs to be on how to use this public investment to benefit all households and reduce the need to travel through better local facilities and to improve public transport.

**Table 6**  
**Effect of past policies on travel and rural households**

	<b>Non-car household</b>	<b>Car-owning household</b>
<b>Prices and running costs</b>	bus deregulation and reduced local authority support resulted in bus fares increasing faster than inflation or petrol prices	relatively lower cost of petrol
<b>Capital expenditure</b>	reduced public support for bus services and local facilities	public investment in better road network, private investment in more cars

The Institute of Fiscal Studies has modelled the likely effect of taxes on private motoring and confirms that increasing the duty on petrol and diesel hits low-income households in rural areas the hardest<sup>39</sup>. The greatest response in terms of switching modes of transport or reducing the amount travelled comes from the poorest car-owners in urban areas, demonstrating the wider choice of travel options they have available. The lowest response is from rich car-owners in rural areas and households with second cars. For them, the price rise is more readily absorbed into the household budget and there is less need to adjust the family lifestyle. Company car drivers are similarly cushioned. Therefore, the groups responsible for a large

proportion of rural travel and, undoubtedly, much of the growth, respond the least to increased taxation of private motoring. This represents another of the policy conundrums: a large increase in hardship for the rural poor is offset by a small response from the rich, but the latter has a greater environmental benefit, because they already drive further.

Poorer households are more likely than richer households to change to bus use from a car, if the price of petrol rises<sup>40</sup>, and this response is independent of population density. The effect is enhanced if public transport fares are reduced at the same time. For those in rural areas who do not own a car, these price rises make car-ownership even more remote. Some car owners will cease to own a car, perhaps moving to more urban localities, in order to have access to adequate public transport.

The effect of fuel price rises on travel demand is a limited reduction from the rich and greater hardship for the poor. The benefits, in terms of greater energy efficiency, occur slowly and in the long term, if at all. However, at the moment, oil prices are dropping so that the increase fuel taxes could be offset at the pump and result in no overall price rise. This would provide a short-term window of opportunity – increased taxes could raise the money without harming the poor. The opportunity may only exist for a couple of years, so the short-term objective must be to undertake capital investment in better facilities and public transport and to lessen the need to travel, for everyone, and to make travel without a car more feasible.

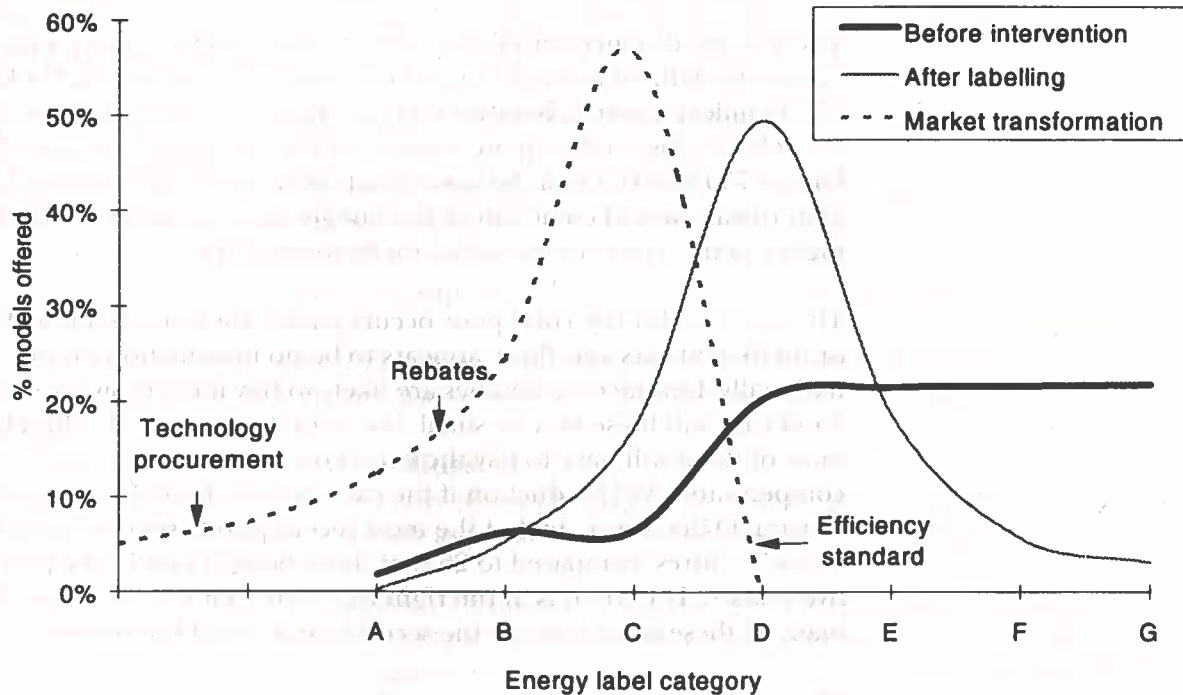
## **Market transformation**

The limited benefits that may be achieved by pricing policies means that there has to be a greater emphasis on capital investment programmes. Separate policies can interact positively to achieve a synergy, known in studies of domestic appliances as market transformation. This is the process by which a significant and permanent improvement in the efficiency of products sold can be brought about, more quickly than would have happened without intervention (DECADE 1997). For transport, this may have to be rephrased in terms of services obtained.

Market transformation takes a long-term view (typically 10-15 years). The first requirement is a reproducible measure of consumption and efficiency, for instance an energy label on an individual piece of equipment or an energy audit of the whole house. Once efficiency can be measured, it can be monitored and influenced. With energy labels, the most efficient models are A rated – so the aim of policy over time, as depicted schematically in Figure 1, is to move the distribution of models sold further to the left. The components of such a strategy include labels, education, procurement, rebates, efficiency standards and regulation.

A market transformation strategy for transport, including both incentives and standards, is a new concept, although there have been approximations for cars alone. It cannot be developed fully here, but is introduced to indicate the way in which a variety of policy initiatives can interact beneficially. More importantly, there is often a necessary policy sequence; some actions are prerequisites for other interventions. Any programme developed will be more complex than that required for

**Figure 1**  
**Three stages in transforming the market**



domestic appliance markets since it should include the distinct but inter-dependent sectors of the provision of facilities and transport methods.

In the above diagram, the energy categories could be based on household or village consumption. The mere act of coding provides a spur for discussion and a prompt for action, particularly if supported by education and advice. The procurement, or introduction, of new facilities such as a new shop or bus service, would encourage people towards either less travel or more efficient travel. Financial incentives in the form of reduced council tax for the shop or bus passes would rebate the initial costs and enhance demand, so that more people have more efficient travel patterns. Eventually, there are opportunities to introduce minimum standards of efficiency and penalise the most polluting equipment or behaviour. This could be a requirement to phase out all vehicles that cannot achieve a certain minimal emission standard at the MOT or preventing engine-idling in stationary vehicles.

There are considerable benefits to be achieved by a long-term perspective and planned sequence of policies. Some of the components are considered below, in relation to the major objectives, but the first impact comes from the last budget.

**Policy developments –  
the March 1998  
Budget**

In the March 1998, the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced a budget which had a useful and appropriate philosophy for rural transport: reduce the cost of keeping a car on the road, increase the cost of driving it around and use the revenue for more public transport. He lowered the rate of vehicle excise duty (VED) by £1 a week for small, efficient cars (probably



one category, not two separate ones), whilst increasing the cost of petrol. The VED reduction will be sufficient to offset the extra cost of about 20 litres of petrol per week. For a small car this is equivalent to a distance of 300 km (190 miles), so that any of these households can travel 15,600 km a year, (9,750 miles) without any cost penalties.

The average distance travelled by drivers with cars less than 1.4 litres (normally defined as small) in an Oxfordshire survey was 12,374 kms (7,734 miles) a year<sup>41</sup>. Because there is often more than one driver per household, this would equate roughly to the household average of 15,600 kms (9,750 miles) a year. So households with small, efficient cars in Oxfordshire would come out of the budget as approximately equal: higher petrol costs compensated for by lower VED.

The problem for the rural poor occurs mainly for households with large or inefficient cars and there appears to be no information on this nationally. Low-income families are likely to buy inexpensive, second-hand cars and these may be small, but not efficient as well. Therefore, most of them will have to pay the extra cost on petrol, with no compensatory VED reduction if the car has to be both small and efficient. In rural Oxfordshire, half of the most recent purchases of new cars were below 1.4 litres, compared to 26% of those bought new in the preceding five years<sup>42</sup>. The trend is in the right direction, but it is probable that many of these small cars are the second car in rural households.

One of the outcomes of increasing the tax on fuel is to raise a lot of money (Table 7). The Chancellor announced in the budget that an additional £50 million will be given each year to rural transport investment initiatives for the next three years. For non car-owners, this is the most important impact of the budget. The £50 million is constant over these three years and declines from 5% to just over 1% of the amount being raised in taxes – a small, but useful step towards better rural public transport. If matched by other investment, real improvements could be seen.

**Table 7**  
**Revenue yields from fuel tax escalator**

	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
Increase in road fuel duties by 6% raises an additional (£m)	1,075	2,200	3,420

*Source: Hansard, WA, 17.2.98, col 529*

The funding of rural public transport requires a combination of capital expenditure and support for running costs. The initiatives could be new, innovative community transport schemes that require a vehicle, or subsidies for 'socially necessary' bus services, continuing indefinitely. One estimate is that an additional £50 million would provide 'reasonable' bus services (Table 2) in all rural parishes<sup>43</sup>. This is a service that operates seven days a week and hourly at peak times – an important improvement,

---

but it may be insufficient to cause a major shift to buses. Whatever the solutions, there appears to be adequate funds available from the additional fuel taxes to initiate new investment programmes.

## **Objectives and policy directions**

As introduced at the beginning, the policy opportunities exist in relation to:

- adequate local facilities for everyone, to reduce the need to travel;
- the level of public transport, where travel is required, as this is beneficial on both equity and environmental grounds;
- financial support for individuals to ensure they have access to facilities;
- further restraint for car usage, whilst protecting the poor, to encourage greater use of both local facilities and public transport.

### **More facilities**

The objective should be to provide a wide range of facilities in the village, or as locally as possible, and to increase this provision over time.

There is no definition of what is perceived as an adequate range of services as the 21st century approaches, and a consensus needs to be developed. The minimum might include, for instance, the doctor, chemist, dentist, local library, bank, post office, a few shops and Job Centre. Dialogues within the village and between the village and the local authority would identify the need for new facilities and the ways these can be supported. Some initiatives will be sponsored by the village community, some will need local authority support. These could extend mobile services, like the library, to banks, doctors and Job Centres. In one community in Oxfordshire, there was concern about the proposed closure of the local shop, so the better-off residents have bought the premises and are able to offer a lease at lower rental. Does this demonstrate the birth of a new co-operative movement?

All opportunities should be taken to reverse the decline in rural amenities, for instance by requiring proposals for rationalising medical and educational facilities to include statements of the effects on private travel. The centralisation of services externalises the cost of transport: it makes the users pay for access to the facility from their private resources. With certain essential services, like health and education, public expenditure should continue to include the cost of keeping the service nearer to the people.

An increase in the price of petrol will make the provision of some services more expensive, particularly those provided in the home by health and social services. For this and similar reasons, support funding for the service provider needs to have a rural component, recognising that the provision, or retention, of local amenities provides local employment.

### **Better bus services**

The objective is to improve bus services to surrounding areas, so that all appropriate facilities are easily accessible by public transport. The level of

---

service should improve annually.

An adequate service would need to be defined, but a daily bus service would appear to be a minimum – perhaps achieved through the £50 million from the budget. In the longer-term perhaps the aim could be for an hourly daytime service to most of the large rural settlements, with adequate services in the evening and at weekends. Evening and Sunday services may be less economic, but necessary to limit the need for a car. Positive examples from around the country have demonstrated that new services have attracted a broad base of clients.

Local authorities already have discretionary powers, under the 1985 Transport Act, to support 'socially necessary' public transport. A revised circular, under this Act, could define adequate access, including what 'access' to a bus service might mean – how far to the nearest bus stop, for what proportion of the population. This is not defined at present. To encourage people back onto public transport:

- bus fares should go up less than petrol prices;
- bus routes should be protected from sudden change, as they are with train services – continuity is needed to build up trust and reliance;
- the image of bus travel needs to be revitalised, to overcome any present social stigma, through more modern equipment, better integration of routes, reliable timetables that are widely available and publicised and punctual buses.

The local authorities do not have the powers to implement some of these measures, so there needs to be a clarification of the roles of central and local government, together with appropriate budgets. For instance, over the period 1985-1986 to 1993-1995 bus fares increased nearly three times faster than petrol prices. This sends entirely the wrong message to everyone and will have increased the trend towards car usage. The ongoing extension of the fuel duty rebate<sup>44</sup> in the budget will help, but there needs to be a positive policy decision to help local authorities ensure that bus fares increase by less than the rate of inflation. Part of the debate about rural bus services is the balance between capital investment and revenue support. The latter may be needed for several years, depending on other policies.

Even where a bus service is provided, it may be some distance away from the house. An acceptable distance to the bus service will be dependent upon the personal circumstances of the individual, but perhaps the aim should be for most people to live within 0.5 km. Beyond this distance, alternative forms of transport should be available (for instance, dial-a-taxi) and these should complement existing services rather than compete with them.

Increasing the attractiveness of buses is a major objective, to overcome the stigma that appears to be associated with them. A better service, new routes, modern image and reduced fares will encourage greater use, not just by those who are poor or cannot drive, but also by those who have a car. The more the public transport is used, the lower the subsidy

---

required.

Buses are more energy efficient if well used, with good occupancy levels. A nearly empty bus is of little benefit and certainly not to the environment.

### **Support for individuals**

The objective is to provide financial support for low-income households in rural areas who are not able to afford adequate access at the moment and to ensure that they are protected from the harmful impact of future policies. Most of these initiatives are targeted on those who are in receipt of a means-tested benefit – the passport benefits, as they are called [ECU1]<sup>5</sup>. There may also need to be partial support for pensioners. These are the criteria adopted for the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme, to ensure that the homes of these families are improved with insulation measures at no expense to the householder or with a grant.

The cost of using the bus is seen as expensive by some, or even most, low-income households in rural areas. A rural travel card could be provided that supported the cost of travel for benefit recipients to an area which encompassed an accepted range of venues. This could be at the concessionary rate of, say, £3.50 per week, based on the present level of expenditure by bus users (Table 4). Many low-income householders are suffering from restricted travel opportunities and would welcome the opportunity to travel more frequently and widely.

The March 1998 budget has provided a balance between additional and lower costs for those that drive less than 15,600 kms (9,750 miles) a year in a small, efficient car. In future, any extra cost of petrol is unlikely to be offset by further reductions in VED, so the penalties will be more severe. If the 6% increase in road fuel tax continues for six successive years, the effect on the poorest tenth of the car-owning population would be a cost of living increase of 2.25%, while it would be less than 1% for the richest tenth of car-owners<sup>45</sup>. This could be reflected in additional increases in benefit levels. The extra money could be paid to all claimants in rural areas, based on postcodes, for administrative simplicity, to enable non-car owners to travel more and reduce their isolation.

For a low-income car owner who has a large or inefficient car, there could be a scheme to enable them to trade-in their present car and get a vehicle that qualifies for lower VED. The precedent is the Fridgesavers scheme run by the Energy Saving Trust (EST). This enables households in receipt of a means-tested benefit to trade-in an inefficient, but working, refrigerator and obtain a new, efficient one for £25. This is cost-effective within the criteria set by the Regulator of the electricity industry and funded through a levy on all domestic electricity prices. Without this support, the low-income household would have continued to cause excess pollution both from the existing refrigerator and from any second-hand replacement. The EST has a transport programme.

More research into the general money problems faced by poorer rural families in order to own a car would highlight what other policies would be appropriate. It could be that little can be done to reduce the cost of owning the car, nor to remove the need for one in the short-term, and that any support should relate to these other expenditures, for instance

---

housing cost. It might be appropriate to assess housing benefit differently for most rural families – to reflect their geographical isolation and travel needs. At the moment, the amount of money spent by rural low-income householders on car ownership seems surprisingly high. This is not well documented, but could be at least £30 a week out of a total expenditure of £120. This compares with the £3.50 per week spent by the quarter of the population using the bus in rural areas. The latter expenditure seems remarkably low.

Households in fuel poverty typically exhibit one of two expenditure patterns. Families will spend a lot on heating, to keep the children warm, despite the risk of debt. Whereas pensioners will not spend and stay cold, because of the fear of debt. There may be a similar divergence for rural households. Some families have decided that the car is a necessity, to get to school or to work and will suffer other budget penalties. Others do not own a car and find bus travel expensive or inconvenient, so that they do not have access even to essential facilities.

With additional support for individuals, there will be increased mobility from people who would normally have to stay indoors, but this proportion is still an important component of greater sustainability. This is the equivalent of people in fuel poverty choosing to have warmer homes after insulation, rather than achieving the maximum reduction in fuel bills. Too little is known about the deprivation being experienced by disadvantaged rural households at the moment to quantify the effect and benefits of these proposed policies.

### **Restraining car use**

The objective is to reduce the need for car owners to get into their cars therefore to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emissions from private car use in rural areas in absolute terms each year, despite increasing numbers of households.

As described above, the price mechanism may have a limited effect on the most affluent rural households, who usually drive the most. The additional provision of facilities and bus services may be sufficient to entice some people out of the car and into local amenities, but these policies will need to be reinforced to have the maximum effect. The number of short journeys by car has been increasing and car journeys of less than 2 miles produced 13% of the carbon dioxide emissions in a study of Oxfordshire residents<sup>46</sup>, demonstrating the gains for climate change – and health – if people were to transfer to foot or bike. The policies that would achieve this are not easy to identify, though a change in social perceptions and a desire to be fitter could be the most effective. Education campaigns should be the first approach. A wider range of policies would improve the environment and encourage less car use, for instance safe cycle routes (to shops and schools), speed limits on certain country roads so that walkers and cyclists feel less vulnerable. The choice will depend upon the locality and local preferences.

Where the household has a company car the distance travelled is also substantial: in two Oxfordshire villages, 14% of the drivers had company cars and drove 30% of the distance<sup>47</sup>. National policies to reduce the financial benefits for individuals with company cars should be changing

---

this. Many drivers in this survey – whether with company cars or not – stated that they would like to reduce the amount of driving they do, to reduce the stress and spend more time at home<sup>48</sup>. There is no doubt, though, that for many people adapting their lifestyle to be less car dependent is not going to be easy and in a lot of cases is not yet seen as necessary. However, even small changes in the amount driven will be beneficial to the environment – reducing the rate of growth is the first step to reversing the trend. The growing recognition of the health impacts of car use will encourage this adaptation, because of concern about asthma and urban pollution, individual ill health from the lack of physical fitness and the long-term effects of climate change.

## **The strategy**

The objective is for local authorities to be given the powers and responsibility to implement a strategy for their region that reduces carbon dioxide emissions from travel each year.

The need for guaranteed emission reductions has been clearer since Kyoto. There are roles for both central and local government and occasionally the European Commission – in defining the policy agenda. The focus here is on local authorities as they are being given greater responsibility for many areas of policy, for instance under the Home Energy Conservation Act they are required to audit the housing stock and identify ways to save 30% of energy. The local authorities have powers which need to be used more rigorously in rural areas to define, monitor and target transport policy. The Road Traffic Reduction Act requires them to assess traffic levels and plan for reduction targets set locally not nationally.

As demonstrated with the market transformation strategy, the first stage is to have a method of grading for energy efficiency. The travel emission profiles pilot<sup>49</sup> provided a way of auditing the carbon dioxide and other emissions from household car use over a year, based on a simple questionnaire that would take about 20 minutes to complete. These audits provide householders with feedback on the environmental impact that they are having and could be a powerful way of empowering individuals. Householders were asked about the changes they would like to make in the next year and the appropriate information could be sent to help achieve these aims. A link with the annual MOT would provide the opportunity for advice. This, or a similar approach, needs to be extended beyond car drivers to all household travel and to be incorporated into Local Transport Plans<sup>50</sup>.

If Local Transport Plans cover a period of about five years, they would provide the foundation for strategic plans that could be effective. The funding, through these plans, would enable the local authorities to identify which schemes would be appropriate to achieve a specified reduction in traffic in their area. They know the local conditions and are already involved in transport planning. The objectives would need to be clearly defined as environmental, in particular a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions and other greenhouse gases. Other indicators could include safer roads and speed limits, the better provision of routes for cycling and walking and other wider environmental objectives.

---

There is a need for careful balancing between the provision of new facilities, of community transport initiatives and of better public transport. All of these interact with each other and a failure to see the linkages could result in mis-spent public money.

A strategic approach is needed to ensure that policies to increase facilities locally are supported, but not challenged, by new transport initiatives. For instance:

- the provision of new facilities and services have to be financially supported until they have a certain share of the market;
- education on the environmental impacts of present lifestyles is needed to inform people of the impact of their actions, particularly on future generations, and of the individual health improvements that come from walking and cycling;
- there may have to be regulation to remove the most polluting forms of transport and methods of providing access;
- the real benefit of a strategy is to make clear to all users and providers the direction of change and its timescale.

## CONCLUSIONS

The debate on integrated transport is based on the need to switch from the car to other forms of transport. In rural areas, the debate needs to be wide enough to incorporate land use planning and recognise that one way to make essential facilities more accessible is to make them more widely available.

The solutions to the problem of rural travel poverty involve both running costs and capital expenditure (Table 8). The aim of all policy should be to encourage the provision of good rural facilities, in order to reduce the need to travel, and improve bus services to the remaining amenities. This will benefit all members of the community, whether they own a car or not, whether they are on a low-income or not. As these services improve and as the price of petrol increases, more households will be encouraged to reduce their car usage.

---

**Table 8**  
**Future policy to reduce rural travel poverty**

	<b>Non-car household</b>	<b>Car-owning household</b>
<b>Running costs</b>	keep bus fare increases below the rate of inflation	means-tested benefit levels increased to compensate for fuel tax increases
	rural travel passes for claimants to travel to a minimum range of facilities, for about £3.50 per week	
<b>Capital expenditure</b>	investment in local facilities and bus services	enable the purchaser / exchange to small, efficient cars for claimants, where bus services are inadequate

---

The money raised from the fuel tax escalator means that the money is being raised for innovative new investments and to provide revenue support for public transport. There is a relatively short timescale before real fuel price rises cause considerable hardship for the rural poor who own cars. The need, therefore, is to invest this money as soon as possible and start reversing car-dependency in rural areas.

As rural areas have an increasing population, it should be possible to generate a positive cycle of new demands quite quickly: provide better local



facilities and more public transport and reduce car usage. This will increase the use of local services, reduce the need for subsidies on buses and bring lower prices in the shops. The cumulative impact would be to reduce travel deprivation by providing appropriate and affordable access to adequate facilities. This would have both environmental and social benefits and provide a basis for an equitable rural transport policy.

## REFERENCES

Anable, J, B Boardman and A Root (1997), *Travel Emission Profiles*, Environmental Change Unit, University of Oxford

Astrop, A (1993), *The trend in rural bus services since deregulation*. Transport Research Laboratory Project Report 21, Crowthorne

Blow, L and I.Crawford (1997), *The distributional effects of taxes on private motoring*. Institute for Fiscal Studies. Commentary 65, London

Boardman, B (1991), *Fuel poverty: from cold homes to affordable warmth*, Belhaven/Wiley

Champion, T, D Atkins, M Coombes and S Fotheringham (1998), *Urban Exodus*, a report for CPRE, London

Cloke, P, P Milbourne and C Thomas (1994), *Lifestyles in rural England*, a research report to the Department of the Environment, the Economic and Social Research Council and the Rural Development Commission. Rural Development Commission, Salisbury

Cloke, P, M Goodwin and P Milbourne (1997), *Rural Wales: Community and marginalization*. University of Wales Press, Cardiff

DETR (1997), *National Road Traffic Forecasts*, Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Stationery Office

DoT 1995, *National Travel Survey: 1992/94*. Transport Statistics Report, Department of Transport, Stationery Office

DoT 1996, *Transport Statistics Great Britain*, 1996 edition. Department of Transport Stationery Office

EHCS (1996), *English House Condition Survey 1991 – Energy Report*, Department of the Environment, Stationery Office

FES (produced annually), *Family Expenditure Survey*, Office of National Statistics, The Stationery Office

FES special extracts from Central Statistical Office, Crown Copyright 1996

Key Statistics (1997), *1991 Census, Key Statistics for Urban and Rural Areas, Great Britain*, Office for National Statistics, Stationery Office

Macintyre, S et al (1993). *Area, class and health: should we be focusing on places or people?* J. Soc Pol 22/2, pp213-234

---

RDC (1992), *1991 survey of rural services*. Rural Development Commission, Salisbury

RDC (1993), *Rural Transport: Problems and Needs*, Rural Development Commission, Salisbury

RDC (1998), *1997 survey of rural services*. Rural Development Commission, Salisbury

RCEP (1994), *Transport and the environment*. Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, 18th report. Cm 2674, Stationery Office

RCEP (1997), *Transport and the environment – developments since 1994*. Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, 20th report. Cm 3752, Stationery Office

Root, A, B Boardman and W Fielding (1996a), *Rural Travel and Transport Corridors*, SMART project – interim report, Environmental Change Unit, University of Oxford, Oxford

Root, A, B Boardman and W Fielding (1996b), *The Costs of Rural Travel*, SMART project – final report, Environmental Change Unit, University of Oxford, Oxford

Stokes, G (1995), *Rural transport policy in the 1990s*. Institution of Civil Engineers, Transport Journal, London

TAS (1997), *Bus services for rural communities: an audit of villages in England*. The TAS Partnership, Preston, Lancashire

## FOOTNOTES

1. DETR (1997), Table 3.
2. The census study is the most restrictive and includes 10% of the population, but 95% of the land as rural in Great Britain (Key statistics 1997). This distinction between rural and urban could result in some villages being defined as having an urban core and rural periphery, which is administratively inconvenient. Settlements or villages of up to 3,000 are used by the National Travel Survey, which covers 13.5% of the population (DoT 1995, p93). The English House Condition Survey defines the location of dwellings as city centre, urban, suburban residential, rural residential, village centre, rural isolated, with 22% of households in the last three categories (EHCS 1996). The Rural Development Commission uses settlements of up to 10,000 (RDC 1992) and this covers 25% of households. The TAS (1997) analysis of rural bus services takes settlements up to 20,000, which covers 33% of the population of England.
3. RCEP (1997), para 7.7 – rural defined as the 150 most rural local authority districts/parishes.
4. Where 24% of the population is defined as rural – special extract from Family Expenditure Survey.
5. Income support, family credit, housing benefit, council tax benefit are means-tested; attendance and disability living allowances depend upon a combination of income and other parameters.
6. Cloke *et al* (1994) p94
7. Special extract from the FES: unoccupied households are not registered as unemployed, eg disabled, long-term ill, single parents.
8. Cloke *et al* (1994) p70
9. Champion *et al* (1998), p29
10. RDC (1998), pp ii,7,12,45,70
11. Cloke *et al* (1994), p134
12. Macintyre, *et al* (1993)
13. Both quotes from Cloke *et al* (1994), p143
14. Root *et al* (1996b), p23. OAPs were not included in the survey
15. Cloke *et al* (1994), p123

16. Unpublished research by Susan Bennett, for SMART study, reported in Root *et al* 1996 (a and b)
17. Blow and Crawford (1997), p32
18. FES 1992/94
19. Cloke *et al* (1994), p122
20. Cloke *et al* (1994), pp118, 120
21. Root *et al* (1996a), Chapter 8
22. RDC (1993)
23. Astrop (1993)
24. TAS (1997), pp9, 30, 36. This definition includes 33% of the English population.
25. RDC (1998), p90. The average parish has 1,067 people and no parish over 10,000 inhabitants is included in the survey.
26. Hansard 3 March 1998, Oral Answers, col 853
27. Root *et al* (1996b), p46
28. FES 1995-6, p148
29. FES 1995-6, p14
30. This finding is supported by work in Oxfordshire – few bus users had a choice of any other mode Root *et al* (1996b).
31. Blow and Crawford (1997), p43
32. The data refer to reported expenditure on petrol, diesel and motor oils – this is reported by slightly less households than all car-owners, as not everyone buys fuel each week.
33. DETR pers comm. Driving in urban areas results in about 76% of the distance, per litre of petrol, in comparison with the greater speed on rural roads.
34. Stokes (1995)
35. Root *et al* (1996b), pi
36. Macintyre (1993)
37. DoT (1995), pp28-9
38. For every 100 units of carbon dioxide emitted by a pre-1993 car per kilometre, a midi-bus emits 256. Although these are for urban

---

travel, they are used for this rural example. Transport Statistics Great Britain 1996, p41/DOT 1996

39. Blow and Crawford (1997), p39
40. Blow and Crawford (1997), p41
41. Anable *et al* (1997), p51
42. Anable *et al* (1997), p65
43. TAS (1997), p40
44. The reinstatement of a rebate on diesel for bus use.
45. Blow and Crawford (1997), p51
46. Anable *et al* (1997), p41
47. Anable *et al* (1997), p48.
48. Anable *et al* (1997), p60
49. Anable *et al* (1997)
50. The proposed replacements for TPPs

**Discussion paper published by:**

**CPRE**



*Your countryside  
Your voice*

**Council for the Protection of Rural England**

Warwick House  
25 Buckingham Palace Road  
London SW1W 0PP

*Tel:* 0171-976 6433

*Fax:* 0171-976 6373

**COUNTRYSIDE  
COMMISSION**

**Countryside Commission**

John Dower House  
Crescent Place  
Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire GL50 3RA

*Tel:* 01242 521381

*Fax:* 01242 584270



**Rural Development Commission**

Dacre House  
19 Dacre Street  
London SW1H 0DH

*Tel:* 0171-340 2900

*Fax:* 0171-340 2911

*August 1998*

**ISBN: 0 946044 82 1**

Printed by: Signal Press on recycled paper