

Government Office for the South West
London to the South West and South Wales
Multi-Modal Study
Rural Access to the Main Transport Corridors
Final Report
May 2002



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Government Office for the South West

London to the South West and South Wales Multi-Modal Study

Rural Access to the Main Transport Corridors Final Report

Contents Amendment Record

This report has been issued and amended as follows:

Issue	Revision	Description	Date	Signed
19	0	Plan: Rural Access to the Main Transport Corridors – DRAFT REPORT	Feb 02	GD
19	1	Plan: Rural Access to the Main Transport Corridors – FINAL DRAFT	Apr 02	GD
19	2	Plan: Rural Access to the Main Transport Corridors – FINAL REPORT	May 02	GD/MB

The Preferred Strategy will go to the Regional Assemblies for the South West and South East of England, and the Welsh Assembly Government, to consider their recommendations and as an input to the revision of the Regional Transport Strategies in Regional Planning Guidance for the South West and the South East.

These bodies will consider whether they wish to support the strategy. They will then, in turn, make recommendations to Ministers. Only then will any decisions be taken on the addition of schemes to investment programmes.

The study has been taken forward in an open and consultative manner and the possible options discussed publicly. Many of the proposals are at an early stage in the planning process and if the recommendations were accepted, further work would be required to prepare and consult on detailed designs and route alignments. This will allow specific impacts to be identified.

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Executive Summary

- E.1 The issue of access to the main SWARMMS transport corridors from rural areas is an important consideration. It is particularly important from a social exclusion viewpoint, since many people without access to a car would be prevented from enjoying the enhanced accessibility benefits which other parts of the SWARMMS strategy would otherwise provide.
- E.2 It is not the purpose of SWARMMS to suggest ways of resolving all the issues in the broad rural transport agenda; the focus of SWARMMS remains the main transport corridors between London and the South West and South Wales included in the study, and the purpose of the Plan is to address rural access to those corridors.
- E.3 Given that the 'rural transport agenda' is far wider than simply improving access to major public transport nodes, the types of public transport schemes that exist in rural areas across the country differ markedly in both type and structure. This presents the opportunity to review the range of schemes and draw conclusions on which types already improve rural access to the main transport corridors or can be adapted to do so.
- E.4 While many recent schemes have been put forward as examples of 'best practice', almost all have some drawbacks whether it be in terms of difficulty of use, lack of reliability in their connection to other public transport services or, perhaps most worryingly, low levels of patronage. Even though all provide some benefits to the community they are intended to serve, it inevitably calls into question their value for money, and the ability to fund them over the longer term.
- E.5 However, many schemes are still in their infancy, and lessons are continually being learnt about how to overcome potential pitfalls of implementation and operation. The highlighted difficulties, however, do suggest that there are no simple solutions to the SWARMMS problems, and that excessive optimism to wholly address such access problems should be tempered.
- E.6 Certainly there is no 'one size fits all' solution, but in researching different schemes as part of this Plan, four different types of public transport scheme have been identified that could be suitable for future development. They could either work in

combination with one another or in isolation, depending upon local circumstances. These are:

- fixed-route bus services;
- flexibly-routed bus services;
- dedicated private hire connecting services, and
- fixed-rate taxi/private hire services.

E.7 Fixed-route bus services provide benefits by way of the surety of timings and of the places that will be served. It also does not require any form of pre-booking which can be seen as inflexible if a person's travel arrangements change, and for which a telephone call can be perceived as being potentially costly. The service is clearly providing a valuable connection to the main rail network, as well as a valuable local bus service. Hence, where there is sufficient point-to-point demand to warrant such a regular connecting service, we recommend that such schemes should be introduced within the SWARMMS area.

E.8 In areas where there is either lower demand or where relatively high demand is dispersed away from a linear corridor, and hence there is less certainty of regular patronage on a fixed route service, one of the three types of flexible services should be used, namely flexibly routed buses, liveried private hire or fixed rate taxi/private hire services.

E.9 For places where the terminal points are the connections to the major transport corridors, flexibly routed buses may be suitable. It is unlikely that there will be sufficient demand to sustain a dedicated service of this type in most instances. However, if it was the case, then this would be the most preferable, as it would be much easier to delay the departure of a waiting connecting bus without inconveniencing passengers who were already on the bus.

E.10 In areas where there is either lower demand or where it is not appropriate for public transport nodes to be terminal points, we recommend a liveried private hire service similar to the '+Bus' recently introduced at Truro station by First Great Western. Providing such a service is well advertised and cost-competitive, it would provide the flexibility of routing to and from any public transport interchange.

E.11 For areas with a lower overall level of demand for services to the main transport corridors, or with a demand at the peak period only, we would recommend fixed rate taxi/private hire services, similar to the Devon 'Fare Car'. These could serve

public transport interchanges as well as other destinations, or possibly only serve the interchanges at the peak times. This would make the most efficient use of the services and offer significant benefits to the level of transport provision within rural areas as a whole.

- E.12 All four types of schemes proposed in this plan would provide the very important benefit of guaranteed connections for public transport users. Such certainty of connection would be a vital consideration for those choosing to travel by public transport.
- E.13 Some of the case studies, and particularly the work carried out by Eco-Logica on the Wiltshire Wigglybus, advocate a strong community involvement in the development of rural transport schemes. We would fully endorse this view, insofar as County Councils and transport operators should fully consult with and engage the local communities so as to establish need and identify the most appropriate form of provision. The type of services being advocated in this Plan as most appropriate for SWARMMS do not, however, require the community to manage or operate the services on a daily basis.
- E.14 The importance of interchange must also be recognised, and the examples at Clitheroe and Carnforth are admirable in this respect. The need for convenient interchange between modes is self-evident, and should be designed into any facility. The presence of staff at the interchange is also important, giving added confidence in the service and high security (perceived if not necessarily real) to the passengers.

Implementation

- E.15 In terms of implementation, we propose that a continual programme of scheme implementation be carried out over a 15-year period. This will allow the existing 'trial' schemes to be monitored and amended as necessary, and further lessons to be learnt. It is estimated that around 75 such schemes could be implemented over that period.
- E.16 With an even spread of schemes through a 15-year implementation period, and with the need for a continuous revenue support, the cost in the first year of implementation would be in the region of £0.33 million, and in Year 15 it would be in the region of £5 million. The total cost of the Plan over the 15-year period would be £40 million.

- E.17 Even with these schemes in place it must be noted that they would not cover the whole of the rural catchment for each interchange, and they must be targeted at the areas of greatest demand and social deprivation. However if this were done at the recommended scale of implementation, they would offer real benefits to people in rural areas.
- E.18 The state of current knowledge makes it difficult to recommend which organisations should be responsible for implementing such schemes. The Countryside Agency has a clear interest in access issues within its wider rural responsibilities, whereas it is local authorities who currently deliver most of the existing rural public transport. On balance, we suggest that the local authorities, through the LTP process, would be best placed to implement such schemes, thereby drawing upon their existing networks of community consultation and participation. The Countryside Agency, however, would have a key role in scheme development, including the setting of scheme objectives and monitoring outcomes.
- E.19 It is accepted that the monies associated with this Plan are significant, but they are nevertheless an important contributor to addressing the rural social inclusion agenda. Without the schemes which are described, many people will be excluded from the enhanced accessibility benefits which SWARMMS is striving to provide.

1 Introduction

1.1

SWARMMS

1.1.1

Halcrow was appointed by the Government Office for the South West (GOSW) in March 2000 to undertake the London to South West and South Wales Multi-Modal Study ('SWARMMS' - South West Area Multi-Modal Study). The overall aim of the study is to make recommendations for a long-term strategy to address passenger and freight transport needs within the key transport corridors between London and the South West of England and South Wales (M3, M4, M5, A303, A30, A38 and the parallel rail routes). The study area is shown in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Map of the SWARMMS Study Area

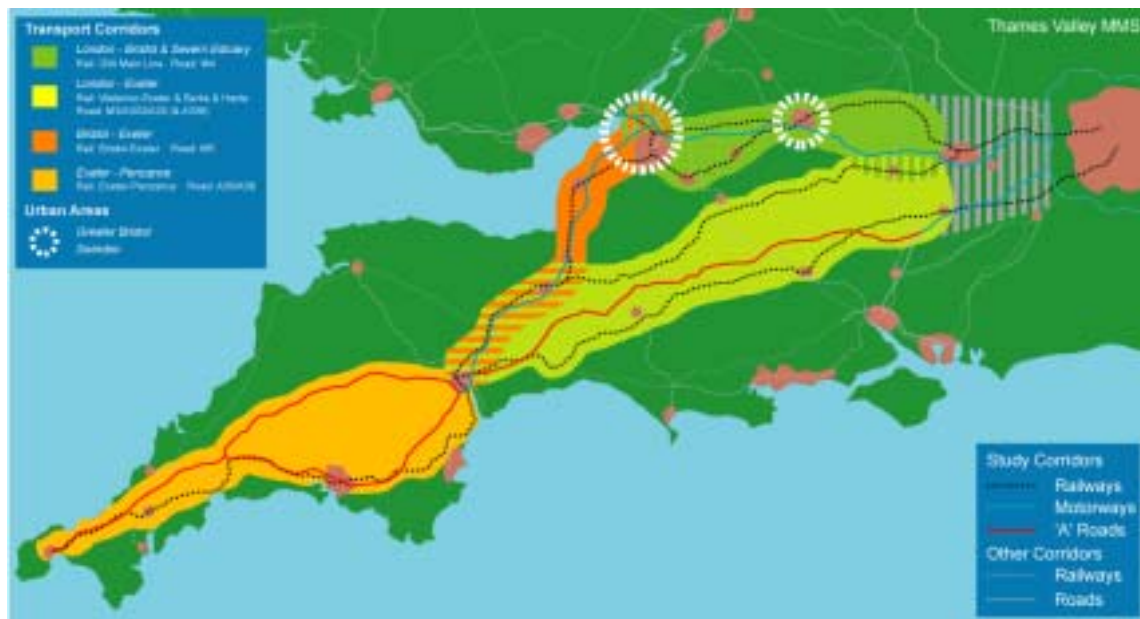


1.1.2

This will include, as and where appropriate, plans of specific interventions to address existing and predicted strategic transport problems in the study area, looking in particular at opportunities for reducing congestion by better management and modal shift, as well as options for taking forward focused improvements.

- 1.1.3 The Strategy developed in SWARMMS comprises a range of policies and schemes that, together, are designed to effectively address the transport problems of the SWARMMS area. While many parts of the strategy offer solutions to the specific locational problems which occur, this Plan specifically addresses the issue of how people in rural areas can access the major transport corridors.
- 1.1.4 This Plan reflects a key issue that has been raised during the course of the SWARMMS study that many people who live in rural areas feel that they will be excluded from the benefits of the potential improvements through SWARMMS because without access to a car, they cannot access the main transport corridors. This Plan will explore the problems relating to accessing the major public transport corridors in more detail. It will identify the issues and concerns, and will examine a range of 'good practice' in meeting such needs to assess their suitability for their further application throughout the SWARMMS study area.
- 1.1.5 There are nine other Plans that form part of the strategy for the SWARMMS area. Four of them are multi-modal transport corridor plans, and two other Plans specifically address the principal urban areas of Bristol and Swindon. There are obvious geographic linkages across these Plans, and are shown in Figure 1.2 below. There are three other study-wide theme plans and these are reducing the growth in travel demand, tourism, and intermodal freight. The Plans for tourism and reducing the growth in travel demand are inter-related, and where there are links and common influences, these have been noted.

Figure 1.2: Coverage of Geographic Plans



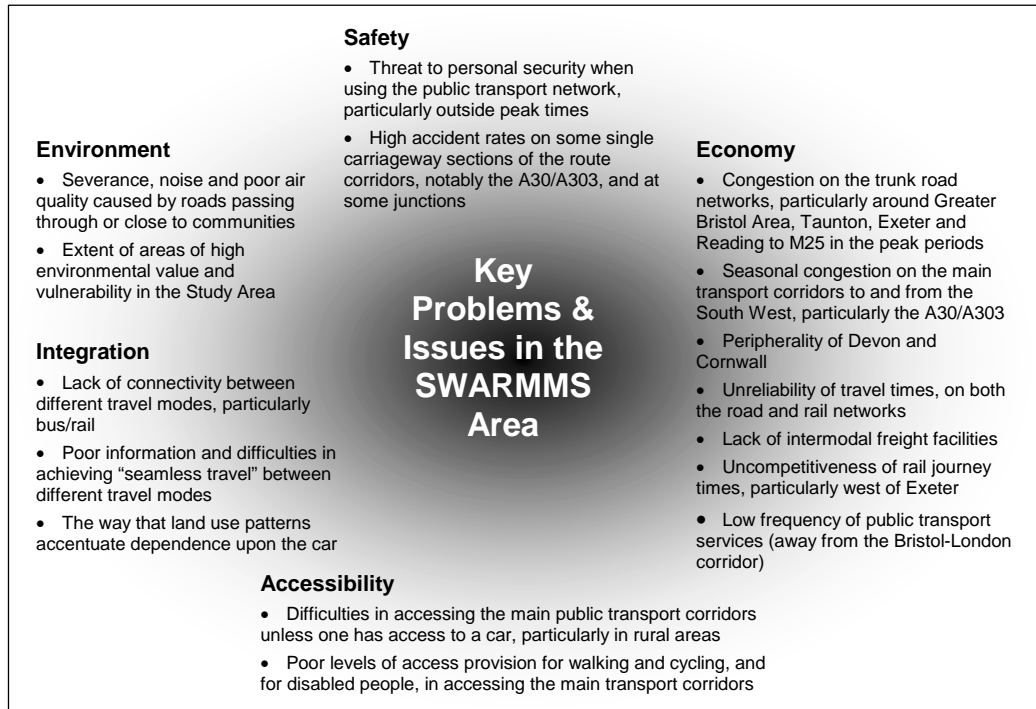
1.1.6 The Plan only covers the topic of ‘rural access to the major transport corridors’, and cannot seek to solve all of the many and varied transport problems within rural areas.

1.1.7 Also this Plan does not seek to set out a ‘master plan’ for improving access to the main transport corridors from rural areas for the whole of the SWARMMS study area. As will be described in more detail in the Plan strategy, the scale and type of transport suitable for a specific area can only be considered on an individual scheme-by-scheme basis. Moreover, to attain long-lasting success they should be established through partnerships with the local community from the earliest stages of scheme development. Instead, this Plan will set out a range of modes and types of schemes that can be appropriate in different areas; all have the ultimate goal of improving access to the major transport corridors from rural areas.

1.2 **Problems and Issues**

1.2.1 The key problems identified earlier in the study, which apply to the whole of the SWARMMS study area, are shown in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3: Key Problems and Issues in the SWARMMS Area



1.2.2

From the correspondence received through the consultation process and the invitation for comments through the distribution of the SWARMMS newsletters, the broad headings of the problems and issues concerning rural access to the major transport corridors are described below.

- Unsafe rural bus and rail stations and poor security onboard public transport services;
- Problem of reduced winter /off-season public transport services;
- In rural areas, employers are more likely to employ people with access to a car, than those without – more dependable/reliable in terms of getting to/from work;
- Lack of public transport alternatives (community buses) in rural areas for people with disabilities who are unable to drive;
- There is a need for the greater use of 'self help' transport solutions in such rural areas e.g. community based mini-buses/taxi services, subsidised and price controlled taxi operation for standard journeys, and taxi buses; and
- There is a need for separate consideration of travel needs in rural areas, which will always depend on the private car. Providing sufficient public transport is not a feasible financial option. The car is the most flexible form of transport and is essential to many people in carrying out their day-to-day activities.

1.2.3

From the eight workshops that were held as part of the public consultation, a wide range of views and suggestions were expressed relating to rural access to the transport corridors. These included:

- Taxis should be combined with other modes of public transport;
- The reliability of public transport in rural areas needs to be improved;
- Public transport marketing needs to be improved;
- There needs to be improved information with up to date/accurate timetables making the travel experience easier, including real time information;
- Bus stations, buses and trains should have more facilities for cyclists, and be able to carry them without pre-booking;
- Many bus stations and facilities are of very poor quality;
- The planning of train and bus services should be integrated, allowing for reliable connections;
- Mini park and ride sites in rural area locations should be considered;

- Cars need to be used for certain things especially when the public transport is so unreliable to and from rural rail stations;
- Subsidised/shared taxis should be used instead of bus services, as it would be a lot cheaper than empty subsidised buses. The certainty of the taxi fare is the most important factor;
- Travelling further inevitably means using different operators, it therefore becomes more difficult to obtain travel information for the new operator;
- Taxi-buses should take over from rural bus routes so they can continue to run later into the evening;
- Rural access needs to be considered not only rural to urban, but urban to rural also;
- Public transport should be cheap, quick and reliable, priced comparable to marginal cost of private car use;
- Demand responsive transport providers should be on the end of the phone and on the internet; and
- Small-scale transport schemes should be combined with large-scale transport schemes in order to ensure comprehensive coverage.

1.2.4

The feedback on previous SWARMMS work has also raised the following points:

- Investment for rural bus services should be a key part of Strategy;
- It would help to reduce car dependency in the rural areas by providing better integration of bus and trains;
- The issue of social exclusion could be given higher profile within the Strategy as, in rural areas, improved transport opportunities are linked to employment opportunities and can provide a vital link to essential services;
- The Strategy needs to include local bus services which are vital as part of any serious attempt to improve local public transport as an alternative to the private car; and
- The use of real time information should not be underestimated, particularly in rural areas where the cost of installing the systems is unfortunately much greater than urban areas. In rural areas such as Devon, buses can easily be caught along the narrow roads behind other vehicles and especially tourist traffic in the season. Real time information gives waiting passengers some hope that the bus is going to arrive and has not in fact been cancelled or broken down. It is important to give tourists confidence in using bus transport.

1.3

Structure of the Report

1.3.1

Chapter 2 describes the methodology used to develop this Plan, and Chapter 3 sets out the overall context of the work. Chapter 4 reviews a number of other studies and research that have been undertaken in this area. Chapter 5 describes some case studies of notable rural transport schemes in operation, and looks at their scope in accessing main transport corridors. Chapter 6 describes in more detail the recent and relevant research to SWARMMS undertaken for SW TAR and the Countryside Agency. Finally Chapter 7 sets out a proposed approach for improving rural access to the major transport corridors.

1.3.2

A bibliography for this research is included in Appendix A, and Appendix B details a number of rural transport typologies, as identified in the recent research by the CfIT.

2 Study Methodology

2.1 ***Introduction***

2.1.1 The methodology for this Plan is based on identifying examples of good practice in the provision of rural transport that could be used to access main public transport corridors. There are many examples of good-practice in existence, and the information on these has been drawn from a wide variety of sources. However, as will be seen in the relevant sections, it has proved very difficult to obtain sufficient financial performance data to make an assessment of the costs of such schemes and their relative value for money in each circumstance. Also, an important part of this Plan is to review a number of other research studies concerning rural transport, which are relevant in some way to this Plan.

2.1.2 A further input to this Plan has been the work undertaken by Eco-Logica for South West Sustainable Transport Round Table (SW TAR) and the Countryside Agency. Their report 'Joining in Public Transport – Key issues for guidance on rural access based on an assessment of a demand responsive service' is reviewed in detail in Chapter 6 of this report.

2.2 ***The Plan***

2.2.1 In terms of the access modes to be studied in this Plan, they are wide-ranging, and aim to encompass the whole rural transport 'spectrum'. These include:

- conventional scheduled buses and coaches;
- flexible, demand responsive bus services;
- community transport;
- conventional taxis and alternative taxi-buses;
- car sharing schemes; and
- where applicable, local rail services.

2.2.2 In some places, a range of more than one of these access modes may be appropriate, particularly when part of an overall scheme to improve the facilities for interchange and the provision of information. One such scheme, which is described in more detail in Chapter 5 is the Lincolnshire 'InterConnect' scheme where semi-demand responsive 'CallConnect' and fully demand responsive 'CallConnect Plus' buses interchange with the core inter-urban bus route, the

'Connect 6' to give access to a number of railway stations along the route. Figure 2.1 below illustrates some of these elements working together in one scheme.

Figure 2.1: Access Modes and Elements in the Lincolnshire 'InterConnect' Scheme



2.2.3

This Plan has been informed throughout by numerous consultations with a wide range of bodies. Local authorities, transport operators, local and national interest groups, and the general public have been consulted and given an opportunity to participate on a number of occasions and in a number of different ways.

2.2.4

As was noted above, accessing the major transport corridors from rural areas was noted as a key point of concern.

- 2.2.5 The form of public transport interchanges relevant to SWARMMS can be either rail or coach/bus. The SWARMMS Preferred Strategy is proposing a number of new rail stations throughout the study area, and many stations which already serve predominantly rural areas already exist. The Preferred Strategy is also recommending a number of new coachways combined with significant enhancement to both the coach and express bus network. The intention of this Plan is to address both rail and coach/bus access issues.
- 2.2.6 Other discussions and consultations have taken place, and in particular the help and feedback from the Countryside Agency at both a national level and their South West regional office is acknowledged.
- 2.2.7 Also a joint seminar was held with the Countryside Agency in December 2001 on rural access issues, and attended by representatives of many different organisations involved with transport in the South West. The discussions and comments from this seminar have also informed this Plan.

3 Context

3.1 *The Rural Public Transport 'Problem'*

3.1.1 Transport is a significant issue for people who live in rural areas, as facilities such as stops, schools and healthcare are more dispersed and located further away from where people live compared to urban areas. Generally, therefore, people in rural areas have to travel further to access the facilities and, while car ownership levels are usually higher than in urban areas, for the people without access to a car, there is a much greater reliance on the often-limited public transport services.

3.1.2 Rural areas normally do not lend themselves towards comprehensive and effective public transport operations. Rural public transport is often characterised by:

- low bus and rail service frequencies;
- lack of co-ordination between operators and between modes;
- patchy provision of community transport such as social cars and dial-a-ride;
- bus, coach and rail stations of generally modest quality, and without a full range of facilities;
- inadequate and inconsistent coverage of information; and
- limited concessions for the elderly and disabled.

3.1.3 With particular reference to buses, the following characteristics are all too often true:

- low levels of investment by operators generally, reflected in ageing vehicle fleets;
- high proportions of high step entry vehicles, and few accessible vehicles;
- frequent changes to bus timetables, especially as supported services are withdrawn or altered especially with changes in operators; and
- bus stops, shelters and timetable cases are either completely lacking or in a generally poor condition.

3.1.4 The lower population densities, the smaller settlements and the dispersed location of facilities all make commercial rural bus increasingly difficult to sustain, and in recent years there has been a worrying trend of operators withdrawing commercial

services, necessitating revenue support from local authorities if the services are to continue.

3.1.5 This is not only a rural problem, and is seen in urban areas as well. However, bus services in rural areas are often seen by operators as having the least potential for commercial market growth, and can be the most susceptible to the increased financial pressures of fuel price increases, driver's wage increases and insurance. A recent Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) survey showed that the average costs of re-tendered bus services had risen by 21% from October 2000 to October 2001 across the country (ATCO, 2001).

3.1.6 In many of the more affluent parts of the SWARMMS area, such as those in the South East and surrounding the major urban areas of Swindon, Bristol, Bath, Taunton and Exeter, the difficulty in recruiting and retaining driving staff for bus companies in a buoyant employment market has resulted in significant wage increases. This has led to a 'slimming-down' of bus services operated by the larger bus operating groups, often concentrating on urban or trunk route services, and has affected the smaller, local bus operators to some extent as well.

3.1.7 Linked to the above, there is also a trend that has become apparent over the last year or so for bus companies to concentrate their bus services in rural areas to the main trunk routes between urban areas. Where rural settlements are located on, or very nearby these trunk routes, this can be beneficial in terms of increased frequencies, improved vehicles and ticketing deals. However, for those rural settlements that are located further away from the main trunk routes, often services have been withdrawn from the smaller settlements in favour of speeding up the overall bus journey on the main roads.

3.1.8 It is generally acknowledged that the British bus operating industry is currently undergoing a change which reflects that it has reduced operating costs, such as the cost of drivers, as far as possible. Instead it is now concentrating resources on eliminating the most unprofitable routes, and concentrating on the routes with the largest perceived potential for passenger growth. This has an implicit, if not sometimes explicit, message that the bus operators expect local authorities to pick up the costs of supporting the more marginal and unprofitable routes if they wish them to continue.

3.1.9 While offering benefits for those on the 'chosen' routes, this is increasing social exclusion in the smaller and more difficult-to-reach areas as services are being

reduced or withdrawn. It is also increasing the pressure on the traditional funding sources of local authorities' budgets for supporting non-commercial but socially necessary bus services. The form and provider of the services is also being looked at ever closer, to try and find alternative and innovative services and methods of operation.

3.1.10 Rail services in rural areas, where they exist, create a similar set of problems. That is:

- on the branch lines that do exist, service frequencies are very low;
- absence of staffing at stations generally;
- lack of secure car parking and facilities for cyclists;
- inadequate passenger information at stations, including real time systems; and
- the cost of rail travel generally.

3.1.11 Notwithstanding the above, there have been some recent improvements in public transport provision in rural areas, with 67% of rural parishes having a bus service either every six or every seven days, compared with 60% in 1997 (CA Rural Services Survey for 2000, published in 2001). There has been increased funding for such services from a number of sources, and this has not only increased the level of provision but has also led to new innovation in the type of services and their flexibility.

3.1.12 These funding sources include the Government's Rural Bus Challenge Competition, the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant, the Rural Transport Partnership scheme, and the Parish Transport Grant, and these are reviewed in more detail below. The resultant schemes have included new flexibly-routed and demand-responsive buses, new local rail services, new taxi and taxi-bus schemes, and new community transport buses and car sharing schemes.

3.2 ***Central Government Policy Context***

3.2.1 It is important to outline the Central Government policy context relating to rural transport to understand the present position from which this Plan for improving access to the major transport corridors is seeking to improve. Recent Central Government Policy Guidance has recognised the importance of transport provision and the effect it has on all people, and in particular for those in rural areas. The Transport White Paper, the 10-year Transport Plan, and the Rural

White Paper set out aims and objectives for rural transport, and these are described in more detail below.

The Transport White Paper

3.2.2 The Government published its Transport White Paper in July 1998, in which it set out its policy for integrated transport to “extend choice in transport and secure mobility in a way that supports sustainable development”. It also notes that it is the Government’s ‘New Deal for Transport’ in that it proposes a transport system that is safe, efficient, clean and fair.

3.2.3 Amongst a range of new measures, the Transport White Paper introduced Local Transport Plans for local authorities, and introduced new sources of funding such as the Rural Bus Challenge. A ‘sister’ document, ‘From Workhorse to Thoroughbred: A Better Role for Bus Travel’, published in 1999 set out more detail on the Government’s policies for bus travel. In particular it placed an emphasis on the need for quality in the provision of local bus services, and for integration with other modes.

Transport 2010 - The 10 year Transport Plan

3.2.4 The document ‘Transport 2010’ was published in 2000 and is the Government’s 10-year plan for transport, and it sets out a strategy for improvements to all modes of transport in the country. It sets a target for public and private sector expenditure of £180bn over 10 years, and notes ambitious targets in all sectors, such as a 50% use in rail, measured in passenger kilometres, and a 10% increase in bus passenger journeys.

3.2.5 The 10-year plan sets out a vision for transport, of which a number of elements are relevant to the provision of public transport in rural areas. These include:

- modern, high quality public transport, both locally and nationally. It says that people will have more choice about how they travel, and more will use public transport;
- fully integrated public transport information, booking and ticketing systems, with a single ticket or card covering the whole journey;
- safer and more secure transport accessible to all; and
- a transport system that makes less impact on the environment.

3.2.6

The Rural White Paper (2000) highlighted a variety of issues regarding local transport in rural areas. These included:

- distances between people and settlements mean that difficulty with transport is often a dominant consideration for those who live in the country. The White Paper describes that as public transport services are often sparse, communities are typically highly dependent on the private car. Indeed, 84% of households in rural areas own a car, compared with only 69% in towns and cities. It also notes that the poorest 10% of households are twice as likely to own a car if they live in a rural area compared to a metropolitan area;
- there are particular problems of access to services for the one sixth of rural households who do not have the use of a car. These include many older people (and those who are frail or disabled), and young people, for whom it is often difficult to get access to training and job opportunities – or even to enjoy a night out with friends. Even when a family has a car, some members may not have access to it during the day and women in particular are often more dependent on public transport; and
- whether car users or not, all rural residents are affected by traffic levels, rising fastest on rural roads, and by concerns about road safety, with casualty rates falling more slowly on rural roads than on urban roads.

3.2.7

For all transport modes, the White Paper sets out a vision for improvement. This vision is described as:

- more locally provided services (shops, banking, health services) which people can reach without the need to travel long distances;
- recognition of the important role of the car;
- good quality public transport, responsive to people's real needs - flexible, well marketed, well integrated, stable and reliable;
- better co-ordination of services to make best use of what is available, with an expanded community and voluntary transport sector, working with bus and rail service providers and filling the gaps in those areas which are not adequately served by scheduled services;
- a stronger role for local communities in identifying local needs and in deciding how those needs can be met, and more funds for small local projects; and

- improved rural road safety - with measures to minimise the impact of traffic in rural areas and to facilitate cycling and walking.

3.2.8

The measures for achieving this vision were set out as:

- additional rural bus services through increased funding: £132m over three years for Rural Bus Subsidy Grant and £60m over the same period for Rural Bus Challenge;
- a doubling of Rural Transport Partnership funds from £6m to £12m to deliver to up to 500 new Rural Partnership schemes over the next three years and at least one partnership in every county by April 2001;
- a new Parish fund of £15m over three years to support small-scale, locally generated transport solutions;
- early consultation on measures designed to relax restrictions on rural transport services so as to allow for more responsive and flexible provision in areas not well served by scheduled services;
- new pilot schemes and funding for car sharing schemes and car clubs in rural communities;
- better and more integrated travel information, including developing a comprehensive internet information and retailing service 'Transport Direct';
- additional funding for Community Rail Partnerships – local authorities and businesses working together to promote local rail services;
- rail franchises which protect rural rail services; and
- actions to make towns, villages and rural roads safer – through reduced speed limits, more investment in traffic calming, and some 50 rural bypasses.

3.2.9

The other issues regarding transport in rural areas noted in the White Paper are the vicious circle of 'no car, no job; no job, no car' for many people seeking employment, given that the existing public transport often does not meet their needs for access to employment. It notes the potential for 'car clubs', which are particularly suitable for people who do not need a car every day. The White Paper notes that these are yet to take off in this country; however there are a small number of pilot schemes currently being set up.

3.2.10

It also sets out support for "a range of different public transport services, for different needs and different places", noting that as well as conventional transport schemes, new, more flexibly routed buses, community transport, and taxi-sharing

schemes may be appropriate. It also highlights the need for good interchange between such modes, to enable journeys to be easily made involving more than one mode.

- 3.2.11 In terms of scheduled local bus services, the Rural White Paper sets out a target of “a one third increase in the proportion of rural households living within about a 10-minute walk of a bus service that is hourly or better by 2010”.
- 3.2.12 For flexible bus services, it notes that the existing law allows for a range of such services, but adds that while there are some “excellent examples” of what can be done with such services, there is little evidence yet that the full range of possibilities are being routinely built in to the planning of an integrated package of transport services for rural areas. This, the White Paper notes, has to be addressed.
- 3.2.13 A common theme of the case studies of flexible bus services described later in this report is the difficulty in registering the operation of a bus service with a flexible route. The Rural White Paper notes that while recognising this problem the existing bus service registration requirements, as set out in the 1985 Transport Act, provide important consumer protection in terms of ensuring reliability and accountability, which are just as important in rural areas as urban areas. The White Paper promises consultation on proposals to relax registration requirements, which could ease the introduction of flexibly routed buses.
- 3.2.14 The Rural White Paper also notes the importance of community transport and voluntary services, and encourages their expansion and integration with commercial and conventional bus services. It also notes that rail services can bring many benefits to rural areas, while accepting that few are likely to be profitable in their own right. It notes that community rail partnerships can be an effective way of attracting more people to rail, and encouraging their local management.
- 3.2.15 Local Transport Plans (LTPs) are highlighted in the White Paper as being central to the co-ordination and integration of different transport services and modes. It notes that the guidance for LTPs requires local authorities to identify the particular needs of rural areas, and to develop targeted measures for dealing with them and to establish consultation methods that reach all sections of the community.
- Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (PPG13) – Transport*
- 3.2.16 The revised PPG13 published in March 2001 sets out planning policies in relation to transport, with the aim of integrating planning and transport at a national,

regional, strategic and local level. The aim of this is to promote more sustainable transport choices, to promote accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling, and to reduce the need to travel, especially by car.

3.2.17 The guidance mainly relates to new developments, and does not explicitly cover improving access to the major transport corridors from rural areas. However the policies which encourage the use of public transport, and in particular discourage commuting by car into the main urban centres have implications for increasing the viability of public transport, and therefore have benefits for accessing the major transport corridors by means other than the car. Similar comments can be attributed to the locational policies for key journey attractions to be located near public transport nodes and interchanges.

3.2.18 PPG13 also sets out policies to promote interchange between different transport modes, in that they should be safe, convenient and easy to access.

3.3 ***Other Policy Background*** *The Countryside Agency*

3.3.1 The Countryside Agency is a statutory advisory body, which was formed in 1999 from the merger of the Countryside Commission and part of the Rural Development Commission. Their document 'Towards Tomorrow's Countryside' which was published in 2001, describes the Countryside Agency's three main aims of:

- to conserve and enhance England's Countryside;
- to spread social and economic opportunity for the people who live there;
- and
- to help everyone, where they live and whatever their background, to enjoy the countryside and share in this priceless national asset.

3.3.2 In terms of transport policy, 'Towards Tomorrow's Countryside' notes that good public transport is needed to underpin the social, economic and environmental well being of the countryside. People need access to a whole range of transport services; villages need to be safer places for people on foot or cycle. It also notes that the Countryside Agency will encourage investment in schemes that meet local needs.

3.3.3 Such available funding includes the Parish Transport Partnership and the national Rural Transport Partnership Fund which are both administered by the Countryside Agency.

3.3.4 It also notes that accessible services are critical to rural communities, but that they are increasingly difficult to maintain through traditional means. It adds that a series of demonstrations and pilot schemes will be run to show how to achieve and sustain viable rural services. These will include the use of garages and petrol stations as public transport interchanges.

3.4 *Sources of Funding*

3.4.1 As a conclusion to this chapter, and as an important part of the background to the rest of this report, the main sources of funding for rural transport schemes have been summarised below.

3.4.2 The largest and most traditional source of funding for transport in rural areas is from the transport budgets of local authorities. The main allocation of funding is for the support of local bus services that are not commercially viable on their own, but that are considered as 'socially necessary'. This provision was enabled under the 1985 Transport Act, and while its description often varies, can be considered as **Local Authority Support**.

3.4.3 The budgets for local authority support vary considerably depending on the size of the authority, and factors such as the rural nature and population density. However the level of support for this is determined by the local councils, and reflects the political 'priority' of support for bus services in different areas. While local authority funding is a very complex subject, at a simple level the funding for this comes from various sources such as local council tax and revenue support settlements from Central Government. For example, some typical examples from the SWARMMS study area include Cornwall County Council, which spends some £1.4m on such support, Somerset County Council approximately £500,000, and Gloucestershire County Council £900,000.

3.4.4 Since 1998, this 'traditional' source of funding for local authorities to support bus services has been added to by the **Rural Bus Subsidy Grant**, paid directly to local authorities by Central Government. This funding has been extended for another three years, until 2004, with £135M over the three years.

- 3.4.5 Rural Bus Subsidy Grant is distributed to local authorities on a formula allocation based on the size of its rural population. The grant is for the provision of new or enhanced scheduled local bus services in England. It is for the local authorities to decide which services and communities to support. For the South West, there was funding of £8,120,677 for 2001/02, and an indicative allocation of £9,294,751 for 02/03 and £9,490,430 for 03/04. Here the South West is defined as Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, and the ex-Avon area and other unitary authorities within this area.
- 3.4.6 Additional to the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant is the **Rural Bus Challenge** competition funding. This has also been available since 1998, and has funding for another three years until 2004. The Rural Bus Challenge is an annual competition, in which local authorities bid for funding of schemes, which is hoped to stimulate innovation in the provision and promotion of rural public transport, to improve quality and choice across the country.
- 3.4.7 In 2001, funding of a total of £21m was given to 51 schemes throughout England. For the South West, there was funding of a total of £2.64M for eight new schemes, for the area described above.
- 3.4.8 The **Parish Transport Grant** is run by the Countryside Agency, with funding from its own sources. Parish or Town Councils can apply directly to the Countryside Agency for funding for transport projects that 'meet the needs of their rural residents'. Funding can include capital and/or revenue funding, and can include:
- purchasing cars, mopeds or minibuses for community use;
 - support for car clubs or social car schemes;
 - support for community transport schemes;
 - vouchers for taxis or taxi sharing schemes;
 - funding for a local bus company to divert a service through a village;
 - projects to promote walking or cycling;
 - extension to an existing project/service or actions to make a service more sustainable; and
 - support for innovative ideas for provision of transport information.
- 3.4.9 The Parish Transport Grant scheme is currently planned to run for three years, until March 2004, and can provide a grant of up to £10,000 per parish, for up to 75% of the project costs. A parish may apply for a smaller grant or several smaller

grants up to the maximum over the three years. Parishes may also join with others for larger scale activities.

- 3.4.10* The **Rural Transport Partnership** scheme is also administered by the Countryside Agency, but on behalf of and funded by Central Government. The scheme provides grants for rural transport services and facilities. The grants are designed to help secure long-term improvement in access to jobs, services and social activities and in developing visitors' sustainable access to the countryside. There is a budget of £32M for Rural Transport Partnerships.
- 3.4.11* All areas in rural England can apply including villages, county and market towns. Projects that bring visitors from larger towns into the countryside can also receive funding. The scheme aims to help local communities to identify and meet their transport needs through appropriate projects, and provides support for all types of transport projects including cars, buses, rail, boats, scooters, cycling and walking. Projects that reduce the need to travel such as mobile services can also be supported.
- 3.4.12* Examples of larger transport projects that can be supported through the Rural Transport Partnership Scheme include minibus brokerage schemes, and joining up public, private and community transport services to benefit local people.
- 3.4.13* Partnerships between organisations in the community are encouraged through this grant, such as local authorities, voluntary or private sector groups, rural community councils, and local youth centres. If a local rural transport partnership is formed, it can:
- look at existing transport services in the area;
 - identify transport needs of the local people; and
 - draw up an Action Plan for developing projects that meet local transport needs and have local support.
- 3.4.14* However partnerships are not essential to the funding, and project funding can still be sought. For rural transport partnerships up to £35,000 per year can be sought, including the employment of a partnership officer, and another £10,000 per year for a delegated fund for small-scale transport projects. Project funds of up to £25,000 are available for up to 75% of the eligible value of projects developed, including revenue support for staff costs.

4 Recent Research

4.1 *Introduction*

4.1.1 There is a significant amount of recent research that has been published relating to rural transport. On the whole this does not directly relate to access to the major transport corridors; however as previously noted, many of the lessons and examples of good practice for rural transport in general are in some way relevant to this Plan.

4.1.2 This chapter will review the most relevant of this research, with the aims of:

- to outline what research has been done by other bodies/organisations;
- to describe the lessons that have been learnt in terms of the provision of rural transport; and
- to highlight the implications of this research for finding a way forward on accessing the major transport corridors.

4.1.3 Within some of this research, there are examples of good practice, and the most appropriate of these have helped to inform the case studies described in the next chapter.

4.1.4 The research that will be reviewed in this chapter is:

- 'Rural Transport - An Overview of Key Issues' (CfIT);
- 'Physical Integration' (CfIT);
- 'Evaluation of the Rural Transport Fund', written by Steer Davies Gleave for the Scottish Office;
- 'Rural Community Transport – A guide to good practice', by Steer Davies Gleave and Transept for the Scottish Executive;
- 'Let's get going – an action guide for community transport in rural England', published by the Community Transport Association;
- 'VIRGIL – Verifying and strengthening rural access to transport services – Final Report'; and
- Research into Rural Transport undertaken by the Countryside Agency, including the 'Rural Services Survey 2000', and the 'State of the Countryside Report 2001'.

- 4.1.5 Another useful document is 'Great Ways to Go – Good Practice in Rural Transport', also published by the Countryside Agency. Whilst the report is not reviewed in itself within this chapter, many of the featured examples of good practice have been referred to in the next chapter.
- 4.1.6 The report 'Joining in Public Transport' – Key Issues for Guidance on Rural Access', by Eco-Logica should also be noted. Part of its aim was to inform SWARMMS rural transport issues. Not only does it give a comprehensive review of the Wiltshire 'Wigglybus' demand responsive bus service, but makes many important recommendations from the experience of Wigglybus. This report is reviewed in more detail in Chapter 6.
- 4.2 ***'Rural Transport: An Overview of Key Issues', CfIT***
- 4.2.1 Part of the remit of the Commission for Integrated Transport (CfIT) is described as 'continuing and refreshing the transport policy debate'. They note in their report that, in their opinion, the rural transport debate over the last few years has been conducted with very few facts, and therefore CfIT set up a Rural Working Group to further develop the debate on transport provision in rural areas.
- 4.2.2 Published in April 2001, 'Rural Transport: An Overview of Key Issues,' includes a wealth of data concerning rural journey making in general, car dependence, road safety, rural traffic growth, the cost of rural travel and available alternatives to the car. They note that a survey by the Countryside Agency in 2000 found that transport is now the single most important concern of people living in rural areas.
- 4.2.3 Rural households are found to rely more upon their car, own more cars and spend more per week on motoring than those households from more densely populated areas. It suggests that the greater reliance upon the car in rural localities is a function of people living further away from basic services and having less access to public transport.
- 4.2.4 It describes how rural reliance upon the car has increased significantly across the UK in recent years, with the use of public transport, walking and cycling also decreasing. However, while noting that this figure is likely to be an under-estimate, the report does also suggest that only a quarter of the trips made by cars in rural areas have absolutely no alternative than the to use the car. This suggests that the remaining 75% of trips could potentially be made by either public transport, cycling or walking if they had to, albeit possibly with some changes to the time of

the trip and/or the length of the journey, and in most cases at least some extra inconvenience.

4.2.5 Observed variations in rural transport services are partially explained in terms of differing densities and distributions of the rural population, and the varying commitment of local authorities to solving rural transport issues. Growth on rural train lines currently stands at 6% p.a., and a number of initiatives designed to optimise these rural rail services are highlighted. These include Micro-franchises, Community Rail Partnerships and Rail Passenger Partnerships.

4.2.6 The CfIT report argues that 'rural areas' encompass widely differing locations, and hence experience heterogeneity of transport problems. It is suggested that strategy formulation throughout government does not take sufficient account of this, and hence policies are rarely tailored to deliver appropriate solutions. The report puts forward eight 'rural transport typologies' as a way of practically categorising rural areas. These are an important consideration for this Plan, and are reproduced in Appendix B and can be taken into account when looking at the types of schemes that may be suitable for specific local areas. These categories are detailed below.

4.2.7 Typologies A1 and A2 refer to peri-urban rural areas (for example Oxfordshire, which surrounds a free-standing city, and rural Surrey, which is close to a major conurbation). In these areas, the impact of increasing traffic levels and lorry weight is more of a preoccupation than accessibility.

4.2.8 Market towns with hinterlands have also been included. Accessibility is a main concern here - more specifically, the diminishing shop and service provision in smaller villages, the declining demand for and cost of public transport and increasing reliance on the car. The market town/hinterland relationship has been differentiated into three sub-categories.

- B1: Where the retail and service provision of a smaller market town is increasingly dominated by a larger urban centre, for example Dingwall and Inverness;
- B2: Where the market town serves a dispersed rural population, making effective public transport difficult to provide, for example Lincolnshire; and
- B3: Where the rural population is dispersed in a linear fashion along main routes making public transport easier to provide, for example The Yorkshire Dales.

4.2.9

Three remote typologies have been included:

- C1 refers to a remote 'honeypot' or tourist location such as the Lake District, which has to cope with many of the problems of isolation, and also with unsustainable levels of traffic at peak times;
- C2 is an isolated village suffering the common problems associated with remoteness such as car dependence, lack of access to services and shops and high fuel costs; and
- C3 includes extremely isolated settlements or removed households.

4.2.10

The report adds that although difficult to estimate, around 90% of the rural population are thought to be contained in rural typologies A1 to B3, although the problems associated with the remote areas (C1 to C3) often dominate debates on rural transport. CfIT points out that many areas could fall into more than one category.

4.2.11

Following initial feedback, the report acknowledges that the typologies require further refinement, in particular to emphasise socio-economic differences between rural areas. It is argued that more detailed information is required to shed light upon a number of issues. These include the diverse nature of rural transport conditions, public transport coverage in rural areas, the household decision making process, and the impact of fiscal policies across different localities.

4.3

'Physical Integration', CfIT

4.3.1

This report notes that CfIT recognises that all modes of transport have a role to play in the development of a safe and efficient transportation system, and that a central part of the integrated transport strategy is that these modes of transport must work efficiently together to facilitate sustainable journeys. Therefore CfIT published this report in December 2000, which it describes as concentrating its efforts on driving forward and highlighting current work by DETR, transport operators and local authorities in promoting seamless journeys.

4.3.2

The report also describes how it has sought to bring fresh thinking to some of the concepts surrounding integration. A number of new initiatives designed to bring about quick wins or to help push forward existing proposals are also proposed and these form a key aspect of the report.

- 4.3.3 CfIT notes that it is aware of the work that has already been carried out in the sphere of physical integration, and does not seek to repeat it. Instead it notes other reports of key interest relating to good physical integration of transport modes, such as the Institute of Logistics and Transport report on a good practice guide to integration. It also refers to the research by Oscar Faber for DETR entitled 'Public Transport Interchanges: New Perspectives and a Blueprint for Change' which looks at the effectiveness of public transport interchange in the UK and presents priorities and recommendations for change and improvement.
- 4.3.4 The report looks at the contribution of different elements of integration of transport modes, including the matters that could be considered as the less tangible elements of physical integration such as through ticketing and improved information. It also looks at what could be considered as actual interchange facilities, and how the car can be integrated with other modes.
- 4.3.5 The recommendations of the report cover a wide range of topic areas relating to physical integration, but in terms of this Plan topic of improving access to the major transport corridors from rural areas, the important recommendations are briefly described below.
- 4.3.6 It recommends that Regional Planning Bodies ensure that in developing their Regional Transport Strategies, interchanges are looked at from a strategic viewpoint, and suggests the establishment of a 'champion' to co-ordinate activities for physical integration. It also recommends that DETR encourages Local Transport Forums, and highlights examples of good practice and rewards best practice.
- 4.3.7 CfIT recommends that DETR works with the national travel information service, 'Traveline', to ensure the project establishes itself in most efficient way possible is important, especially in terms of making sure that information is available on the less conventional modes at interchanges, such as taxi-buses and relevant community transport services. CfIT also recommends this should also be extended to the national rail enquiry service for trip information, and takes this further with regard to improving the availability of information with new publications designed to assist ease of interchange, and for public transport operators to mount major advertising campaigns to market physical integration.

4.4

'Evaluation of the Rural Transport Fund', Scottish Executive

4.4.1

This report is written for the Scottish Executive by Steer Davies Gleave; however given the rural nature of many parts of Scotland, it gives it a useful piece of research concerning rural transport from which lessons can be learnt for the rest of the country, including the SWARMMS area.

4.4.2

In March 1998, the Scottish Transport Minister announced that a new initiative, the Rural Transport Fund (RTF), would provide £13.5m over three years to improve transport links throughout rural Scotland. The RTF comprised:

- **Rural Public Passenger Transport Grant Scheme:** aiming to “help bus services in all areas and within that aim to deliver greater help for the more remote areas of Scotland. The aim will be to ensure that councils with an element of rurality receive base support, with those councils with a higher element of rurality or remoteness receiving a greater share of the resources.” Thus from the outset, there was a clear decision to discriminate in favour of the more remote Scottish areas;
- **The Rural Community Transport Initiative:** aiming to “fund community transport measures which will be of particular help in the more remote areas of Scotland. This was particularly for the area where there are no scheduled bus services or where the services are very limited.” £0.6M p.a. for 3 years was allocated to fund this initiative; and
- **The Rural Petrol Station Grant Scheme:** aiming to “support the retention of a sustainable and accessible network of fuel supply throughout rural Scotland.”

4.4.3

Of the three initiatives detailed above, it is the first two that are of the most relevance to this Plan. In 1999, the Scottish Office commissioned a review of the RTF, the findings of which are contained in 'Evaluation of the Rural Transport Fund' document.

4.4.4

The report does not go into any great detail about rural access to major transport corridors, and instead concentrates on the provision of rural transport in itself. However the report contains a number of observations and recommendations in terms of comparing the different types of rural transport, which are useful to note and consider. It also makes an interesting observation that, from their examples, the cost of community transport was lower than for conventional buses.

Rural Public Passenger Transport Grant Scheme (RPPT)

- 4.4.5 In order to evaluate the RRPT scheme, the report's authors examined six case studies in South Lanarkshire, West Lothian, Angus, Scottish Borders, Orkney and Lochaber. The report concluded that while costs per trip were high and market penetration low in some cases, the services supported by the RPPT delivered important benefits to those people who used them. The services generally met the accessibility needs of their target markets, especially where people had very limited alternative opportunities for travel. A picture of high dependency on the services emerged within the remote rural areas and scope was identified for greater penetration into the non-car owning/using market.
- 4.4.6 Analyses of ridership figures revealed a large proportion of female and elderly users in each of the areas. It was found that withdrawal of services would cause high or very high levels of inconvenience among users, especially on services in remote rural areas. In peri-urban areas there were some significant social inclusion benefits, not entirely related to rurality, as well as potentially useful modal shift benefits.
- 4.4.7 Concerning funding, the authors recommended that:
- the scheme should continue with levels of funding at least as high as at present;
 - there should be reasonable stability of funding to remove uncertainty and give authorities confidence to remove and modify services or try less conventional approaches. Had councils been allocated a rolling budget for 3-5 years, it was thought that more innovative services options such as taxi services would have been trialed;
 - funding should continue to be made direct to local authorities;
 - one-off additional funding should be made available through remote rural authorities to allow them to commission reviews so that new ways are explored of delivering the most cost-effective services; and
 - that scope existed for funding in peri-urban areas, including potentially for more urban authorities which do not currently receive an allocation. The sensible way to allocate these funds would be through a competitive fund rather than through changes in the rural transport fund distribution.

4.4.8

Regarding the promotion and targeting of services, it was recommended that:

- there should be more emphasis on promotion of services with targeted information for potential users, perhaps involving partnership with community councils or voluntary organisations or the employment of short-term mobility officers. A modest additional resource should be provided to promote rural services;
- investment in targeted bus services particularly in peri-urban areas can assist in tackling social exclusion and may have a positive influence on modal shift in areas with currently low levels of car ownership;
- monitoring of services by authorities needs to be improved. Costs of surveys should be a legitimate use of rural transport funding;
- clearer local objectives for supported services need to be set and monitored. These could be incorporated into local transport strategies and include the identification of unmet needs, the respective roles of conventional bus and more innovative bus/taxi and community transport solutions, and an audit of vehicles and other resources; and
- more needs to be known about the transport needs of young people in rural areas. The Scottish Executive, perhaps in conjunction with interested local authorities, should consider a research study in this area.

The Rural Community Transport Initiative (RCTI)

4.4.9

Prior to the introduction of the RCTI, a number of community transport initiatives were funded through the Rural Transport Innovation Grant scheme. However, it was found that this placed severe limitations upon applications, due to the assumption that services would need to become self-supportive within 3 years. This was not the reality for most Scottish rural community transport schemes as well as for more conventional rural bus services. Even for those schemes using solely volunteers, the level of any contribution often did not cover all the costs of administration and operation.

4.4.10

The RCTI distributed grants at national level rather than through local authorities. Funds were the subject of competitive bids from community transport groups and other organisations, thus enabling projects to be carefully scrutinised. This was thought to be especially appropriate for community schemes where the level of experience in developing and operating transport services was likely to vary widely.

4.4.11

Significant levels of funding from the RCTI scheme were made available for community transport field officers or development worker posts. It was hoped

that such projects would stimulate communities to examine unmet transport needs and to develop appropriate schemes to meet these. Concern arose, however, at the length of time it took for these posts to become established and the dangers of post-holders quickly moving on to more stable employment. Many of these posts were being funded in areas where there was already a good level of community transport activity. It was noted that the relationship of these posts to the local authority and to the Community Transport Association Rural Transport Officer (Scotland) needed careful consideration. It was concluded that there may be more merit in expanding the CTA resource which is much valued by most schemes applying for grants rather than funding more local community transport posts.

4.4.12 This would help to spread models of good practice and could improve the current patchy geographical distribution of projects. Indeed, a major issue was that some authority areas generated very few, if any, applications and subsequent funding. It was found that the creation of new development posts tended to mirror the existing distribution of grants and may well have resulted in even more bids from those areas that have already benefited most from the scheme.

4.4.13 A number of case studies throughout Scotland yielded the following findings:

- schemes hiring commercial bus and boat operators to deliver services emerged as providing particularly good value for money;
- many schemes were based on solid community transport practice but also good examples of innovation, both in terms of service delivery and also methods of working, such as partnership between voluntary organisations and with the commercial sector; and
- the importance of on-going funding for existing projects that would otherwise struggle to survive as well as the importance of enhancements to existing services and totally new projects.

4.4.14 It was also noted that enhancements to existing community transport schemes can be particularly cost effective as administrative and set-up costs may not need to be reinvested. These organisations have the necessary expertise to introduce schemes quickly and have well established monitoring schemes in place.

4.4.15 Concerning funding, the report's authors made the following recommendations:

- the RCTI should continue to operate with overall levels of funding at least as high as at present. An increase in funding will be needed to maintain schemes already developed and to develop further new initiatives;
- a 3 year rolling programme of funding with a periodic review would provide much needed stability;
- there is significant scope for an increased role for community transport type initiatives in more remote rural areas; and
- the current competitive allocation system should be retained although with some fine-tuning.

4.4.16

Regarding the promotion and targeting of services, the report suggests that:

- particular priority should be given to schemes that provide services for individuals, existing group hire schemes should be encouraged to widen their role by providing such services;
- Local Authorities should be encouraged to develop clear rural transport strategies as part of their Local Transport Strategies;
- applications to the RCTI for research by local communities into unmet transport needs and audits of existing transport resources should be encouraged;
- positive action should be taken to promote new Community Transport initiatives in those areas that have currently received little or no support;
- good practice in the provision of rural community transport services should be promoted through dissemination of information on good practice; and
- the programme of monitoring of projects should be continued but with an additional requirement to provide basic passenger trip and mileage data.

4.5

‘Rural Community Transport: A Guide to Good Practice’, Steer Davies Gleave

4.5.1

This guide to good practice is primarily aimed at helping those interested in improving local transport facilities, including:

- members of the local community who have identified transport needs, but have no previous experience of organising transport;
- existing transport providers;
- local authorities; and
- other organisations which might have resources such as vehicles and drivers, which could be used more widely.

4.5.2 The document is of interest to this Plan since it provides a detailed report on how such schemes should be organised and operated. The document states that it seeks to demonstrate “the need for an effective partnership between local communities and the various agencies interested in solving local transport needs.” It is suggested that the three main actors in this partnership are likely to be:

- the promoter of the scheme, idea or need for a community transport service;
- the operator of the community transport service; and
- the funder of the community transport service.

4.5.3 This report offers helpful advice concerning the community transport options available, how to plan and set up a service, including the funding, staffing, legal and operating issues which need to be considered, as well as how to monitor a service once it is in place. The guide also considers a range of case studies around the UK, including one from within the SWARMMS area operated by Devon County Council, and this is referred to in the section on case studies below.

4.6 ***‘Let’s get going – an action guide for community transport in rural England’, Community Transport Association***

4.6.1 This report is similar to the above in that it is a guide to good practice in community transport for rural areas. It is written by the Community Transport Association, which is an experienced body involved in the provision of such transport.

4.6.2 It covers all aspects of community transport, including the range of different services that come under the broad definition of community transport, and relates these to particular problems for which transport solutions are being sought. It also stresses the need for community involvement in finding the right solutions, and in implementing and ongoing management of the community transport schemes.

4.6.3 Again it does not specifically refer to accessing main transport corridors, instead dealing with all aspects of community transport. However it is a particularly useful document for comparing the advantages and disadvantages of the different schemes, and putting them into action. It also goes into detail on the practical aspects of community transport, ranging from management structures, sources of finance, use of paid staff and/or volunteers and aspects of vehicle management.

4.7

'VIRGIL' – Final Report

4.7.1

The Final Report, deliverable number 5, of the 'VIRGIL' project (**V**er**I**fy**I**ng and **s**t**R**en**G**th**e**n**I**ng **r**ura**L** access to transport services), brings together the findings of a European Fourth Framework project on rural transport systems. The objectives of VIRGIL were:

- to make an inventory and assessment of existing practices on rural transport. Special emphasis is put on the use of telematic tools to ease the access to transport, and on integration of passenger and freight transport; and
- identify further research needs in collaboration with the key stakeholders and rural citizens.

4.7.2

The report presents a review of the provision of rural transport in Belgium, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom based on rural transport jurisdiction, rural transport policy, and the main service providers. It compares a number of different definitions of 'rural' between European countries, and describes the rural transport 'problem'.

4.7.3

Of particular note for this Plan within SWARMMS is that, at the time of writing in November 2000, it notes that even Europe-wide, the use of telematics in demand-responsive rural transport services is still at an early stage of development. This, it notes, is especially true in terms of mapping and routing applications. However it does note that mobile telephones are much more widely used.

4.7.4

The report also makes an interesting suggestion about whether economies of scale could be achieved with the combination of freight and passenger transport. However it notes that at present it would not be sufficiently attractive to operators. Therefore it suggests changes in the operating and legal framework for both sectors, and the development of an efficient freight and people movement system.

4.7.5

It also notes that the strategies for integrating transport services between different sectors, such as school and conventional public transport are not well developed throughout Europe. The report suggests that there is great potential for this, but would require more advanced operational control than is available at the present.

4.7.6

A key output of interest is a number of case studies from throughout Europe in their good practice guide, which also describes some of their costs and revenues. These are referred to in more detail in the next chapter.

4.8

Research by the Countryside Agency

4.8.1

The Countryside Agency has recently published a report 'Rural Services in 2000'. This research examines the level of services in rural areas, and looks at trends of how they have changed over time since the previous reports undertaken in 1991, 1994 and 1997. The research covers a wide range of services, including post offices, banks, shops, pubs, petrol stations, meeting places, schools, health facilities, access to the internet, and transport.

4.8.2

The findings of this survey are described in more detail in a further publication by the Countryside Agency, 'The State of the Countryside 2001'. This report looks at the economic, social and environmental condition of England's rural areas, and includes DTLR's data of Indices of Deprivation. Regional reports have also been published, including one for the County areas of the South West.

4.8.3

In terms of rural transport, the 'State of the Countryside 2001 South West' report notes that rural transport is a key issue in the South West, made more so by the essentially rural character of the region and the remoteness of some areas. Also it notes that "in general, the north and east of the region are generally better served by transport links than the south and west. People living in rural areas of the region rely greatly on cars, as there are limited public transport options away from the main routes, particularly in the evening and at weekends. This makes accessing jobs, training and services extremely difficult and costly for those without private transport".

4.8.4

The report notes the key transport characteristics of the South West region as:

- despite rising levels of car ownership, over one in five households do not own a car;
- the average expenditure on motoring per household per week in the South West is significantly higher in rural wards than in urban wards;
- the 'Rural Services in 2000' survey reveals that as the population size of rural parishes in the region increases, in general, so too does the level of provision of public transport; and
- local authority spending on public and community transport is significantly lower in rural than in urban areas.

4.8.5

For the level of car use in the South West, the State of the Countryside 2001 South West report notes that patterns of car ownership and use in the rural South West generally reflect the broader situation in England, with greater reliance on cars and

more frequent and longer journeys than in urban areas. It also notes the rising number of households that own cars, and the increase in cars per household.

4.8.6 The research by the Countryside Agency quotes DTLR figures that car availability in the South West is one of the highest of all the regions of England with 46% of households having at least one car available to them in 1999. This it concludes reflects the absence of alternative forms of transport and greater distances to work, shops and other services in rural areas. In terms of each person, based on figures from the South West Regional Planning Conference, 2001, the 'State of the Countryside' report for the South West quotes figures that each person in the region travels 11,500 km a year – 10% further than the national average, and of this only 7% is by public transport. It adds that average expenditure on motoring per household per week in the South West is significantly higher in rural wards than in urban wards.

4.8.7 In terms of public transport in the South West, the Countryside Agency found that local bus services and community transport schemes play an important role in many rural areas, particularly for households in the region who do not have reliable access to a car. It does add that the level of these public transport services is far from consistent across the region, citing that even those rural areas with a locally operating bus service do not always have a full range of services available, with timetables often restricted to certain times of the day and days of the week.

4.8.8 The 'Rural Services in 2000' survey shows that while 71% of rural settlements have some form of bus service, for settlements of fewer than 50 residents this figure falls to 39%. They also found that 49% of the rural parishes in the South West responding to the survey operate some form of community transport, which is broadly comparable to the rest of rural England.

4.9 ***Relevance to SWARMMS***

4.9.1 The reports reviewed above clearly improve the understanding of rural public transport, and are particularly good at providing background information and providing 'best practice' advice on how schemes should be developed. However there are two main weaknesses in respect of SWARMMS, namely:

- The reports have little information or guidance on providing improved access to specific nodes, such as public transport interchange points; and

- The reports contain even less information on the 'outcomes' of the schemes, and the extent to which they reduce social inclusion encourage modal shift and/or provide value for money.

4.9.2

In terms of the second point, it should be noted that a study has recently been started on behalf of the Treasury, Countryside Agency, Scottish Assembly, and Welsh Assembly Government to identify 'what works' in rural accessibility, and is expected to report its findings in the autumn of 2003. The need for such a study suggests that relatively little is known about the outcomes of rural transport schemes, a point which is reinforced within the next chapter.

5 Rural Transport Case Studies

5.1 *Introduction*

5.1.1 This chapter reviews a wide range of rural transport schemes, from which lessons can be learnt for their wider application within the SWARMMS area, and elsewhere in the country. In each case the scheme is described, and where possible, detail is given on its background, funding, considered success, lessons learnt, and any problems encountered to its wider implementation.

5.1.2 Many of these schemes described below are examples of transport provision within their local context. However their scope for adoption elsewhere to facilitate access to the major transport corridors from rural areas is also examined, as this is the key element of this Plan.

5.1.3 The range of modes that are covered include:

- conventional bus;
- flexible bus;
- taxi-bus and conventional taxi/private hire schemes;
- community transport;
- voluntary car schemes and car-sharing;
- 'wheels-to-work' schemes; and
- rail services.

5.1.4 In some cases, schemes are a combination of more than one of these headings, such as the Lincolnshire 'InterConnect' bus service which uses conventional scheduled bus services, flexibly routed bus services, and fully demand-responsive services. Where there are links between these modes, these are described. Some examples from Europe are also briefly described, mainly taken from the VIRGIL report on good practice, referred to in the chapter above.

5.1.5 Also of critical importance to the issue of rural access to the major transport corridors is interchange. By making the interchange between modes at the point of accessing the major transport corridors as 'seamless' as possible, barriers to travelling by different modes can be reduced significantly. Therefore, while making interchange easier is important to all the modes describe above, specific examples of good interchange between modes will be reviewed as well.

5.2

Conventional Bus – Case Studies

5.2.1

Conventional bus services, which run on fixed routes and to an advertised timetable, are the most traditional and well-understood form of public transport that can be used to access the major transport corridors. The way such bus services are operated has changed very little since the 1985 Transport Act, which ‘de-regulated’ their provision and opened up a free market for bus services in all parts of the country outside London. Prior to the 1985 Act, effectively a licence had to be obtained to operate a local bus service, and to do this a ‘need’ for the service had to be able to be demonstrated. Since the 1985 Act any licensed bus operator can register the operation of a local bus service, and competition between different bus services is encouraged. It is argued that this makes integrating different bus services more difficult, as the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) can fine operators who work together to co-ordinate routes, timetables, and/or fares.

5.2.2

The large majority of conventional bus services are provided commercially, by either private companies or by companies owned entirely or in part by a local authority but which have to be run as independent, self-supporting companies.

5.2.3

As described earlier, local authorities have the power to support bus services that are considered to be ‘socially necessary’ but are not commercially viable to bus operators. In many cases these are rural services, due to the smaller customer base and the longer distances involved in the service.

5.2.4

None of the case studies illustrated here are commercially viable by themselves, although as with the Lincolnshire ‘InterConnect’ service, support for rural feeder services has made the connecting trunk route service commercially viable. Therefore it should be recognised that even in these cases, which can be considered to be nationally important in terms of good practice, financial revenue support is still necessary.

5.2.5

The case studies of conventional, fixed route bus services are:

- The Cumbria PlusBus;
- Burgess Hill bus services, West Sussex;
- Lincolnshire’s ‘InterConnect’; and
- The Helston Branch Line, Cornwall.

5.2.6

Conclusions are also drawn about the role of such services in the context of this Plan within SWARMMS.

The Cumbria PlusBus

- 5.2.7 The Cumbria PlusBus project was initially set up in 1998, as an research project by the University of Central London (UCL) to see if a transport service could be developed to meet the needs of a very rural area, Kirkby Stephen in east Cumbria. Kirkby Stephen itself has a population of around 2,000, with an additional 2,500 people in the surrounding 11 small villages. Many of these villages previously had no bus service at all.
- 5.2.8 The service is a fixed-route bus service, which operates from 06.30 to 19.00, six days a week from Monday to Saturday, and which does a 22-mile route four times in each direction each day. As it passes through the centre of Kirkby Stephen each time it serves one of the four 'legs' of the route, the centre of Kirkby Stephen is served in total 24 times each day. It also connects with trains to Settle and Carlisle at Kirkby Stephen railway station, which is 2km away from town centre.
- 5.2.9 It operates with a single 13-seat Rohill Harrier accessible, low-floor vehicle, as shown in Figure 5.1 below, which originally had a GPS-based tracking system. This has now been discontinued, as it was found that it was unnecessary, and could be better substituted with mobile telephone communication.

Figure 5.1: The Cumbria 'PlusBus'



- 5.2.10 The bus is reported to be carrying around 300 passengers a week, which gives an average occupancy of between three and four passengers per trip. Other revenue income sources are being explored including the carriage of parcels. It also can be hired from the operator when it is not involved in scheduled service. Short-

distance fares are low, to make the service attractive and affordable, and based on an average rate per mile. However the service still needs significant revenue support, as the income does not cover the costs of the operation.

- 5.2.11* In their research as a comparison to the Wiltshire Wigglybus, the report he research 'Joining in Public Transport' by Eco-Logica describe that the total cost less revenue is £3.28 per passenger. This is noted as being less than the estimated £5-6 per passenger for the Wigglybus, which is attributed by Eco-Logica as being due to the lower operating cost of the route as a fixed service compared to the Wigglybus's demand responsive operation.
- 5.2.12* Funding for the project originally came from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, with a contribution to the cost of the vehicle from the Countryside Agency's Rural Transport Development Fund. Additional funding has come from the parish councils, Eden District Council and Cumbria Social Services.
- 5.2.13* The service has attracted a wide range of users, and has been particularly successful at targeting young people, who make up around 40% of all users. These people are particularly disadvantaged in terms of their transport provision, and it has been reported the PlusBus is even seen as quite 'cool' for the young people. People aged over 60 make up another 21%. Leisure trips, particularly walkers are also targeted with 'ride and walk' and 'ride and dine' publicity, with recommended routes, walks, hostelries and bus times. These trips have fallen in 2001 due to the foot-and-mouth outbreak.
- 5.2.14* Part of the success of the project is put down to the strong community involvement, which was facilitated by the University of Central London. A non-profit making company, the Upper Eden PlusBus Company, limited by guarantee, and led by a six-strong committee, contracted the operation of the service to a local operator, Grand Prix Services. The bus operator provides regular drivers for the PlusBus, and the drivers are well known by the passengers and local residents. The Upper Eden PlusBus Company is seeking charitable status, which will offer other financial benefits.
- 5.2.15* One of the issues that has arisen in the project is the difficulty of meeting many of the trains at Kirkby Stephen railway station. This is due to the irregular times of the stopping trains at Kirkby Stephen, while serving the large number of surrounding villages as well with the one vehicle in the scheme with a fixed, publicly available timetable. This is also a problem with late running trains, as the

bus cannot wait at the station to provide the connection. There have also been some problems with the reliability of the buses. However, overall it is a good example of community management of a bus service, which was considered essential to shape the service to meet the needs of the local people, and ensure their support for the service.

Burgess Hill bus services, West Sussex

- 5.2.16 An example of an innovative conventional bus service in a rural area using normal-sized buses is given in the Countryside Agency's publication 'Great Ways to Go'. This example highlights how, through a partnership with a number of sources of funding and with financial support from the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant, an innovative set of three new services has been set up.
- 5.2.17 Prompted by two new developments in the Burgess Hill area of West Sussex, a new leisure centre and the relocation of a major employer (Ericsson from Brighton), and through a local transport forum meeting convened by West Sussex County Council, a network of new bus services was established. Ericsson was keen to have a direct shuttle bus service from the Burgess Hill railway station to its new site, so that the existing workforce could commute by rail.
- 5.2.18 The County Council also invited Tesco to the partnership, as a provider of shoppers' buses to their store in Burgess Hill. Funding was also obtained through Sussex Enterprise, and the Town and District Councils. The buses used were large single deck buses, which were considered necessary to cope with all the passengers and their shopping. They also could 'kneel' at stops and had a low floor, which not only attracted the elderly and less mobile, but families with buggies. They picked up at fixed stops, but also used the hail-and-ride principle.
- 5.2.19 From this partnership, an integrated package of bus services for the Burgess Hill area was devised. The network of three Tesco sponsored services are now registered as local bus services, which are free to Tesco 'ClubCard' holders, but unlike most other shoppers buses, can also carry other fare-paying passengers for access to Burgess Hill and the leisure centre. A further network of services link surrounding villages to Burgess Hill with a daily service.
- 5.2.20 Originally the services were contracted by the County Council to the Brighton and Hove bus company under a gross-cost contract. However due to problems in recruitment in the Brighton and Hove area, the bus company gave notice to withdraw, so they could concentrate on their core areas. In April 2001 the tender

to operate the services was won by a smaller local bus operator, Compass Travel. Given the patronage information available prior to the notice by the Brighton and Hove bus company, a net-cost tender was accepted, transferring the revenue risk to the bus operator from the County Council.

5.2.21 The Rural Bus Subsidy Grant met three quarters of the cost of the services, with the remainder being made up by the Town and District Councils, Sussex Enterprise, Tesco and Ericsson. Up until the contract change in 2001, the County Council has reported that the revenue taken on the bus was meeting 30% of the costs of the contract.

5.2.22 West Sussex County Council credits the relative success of the scheme to the partnership of the different organisations, with the County Council taking the role of the broker. It does note however that the co-operation of the major national retailers is at the discretion of the local store managers, rather than any national policy.

Lincolnshire InterConnect

5.2.23 'InterConnect' is Lincolnshire County Council's strategy for widening travel choice across all public passenger transport modes, including local bus services, rail services, community transport schemes, public transport information and public transport interchange. In particular, emphasis is given to the contribution that public transport can make in the policy areas of:

- sustainable alternatives to the car;
- social inclusion, particularly in rural areas;
- integration across modes; and
- access for the disabled.

5.2.24 One of the key schemes within this strategy is the 'Interconnect 6' service, which was launched in February 1999. This saw the upgrading of the service 6 between Lincoln and Skegness, with a doubling of the frequency, with at least every other bus being a low-floor, easy access bus. While not being as desirable as having all buses on the route 6 as low floor buses, the services which are operated by an accessible vehicle are clearly marked in the timetable and other publicity.

5.2.25 It is considered to be one of the County Council's 'primary' Quality Bus Partnerships with four different operators in a voluntary partnership registered with the Office of Fair Trading, and with new feeder bus services along the route

of the InterConnect 6 with interchange hubs at Wragby, Horncastle and Spilsby. The project is managed by a steering group of the operators, Countryside Agency, district councils, Lincolnshire Access Forum and Community Council of Lincolnshire. Informal liaison has been maintained with parish councils and agreements have been developed with them on the maintenance of shelters.

5.2.26

The key features of the InterConnect 6 project are described below, and were illustrated above in Figure 2.1:

- accessible stops at key points in the network, with quality shelters and information;
- video surveillance at the hubs;
- 'Makaton' touch cards to assist those with hard of hearing or learning difficulties;
- driver training in disability awareness and customer care;
- through ticketing between all services on the network;
- integration of timings with rail and express coach services; and
- real time information at key points on the primary route.

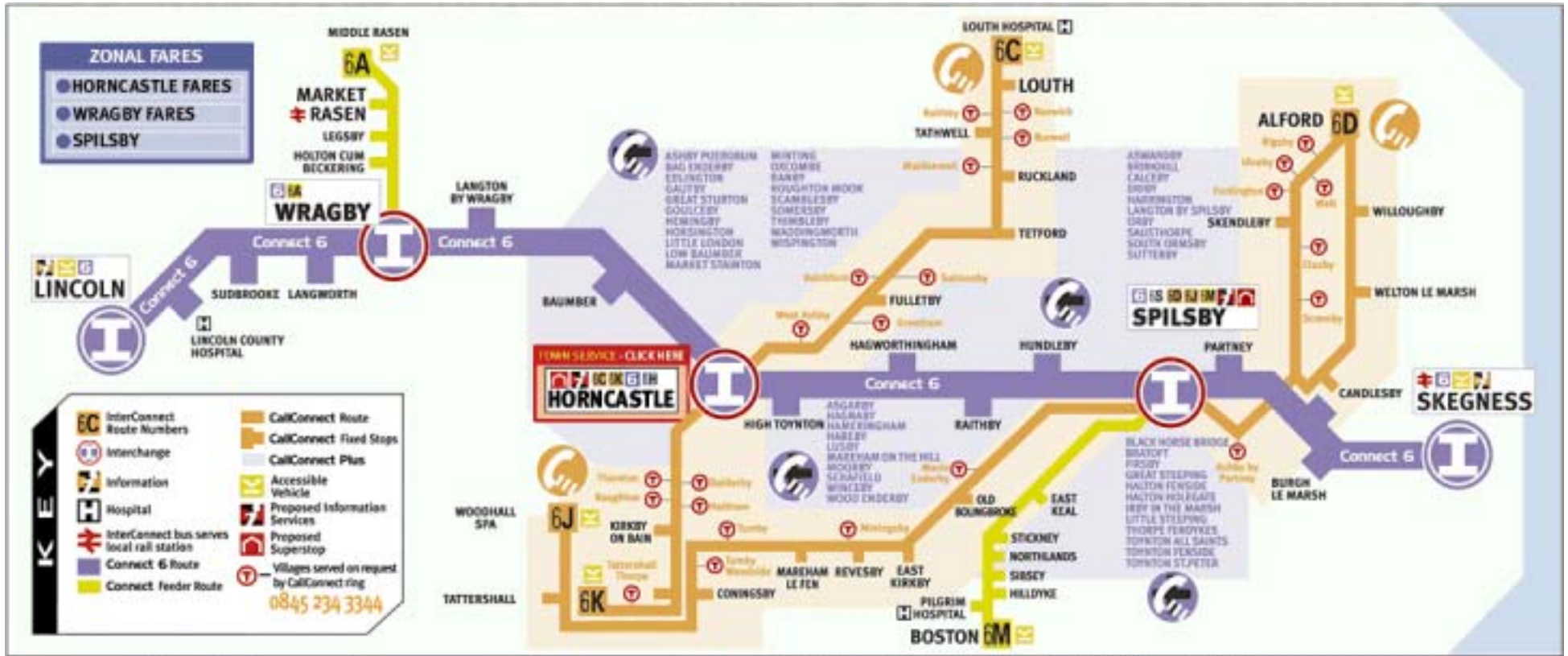
5.2.27

The scheme offers connections to the major transport corridors - primarily to the railway station in Lincoln, but also to a lesser extent Skegness. In the first year, ridership on the core InterConnect 6 route increased by over 60% compared to the previous twelve months, and is currently more than double the level before improvement. This is equivalent to over 180,000 extra passengers annually. Ridership has also increased on the feeder services by 25%.

5.2.28

The first phase of the InterConnect project was started with an award of £1.2 million under the Government's 1998 Rural Bus Challenge. The two-year project has attracted total funding of £2.4 million, and has been progressed by modifying some of the existing fixed route feeder bus services to semi-demand responsive, branded 'CallConnect', or fully demand responsive, branded 'CallConnect Plus'. The way these demand responsive bus services link into the Connect 6 route is shown in Figure 5.2 below:

Figure 5.2: Links between Demand Responsive Buses and a Core Fixed Bus service in the Lincolnshire 'InterConnect Scheme



- 5.2.29 The County Council notes that a key aim of the InterConnect approach is for the 'core' interurban services to operate commercially. They also note that the growth in ridership and revenue on InterConnect 6 suggests this will be achieved. The operator Lincolnshire Road Car is also reported to be considering the replacement of the fleet of buses dedicated to InterConnect 6 with new low floor double deck buses.
- 5.2.30 InterConnect is also an example of good practice in terms of the marketing of the service, which will have helped the scheme to be able to show such passenger growth. The publicity and marketing has been undertaken in a comprehensive way, including:
- strong branding with 'InterConnect' logo on vehicles and publicity material;
 - high profile launch and other photo opportunities to raise and maintain profile;
 - quality timetable leaflets issued on three occasions since the start of the project in February, 1999;
 - each leaflet issue gives the date when the validity of the leaflet ends;
 - extensive distribution including to households in towns and villages;
 - 'London Underground' style map used to depict the network;
 - extensive use of colour and symbols linking leaflet design, map and vehicle livery;
 - timetables and map displayed at stops and in shelters across the network; and
 - timetables displayed on the InterConnect web page.
- 5.2.31 The results of a research study undertaken for Lincolnshire County Council showed the effectiveness of the marketing campaign. Without prompting, 75% of householders in the project area were aware of a project to improve bus services, and 31% associated the name 'InterConnect' with a network of connecting bus services.
- 5.2.32 The County Council reports that the InterConnect 6 route is also having a marked impact on satisfying unmet travel needs as measured by the transport provision analysis software, SONATA. Half of unmet travel needs in the project area have been satisfied by the ability of passengers to reach employment and facilities by interchange. However no figure is available on the contribution to this of access to the major transport corridors, such as the rail or coach networks.

5.2.33

A study was by Lincolnshire County Council to research the attitudes of people, especially the vulnerable, living in the InterConnect 6 project area towards bus travel generally and InterConnect services in particular. It also assessed actual changes in the pattern of use and travel behaviour of InterConnect users. Household and on-bus surveys were undertaken across the project area. The key points found were:

- measures which would encourage residents to use buses more often are high quality well-lit shelters, real time information, and guaranteed connections;
- 19% of non-bus users were now more likely to use bus services;
- 27% of bus users were making more trips by bus;
- 4% of bus users said these new bus trips were made by car previously; and
- 35% of residents without access to a car said InterConnect had improved their quality of life.

5.2.34

The InterConnect concept is being extended in Lincolnshire with a further award of £1.6 million under the 1999 Rural Bus Challenge as part of a £2.7 million package. This will enable more demand-responsive services to be set up to feed the two further InterConnect corridors of Spalding to Kings Lynn and Boston to Lincoln.

5.2.35

Until recently, the Lincoln-Boston corridor was served by three operators with a mix of commercial and subsidised services. In November 1999, agreement was reached with the three operators to combine their resources and, with the continued support of rural bus grant, introduce an integrated hourly service with inter-availability of tickets. The effect is reported to have been immediate with ridership more than doubled in the first month. The County Council is seeking to build upon this success and seeking to let new contracts for a quality service based on the principles of InterConnect 6, with close working with operators and the community again.

Helston 'Branch Line', Cornwall

5.2.36

The aim of the Helston Branch Line Project was to create a bus service, which serves the Lizard in Cornwall and the inter-linking areas, and is fully integrated with the rail services at Redruth Station. Therefore it effectively acts as the 'Helston Branch Line'.

5.2.37 The project has been developed through a quality partnership approach between Cornwall County Council, a local bus operator Truronian Ltd., the Countryside Agency, Railtrack and the train operating companies Wales and West Passenger Trains Ltd., First Great Western and Virgin Trains. It was funded through a partnership which includes grants from the Countryside Agency, the European Regional Development Fund and the Rural Bus Challenge.

5.2.38 The key features of the project include:

- integrated bus/rail connections at Redruth;
- through-ticketing (including on-bus sales) between rail and bus modes;
- full information in national rail timetable and enquiry service as well as in local bus timetabling;
- easy access low floor buses with space for a wheelchair and pushchairs;
- bicycle racks on the back of buses (with CCTV added security);
- sufficient luggage accommodation to cater for long distance travellers;
- family seating area on the bus with children's toys;
- substantial new waiting and interchange facilities at Redruth Station;
- new 'platform' construction for buses at the station;
- improved station highway frontage, including footpath, disabled and cycling facilities;
- important bus route infrastructure improvements at key locations along the route; and
- an experienced bus operator using specially trained staff.

5.2.39 The Countryside Agency provided a capital grant towards the cost of two new 34 seat 'Easy Access' buses for the route and the service was launched in March 1999.

5.2.40 The Helston Branch Line operates from a specially designated area (Platform 3) which is adjacent to the main entrance of Redruth station. The station building and bus stop facilities along the route are also being enhanced as part of the project to provide good quality sheltered accommodation, timetable displays and raised kerbs. The aim of the project is described as offering a realistic solution to rural transport problems and satisfies the needs of the mobility impaired.

5.2.41 No information has been found which gives passenger number or the cost of subsidy; however it is regarded as a high profile and successful link from the rural area to a major transport corridor.

Conventional Bus – Summary

- 5.2.42 While all four schemes described above are primarily based on conventional fixed route bus services, they are very different in their scale and operation. The Cumbria PlusBus meets a very specific local transport need, and offers valuable lessons about its community-led management structure which appears to offer a service which can be tailored to meet the needs of the community it serves.
- 5.2.43 However its own operating circumstances in terms of routeing and geographic area covered means it can only make a limited contribution to providing access to the main transport corridors. This is not to say that under different geographic operating conditions the service could not fulfil a wider role at achieving this.
- 5.2.44 The Burgess Hill bus services are an example of a new approach being taken to co-ordinating a number of different scheduled bus services to serve a variety of purposes, and thereby increase their overall patronage.
- 5.2.45 This scheme does provide links to the rail network, albeit mainly due to support from the relocation of a major employer. Such support has helped to provide a better frequency of service for all people in the area. This is an example of a partnership working very well to achieve a common goal; however the need for significant ongoing revenue support should be noted.
- 5.2.46 The Lincolnshire InterConnect 6 service is based on an improved core bus route, 'fed' by a range of fully and semi-demand responsive bus services. This is a good example of how the different forms of bus service provision can be integrated and work together for their common efficiency. It is also a good example of how to minimise the inconvenience of interchange with a 'core' bus services, which could be particularly suitable for accessing express bus and coach services within the SWARMMS area.
- 5.2.47 Finally the Helston Branch Line is a good example of a specifically targeted rural service to access a major transport corridor. No information has been found on the number of passengers who use the service and who use the train at Redruth, but with the name and branding of the 'Helston Branch Line' there can be no doubting one of the primary aims of the bus service is to link in with main railway services in the way that rail branch lines do.
- 5.2.48 To conclude, these examples show how conventional fixed-route buses can provide a good rural bus service, which can be used to access major transport

corridors. The next section looks in detail at examples of flexibly routed bus services, and the role they can play in meeting similar needs.

5.3

Flexible Bus Services – Case Studies

5.3.1

The concept of 'flexible' bus services is not new. Dial-a-ride schemes in many different forms have been around for over 20 years; however they have normally been operated by the community and/or voluntary sectors, and/or targeted at a particular audience, such as the elderly or infirm, who cannot use conventional public transport.

5.3.2

Within the past three or four years, aided by new funding such as the Rural Bus Challenge schemes which have encouraged innovative services, flexibly routed local bus services, available to all persons, have seen a rise in their popularity and in their interest. The first of these was the Wiltshire Wigglybus, and this is described and assessed in detail in the next chapter in relation to the research for the CA and SW TAR. The Wigglybus was followed by the Dengie Village-Link, the Devon Flexi-bus, the West Sussex 'DoRiS', and the Gloucestershire Village-Link.

5.3.3

A number of other such schemes have also been recently launched, again assisted through funding from recent Rural Bus Challenge competitions, and an even greater number are being prepared for launch in 2002. A number of examples of case studies from Europe are also briefly described, with reference to the VIRGIL project.

5.3.4

As will be described below, the range and scope of their flexibility varies considerably, from simple deviations of a scheduled bus service to fully demand-responsive services, which also offer interchange opportunities with other bus and rail services.

The Dengie Village-Link

5.3.5

Dengie in Essex can be considered a particularly remote area, with a very low population density in the 15 miles long by 7 miles wide Peninsular. It benefits from an hourly rail service to Liverpool Street in London, but its traditional local bus services were in decline, due to a lack of flexibility and increasing patterns of centralisation for services such as shops, hospitals and doctors' surgeries.

5.3.6

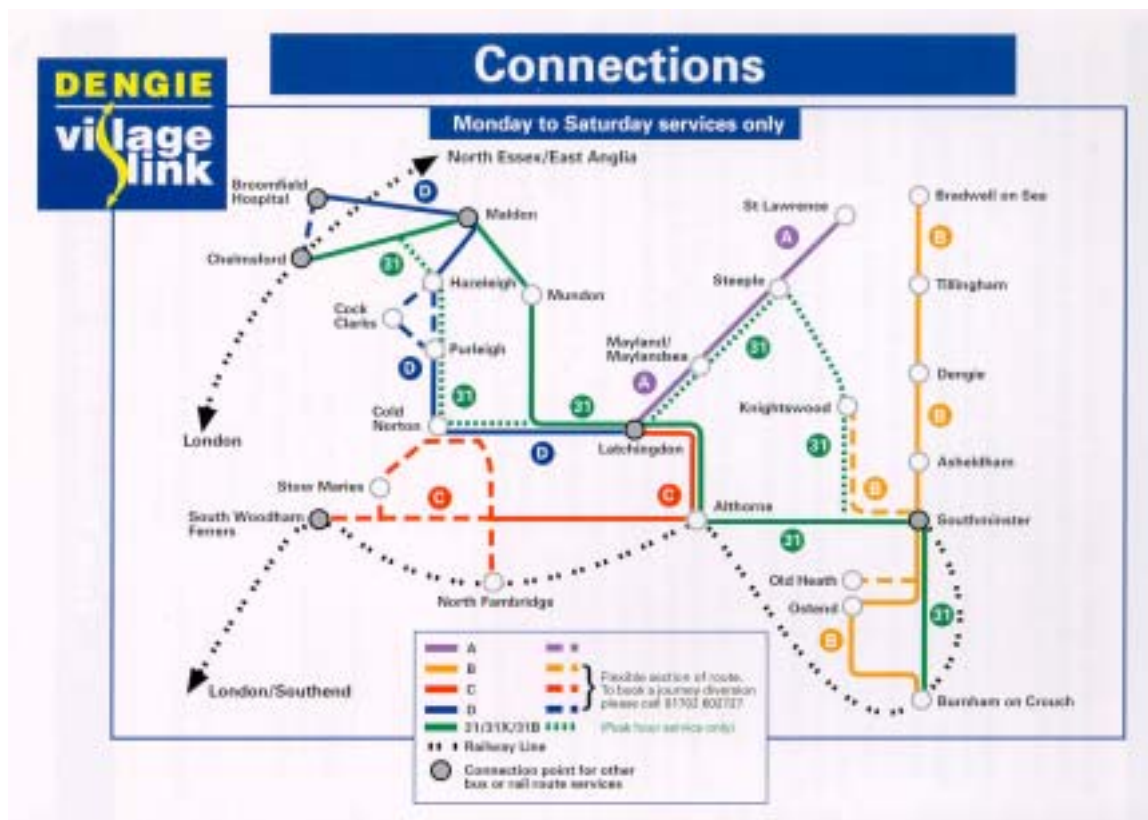
An award of £800,000 in Rural Bus Challenge funding saw the establishment of four new 'Village-Link' bus services in the Dengie Peninsular in October 1999.

They are operated by Arriva Southend, using five Renault Master seven-seat minibuses, owned by Essex County Council, which have wheelchair ramps.

5.3.7

Three out of the four Dengie Village-Link services can deviate off the fixed route to serve other settlements on demand. These services broadly operate six days a week, for 18 hours a day, and can connect with the rail stations and the First Eastern National's 31X service from Burnham-on-Crouch to Chelmsford, as shown below in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3: The Dengie Village-Link Routes



5.3.8

As part of this partnership, the 31X was enhanced from an irregular timetable to hourly. Booking lines are staffed 12 hours a day, and communications are enabled through Nokia 'Communicator' mobile telephones, which have a full 'QWERTY', style keyboard to enable text messages to be sent and received. Pagers have also been given to the drivers from First Great Eastern, to warn of any delays to the connecting trains.

- 5.3.9 The Peninsular is divided into nine zones, costing 50p per zone to a maximum of £2.50 single, with a £3 Dengie Day Rover offering unlimited travel on the Village-Link buses, and on the connecting bus and rail services within the Peninsular. Multi-journey tickets offer 10 journeys for the price of eight, and FirstGroup Bus Ranger tickets are also sold by the Arriva drivers.
- 5.3.10 The capacity of the vehicles, the suitability of the van-based conversions is currently an issue. It is reported that each of the vehicles had covered over 70,000 miles in their first nine months of operation, and certain fittings have proved to be unreliable. These include the under-floor step, as well as items such as the gear selector cables.
- 5.3.11 It was reported in October 2000 that the services were carrying 9,000 passengers per month, but this only covered around a quarter of their costs. Fresh bids were being submitted for Rural Bus Challenge funding, to include 16 seat vehicles on some routes.
- West Sussex 'DoRiS'*
- 5.3.12 The West Sussex 'DoRiS' (**D**emand **R**esponsive **S**ervice) was launched in July 2000, with eight different services, numbered 110 to 117 from Midhurst to the borders of Hampshire and Surrey. Five of the routes have a demand-responsive section in addition to their fixed route, and the other three are conventional core timetabled routes only.
- 5.3.13 The amount of demand-responsive operation on a specific route can range from a choice of two roads to get to the same point, or a number of roads in a small area. However the proportion of the route that is demand-responsive is normally less than half, and can be as little as 10% to 20%. An example of a DoRiS route is shown below in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4: A Typical 'DoRiS' Route



5.3.14 This makes issuing a public timetable for the core parts of the route easier, and therefore registration of the service. It also makes it more likely a bus will arrive at the timing points on the core bus route at the advertised time, so long as there is sufficient slack built into the timetable.

5.3.15 Some of the routes run Monday to Saturdays, and these are generally the peak-hour only services, while the daytime services are mainly either Monday/ Wednesday/ Saturday or Tuesday/ Thursday/ Friday. The routes have a considerable variation in service operation, and while this may provide greater service coverage than a regular Monday to Saturday timetable, there can be difficulties in understanding the service, and making regular, daily trips.

5.3.16 The service publicity advises advance booking even if it intended to catch the bus on part of a timetabled core route. Advance booking is essential if catching the bus in a variable part of the route. It also advises booking at least 1 hour in advance, and trips can be booked up to two days in advance.

5.3.17 The call-centre is open from 07.45 to 19.15 Monday to Saturday, although bookings for trips on the Friday and Saturday evening services are requested by

18.15 on the evening of travel. A 10-journey 'Carnet' ticket is available, at the cost of eight normal journeys.

5.3.18 Some of the eight routes serve railway stations at Petersfield and Midhurst, but no specific service connections are advertised. No indication has been given of numbers of passengers using the DoRiS services or the level of financial support needed, but it is understood that the cost to revenue ratio has been described as 'high'.

The Devon Flexi-Bus

5.3.19 The Devon Flexi-bus started operation in November 1999, and operates from Payhembury, Broadhembury and Plymtree to Honiton in Devon. It originally started out with a single route, the F1, with four journeys a day in each direction, Monday to Saturday between 07.30 and 18.00. The service is operated by one 15-seat high floor vehicle by the operator, Cooks Coaches of Wellington, fitted with a wheelchair lift to the rear doors.

5.3.20 The flexible routeing area of the Flexi-bus is at the end of a linear route, as shown below in Figure 5.5. This enables a timetable to be published for the core part of the route, until the start of the demand-responsive area. A start and end timing point is also given for the furthest point of the demand-responsive area, with a significant period of time being allowed between the two 'ends' of the demand-responsive area for flexible routeing. The significant difference to other schemes, and therefore the key factor in enabling the service to operate to a timetable is a much smaller demand responsive area, at the end of a linear route. No intermediate timing points are given within the demand responsive area. The timetabled core route does pass the railway station in Honiton, but it does not claim to integrate directly with any rail services.

Figure 5.5: The Devon Flexi-Bus 'F1' Route



5.3.21 Booking is not needed for people boarding along the timetabled core route. For booking a journey in the demand-responsive part of the route, bookings are made via a call centre, between 10.00 and 16.00 Monday to Saturday. For journeys before 11.00 on a day, it is requested that journeys are booked the previous day. One hour of notice is also requested for same-day journeys. Fares vary depending on the distance travelled, and return tickets offer discounts on two single tickets. Child fares are also offered at two-thirds of the adult fare. Devon County Council reduced fare passes are also accepted on the Flexi-bus.

5.3.22 No details are known about the costs of the operating contract, or the usage of the service. This service was supplemented in December 2000 with a further Flexi-bus service, the F4, from Axminster to Chard in Somerset. This service has a much more limited section of the route which is demand-responsive, but as with the F1 links into rail access at Axminster station albeit without direct connections.

Gloucestershire Village-Link

5.3.23 The Gloucestershire 'Village-Link' is a demand-responsive bus service in the Southern Vale of Gloucestershire. This service was launched in June 2001, using two demand responsive routes, one based on Stonehouse and the other one based on Dursley. Both of these routes encourage interchange where possible with the inter-urban Stagecoach bus service 91 between Dursley and Gloucester. A key part

of this service is to see whether a more frequent bus service can be offered to more areas in the Southern Vale of Gloucestershire through the efficient use of the scheme vehicles interchanging with the existing service 91. An example of this interchange is shown below in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6: A Gloucestershire Village Link Bus at the Interchange with the Service 91



5.3.24

The key features of the scheme are:

- the two routes operate in alternate directions, and offer a demand-responsive bus service to a considerable area;
- these two routes are supplemented by a third, peak-time only direct scheduled bus service from Arlingham and Frampton, direct to Gloucestershire city centre;
- the services operate from around 07.00 to 19.00, Monday to Saturdays; and
- there is a flat-fare of £1 single, £1.50 return for adults, with a half-price 'short-hop' ticket to avoid unduly penalising passengers travelling only a short distance. Young persons and concessionary fares are also available.

5.3.25

The service is operated by the Cheltenham-based bus company, Swanbrook, using three Rohill Harrier 16-seat minibuses, which have low floors and are wheelchair and pushchair accessible. These were purchased by Gloucestershire County Council through part of the £1m funding from the Rural Bus Challenge.

- 5.3.26 Given the very large area of demand-responsive operation, pre-booking is almost essential. It was planned for the County Council to form a partnership with the Gloucestershire Ambulance Trust to take the bookings. However this did not materialise due to operational problems. Therefore a private message handling company who deal with the County Council's public transport enquiries took on the booking and scheduling role.
- 5.3.27 One key issue that has arisen is the high cost of operating the service. The uncertainty for operators of tendering for a bus service where the mileage and level of use was very uncertain was appreciated, and therefore the routine maintenance of the vehicles, the fuel for the vehicles, and the revenue risk of the service were all taken by Gloucestershire County Council. However even after competitive tendering the resultant tenders were higher than expected, and it is hoped that any future tenders will be lower to reflect the knowledge acquired through this scheme.
- 5.3.28 Another issue is the amount of flexibility and structure given to the two demand-responsive routes. It was decided that to avoid the buses becoming a virtual taxi-service for the first passenger or so who called in for each journey, a more structured 'route' would be created within the software, so the route was made up of a number of geographic 'cells'. This allows the bus to deviate within those cells, within the allocated time period, but would still allow the bus to reach its timing points and enable other passengers to be accommodated within the demand-responsive route. However this structure does mean that passengers can have a longer journey than would otherwise occur, especially if there are no other bookings taken on that journey.
- 5.3.29 The need to interchange with the service 91 bus, and the need to adhere to intermediate timing points to enable the routes to be registered as local bus services with the traffic commissioner, have also constrained the flexibility of the services.
- 5.3.30 Other problems encountered are in terms of the acceptability of having to book a journey, especially to elderly people, who even at local call rates are concerned about the additional cost of making a booking. Also even though bookings can be taken at as little as 30 minutes notice, from early feedback there is a perception of a lack of flexibility. Some passengers have noted that for many of their trips, they would like to leave the decision to travel until almost the last minute, depending on factors such as the weather, and if any of their neighbours and friends are also travelling.

5.3.31 The interchange with the service 91 is generally without any problems, as the Village-Link drivers can normally wait until the connecting service arrives. But again early feedback has noted that some of the passengers say they would prefer a less frequent service, but direct to Gloucester city centre, rather than a more frequent service but with interchange. However other passengers have also noted the convenience of the service, in that they now have a bus service that they did not have before.

Belbus, Meetjesland, Belgium

5.3.32 This flexible rural bus service in Belgium is reviewed in more detail in the VIRGIL report. It operates on request between a number of identified bus stops, so it provides a more frequent bus service than the fixed route service that ran before it.

5.3.33 It covers a population of around 45,000 persons, over around 225km², and is demand responsive to defined bus stops, but does not offer a door-to-door service. Of the bus stops served by the Belbus, around 30% have an alternative regular bus service every 2 hours and 60% have an infrequent peak-hour service. The remaining 10% had no previous bus service at all before the Belbus scheme. It started operation in June 1997 and runs hourly from approximately 06.30 to 21.00, seven days a week.

5.3.34 There is only one vehicle in the scheme, which is wheelchair accessible, and there is the equivalent of 3 full-time drivers, and the equivalent of 1½ full-time operators to take telephone bookings. The telephone booking line is open 12 hours on weekdays, eight hours on Saturdays, and is closed on Sunday.

5.3.35 The Belbus provides co-ordinated connections to the hourly rail service at the local railhead, Eeklo, as well as with local bus services from Eeklo, and the fare system is fully integrated with other local bus services, as well as with rail services in respect of weekly, monthly or annual passes. Timetables are displayed at bus stops. Belbus leaflets were distributed to every local household when the service was launched, and are available on request from the public transport company.

5.3.36 The publicly owned public transport company, De Lijn, has a monopoly of urban and local public transport within the region, and has sub-contracted the operation of the Belbus to a private bus operator. The contract was granted for an unlimited period with a 5 year term of notice. However the process is to be opened to competitive bidding and five years advance notice has been given of the

termination of the contract to permit competitive bids. The new contracts will be for a fixed period of 5 years.

- 5.3.37 It is reported that most passengers (80%) travel to and from Eeklo, the main local town and transport hub for train and bus services. There are 13 journeys scheduled every day in each direction, but in reality only about 70% of these services run (Sundays 40%), since the bus only makes a journey when a booking has been made. Use of the service is quoted as “still rising”, but with an average of 55 passengers using the service each weekday. This gives an average of around three passengers per bus.
- 5.3.38 As with many of the UK examples of flexible buses described above, telephone calls to book journeys are answered manually at a call-centre, and the routing of the buses and dispatch of the information is handled by specialist software. For this scheme it uses ‘Ring’ software, developed for the purpose by De Lijn, and buses are tracked by GPS. There is no real-time information system for customers.
- 5.3.39 The VIRGIL report concludes that the share of public transport remains too small to see any significant increase of local services. Mobility of elderly people, young people and other people without cars has increased significantly, now allowing nearly every trip at any time of the day. According to a survey, the necessity for reservation is not considered to be a major disadvantage.
- 5.3.40 In terms of the costs of the service, the operational costs per year are quoted as 217,000 euros, with revenues of 9,344 euros. At a cost/revenue ratio of only 4.3%, it makes this particular example of ‘good-practice’ from Europe very costly to operate. The review within the VIRGIL report justifies this with the note that to cover this area using conventional bus services is estimated to require three separate lines at an estimated cost of 0.61 euros/km excluding labour. The existing scheme, utilising one vehicle, including the cost of reservation staff but excluding all other labour, is quoted as costing 0.38 euros/km. However the addition of labour costs to the latter figure may mean that in practice the costs are similar between the conventional bus services and the Belbus.
- MobiMax, Achterhoek, Netherlands*
- 5.3.41 MobiMax is a demand responsive service using accessible minibuses, which are available to the general public, and is completely flexible regarding routes, stops and timetables. It operates in the region of Achterhoek, which is a rural area in the

eastern part of the province of Gelderland in the Netherlands, located near the border of Germany.

- 5.3.42 It was launched to the general travelling public in March 1998, after being solely for disabled people since October 1997. Reservations are made by telephoning the Regional Travel Dispatch Centre, which collectively serves a coalition of regional taxi companies. Again as with many of the other systems described, it uses software that automatically creates clusters of individual bookings and allocates these to vehicles. The system is considered to be very flexible, but known regular rides are booked and clustered in advance.
- 5.3.43 The service is provided using twelve wheelchair accessible eight-seat minibuses. It provides coverage for 17½ hours each day. Connections to other bus and train services are guaranteed when reservations are made at least two hours in advance.
- 5.3.44 A leaflet providing detailed information about using the service is distributed to all households in the service area. MobiMax is also included in the nationwide 'OV Reisadvies' a telephone travel information service covering all public transport modes. MobiMax operates under the local taxi licence scheme administered by the central government. The contract was awarded to the Regional Travel Dispatch Centre after competitive bidding administered by the local and national authorities.
- 5.3.45 PlanVision software is used to assist the scheduling process and calculation of fares. Onboard computers communicate with the PlanVision software. All vehicles are equipped with the navigational system, Carin (a speaking computer), to calculate the shortest or fastest route. Mapping is integrated with Carin in the on board computer.
- 5.3.46 The review in VIRGIL describes how some time prior to MobiMax, national legislation was amended so that elderly people identified as having physical disabilities may use facilities created for disabled people. It notes that a lot of elderly people have difficulty using regular public transport systems, but with MobiMax they can travel independently at times they choose themselves.
- 5.3.47 This fact may have created an image of MobiMax as a service exclusively for disabled people. Although it is open to all members of the public, the service is used almost exclusively (93%) by people with some degree of physical disability.

5.3.48 Extra effort is now being made to emphasize that MobiMax is available to the public at large. The view is that MobiMax must become more attractive to the general public. Talks with the public transport providers in the region have begun, and a specific enhancement to the service in September 1999 means that 'public' passengers can travel longer distances than before.

5.3.49 Annual fare revenues of 273,000 euros cover about 9% of the 3,000,000 euros costs. Every municipality in the region supports the project with about 11 euros per inhabitant/year. For each passenger trip the Dutch government pays an amount to the province of Gelderland for allocation to the project.

Other European Examples

5.3.50 The Final Report for the VIRGIL project gives 10 other examples of flexible transport in various forms from Europe. These include the KTEL combined passenger and freight service in Magnesia, Greece, which provides villages in rural areas with a service twice a day on broadly fixed routes and timetables. In practice however, the buses stop on request on an informal basis. There is no reservation system, and if the vehicle fills up, then passengers stand. There is very little publicity, as the service is known to all residents as their only form of delivery system, given the rural nature of the areas. No costs have been given for this service, as separate records are not maintained for parcels and passengers.

5.3.51 Another scheme described in the research that combines parcels and passengers is the Lisdoonvarna Mail Feeder Service Post Bus, in County Clare, Ireland. This service is operated by An Post, the state-owned Irish postal service, and offers trips for travel to work, for pensioners to go shopping, for schoolchildren and for tourists. It serves a resident population of around 8,000 people. It operates on a broadly fixed route between 12 sub-post offices, and 11 wall post boxes in a circular route, but can be stopped on a hail-and-ride basis. It runs on Monday to Fridays, and there is no provision for booking a seat. It carries an average of 10 persons per day, and operating costs quoted are 17,300 euros/year, with revenues of 8,000 euros/year.

5.3.52 While this service operates on a very small-scale, it is operated as an integrated part of An Post's existing operation. It is considered to be financially viable with reasonable revenue support and provides a vital service to the people of an area with little or no public transport service. However it is noted that the service is unique in Ireland and there appear to be no plans to test such a service elsewhere in County Clare or in Ireland. It concludes that certain specific conditions are

required for such a service to be feasible. These include suitable operational conditions for An Post, the lack of alternative public transport services in the area and low levels of actual demand.

Flexible Bus Services – Summary

5.3.53 The four UK examples described above are the most established of the new-tranche of demand-responsive, flexible bus services that can be used by all passengers. As noted in the introduction, flexible bus services are not new, and are in their simplest form an adaptation of traditional dial-a-ride services that historically could only be used by certain mobility impaired groups. However each of the four examples above has at least some innovation in them, either in their operation, management or use of information technology.

5.3.54 There are many differences between them, such as the scope for demand-responsive operation within their routes, and the level of integration with other bus and rail services. There are also many common themes between them, including greatly improved opportunities for making journeys by public transport. A particular common theme to note, especially when including the examples from Europe, is not only the initial capital start-up cost of such schemes, but the need for ongoing revenue support. Notwithstanding this, the availability of accurate figures on the costs, revenues and utilisation of such schemes is very limited, and more openness about the financial performance of such schemes is necessary for reliable assessment of future schemes.

5.4 ***Community Transport – Case Studies***

5.4.1 As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the range and breadth of services provided broadly under the description ‘Community Transport’ is very varied. Some of these services use dial-a-ride type transport, but normally are only reserved for disabled or mobility impaired users. Other forms of community transport use community car schemes, provided by voluntary drivers, and others use community minibuses, where a minibus is owned by a community group and provides a bus service for all members of that community.

5.4.2 Case studies for these forms of transport are less common than those above, mainly as such schemes are more common and therefore less notable. Also many such schemes are provided at a local level, with little publicity, as word-of-mouth through the local communities. This is not to underestimate their role, as these schemes provide a very valuable service to the communities and the passengers they serve.

5.4.3 However within the context of this Plan, to improve access to the major transport corridors from rural areas, there is only a limited scope for such transport to provide regular trips for purposes such as work. Notwithstanding this, an example of the Honiton Ring-and-Ride is given below, mainly due to the innovative nature of its management and role of providing information on other forms of transport through the TRIP scheme.

Honiton TRIP

5.4.4 The Honiton TRIP initiative has been highlighted by the Countryside Agency in their review 'Great Ways to Go' as an example of good practice in community transport for services to local surgeries and trips to hospital.

5.4.5 The TRIP Community Transport Association (TRIP CTA) has a prominent town centre office in the market town of Honiton, which acts as booking agents for a number of community transport services, and a one-stop shop for transport information. In addition to the Community Car, Ring & Ride and Fare Car services, TRIP CTA has taken on the responsibility of booking patients onto the Ambulance Car Service, run by Westcountry Ambulance, from the local surgery. Honiton Surgery is a substantial practice, serving nearly 16,000 patients living in both Honiton and the surrounding rural area.

5.4.6 Surgery staff were finding the task of assessing patients' eligibility and booking of an Ambulance Car Service (ACS) vehicle too time consuming and so TRIP CTA was approached in order to undertake this task. It responded positively, feeling that this fitted in well with its other work, and with the general ethos that TRIP CTA has of providing information about various transport options all under one roof.

5.4.7 The majority of patients in the Honiton Surgery area now know to approach TRIP CTA for ACS bookings, whilst surgery staff direct patients to TRIP CTA on the odd occasion that they still receive enquiries. Staff at TRIP CTA work through the standard booking form supplied by Westcountry Ambulance, which helps to assess whether the patient is eligible to use this service. If they find that the patient is not entitled, TRIP CTA is in a position to advise on alternative transport, such as public bus services or the local Community Car Service. The use of the Honiton TRIP is shown in Figure 5.7 below.

Figure 5.7: Honiton TRIP in Action (picture taken from 'Great Ways to Go', CA).



5.4.8 Whilst not directly relevant to access to major transport corridors, this is an example of an integrated information and booking service for a number of different forms of community transport, and which benefit from economies of scale.

5.4.9 The research by Eco-Logica in their report 'Joining in Public Transport' notes that TRIP CTA is a registered charity, and company limited by guarantee. It is managed by a voluntary management committee, where volunteers on the committee are trustees of the company with voting rights. These are mainly drawn from interest groups such as Red Cross and Special Needs Action Group, parish and town councils, and representatives of the organisations such as Honiton Ring and Ride which operate under the TRIP umbrella. There are also non-voting committee members, including paid employees and local authority representatives (Devon CC and East Devon DC).

5.4.10 Eco-Logica also note in their report that Honiton Ring and Ride has its own management committee, constitution, funding and accounts. Both TRIP and Honiton Ring and Ride have very detailed constitutions setting out objectives, roles and responsibilities and formal annual reports and accounts.

5.4.11

It is noted that the management structure of Honiton TRIP has the following characteristics:

- it is very exactly defined and clearly documented, and chains of communication and accountability are readily identified;
- management control is clearly vested in the organisations and their component community organisations and individuals, to the extent that local authorities do not have management voting rights even though they are the major source of funding for the scheme; and
- the individual operations such as Honiton Ring and Ride have the accumulated expertise and resources of TRIP to back them up, and these resources are available locally.

5.4.12

Eco-Logica's report suggests that there are lessons to be learnt from Honiton TRIP, in terms of the operational and financial advantages in having a 'one stop shop' for a number of related transport services. It also suggests that there are advantages in the more 'flexible' use of the vehicles for a number of purposes as well as its core dial-a ride service to Honiton. These include preferred user status from Devon CC for schools transport to a special needs school, Passenger Club outings at weekends, and availability for hire, all of which contribute to income.

5.4.13

Also Eco-Logica notes the responsive nature of the service to feedback and demands, in that when further unmet needs were identified in areas not served by Honiton Ring and Ride, the service was extended by hiring a wheelchair accessible minibus owned by a voluntary group. This vehicle was a valuable but under-used resource; this has benefited the Honiton Ring and Ride project by extending the service but avoiding the cost of an additional vehicle, and provided useful income to the voluntary group. It is quoted in the Eco-Logica report that "it is not easy to derive unit costs per passenger trip because some funding is in kind through the provision of fully funded vehicles from Devon CC, but it appears to be below £10/trip....".

5.5

Taxi-bus, Taxi and Private Hire Schemes – Case Studies

5.5.1

While there is to some extent a 'grey area' between different modes of bus services described above, with the case of taxis, taxi-buses and private hire the differences and the legal definition of each is more rigid. It is not within the scope of this report to go into any detail on the differences, except to highlight how they can be used to give access to the major transport corridors from rural areas.

5.5.2 At the simple level, the definition of a 'taxi' is a licensed 'hackney carriage', where picking up passengers from the street or waiting at taxi ranks is permitted, without prior booking. 'Private hire' vehicles can only accept prior bookings, and cannot pick up from the street or 'ply for trade'. Taxis and private hire vehicles are an important form of public transport in rural areas, especially when people have no alternative. As will be described below, even these 'conventional' services can be used in an imaginative way.

5.5.3 A further definition is that a hackney carriage only applies to vehicles of less than 9 seats, as for more than 9 seats the vehicle is defined as a Public Service Vehicle (PSV). For vehicles between 9 and 16 seats, a restricted PSV licence may be appropriate. It also only applies to vehicles of less than 9 seats, if passengers are not carried at separate fares. Therefore if an 8-seat vehicle is used to carry persons at separate fares, it is called as a PSV, not a taxi. A larger vehicle is a PSV whether or not passengers are carried at separate fares, or the same fare.

5.5.4 A taxi-bus is a hackney carriage with a Special Restricted Passenger Service Vehicle Licence (SRPSV). This allows a person or persons with a taxi licence to apply to the local Traffic Commissioner to register a local service, defined by a route and a schedule.

5.5.5 There are few restrictions on applying for a SRPSV for existing hackney carriage licence holders. If a holder does not have a hackney carriage licence, they need to apply for one first. Once a SRPSV licence is obtained it is subject to the following conditions:

- it is valid for a maximum of five years;
- only the named vehicles on the SRPSV licence can be used on the local service;
- vehicles with an SRPSV licence must be used for the sole purpose of providing the local service;
- vehicles have less than 9 seats;
- vehicles with an SRPSV licence remain subject to the regulations of the local authority in which the taxi is licensed (except fares, which can be set at different levels for different passengers at the discretion of the taxi bus operator);
- there is a limit of one on the number of SRPSV licences that a person may hold in any traffic area, though a person may hold more than one SRPSV

licence. An SRPSV is an operators licence and can be used to operate more than one vehicle under the licence; and

- the local service must have at least one stopping place in the area that licences the taxi(s) used to provide the service.

5.5.6

Taxis operating under SRPSV licences do not have to charge any standard local fares, and can charge whatever fares it considers are appropriate. The 1985 Transport Act makes provision for separate fares to be paid for taxis by passengers, as long as the journey is booked in advance, and each person sharing the taxi has agreed to the arrangement. Immediate hiring of taxis at separate fares can only be done from an authorised location, licensed by the local authority.

5.5.7

The key problems with taxi-bus operation under the current legislation are:

- taxi-bus routes must be anchored in the district that issues the taxi licence, which can cause problems for route definition for operators wishing to expand their operations to new markets;
- the criteria for licensing taxis vary tremendously between districts, in terms of vehicle type, maximum age, livery, and driver qualifications and knowledge. The powers of district enforcement officers to remove vehicles from operators could cause schedule adherence problems. Standardisation of licensing conditions across districts in the county would alleviate these potential barriers to a co-ordinated service. Alternatively, larger nine seat plus vehicles could be used on RPSV or 'O' licences;
- some licensing authorities maintain a tight control on the number of taxi licences issued, which gives the incumbent operators a protected position, leading to unwillingness to try something 'different'. Secondly, this prevents new entrants to the market from doing so. Again, slightly larger vehicles could be used which do not come under the wing of local licensing authorities; and
- many taxi drivers are fiercely independent and operate a relatively low cost, low risk, and low return business. The investment required to obtain vehicles suitable for taxi-bus operation, together with the restrictions on movement and working times generated by the schedule have been found to militate against the provision of those services in the past. It is also recognised that many taxi trade organisations are very conservative, and do not respond well to new ideas.

5.5.8 The 'Wiltshire Hopper' is described below as an example of a taxi-bus scheme, along with three other examples from around the country of where the more traditional private-hire vehicles have been used in an innovative way. These are:

- Greater Manchester 'APT';
- First Great Western '+Bus'; and
- Devon 'Fare Car'.

The 'Wiltshire Hopper'

5.5.9 This is an example of a taxi-bus that, whilst not connecting with a major transport corridor, does provides a link from a rural area to a hospital. Therefore lessons can be learnt from its set up and operation as a taxi-bus that could be applied to accessing transport nodes.

5.5.10 Wiltshire County Council made the Hopper demand responsive taxi-bus service possible with a successful bid for £450,000 under the Rural Bus Challenge in 1999. It is a service for outpatients with a social rather than medical need, and visitors to the Royal United Hospital in Bath from rural locations in west and north Wiltshire. It offers home pick-ups and drop-offs, and is aimed at people without access to a car.

5.5.11 The project team report that there was no fixed formula for licensing rural community/taxi-bus services, and followed on from the examples in Greater Manchester described below where the service operates as a shared taxi under section 11 of the 1985 Transport Act. This avoided any route registration difficulties. The main requirements are that:

- passengers must book in advance;
- once a journey is booked, the service must operate;
- only passengers who have pre-booked may be carried; and
- passengers must agree to share.

5.5.12 Agreement was reached with the three local authorities in which the service operates that the operation needed to be registered in one authority only. Agreement was also reached on the specification of the vehicles to include accessibility for the mobility impaired, and for publicity of the way the shared taxi works.

- 5.5.13 One important finding from this scheme is that while it was felt that there was genuine initial interest from 12 local operators through meetings and discussions, only four chose to tender. It is reported that, from discussions with the operators who did not tender, there was a perception of the over-complexity of the project and the degree of paperwork deterred them from bidding. The chosen operator was A & G Minibuses of Warminster.
- 5.5.14 The fares for the service range from £4.50 to £8. The vehicles chosen for the service were Renault Masters, which include wheelchair access and fittings, and electrically operated lift, and hands-free communication kits.
- 5.5.15 The service started in July 2001, and by November the 1000th passenger was reported to be imminent. However it is also reported that patronage will need to 'increase significantly' to maintain the operation at an acceptable level of subsidy after the project period. An intensive advertising campaign is being prepared. Links are also being sought with other medical transport schemes at the hospital.
- Greater Manchester 'APT'*
- 5.5.16 Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (GMPTE) currently has nine taxi-bus routes. These are mainly based in small residential areas that can not be served by conventional financially-supported bus services due to either the small size of the settlement or the narrow layout of the roads precluding operation by larger vehicles.
- 5.5.17 APT stands for 'arranged passenger transport', and is described in the publicity as combining the benefits of a bus service with that of a taxi service. There are no published timetables or bus stops, and passengers just have to call the local call-centre at least an hour before wishing to travel. There is no need for pre-booking or registration with the scheme.
- 5.5.18 The publicity notes that the route will depend on other passengers' start and finish points, but adds that if APT is being used as an outward part of the journey, connections to the required bus or railway stations will be guaranteed. Return bookings can be made with the driver on the outward journey. A booking time exactly as requested cannot be promised, but are described as being possible within 30 minutes of the time.
- 5.5.19 The vehicles used include cars, people carriers and minibuses, and are operated by local taxi firms under contract to GMPTE. Some funding from Rural Bus

Challenge has been used to support specific services. Fares are calculated either on a zonal basis or as a flat-fare. The services use private hire vehicles, as all journeys have to be pre-booked, and can therefore pick up specific passengers as arranged.

5.5.20

While connections to other bus and rail stations are guaranteed, within the dense urban context of Greater Manchester such scheduling can be far easier than in large rural areas. While subjectively there may be significant economies to be made by using such vehicles only on a 'as-and-when needed' basis, rather than running to a fixed timetable, currently there is no financial information available to support this.

First Great Western '+Bus'

5.5.21

One of the newest, and potentially most interesting of the schemes, is First Great Western's '+Bus' (Plusbus) service. This offers a public transport service from a passenger's door to and from Truro railway station, and is advertised as operating to meet every major train arrival and departure, seven days a week. FGW quote Truro station as handling around 650,000 passenger trips per year.

5.5.22

The +Bus uses one Ford Galaxy 'people carrier', which has space for up to 6 passengers, and is clearly branded with the FGW's livery. It is only available to rail passengers, although while through ticketing is available, separate fares can be paid on the vehicle. The fares are £2.20 within Truro's 'inner zone' boundary and £2.90 for the 'outer zone' boundary. Currently the service covers an area of 2 to 3 miles from Truro railway station. Trips can be booked by telephone on an advertised number, at stations and on trains. An example of the +Bus publicity is shown in Figure 5.8 below.

Figure 5.8: First Great Western's '+Bus' Publicity



5.5.23

It was originally quoted that the scheme will operate for at least one year, and as of April 2002 the service area is expected to be extended significantly to cover areas such as Newquay and Falmouth. The service is reported as having 'plenty of spare capacity', although the service was launched in the winter season and at a time of some disruption to services. No operating problems have been reported, and it is reported that user satisfaction surveys have shown a very high level of satisfaction amongst the users. Also a new marketing campaign at all connecting railway stations expected to commence shortly.

5.5.24

The service is legally registered as a private hire vehicle, as pre-booking of trips is needed. Therefore the +Bus cannot pick up directly at stations. FGW report that if

they had registered the scheme as either as a hackney carriage (taxi) or a taxi-bus, they felt they would have faced opposition from the established local taxi companies. They also added that they would have had a far more rigorous licence application process, and would have had to queue for fares in the taxi-rank outside the station along with all the other taxis.

Devon's 'Fare Car'

- 5.5.25 This scheme started operating in December 2000 and operates seven days a week from eight small villages in an area north of Honiton. It offers six journeys per day in each direction, and is described as being “a taxi service at special fares”. However in practice it is operated as a private hire vehicle, operated by a private taxi and private-hire company under competitive tender.
- 5.5.26 Devon County Council makes up the difference between the fixed £1.50 fare per trip paid by the passenger, and the normal private hire fare that the taxi would charge. It is considered by Devon County Council to be a “great success”, which exceeded their expectations. On average, each journey is subsidised at a cost of between £4.50 and £5, which is comparable to and in many cases less than the County Council would subsidise a bus service. This scheme also offers a far more frequent service than would have been possible by bus.
- 5.5.27 Trips need to be booked in advance, but the Fare Car offers fixed arrival times in, and departure times from, Honiton. It also advertises that it offers the opportunity to connect with other public transport services.
- 5.5.28 The service operates under the 1985 Transport Act, which permits trips to be made by private hire vehicles by passengers paying separate fares, if they agree before hand. This is explicit in the booking of a trip. As with the ‘+Bus’ described above, by pre-booking trips private hire vehicles can be used, which opens up the market for potential service providers beyond ‘hackney carriage’ licensed operators. It was also noted by Devon County Council that the operator, Acorn Taxis of Honiton is considered to be a key part of the success of the scheme, in that they are fully committed to the scheme.
- 5.5.29 As with the Devon Flexi-Bus described above, the service is co-ordinated by Honiton TRIP. The service also receives financial support from the Countryside Agency.

5.5.30 This scheme appears to be very successful for the least-densely populated rural areas, and while the costs per trip may appear high at first sight, is cheaper than a comparable bus service would be. Therefore this scheme does offer good potential to be implemented in other parts of the SWARMMS study area.

5.6 ***Examples of Other Modes of Transport***

5.6.1 As noted in the introduction to this chapter, there are a number of other modes of transport that contribute to the overall transport system in rural areas. These include voluntary car schemes, car-sharing schemes, community car schemes, as well as 'Wheels-to-Work' schemes.

5.6.2 Voluntary car schemes are common in many rural areas, and are implemented in varying scales and with different levels of success. With these, local people volunteer their services to provide people with lifts. Usually a mileage based payment is payable to cover the cost of fuel and a contribution to the running costs. These are normally only available to people who are unable to use conventional public transport, but in some cases such as the Beeline Community Car scheme in Atherstone, in North Warwickshire can also be used by people with no access to public transport.

5.6.3 Car sharing schemes can also help with giving people access to transport that they would not otherwise have. An example of such a scheme is part of the Shropshire's 'Wheels-to-Work' scheme in Oswestry, which matches potential lift givers with those requiring lifts. This scheme also offers bicycle and moped loans for young persons with the opportunity of employment, but who would not be able to get there without such help.

5.6.4 Other modes such as rail branch lines can also provide access to the major transport corridors, and there are a small number of examples of where community groups have been established to support such lines. These include the Penistone Line Partnership in south and west Yorkshire, and the Cotswold Line Promotion Group.

5.7 ***Interchanges – Case Studies***

5.7.1 All the case studies so far concern different modes of transport to access the main transport corridors. However, such modes can either succeed or fail by the experience of the passenger at the interchange. A common complaint raised through the SWARMMS consultation about using public transport was the concern about interchange. In particular people were put off travelling by the idea

of being dropped of by one mode of transport on a dark, empty railway station or other interchange point, with no guarantee that the connecting service would arrive. Such issues have to be addressed if people are to have confidence in interchanging.

- 5.7.2 The earlier case-study of the Lincolnshire InterConnect service illustrated one example of how interchanges were being improved through new facilities, lighting, CCTV, communication links and by feeder buses being able to track the trunk bus route. Below are two examples from Lancashire County Council of improvements to interchange.

Clitheroe Interchange

- 5.7.3 The town of Clitheroe lost its railway service in 1962 when the line from Clitheroe to Hellifield was closed for passenger service. A passenger service was re-introduced in 1986 for 'DalesRail' walkers' special services, and the service was gradually improved with pressure from a local voluntary group, Ribble Valley Rail. Services are now available from Clitheroe to Preston or Manchester, although the link is still missing via Hellifield to the Settle-Carlisle Line.

- 5.7.4 Clitheroe itself is a small market town of around 10,000 people, with a large and quite affluent catchment area. However there are some areas of deprivation within the locality, and some villages are reported as having sizeable minorities of households without a car.

- 5.7.5 While the new railway services were welcomed, it was realised that co-ordination with the local bus services was less than ideal. Through partnership with the local bus operators, Stagecoach and Blackburn Transport and the local interest groups, Lancashire County Council led the project for state-of-the-art rural transport interchange at Clitheroe.

- 5.7.6 The interchange comprises new bus facilities located directly outside the railway station, with bus bays and new passenger waiting shelters, as shown in Figure 5.9 below. A new 'control centre' was built at the station which houses transport co-ordination staff for Lancashire County Council. The former booking office was restored and converted to an art gallery.

Figure 5.9: Clitheroe Interchange (picture taken from 'Great Ways to Go', CA).



5.7.7 The transport co-ordination staff provide information on the bus and rail services, and do as much as they can to ensure that bus and rail services connect. The progress of trains can be tracked via terminals linked to the national rail TRUST computer, so bus drivers can be advised on any short delays. In the case of longer delays, the staff can arrange for replacement bus or taxi services. They also handle telephone enquires, but at the time of reporting do not yet sell tickets.

5.7.8 The interchange is staffed from 07.00 to 23.00, with shorter periods on Sundays. This is a large staff commitment, but was considered necessary to provide the full benefits of the scheme to all passengers whatever the time of their journey. Many local bus services have been adjusted to serve the new interchange, and new low floor vehicles have been added on one route as part of a quality partnership. The lack of the availability of through ticketing due to the complexity of the number of tickets that would have to be available has been noted as having been a problem. However, this is due to be resolved with limited bus/rail tickets covering two rail-to-bus zones around the Clitheroe interchange. There are also cycle lockers at the station.

- 5.7.9 A community bus was due to also be introduced, operating on a demand-responsive basis to serve some isolated settlements by the Ribble Valley Community Transport group.
- 5.7.10 Funding for the scheme came from a number of different sources. Capital costs are quoted as being around £500,000, with annual running costs of around £90,000. Lancashire County Council has met most of the costs, with significant contributions from the Countryside Agency's Rural Transport Development Fund for the revenue costs. No figures have been able to be obtained on the number of extra passengers using the services although subjectively they have been quoted in the research for 'Great Ways to Go' as being "busier than before".
- 5.7.11 In summary, this is an excellent example of how interchange between modes can be encouraged. However, again the significant on-going revenue costs of the scheme need to be noted.
- Carnforth Connect*
- 5.7.12 The 'Carnforth Connect' transport interchange is similar to Clitheroe, and seeks to build upon the lessons learnt through that project. It opened a new staffed travel office in January 2002, with the objective of providing information, passenger facilities, co-ordinated services and personal safety. The station building was renovated, and is staffed from 07.00 to 23.30 Monday to Saturday and 07.00 to 21.00 on Sundays.
- 5.7.13 Staff can sell rail tickets, as well as the range of functions provided at Clitheroe, to ensure that rail and bus services connect with each other. At Carnforth there are three additional demand-responsive bus services, provided by new accessible minibuses, branded with the Carnforth Connect livery. Bookings for these services are taken at the travel office, and the buses are also equipped with cycle racks.
- 5.7.14 There are also cycle parking facilities, and CCTV for security. Bus stops in the area have also been equipped with real-time information, even in some of the most rural locations.
- 5.8 ***Relevance for SWARMMS***
- 5.8.1 It is evident from the above case studies that rural transport provision has changed markedly in the last few years. Far greater innovation has been shown than in the past, with many new schemes also utilising new sources of funding. However,

given that so many examples of 'good practice' have only been in operation for a short period, the evidence base for analysing their success is lacking.

5.8.2 It is also clear that SWARMMS is attempting to break new ground by improving rural access to selected public transport interchanges, albeit that some of the schemes which have been reviewed are similar in some respects. The review also illustrates that it is not possible to promote a 'one size fits all' approach to the provision of rural transport, and that it would be necessary for SWARMMS to offer a flexibility of approach in different areas.

5.8.3 Another common feature of the schemes reviewed is their continuing requirement for ongoing revenue support. In the absence of robust information on how the schemes provide value for money, either in a financial sense or in terms of meeting social exclusion objectives for example, it is inevitable that SWARMMS must adopt a cautious and iterative approach to addressing its rural access needs. To commit excessive funding when the relative successes of different schemes and approaches is not fully understood would be foolish.

6 Research by Eco-Logica for SW TAR and the CA

6.1 *Introduction*

6.1.1 As was briefly described earlier in Chapter 4, the report 'Joining in Public Transport – Key issues for guidance on rural access based on an assessment of a demand responsive service' is a key document of interest for this Plan. It was commissioned by the South West Sustainable Transport Round Table (SW TAR) with their partners the Countryside Agency South West regional office, and undertaken by Eco-Logica.

6.1.2 A specific output of the report, published in February 2002, is to contribute to SWARMMS, a study in which SW TAR has been an active stakeholder. In particular the report is helpful in terms of describing the good practice and for the lessons that can be learnt for other demand-responsive bus schemes. Another output of the Eco-Logica study is to inform the Government Office for the South West (GOSW) on the LTP process, with particular reference to the forthcoming review of LTP guidance.

6.1.3 The brief for the report was to review a specific demonstration project of the Wiltshire 'Wigglybus', to see if the project constitutes a model for rural public transport provision which could be widely replicated across rural Britain. The Wigglybus project is high profile in which there is much interest throughout the country as it was the first example in Britain of demand responsive transport applied to a regular scheduled public transport service available to all people. Two of the three Wigglybus routes provide a service from their rural catchments to Pewsey railway station, and are therefore directly relevant to the issue of accessing main transport corridors from rural areas.

6.1.4 The report also briefly describes two other rural public transport projects, the Cumbria PlusBus and the Honiton Ring and Ride, both of which were described in the previous chapter on case-studies.

6.1.5 A review of the findings of the report is given below, and has been informed further by a joint SWARMMS/SW TAR 'Seminar to Brainstorm Rural Access Issues' which was held in December 2001. This seminar was attended by 27

delegates representing a wide range of interested parties concerned with rural transport.

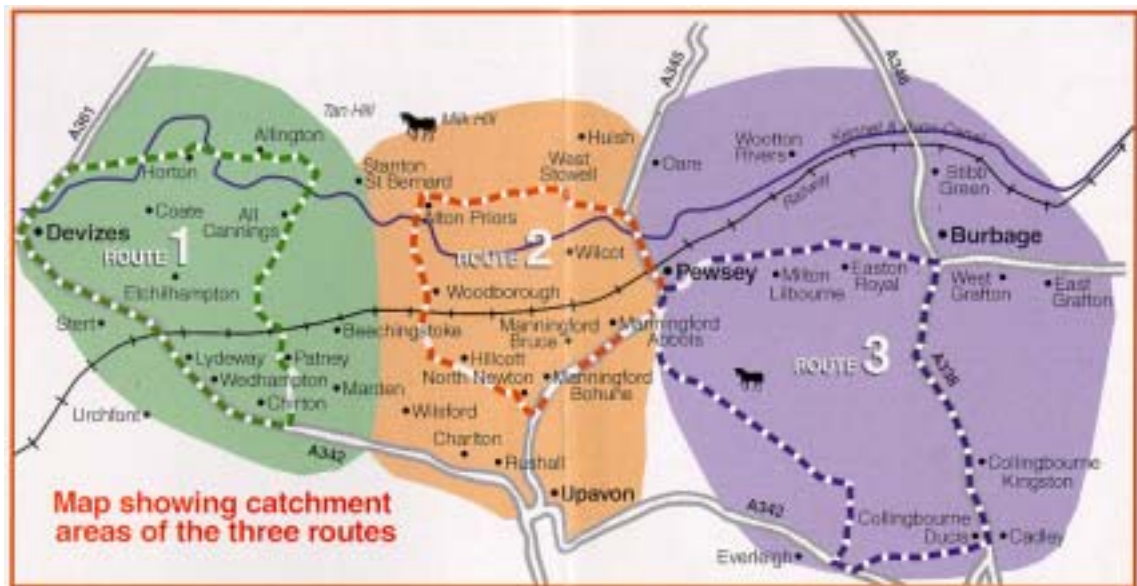
6.2

The Wiltshire Wigglybus

6.2.1

The Wiltshire Wigglybus currently provides an approximately hourly bus service on each of three circular routes in the Vale of Pewsey, Wiltshire. These three routes are east of Devizes and east and west of Pewsey, as shown in Figure 6.1 below. In total it serves a population of around 12,000.

Figure 6.1: The Existing 'Wigglybus' Routes



6.2.2

In January 2002 it was announced by DTLR that Wiltshire had part of their 2001 Rural Bus Challenge Bid accepted, with an award of £854,000. This will enable a fourth route to be added in the Pewsey Vale areas, and new services for Calne, and the establishment of a community transport organisation in Mere before a new service commences.

6.2.3

The basic objectives of the Wigglybus scheme were to:

- provide a public transport service for all, in rural areas formerly with minimal or no service;
- meet the needs of many people without access to a car; and

- offer the opportunity for people to transfer some car journeys to public transport.

6.2.4 The report notes that the Wigglybus began to deliver on these objectives from early on in its trial period, and it is an established and valued mode of transport even after a relatively short period of operation.

6.2.5 The background to the Wigglybus project originated in the sustainable transport programme of 'Making Tracks in Wiltshire', which included the aim of competing with car transport and promoting modal shift in rural areas, as well as providing a new rural bus service for those without access to cars. The idea of a flexibly routed bus service for all was taken up by the Pewsey Vale Passenger Transport Action Group (PVPTAG), which is a community-based organisation, which maintains an active role in the Wigglybus steering group. A successful bid was made to central government for a three-year funding of a pilot project under the Rural Bus Challenge competition. The three routes began operation between May and July 1999.

6.2.6 As with the other demand-responsive bus service case studies reviewed in the chapter above, journeys are booked in advance via a central call-centre up to the time of departure of the bus. The pick-ups and drop-offs of passengers are then transmitted to an on-bus LCD display screen for the driver's information via mobile telephone short message service (SMS) technology. The buses are also tracked by Global Positioning System (GPS) so the call centre can check the location of each of the buses at any time.

6.2.7 The service operates along a core route but the bus 'wiggles' off the route to pick up passengers. The bus service is registered with the Traffic Commissioners as a local bus service, with a start and end point, and an intermediate timing point. The original operator, Clapton Coaches gave their notice to terminate the contract in March 2000, citing financial losses in operating the service. The contract was then awarded to a Chippenham based operator, Hatts Coaches, at a reported increase of £50,000 per year. Wiltshire County Council handles all the contracts, including the operational tenders. The scheme uses 13-seat low-floor, accessible Rohill Harrier minibuses that are owned by Wiltshire County Council.

6.2.8 The service can operate on a broadly hourly interval, given that it does not offer any direct interchange opportunities with either other bus services or specific rail services. However the existence of the bus service is advertised in the First Great

Western guide for bus links, with an advertised add-on fare of 60p single, £1.20 return, and a £4.00 7-day ticket targeted at visitors and tourists.

6.2.9 Each of the three Wigglybus vehicles can carry up to two cycles on rear-mounted fold-down cycle racks, although no figures have been reported on the level of use of these. Fares are paid on the bus, but these can be much lower for those who join the Wigglybus travel club for a low annual membership.

6.2.10 More details about the service operation, including details of the travel club, and ridership analysis is given in the Eco-Logica report.

6.3 ***Achievements and Challenges***

6.3.1 The Eco-Logica report notes the major achievements of the Wigglybus, over what is still a relatively short period of trial operation, to be:

- there are now over 3,000 trips per month on the Wigglybus services as a total for all three routes, in areas which until mid-1999 had little or no public transport;
- levels of use reached the target for the three year trial period within two years;
- 10-15% of Wigglybus trips were previously made by individuals driving a car, so have brought about some reduction in car trips and around 35-40% of Wigglybus trips were previously made as car passengers;
- 20 - 30% of Wigglybus trips were previously not made at all, due to lack of opportunity. This, the report notes, is a clear indication that the Wigglybus is addressing problems of transport poverty;
- the Wigglybus is close to providing the hourly service frequency called for in government guidance and widely regarded as an essential minimum to provide convenience and flexibility in personal travel choices; and
- the Wigglybus has managed to extend its level of service during the trial period, to include some evening services and a limited direct service between Devizes and Pewsey, in response to community demands.

6.3.2 However the report adds that while this is generally a positive story, there have also been a number of problems, and they note that some of the headline achievements are therefore perhaps less notable than they at first appear. These problems are described as:

- there have been many operational difficulties, such as with the call centres, bus design and supply, and the operating contracts, and note that some of which are still unresolved;
- the Wigglybus has not met the needs of some members of the community within priority groups, and has been relatively weak at integration with the wider public transport network, even with its connection with the rail network at Pewsey;
- there appear to be drawbacks in the management framework, and some unclear lines of accountability;
- tensions arose between partners in establishing and operating the Wigglybus;
- question marks remain over the lines of communication with the user community;
- there are signs of usage levelling off or even possibly declining, at a level that gives cause for concern about whether the service can be sustained in the longer term; and
- although a high proportion of all bus trips were formerly made by car as either the driver or passenger, the proportion of all car trips replaced by the Wigglybus appears to be low.

6.3.3

The report notes that some of these problems contain an element of ‘teething trouble’ due to the innovative nature of the service, and the problems could be expected to be resolved through experience and avoided in future projects. However it describes other issues which may be more deep seated and have possible long term implications, and recommends that it is important to be as open as possible about the presence of such issues, in order to learn from them. It adds that it is important to distinguish between short-term ‘teething troubles’ and the more structural issues, which run the risk of being concealed “within the overall aura of positive progress”.

6.3.4

The report goes into more detail about some of the problems and issues, including the ones regarding the call-centre. Wigglybus needed to find a new call centre when one of the partners, Wiltshire Ambulance Trust, gave notice to terminate their provision of a call-centre facility in July 2001. This was described as due to the ambulance service’s necessary priority to provide ambulance cover over Wigglybus calls. The call-centre operation transferred to Message-Link in Gloucestershire, who already handled the Gloucestershire ‘Village-Link’ bookings. The report notes some initial difficulties in the transfer of the operation, and adoption of new operational procedures and software.

- 6.3.5 Other problems noted include the lack of user-friendliness in having to book all journeys, and of the information line being managed by the scheme's consultants, MTRU, in London, so lacks a local contact. Reliability of the three Rohill Harrier vehicles, and of the booking system is also questioned.
- 6.3.6 The Eco-Logica report suggests that on the current monthly patronage figures the service is in its 'consolidation' phase, as patronage in June to August 2001 declined more than would have been otherwise expected. However it is known that this view is not universally held within the organisations involved in the scheme management, who suggest the reported drop in passengers in summer 2001 is more to do with the change in the call-centres and of the booking systems, and the accuracy of recording bookings.
- 6.3.7 The Eco-Logica analysis goes on to look at the potential to expand its market, and the conundrum of attracting more passengers without making the Wigglybus service less attractive with longer journey-times for those already using the bus. More detail is given on these issues in their report.

6.4

Funding

- 6.4.1 With regard to funding, as is a common problem with the assessment of such schemes, the report notes that it proved difficult to get a clear picture of the costs of the Wigglybus project as a basis for assessing the viability of such schemes in general. This problem of analysing financial performance was noted in relation to the case studies described in the previous chapter as well. Many of the costs the report describes have been assumed within the project as one-off costs associated with the start-up of such a pioneering scheme. However there is no evidence from the other case studies across the country described in the previous chapter that they have benefited from a reduction in their costs from the Wigglybus experiences.
- 6.4.2 The report notes that the original three-year bid for funding forecast a cost of £850,000 for the three routes for that period, including the purchase cost of the vehicles, whose lives should far exceed the three-year pilot. The purchase cost of these vehicles is quoted as £180,000, along with other 'one-off' set up costs. Operation and maintenance costs were originally put at £35,000 per bus/year, however in the 2001 Rural Bus Challenge bid for additional funding this has risen to £60,000 per bus/year. Costs of £8,000 per bus/year have been quoted for the call centre, along with £3,000 per bus/year for the ongoing costs of the travel club,

the information line which is not handled by the call centre, publicity and monitoring.

6.4.3 This gives an operating cost of around £70,000 per bus/year, excluding the set-up costs, management and the local authority resource. This is a similar figure to that typically quoted for the annual cost of operating a mini/midibus from 07.00 to 19.00, six days a week. As this latter figure would normally assume an allowance for vehicle depreciation, it seems as if the operational cost of the Wigglybus is higher than could be expected for a conventional bus service, which is a cause for concern.

6.4.4 The financial analysis in the report is taken further, and quotes a cost of around £20 per head/ year, for the 12,000 people in the scheme's catchment area, for an hourly, doorstep public transport service, before passengers revenue is taken into account. The report notes that no detailed analysis of cost per passenger has been done by the project management, but that a funding support figure (the amount by which costs exceed fare income) of £5 to £6 per trip are quoted.

6.4.5 This figure must be treated with caution as the constituent parts of the 'cost' element are not known, and can be heavily influenced by the inclusion or exclusion of costs such as the purchase cost of the vehicles, and a partial allowance of the set-up costs. Taken at face value, the report adds that this cost exceeds the normal maximum cost of subsidy per trip for Wiltshire County Council, of £3.50. Therefore financial performance will have to improve if the service is to be sustained in the long-term.

6.5 ***Scheme Management***

6.5.1 A full description of the present management structure is given in the report. It notes that the Wigglybus Project Management Group (PMG) does not have any direct executive powers, as the contracts for the provision of the service are entirely with Wiltshire County Council. It notes that the PMG may, unwittingly make decisions that have contractual implications for the County Council. The report also notes a number of other potentially conflicting roles the different interested parties are expected to take on.

6.6 ***Community Engagement***

6.6.1 The report describes how a key element of demand responsive transport, and of rural transport strategies in general, is a high degree of involvement and

engagement of local people in the process of defining and refining the transport system most appropriate to their needs.

6.6.2

This it describes as being 'almost self-evident' that responding to demand involves knowing what the demand is, and that this knowledge can best be provided by the target community, so the community must be directly and meaningfully involved from the earliest stages of project development. It goes on to describe some deeper and perhaps less obvious inter-relationships, such as:

- the process is almost as important as the product in ensuring the success of transport plans of any description - if people feel involved in and part of the process of scheme development, they are much more likely to subscribe to the eventual product;
- integrated involvement of local people is a major channel of communication for the spread of ideas and enthusiasm about the project;
- marketing in sparsely populated rural areas is much more effectively achieved through supportive community networks; and
- demand-responsive transport is already recognised as not only meeting known demand but also revealing unknown demands. It is therefore essential for the transport system to be able to recognise and adapt to new demands as it becomes evident, and this can best be enabled if the management body has good contacts reaching far into the community it serves.

6.6.3

The report makes notes about the structure and framework of the various community groups and organisations concerned with the Wigglybus, and their contribution to the project management. It adds that the lack of a constitution or terms of reference can make it difficult for people to know what the groups stand for and how, if at all, members of the community can join them or be represented through them. This particularly relates to the Pewsey Vale Transport Action Group (PVTAG) in relation to the Wigglybus Project Management Group.

6.7

The Application of Demand Responsive Transport

6.7.1

The report concludes that the Wiltshire Wigglybus has brought a standard of public transport well above average to rural communities that previously had little or no public transport of any description. It has also proved that the concept of demand responsive transport is deliverable. However it notes that it has not yet achieved levels of use that would guarantee the security of service in the longer term, and ridership growth is showing signs of stagnation.

- 6.7.2 From their research, Eco-Logica suggest that a fundamental reshaping of the Wigglybus management structure is needed, to put the local communities closer to the heart of the operation and to give accountable community organisations the resources, training and technical support they need. The report argues that only then will the Wigglybus deliver what the user community wants, thereby becoming truly demand responsive. It notes that such structural change would deliver even higher quality, and deliver it more effectively.
- 6.7.3 The report notes that the Wiltshire Wigglybus is a useful starter model for demand responsive transport while acknowledging that demand responsive transport is only one part of rural public transport, and that rural public transport is only one part of sustainable rural transport strategies. The report proposes an organisational framework for much more integration between the various elements, again with community management to the fore in the delivery mechanisms for a wide range of public transport facilities.
- 6.7.4 The report also sets out a number of lessons that have been learnt through the Wigglybus scheme and also a number of lessons for Wigglybus. These include some operational changes that could be made, some management changes, and some suggestions for enhancing the performance of the Wigglybus. More details of these are given in the report.
- 6.7.5 In terms of direct implications for SWARMMS, the report concludes that demand responsive transport like the Wigglybus has a direct role to play in providing access from rural areas with dispersed population patterns to the strategic network, and offers tangible benefits to the quality of service and reliability of interchange. It notes that demand responsive transport can however deliver much more than this by contributing to strategic objectives of traffic demand management, but can only do so if firmly embedded in strategies and plans in a fully integrated approach.
- 6.7.6 Also of particular note is the assertion that demand-responsive transport is not being embraced in current transport strategies, such as the local transport plans (LTPs). As an example it quotes Wiltshire's LTP which, while mentioning the Wigglybus, does not form a specific policy or proposal, and has sought funding only through the Rural Bus Challenge instead. The report suggests that to embrace such concepts in LTPs would define the role for demand-responsive transport, especially in terms of a mode of sustainable transport. It would also illustrate its relative importance compared to other modes, would demonstrate the level of

integrated thinking in the LTP, and provide a programme of implementation against which progress can be measured over the plan period.

6.7.7 The report also adds that often a reason for the lack of delivery of support for small-scale community-based transport schemes is that it is easier for local authorities to deliver major infrastructure or maintenance projects. If this is the case, then resources will need to be found to enable local authorities to deliver such schemes from the LTP settlements.

6.7.8 Another difficulty noted in the report is building up the ridership once the service is in place, and suggests that the 'ingredients' described through their report can be summarised as:

- community ownership, commitment to, and support for the service;
- a co-ordinated management structure;
- effective community marketing;
- precise tailoring of the service to identified needs;
- use of the full spectrum of types of rural public transport according to identified need;
- seamless journeys;
- confidence that the service will perform to the required standard; and
- responsiveness to changing circumstances.

6.8 ***Interchange***

6.8.1 The report also discusses interchange, which is of particular interest to this Plan. It notes that demand-responsive transport can offer the means for people without the use of a car, or who would like to choose not to use a car, to gain access to more distant destinations and facilities with the maximum ease. It adds that it can also offer the convenience of seamless travel from home to the point of departure for the longer trip.

6.8.2 Therefore a railway or express coach station can be an anchor point for a demand responsive transport route. This is easiest if the long distance services are running clockface timetables to enable the demand responsive transport service to operate to a simple local schedule and always offer a reasonable connection time of not more than 15 minutes. Alternatively, stations could be request points for picking up or dropping off as part of a round.

6.8.3 However in practice it can be more complicated than it might initially appear. To timetable interchanges with any level of certainty, which is vital for confidence in the service, can be very difficult for demand-responsive bus services. The amount of 'slack' needed in a timetable to allow for flexible routeing off a core route to pick up passengers, but to also make certain connections, can make a service for other passengers very unattractive if the interchanges are not at the termini points of the route. It is important to note again that the Wigglybus does not try and directly integrate with other bus or rail services, unlike other schemes such as the Gloucestershire Village-Link. This is noted in the Eco-Logica report as being due to the complexity of timetabling a regular service with an irregular connecting service.

6.8.4 Another highlighted issue involving interchange between local and long distance services can be the tension between holding connections for people on late running services and disrupting schedules for other local users. It notes that in some respects demand responsive transport can handle this better than conventional services, because the connection is pre-booked (at least for the homeward journey) so the driver knows whether or not to wait for a late running service. However this does not help if there are other people booked on that trip of the bus, who are not arriving on that late-running connection.

6.8.5 The report describes a further possibility, in that the membership of a rural transport travel club could offer the benefit of guaranteed transport in the event of a missed connection. This it notes could be done by either by an additional run, or by a 'wiggle' back to the station in the event of short delays. However operationally, and with other bookings likely to have been taken by then, this may not be straightforward. However it does note that another solution could be to enlist another resource, such as hiring a taxi.

6.9 ***Criteria for Prioritising Rural Access Schemes***

6.9.1 Another area of information sought for SWARMMS from the Eco-Logica research was some guidance on the main criteria for establishing scheme priorities. The criteria given in their report are:

- the quality of existing access provision;
- the numbers of people benefiting from accessibility improvements;
- the potential for promoting modal shift on critical parts of the transport network; and

- the potential for improving the network as a whole through targeted individual schemes.

6.9.2

Eco-Logica describe how it would be relatively straightforward, and very informative, to produce a map showing accessibility by public transport to the rail and express coach network. This they describe could be done in terms of area served at given frequencies of hourly, two hourly, etc, with given journey times, direct to the strategic network interchange point. This would then show which areas were for example within 30 minutes travel time from a station but completely lacking any access by public transport; these could then be overlain with population data to show where improvements would benefit the greatest number of people. They note that such an approach would appear to be within the sphere of interest of the Regional Transport Strategy, however they note that this level of detail goes beyond the scope of the SWARMMS study.

6.10

Modal shift

6.10.1

The Eco-Logica report makes a number of references to modal shift, which is beyond the scope of this Plan concerning access to the major transport corridors from rural areas for reasons such as social exclusion. However it is important to the wider SWARMMS study. Indeed the report claims that the potential for modal shift in local transport systems to influence patterns of use on the strategic network should not be underestimated. It says that at some locations and at the critical peak hours over 80% of traffic on motorways or major roads is local, short distance traffic on regular repeat journeys, and therefore most amenable to modal shift measures. The report claims that each 10% modal shift in local traffic would in this case mean an 8% reduction in traffic on the strategic road network, which could be significant both as a measure to alleviate congestion (provided that induced traffic effects can be avoided) and as an alternative solution to increasing capacity.

6.10.2

However, the main part of Eco-Logica's research indicates that the modal shift effect of the Wiltshire Wigglybus to date has been negligible, from which it says that it might be inferred that rural public transport strategies are unlikely to contribute significantly to traffic reduction on strategic routes by modal shift. There are two arguments put forward in their report against this conclusion. Firstly, the Wiltshire Wigglybus is thought to be capable of higher levels of capture of car trips than it has achieved to date. Secondly, as is frequently emphasised in this report the Wiltshire Wigglybus, and even demand responsive transport in general, are only one component of rural public transport systems, and rural public

transport systems are only one part of rural transport strategies. However 12,000 rural dwellers can be expected to generate 5 million car journeys in a year, and the Wigglybus appears to have captured 5,000 of these, giving a modal shift of 1%.

6.10.3

It notes that sustainable transport strategies operate as the aggregation of many strands of action, each of which may have only a limited effect on its own but which cumulatively add up to a significant achievement. It refers to one company transport plan (Pfizer Sandwich) as having already achieved modal shifts of approaching 10% away from car use in less than three years, in a rural location, by a concerted approach across a broad front of targeted actions. From this it concludes that rural transport strategies taken forward on a similarly broad front should be capable of similar results.

6.11

6.11.1

Deliverability

On the issue of deliverability, Eco-Logica's report notes that it would be futile to pretend that there are easy universal prescriptions for this problem, but draws attention to some pointers in their report, including:

- long term stability in funding commitment from central government creates a climate in which carefully constructed programmes can be put forward with confidence;
- addressing legislative and regulatory barriers is a key ingredient in promoting deliverability;
- a strong evidence base of need for a service, grounded in the views of the recipient communities, will increase the confidence of funding bodies to allocate funds;
- community management organisations, being relatively small and tightly constituted bodies, can often move relatively quickly to make the most of opportunities to take things forward, so can assist delivery considerably. However it does note the importance of having them properly constituted, with proper financial systems and clear lines of responsibility and accountability, if they are to be entrusted with public funds to deliver public services;
- active community organisations can also be effective in pressing for actions where there is a consensus on what's wanted, and in driving projects forward out of the self-interest of benefiting from the new service; and
- the presence of an 'umbrella' organisation in an area has several benefits for new projects, since the umbrella contains the amassed experience of

previous projects ready to hand, and each scheme does not have to learn from scratch - some aspects of provision, such as a vehicle pool and a call centre, should already be in place and the new scheme simply has to plug into or augment the existing framework.

6.11.2 Eco-Logica also suggest that, contrary to most situations, adequacy of funding is probably not the main issue affecting delivery. They note that political momentum to address social exclusion has boosted funding for public transport, and the problem at the moment is to ensure that services meet needs adequately, rather than funding additional buses to run around empty most of the time. The main problem with LTP funding seems to be in processing projects quickly enough, and here also creative use of trusted community management structures could help bridge resource gaps in local authorities.

6.11.3 It summarises by saying that these delivery mechanisms will contribute directly to the delivery of the SWARMMS strategy, by putting in place the local components of the strategy as and when required. Finally it adds that buses are one of the significant modes in a multi-modal strategy, so their contribution to delivering the strategy is substantial.

6.12 ***Relevance to SWARMMS***

6.12.1 The Eco-Logia report highlights many of the successes of the Wigglybus project including the bringing of public transport to an area that had little or no public transport of any description. It also highlights that it was one of the earliest experiments in demand responsive transport, and it is fair that it provided a model for other demand-responsive bus schemes, many of which were described in Chapter 5 above. It also is relevant to SWARMMS in that it is clear that demand-responsive transport is only one part of rural public transport, which in itself is only one part of the wider sustainable rural transport strategies. It adds that the next step is for a fully integrated approach through Regional Transport Strategies and LTPs.

6.12.2 However the report also notes that the Wigglybus has only had a very small effect in addressing modal shift. This serves as a note of caution to SWARMMS for optimistic claims of modal shift in public transport schemes, even when specifically designed to do so.

6.12.3 It also notes that the service has not yet reached a level of use or return on revenue that would guarantee the security of the service in the long-term. This is important

to SWARMMS in illustrating that even as an example of 'good practice' the Wigglybus requires significant revenue support, and that such schemes are not self-supporting financially. Therefore without such ongoing revenue funding, such schemes will not continue, especially when their costs per passenger trip exceed the normal levels that local authorities would support.

6.12.4 Also in terms of funding, the Eco-Logia report notes that given the cost of between approximately £5 and £6.20 per passenger trip on the Wigglybus, for the average direct trip distances of perhaps 4 and 6 kilometres, "commercial taxis could provide an individually demand responsive service with faster journey times for much the same cost per trip". The report does however note that there are many reasons why this would not work, and the mileage generation implications of these trips being made by taxi, but it does draw attention to the financial realities of such schemes.

6.12.5 The report goes on to suggest that the growth in patronage has reached a plateau, and that to continue to grow and develop, it needs a "fundamental re-shaping of the management structure". This shows the importance of getting the community involved at all stages of the project to ensure 'ownership' of the scheme by the local community, and the importance of maintaining that support as the scheme develops.

6.13 ***Post-Publication Reaction***

6.13.1 Since the report 'Joining in Public Transport' was published, as would be expected of such an important piece of research, a number of articles have been published in the transport planning trade press relating to the report and the reaction to it. This has included general references in articles, and in particular a published letter jointly signed by the scheme's acting project manager, the Chairman of PV TAG, and the district and county council. This letter states that in their opinion that some of the information has been "seriously misrepresented" and that they "wished to dissociate themselves from the report and the way it was being used".

6.13.2 The concerns are two-fold, and relate criticism about the assessment of costs and benefits in the bid as being "over-optimistic" which they groups feel have not been fully understood by Eco-Logica. The second point of contention is about the claim that there was a lack of involvement between the community and the project management team. The four bodies represented in the letter claim this is untrue and that there was a high level of community involvement.

6.13.3

The implications for SWARMMS of this show how difficult it is to objectively review such schemes as the Wiltshire Wigglybus and assess its performance, even after a lengthy and detailed assessment. The management of such schemes involve many different bodies and organisations, as well as numerous individuals, that getting 'to the heart of the matter' is very difficult, especially when assessing the subjective elements of such projects.

7 Summary and Recommendations

7.1 *Overview of Findings*

7.1.1 It is evident from the above that the issue of access to the main SWARMMS transport corridors from rural areas is an important consideration. It is particularly important from a social exclusion viewpoint, since many people without access to a car would be prevented from enjoying the enhanced accessibility benefits which other parts of the SWARMMS strategy would otherwise provide.

7.1.2 It is equally evident, however, that the 'rural transport agenda' is far wider than simply improving access to major public transport nodes. Given the wide variety of rural issues that transport schemes are endeavouring to address, it is perhaps no surprise that they differ so markedly in both type and structure. As stated earlier, it is not the purpose of SWARMMS to suggest ways of resolving the broad rural transport agenda; the focus of SWARMMS remains the main transport corridors between London and the South West and South Wales, and the purpose of this Plan is to address rural access to those corridors.

7.1.3 The review of case studies presented in Chapters 5 and 6 is particularly illuminating. Many recent schemes have been put forward in a variety of reports as examples of 'best practice', and all provide some benefits to the community they are intended to serve. However, almost all have some drawbacks whether it be in terms of difficulty of use, lack of reliability in their connection to other public transport services or, perhaps most worryingly, low levels of patronage. This inevitably calls into question their value for money, and the ability to fund them over the longer term.

7.1.4 We should not, however, be too pessimistic about the future. Many schemes are still in their infancy, and lessons are continually being learnt about how to overcome potential pitfalls of implementation and operation. The highlighted difficulties, however, do suggest that there are no simple solutions to the SWARMMS problem, and that excessive optimism to wholly address such access problems should be tempered. Certainly there is no 'one size fits all' solution; however, the evidence presented above does suggest a way forward.

7.2

Recommendations

7.2.1

If access to the main public transport networks is to be provided at a level which is attractive to users, then there needs to be both a reliable connection and an acceptable quality of interchange. Whilst such connections are undoubtedly easier to provide with a clock-face rail or coach timetable (and this is being promoted by SWARMMS in some of the corridor specific plans), this will not occur in the majority of cases. Hence, either the connecting public transport service has to be frequent enough to enable at least some of its services to act as convenient 'feeder' services, or it needs to be totally flexible and respond to transport needs as and when they occur.

7.2.2

Given this, we propose a combination of the following types of service:

- fixed-route bus services;
- a limited number of flexible bus services;
- dedicated private hire connecting services, and
- fixed-rate taxi/private hire services which can also serve public transport hubs as well as other purposes.

7.2.3

Services such as the Helston Branch Line provide benefits by way of the surety of timings of a fixed route bus, and of the places that will be served. It also does not require any form of pre-booking, for which a telephone call can be perceived as being potentially costly or inflexible if a person's travel arrangements change. The service is clearly providing a valuable connection to the main rail network, as well as a valuable local bus service. Hence, where there is sufficient point-to-point demand to warrant such a regular connecting service, we recommend that such schemes should be more widely introduced throughout the SWARMMS area.

7.2.4

In areas where there is either lower demand or where relatively high demand is dispersed away from a linear corridor, and hence there is less certainty of regular patronage on a fixed route service, we recommend the use of more flexible services. For places where the terminal points are the connections to the major transport corridors, flexibly routed buses may be suitable. Again it is unlikely that there will be sufficient demand to sustain a dedicated service of this type in most instances; however if it was the case then this would be the most preferable as it would be much easier to keep connections without inconveniencing other passengers.

- 7.2.5 In areas where there is either lower demand or where it is not appropriate for public transport nodes to be terminal points, we recommend a liveried private hire service similar to the '+Bus' recently introduced at Truro station by First Great Western. Providing such a service is well advertised and cost-competitive, it would provide the flexibility of routing to and from any rail or coach interchange.
- 7.2.6 Finally, for areas with a lower overall level of demand for services to the main transport corridors, or with a demand at the peak period only, we would recommend fixed rate taxi/private hire services, similar to the Devon 'Fare Car'. These could serve the public transport interchanges as well as other destinations, or possibly only serve the interchanges at peak times. This would make the most efficient use of the services and offer significant benefits to the level of transport provision within rural areas as a whole.
- 7.2.7 All four types of schemes proposed in this Plan would provide the very important benefit of guaranteed connections for rail and coach passengers. Such certainty of connection would be a vital consideration for those choosing to travel by public transport.
- 7.2.8 Some of the case studies, and particularly the work carried out by Eco-Logica on the Wiltshire Wigglybus, advocate a strong community involvement in the development of rural transport schemes. We would fully endorse this view, insofar as County Councils and transport operators should fully consult with and engage the local communities so as to establish need and identify the most appropriate form of provision. The type of services being advocated in this Plan as most appropriate for SWARMMS do not, however, require the community to manage or operate the services on a daily basis.
- 7.2.9 The importance of the interchange itself must also be recognised, and the examples at Clitheroe and Carnforth are admirable in this respect. The need for convenient interchange between modes is self-evident, and should be designed into any facility. The presence of staff at the interchange is also important, giving added confidence in the service and high security (perceived if not necessarily real) to the passengers. Such a presence would be particularly welcome in areas of high tourist activity where potential passengers would be unfamiliar with the local area. The costings and an implementation plan for interchanges will be addressed in the corridor-specific Plans within SWARMMS.

7.3

Implementation

7.3.1

In time, we would wish to see every rail and coach interchange in the SWARMMS area that serves a rural catchment area having at least one of the four types of services described above. However, such schemes are still developing and full knowledge of such schemes is not yet available. As such, we propose that a continual and iterative programme of scheme implementation is carried out over the next 15 year period. This will allow the existing ‘trial’ schemes to be monitored and amended as necessary, and further lessons to be learnt. The rural transport typologies developed by CfIT, and presented in Appendix B, would seem to have merit in determining the possible structure of such an implementation programme.

7.3.2

Overall, there are about 50 rail and coach interchanges in the SWARMMS study area that would benefit from such a scheme, and for half of these interchanges it is estimated that, on average, two schemes would be needed, giving a total of 75. This equates to the introduction of some 5 schemes per year over a 15 year period. The estimated split of the type of schemes based on the areas to be covered are shown in Table 7.1 below with estimated costs:

Table 7.1 Types of Service and Costs

Type of Service	Estimated range of the number of schemes achievable in 15 years	Estimate used in calculations	Average cost per scheme (ea/yr.)
Fixed route buses	5 – 10	7.5	£100,000
Flexibly routed buses	5	5	£100,000
Dedicated private hire	15 - 20	17.5	£58,333
Fixed rate taxi/private hire	40 - 50	45	£75,000

7.3.3

For all four types of service, the costs have been quoted as revenue, in line with normal tendering of bus services by local authorities. The annual amount paid to a bus company or a taxi company will normally be a revenue payment, from which the operator will fund the capital costs of vehicles and equipment. In the case of flexible buses, the additional costs of the call centre and the IT equipment have been added into the estimated annual costs. In practice, whether the bus company would procure such resources from the revenue payment, or whether these would be funded directly by the local authority, may vary between schemes.

7.3.4

Table 7.2 below shows an estimated funding profile, over the 15 year period.

Table 7.2 Estimated Funding Profile

£ millions

Year	Fixed Route Buses	Flexible Buses	Dedicated private hire services	Fixed rate taxi/ private hire	YEAR TOTALS
1	£0.10	£0.10	£0.06	£0.08	£0.33
2	£0.20	£0.20	£0.12	£0.15	£0.67
3	£0.30	£0.30	£0.18	£0.23	£1.00
4	£0.40	£0.40	£0.23	£0.30	£1.33
5	£0.50	£0.50	£0.29	£0.38	£1.67
6	£0.60	£0.60	£0.35	£0.45	£2.00
7	£0.70	£0.70	£0.41	£0.53	£2.33
8	£0.80	£0.80	£0.47	£0.60	£2.67
9	£0.90	£0.90	£0.53	£0.68	£3.00
10	£1.00	£1.00	£0.58	£0.75	£3.33
11	£1.10	£1.10	£0.64	£0.83	£3.67
12	£1.20	£1.20	£0.70	£0.90	£4.00
13	£1.30	£1.30	£0.76	£0.98	£4.33
14	£1.40	£1.40	£0.82	£1.05	£4.67
15	£1.50	£1.50	£0.88	£1.13	£5.00
TOT	£12.0m	£12.0m	£7.0m	£9.0m	£40.0m

7.3.5 Table 7.2 assumes that there will be an even spread of schemes through a 15 year implementation period, with the requirement for continuous revenue support. Therefore in the first year of implementation the total revenue support would be in the region of £0.33 million, and in Year 15 it would be in the region of £5 million. The total cost of the Plan over the 15 year period would be £40 million.

7.3.6 Even with these schemes in place it must be noted that they would not cover the whole of the rural catchment for each station, and they must be targeted at the areas of greatest demand and social deprivation.

7.3.7 One drawback of the existing funding arrangements for rural transport is the lack of certainty over its long-term provision. Currently most funding sources are aimed to provide 'pump priming' finance to get schemes up and running, and therefore only last for periods such as two to three years. The extent of revenue support that the majority of such services need means that schemes that could otherwise be regarded as successful in meeting a clear social need are withdrawn. Whilst accepting that no funding should be granted in perpetuity, we do recommend that

an increased level of certainty should be granted via a rolling programme of three year funding, against which the achievement of clear objectives should be monitored. Whilst failure to meet the objectives would result in funding being withdrawn, meeting the scheme objectives would ensure long term provision.

7.3.8

The state of current knowledge makes it difficult to recommend which organisations should be responsible for implementing such schemes. The Countryside Agency has a clear interest in access issues within its wider rural responsibilities, whereas it is local authorities who currently deliver most of the existing rural public transport. On balance, we suggest that the local authorities, through the LTP process, would be best placed to implement such schemes, thereby drawing upon their existing networks of community consultation and participation. The Countryside Agency, however, would have a key role in scheme development and the setting of scheme objectives. Very importantly, it is also recommended that the Countryside Agency takes responsibility for scheme monitoring, dissemination of lessons learnt, and identifying the most beneficial areas of future spend.

7.3.9

By recommending that implementation is best achieved through the LTP process, it is recognised that changes will have to be made to the current approach of focusing on capital expenditure within LTP funding. By also including revenue support, however, it would strengthen the links with other parts of the Councils' transport strategy, and also provide the aggregated link to the Regional Transport Strategy. To relegate revenue support to another funding source risks decoupling the provision of socially necessary rural public transport from the remainder of the Council's integrated transport strategy.

7.4

Concluding Remarks

7.4.1

It is accepted that the monies associated with this Plan are significant, but they are nevertheless an important contributor to addressing the rural social inclusion agenda. Without the schemes which are described, many people will be excluded from the enhanced accessibility benefits which SWARMMS is striving to provide.

Appendix A

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Appendix A - References

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Appendix B

Rural Transport Typologies

Appendix B – Rural Transport Typologies

Taken from 'Rural Transport – An Overview of Key Issues', by the CfIT, 2001

A1. Rural peri-conurbation (e.g. rural Surrey)

Car ownership

- 75-85%

Population living within 1 mile of a general store / post office

- 65-75%

Population living more than 5 miles from a general store / post office

- <1%

Public/ community transport provision

- Mainline rail
- Rural rail
- Registered bus network

Households within 10 minutes walk of an hourly bus service

- up to 70%

Proportion of journeys made by car

- 65 - 75%

Key transport problems

- Increasing traffic levels & lorry weights
- Deteriorating condition of non-trunk road network
- Road safety and congestion
- Local impact of park and ride schemes

Other transport issues

- Decline of local shop, service and health provision in smaller villages
- Increasing local journey distances

Contribution of key transport problems to social exclusion

- Partial/ secondary

A2. Rural peri-urban (e.g. Oxfordshire)

Car ownership

- 75-85%

Population living within 1 mile of a general store / post office

- 65-75%

Population living more than 5 miles from a general store / post office

- <5%

Public/ community transport provision

- Mainline rail
- Registered bus network
- Rural rail

Households within 10 minutes walk of an hourly bus service

- up to 70%

Proportion of journeys made by car

- 65- 75%

Key transport problems

- Increasing traffic levels & lorry weights
- Deteriorating condition of non-trunk road network
- Road safety and congestion
- Local impact of park and ride schemes

Other significant issues

- Decline of local shop, service and health provision in smaller villages
- Access to public transport for households removed from main public transport routes
- Falling demand and rising subsidy costs on off peak public transport services
- Increasing local journey distances

Contribution of key transport problems to social exclusion

- Partial/ secondary

B1. Market town and hinterland with proximate urban centre

(e.g. Dingwall and Inverness)

Car ownership

- 75-85%

Population living within 1 mile of a general store / post office

- 60 -75%

Population living more than 5 miles from a general store / post office

- <10%

Public/ community transport provision

- Registered bus network
- Rural rail

Households within 10 minutes walk of an hourly bus service

- up to 60%

Proportion of journeys made by car

- 65-75%

Key transport problems

- Decline of retail and service provision in market town and smaller villages
- Increased bypass traffic on minor roads and trunk routes
- Increasing journey distances
- Falling demand for non trunk public transport services
- Bus services do not go where people want to travel
- Cost of public transport fares
- Cost of public transport subsidies on non-trunk routes

Other significant issues

- Access to public transport for households removed from main public transport routes
- Travel to work for non-car owners living off public transport routes
- Evening and Sunday travel for those without access to a car

Contribution of key transport problems to social exclusion

- Partial / significant

B2. Market town with dispersed hinterland (e.g. Lincolnshire)

Car ownership

- 75 – 85%

Population living within 1 mile of a general store / post office

- 60 – 75%

Population living more than 5 miles from a general store / post office

- <10%

Main forms of Public/ community transport provision

- Registered bus network
- Community transport

Households within 10 minutes walk of an hourly bus service

- Up to 50%

Proportion of journeys made by car

- 70-75%

Key transport problems

- Decline of local shop, service and health provision in smaller villages
- Coverage and frequency of bus network
- Rising average journey length
- Falling demand for existing bus services
- Increasing public transport fares
- Increasing cost of public transport subsidies
- Access to public transport for households removed from main public transport routes
- Travel to work for non-car owners living off public transport routes
- Low income; proportion of weekly expenditure accounted for by transport

Other significant issues

- Access to public transport for disabled
- Fuel costs
- Access to filling stations
- Parking & congestion in market town
- Evening and Sunday travel for those without access to a car
- Increasing traffic levels on trunk routes

Contribution of key transport problems to social exclusion

- Significant

B3 Market town with 'valley' hinterland (e.g. Yorkshire Dales)

Car ownership

- 75 – 85%

Population living within 1 mile of a general store / post office

- 60- 75%

Population living more than 5 miles from a general store / post office

- <10%

Public/ community transport provision

- Daily bus network
- Community transport

Households within 10 minutes walk of an hourly bus service

- Up to 45%

Proportion of journeys made by car

- 70- 75%

Key transport problems

- Decline in local shop, service and health provision
- Falling demand for off peak public transport. Increasing cost of public transport subsidies
- Fuel prices
- Access to filling station
- Increasing journey distances and public transport fares

Other significant issues

- Decline of local shop, service and health provision in smaller villages
- Access to public transport for households removed from main public transport routes
- Travel to work for non-car owners living off public transport routes
- Demand and rising fare and subsidy costs for off-peak public transport
- Disabled access to public transport
- Low income; proportion of weekly expenditure accounted for by transport
- Evening and Sunday travel for those without access to a car
- Increasing traffic levels on trunk routes
- Parking & congestion in market town

Contribution of key transport problems to social exclusion

- Significant

C1. Remote rural 'Honeypot' (e.g. The Lake District)

Car ownership

- 80-90%

Population living within 1 mile of a general store / post office

- 55 – 65%

Population living more than 5 miles from a general store / post office

- Up to 15%

Public/ community transport provision

- Registered bus network
- External rail and coach links
- Community transport

Households within 10 minutes walk of an hourly bus service

- Less than 30%

Proportion of journeys made by car

- 70 – 80%

Key transport problems

- Increasing traffic levels
- Congestion and parking difficulties at tourist spots
- Deteriorating condition of non-trunk road network
- Decline of shop, service provision outside tourist areas
- Lack of demand for non-tourist bus services
- Increasing cost of non-tourist fares & subsidies
- Fuel prices
- journey distance and cost
- Low income; proportion of weekly expenditure accounted for by transport
- Travel to work for non-car owners

Other significant issues

- Access to public transport for households removed from main public transport routes
- Access to public transport for disabled
- Evening and Sunday travel for those without access to a car

Contribution of key transport problems to social exclusion

- Substantial

C2. Remote rural village and hinterland (e.g. Northumberland)

Car ownership

- 85-95%

Population living within 1 mile of a general store / post office

- 55 – 65%

Population living more than 5 miles from a general store / post office

- Up to 15%

Public/ community transport provision

- Bus service (between 1 per day and 1 per week)

Households within 10 minutes walk of an hourly bus service

- Less than 15%

Proportion of journeys made by car

- 75 – 85%

Key transport problems

- Decline or absence of local shop, service and health provision in smaller villages
- Frequency of public transport service; lack of demand of existing service
- Price of fuel
- Access to filling stations
- Increasing journey distances
- Increasing cost of fares of public transport
- Increasing cost of subsidy of public transport
- Low income; proportion of weekly expenditure accounted for by transport
- Travel to work for non-car owners

Other significant issues

- Access to public transport for households removed from main public transport routes
- Access to public transport for disabled
- Winter road conditions
- Deterioration of minor road surfaces
- Evening and Sunday travel for those without access to a car

Contribution of key transport problems to social exclusion

- Substantial

C3. Isolated periphery (e.g. North West Highlands)

Car ownership

- 90 - 100%

Population living within 1 mile of a general store / post office

- 50 - 60%

Public/ community transport provision

- Post bus (pre-booked)

Population living more than 5 miles from a general store / post office

- Up to 20%

Households within 10 minutes walk of an hourly bus service

- 0%

Proportion of journeys made by car

- 80 - 90%

Key transport problems

- Absence of alternative to the car
- Fuel prices
- Access to filling station
- Absence of local shop, service and health provision
- Lack of demand for public transport
- High journey distance and cost
- Low income; proportion of weekly expenditure accounted for by transport
- Accessibility and mobility of all occupants

Other transport issues

- Winter road conditions
- Deterioration of minor road surfaces

Contribution of key transport problems to social exclusion

- Fundamental