
HITRANS

Rural Bus Service Support and Funding

March 2021



Executive Summary

National Transport Strategy 2 was published early in 2020, setting out a positive Vision that commits to be a Transport Strategy for all of Scotland recognising the different needs and challenges the country faces, reaching out beyond the silos that exist in terms of responsibility of Scotland's transport infrastructure, services and assets. Sustainable transport will be prioritised and this will foster a move away from car use where possible in every part of Scotland.

Local bus service across Scotland have been in sharp decline for the last 15 years or so. Frequency of bus use is, as expected, higher in urban areas where more bus services operate. Much of rural Scotland continues to rely on supported local bus services, and communities are dealing with the reduction and demise of many routes in their areas.

Since the Concordat agreement of 2007, ring-fencing of Local Authority General Revenue Grant (GRG) has been removed, revenue funding has been reducing (Audit Commission estimated a real terms reduction of 7.6% since 2013/14) and focus has therefore been placed on broader statutory functions, of which, local bus services are not. Consequently, funding for local bus services has reduced significantly across Scotland, and continues to do so.

Rural Scotland has been at the brunt of this decline with the heaviest reliance on subsidised local bus services. Between 2010 and 2019 there was loss of more than one in five subsidised bus services in Scotland, a loss of around 60 routes, which are far more likely to impact rural and remote areas.

The national funding schemes for local bus services in Scotland often favour urban areas and areas operating with commercial services. In other parts of the UK there continues to be dedicated national funding streams for rural transport.

Local bus services across Scotland have been in sharp decline for the last 15 years. This paper sets out some of the key issues, challenges and opportunities that face local bus services in rural Scotland. These include the challenges of delivering equity to rural areas from funding streams established on a one Scotland basis including the National Concessionary Travel Scheme, Bus Service Operators Grant and Scottish Ultra Low Emission Bus Scheme.

The Scottish Government has made a hugely positive commitment through their Bus Partnership Fund that will deliver transformational change in urban networks by tackling congestion and bus running time delays anchoring a partnership effort between local transport authorities and bus operators. This paper sets out a number of recommended actions that Scottish Government could take to ensure that transformational change is delivered for rural bus and community transport services. These interventions would allow RTPs, Local Authorities and Community Transport groups to work together to deliver a pipeline approach that would make a real and lasting difference for sustainable travel in rural areas. The recommendations are listed below:

- a) Recognition that the national concessionary fare scheme has an in built unfairness for rural areas that should be addressed and consider utilising the Bus Service Operator Grant as a mechanism to deliver equity for rural bus services.
- b) Introduce a Rural Transport Fund – if managed at RTP level there would be no impacts on local government grant in terms of ring fenced funding or grant formula. This would appropriate targeting and learning between areas across the region.
- c) Introduce RTP capital passenger transport grant to support improvements to infrastructure and public transport capital assets including within the community transport sector. In the past HITRANS received £3.5m each year to deliver these types of improvements and this level of support would allow us to make a real difference to the infrastructure, interchange and travel information experience offered to passengers.
- d) Introducing an Enhanced DRT funding stream – managed at RTP level and developed collaboratively with local authorities and community anchor groups including existing CT providers and the CTA.
- e) Work with bus manufacturers to develop an affordable multi-purpose accessible bus design that is fit for purpose for rural bus service.
- f) Investigating the potential for more regional collaboration on Public Transport and DRT management and operations.

NTS 2 Context

The Scottish Government's National Transport Strategy 2 was published early in 2020. This sets out a positive Vision and commits to be a Transport Strategy for all of Scotland recognising the different needs and challenges the country faces, reaching out beyond the silos that exist in terms of responsibility of Scotland's transport infrastructure, services and assets. The NTS Vision is underpinned by 4 priorities, these are:

- **Reduces inequalities**
- **Takes Climate Action**
- **Helps deliver inclusive growth**
- **Improves health and wellbeing**

The strategy will be taken forward by Transport Scotland. The NTS has established a travel hierarchy which promotes active travel then shared transport options and encourages a move away from private car use. This hierarchy is supported by the diagram which has been very effective in communicating the NTS priorities.



Summary of Rural Bus Service Issues

Local bus services across Scotland have been in sharp decline for the last 15 years or so. Frequency of bus use is, as expected, higher in urban areas where more bus services operate. Much of rural Scotland continues to rely on supported local bus services, and communities are dealing with the reduction and demise of many routes in their areas.

Since the Concordat agreement of 2007, ring-fencing of Local Authority General Revenue Grant (GRG) has been removed, revenue funding has been reducing (Audit Commission estimated a real terms reduction of 7.6% since 2013/14).

The national funding schemes for local bus services in Scotland all favour urban areas and areas operating with commercial services. In other parts of the UK there continues to be dedicated national funding streams for rural transport.

There is continuing concern about the continuation of further austerity measures and hence pressures placed upon local bus services – predominantly subsidised services, which are most common in rural Scotland. This downwards pressure is also in the context of increasing costs to provide statutory services – including statutory home to school transport, discretionary local bus services, and services beyond transport.

Covid has seen the adoption and welcoming of more home working and working closer to home within community hubs etc., both across the public and private sectors. This presents the opportunity to reshape rural bus services and community transport with the right financial support package.

Covid has seen some strong community action as Community Anchor Organisations have grown and responded to Covid funding opportunities. This presents a future opportunity to build transport solutions as Rural Scotland eases out of the Covid experience. There is potential to benefit from community involvement on the back of the strength of the community response through the Covid experience – growth in, and growth of, Community Anchor Organisations with a will to shape and deliver change and services within their communities. This could be captured through the development of targeted funding for rural and island areas focussed on delivering across all four of the National Transport Strategy priorities. There is a real opportunity in the current context to deliver services in new ways, using technology as well as community involvement, to inform good service design and delivery.

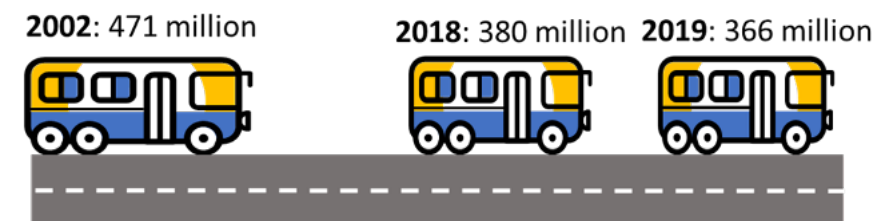
NTS 2 Local Bus Services in Crisis

Local bus service across Scotland have been in sharp decline for the last 15 years or so. This paper sets out some of the key issues, challenges and opportunities that face local bus services in rural Scotland. Unless otherwise stated, the paper draws on data from the most recent Scottish Household Survey analysis.

In 2019, 39 per cent of survey respondents in the Scottish Household Survey had used the bus in the past month. Only eight per cent used the bus ever day or almost every day. These are the lowest figures since comparable records began in 2002. Other sources suggest more clearly that bus use has been declining. Provisional estimates from the DfT's survey of bus operators indicate that there were 366 million bus journeys made in Scotland in 2019, a decrease compared with 380 million in 2018 and 471 million in 2002 – approaching a one quarter reduction between 2002 and 2019.

Transport Scotland (TS) "sets the national policy framework on buses which is delivered by bus operators, local authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships and the regulatory authorities" and TS reports that "the majority of bus services in Scotland are operated on a commercial basis by private bus companies." However, when we look at the picture across rural Scotland, the majority of bus services in remote and rural Scotland DO NOT operate on a commercial basis.

Bus journeys in Scotland



Urban vs Rural Bus Services

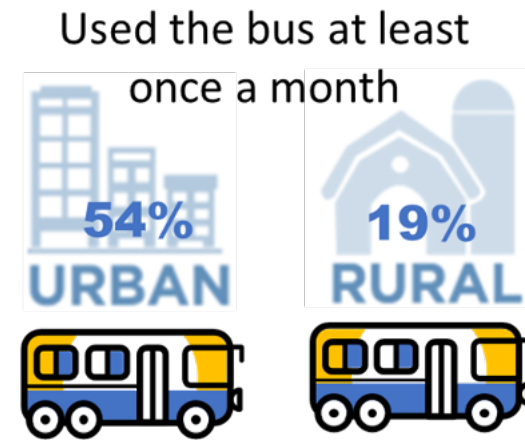
Frequency of bus use is, as expected, higher in urban areas where more bus services operate. Fifty-four per cent of people in large urban areas used the bus at least once a month compared to 19% in small remote towns and 20% in remote rural areas.

Sixty per cent of households in large urban areas have cars, compared with 83-88% of those in rural areas. So, car ownership is notably higher in rural and remote rural areas, but:

- The remaining 12-17% still leaves many within our rural areas that do not have access to a car; and
- One or even two cars in a household does not necessarily mean that all members of the household have private transport available entirely to meet their needs to access learning, employment, leisure and health etc.

Only 40% of households whose net annual income was up to £10,000 had one or more cars available for private use, compared with at least 85% of households whose annual net income were above £25,000.

Much of rural Scotland continues to rely on local bus services, and are dealing with the reduction and demise of many routes in their areas.



Bus Usage and Bus Service Kilometres

Only 14% of people in the Highlands and Islands state that public transport in their area is fairly or very inconvenient in 2014, which is down from a peak of 23% in 2006. Satisfaction with public transport in 2018 was at its lowest since 2007, with just 65% of people saying they were “very or fairly satisfied”, compared to 69% in 2007 and a high of 76% in 2011. There was a marked difference in overall satisfaction between urban and rural areas, with 59.5% satisfied in the former and just 42% in the latter. While satisfaction with health and schools were roughly the same in both urban and rural settings, satisfaction with public transport was markedly lower in rural areas (46%) compared to urban ones (77%).

Bus service kilometres in the Highlands and Islands (including Shetland) have fallen by 11% in the five years to 2015/16. This reduction is the same as the South West and Strathclyde regions and represents the biggest reduction in Scotland. There has been a 4% increase in the North East, Tayside and Central, and no change in the South East. Overall, bus kilometres in Scotland as a whole fell by 5% in the five years to 2015/16.



Local Authority Funding of Local Bus Services

Since the Concordat agreement of 2007, ring-fencing of Local Authority General Revenue Grant (GRG) has been removed, revenue funding has been reducing (Audit Commission estimated a real terms reduction of 7.6% since 2013/14) and focus has therefore been placed on broader statutory functions, of which, local bus services are not. Consequently, funding for local bus services has reduced significantly across Scotland, and continues to do so.

Rural Scotland has borne the brunt of this decline with the heaviest reliance on subsidised local bus services. Between 2010 and 2019 more than one in five subsidised bus services in Scotland was lost. A loss of around 60 routes, which are far more likely to impact rural and remote areas.

National Funding for Bus Operations

National Concessionary Travel scheme for older and disabled people (NCT)

Free travel for older and disabled people has been in place since 2006, and currently provides 24/7/365 free travel for over 60s.

When first introduced, the reimbursement rate was 73.6% of the adult single fare, which has reduced over time and is currently 55.9%. This represents a reduction of 24% over the life of the scheme. The scheme also has a cap on the budget each year, which on occasions has meant that payments are reduced below the reimbursement rate for that year.

All concessionary fare schemes have an objective that operators should be “no better and no worse off” as a result of participating in the scheme. As a result, the scheme should be financially neutral for operators. However, this applied at a Scotland-wide level rather than being applied to each operator individually.

The reimbursement rate is arrived at through a model which has been in place for several years. The model looks at various factors including prior year concessionary patronage, changes to fare levels in the prior year, changes to industry costs in the prior year, along with assumptions for factors in the coming year.

HITRANS believes that the reimbursement rate in the National Concessionary Travel Scheme has unintended consequences that disadvantages rural and island communities for a number of reasons:

1. The 24/7 nature of the scheme and the age eligibility of 60 result in a proportion of trips being made for work purposes. This is reflected in the trip rates in different Local Authority areas, with rural and island areas having lower trip rates reflecting the lack of bus services at peak commuting times as services in these areas are typically designed around school travel requirements.

2. The reimbursement rate paid to operators includes a “discount factor” arrived at by trip rates and assuming that, in the absence of the scheme, what proportion of passengers would buy a multi-journey ticket rather than a single ticket. This is then applied to concessionary passengers. The take up of such tickets by fare paying passengers is greatest in urban areas, to the detriment of the reimbursement for patronage in rural and island areas. Indeed in several rural and island areas multi-journey tickets are not available or an option due to the infrequency of services.

3. Due to these factors, the viability of rural and island services is poorer as a result of the scheme, with the result that one or more of the following occur:
 - a. fare paying passengers are effectively cross-subsidising concessionary passengers, with fares higher than would otherwise be the case.
 - b. services that would otherwise be commercial become uneconomic, which either further reduces travel opportunities or increases the burden on Local Authority supported service budgets.
 - c. Local Authority tender prices for supported services are higher than they otherwise would be, as revenue to operators from passengers is lower due to concessionary patronage being under reimbursed.
 - d. Local Authorities are able to support a smaller supported service network and community accessibility is diminished.

4. There is a high probability that these impacts are exacerbated when free travel is introduced for under 22s in the 2021/22 financial year.

HITRANS supports the policy objectives behind concessionary travel but believes that recognition should be given to the unintended outcomes in rural and island areas. Rather than amending the model, which appears to work well for the majority of services in Scotland, we propose that a top up payment is made to the core BSOG rate for services operating predominantly in rural and island areas or linking such areas to regional centres for employment, education, medical and retail opportunities.

HITRANS would like to work with Transport Scotland on defining which areas would be in scope for these top up payments, the rules for eligibility and the scale of the top up.

Such a measure will assist in maintaining the retention of commercial services, both in the Covid recovery period and in the longer term, whilst easing the financial burden on Local Authorities. Critically, it will enable key lifeline links to be retained and work towards national and local policy objectives. This will help deliver fairness in access to bus services across the country rather than the current system that sees bus pass holders in Orkney, for example, receive a tenth of the benefit that their peers in Edinburgh enjoy.

Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG)

The BSOG scheme is a discretionary grant that subsidises commercial and community bus routes. This is an annual subsidy comprising of a core payment and an incentive for the operation of green, environmentally friendly buses.

The core BSOG rate has been set at 14.4 pence per live kilometre for many years. This reflects a reduction in real terms, increasing the cost burden of rural and island services for both operators and Local Authorities.

Rural and island services typically operate at higher speeds, resulting in proportionally higher BSOG payments per operating hour than urban services, but as a result BSOG covers a higher proportion of the costs of operation than in urban areas. Due to this, the ongoing freezing of the BSOG rate disproportionately affects services in rural and island areas and has similar outcomes to those resulting from concessionary travel.

Green Bus Fund / Ultra Low Emission Bus Scheme (SULEBS) – from 2011

SULEBS supports the purchase of new buses, and assists with 50% of the cost differential between a standard diesel bus and the equivalent ultra-low emission bus. This can rise to a maximum 75% support of the differential for buses depending on their zero emission running capability. Support is also available for the infrastructure for this technology of up to a maximum 75% of the capital cost.

The 2020 award included funding for 5 new electric buses to service Orkney Mainland subsidised network. There was also funding for First Glasgow, Xplore Dundee, McGill's Buses and Ember Core Ltd. totalling £7.4M across the 5 projects.

Vehicle Design

In rural and island areas, bus networks are largely designed around education requirements. The school bus service often is the only bus services for communities or vehicles used for school transport are utilised at other times to provide lifeline services or enhance service levels that would otherwise be significantly lower. This practice is less prevalent in urban areas where a commuter peak is typical.

Local Authorities understandably want to secure the most economic rates for school transport whilst operators, understandably, seek to be competitive by bidding for work utilising the smallest number of vehicles and drivers. Positive legislative changes surrounding accessibility and seat belts have resulted in the school pupil capacity of a typical full size single deck bus reducing from around 50 to around 35. As a result, the use of coaches is more prolific on school transport services and, even when fitted with wheelchair lifts, these vehicles are not ideal for rural and island bus services with elderly and mobility impaired passengers having to climb up to five steps to access the seating area.

HITRANS proposes that Transport Scotland works with manufacturers such as ADL to develop an affordable multi-purpose accessible bus design, that can accommodate up to 50 pupils on school services whilst maintaining level access for all passengers. For example, this may include an easily modified interior where the full seating capacity is normally available, but some seats can be moved on tracks by the driver when a wheelchair passenger is seeking to travel. This should avoid the use of “3+2” seating, which is uncomfortable for adult passengers and reduces gangway widths.

Such a vehicle would reduce barriers to travel and increase the asset base available to operators and Local Authorities to sustain rural and island services. It could have widespread application across Scotland and throughout the UK, whilst creating or maintaining employment opportunities in Scotland.

Bus Partnership Fund

As part of its response to the climate emergency, the Scottish Government committed to providing a long-term investment of over £500m to deliver targeted bus priority measures on local

and trunk roads. This is intended to reduce the negative impacts of congestion on bus services and address the decline in bus patronage. The investment takes the form of the Bus Partnership Fund, together with the roll-out of infrastructure for the trunk road network.

Due to the focus of the fund, on mitigating the impacts of congestion, the focus appears to be on urban areas across Scotland.

Funding for Rural Transport

The schemes highlighted above all favour urban areas and areas operating with commercial services. In the past, there have been targeted rural funding opportunities, but which have now been cancelled. Specifically:

Rural Transport Fund – up to 2006

The fund covered grants to local authorities for passenger transport services, rural community transport projects and grants to rural petrol stations, and comprised:

- **RURAL PUBLIC PASSENGER TRANSPORT**

GRANTS: Grants totalling £24.8m were allocated to Local Authorities for new rural public transport services up to 2004, and a further £11.9M was allocated between 2004 and 2006. The grant paid to local authorities enabled over 400 new or improved services, mainly bus, but also ferry services, to be introduced bringing particular benefits to people who do not have access to a car:

- **RURAL COMMUNITY TRANSPORT INITIATIVE:**

the initiative provided assistance to community and voluntary groups for community transport measures particularly in the more remote areas of Scotland, and where there are no scheduled bus services or where services are very limited. Around one hundred and fifty community transport projects throughout rural Scotland received support. A number of projects provided particular transport benefits for older people opening up new travel opportunities and enabling older people living in rural areas to access and enjoy social activities and local facilities. Projects included mini-buses, transport coordination, dial-a-bus and car schemes.

In Other Parts of the UK

In other parts of the UK there continues to be dedicated funding for rural transport, namely:

England:

Rural Mobility Fund: funding to trial on-demand bus services in rural/suburban areas, and ring-fenced funding for supported bus services to deliver National Bus Strategy.

Wales:

Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020 (to fill gaps in public transport).

Northern Ireland:

Rural Transport Fund since 1998: revenue funding to Rural Community Transport Partnership.

Rural Bus Service Issues in Scotland

The provision of transport solutions for rural communities have never been more essential. Rural areas have experienced a considerable reduction in facilities, such as hospitals, health centres, post offices, shops and libraries, due to cuts in funding and agendas to centralise services.

These cuts and wider austerity measures have also seen a reduction in local bus service kilometres, and so while the need to travel has been growing, the means to travel (by local bus services) has been becoming more restrictive and difficult. This all heightens rural poverty, for example, people are forced into car ownership, and contributes to social isolation, with people unable to access activities, opportunities, learning and employment due to a lack of transport, or cost barriers (either public transport or running a vehicle).



Covid Response and Recovery

Covid Response and Recovery: Rural Communities Survey on COVID-19 – Response and Recovery Round 2 – July/August 2020 (Scottish Rural Action)

The re-design of transport was a major theme amongst both island and mainland residents and one which was perceived to sit squarely with the Scottish Government, local authorities and transport companies.

It was concluded that top priority should be full restoration of all public transport. “I am too disabled to drive so I am absolutely dependent on public transport but many rural bus routes have been withdrawn.”

It was highlighted that reduced timetables and capacity are causing real problems now people are returning to work. Many of the most vulnerable people depend on public transport, particularly for things like getting to hospital appointments, visiting friends and shopping.

Travel itself emerged as a major theme, both in terms of making rural living more viable (e.g. recommendations around cheaper and better rail, bus and ferry networks) but also greener and more conducive to supporting rural social capital: **“we would like investment to support the purchase of electric vehicles for rural transport to bring isolated people to larger community centres and halls so that they have the same opportunities for social interaction as their urban counterparts.”**

Covid Funding for bus services in Scotland COVID-19 Support Grant (CSG)

This grant maintains the National Concessionary Travel Scheme (NCTS) reimbursement and Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) payments at the levels forecast prior to the impact of COVID-19.

COVID-19 Support Grant - Restart (CSG-R)

An additional £61.4 million is being made available to support bus operators to increase bus services and to cover the gap between costs and the anticipated loss of fare-paying passenger revenue that bus operators will experience due to physical distancing and reduced carrying capacity.

Bus Priority Rapid Deployment Fund

Providing funding for temporary bus priority infrastructure, to reduce the impact of congestion on the busiest routes.

Pandemic Impact

The eventual economic recovery for the Highlands and Islands from the pandemic is expected to be slower than the rest of Scotland (due in large part to higher proportion of hospitality jobs and higher proportion of micro and small enterprises in our economy). This is summarised very well by Highlands and Islands Enterprise in their THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 (hie.co.uk) which states:

- The Highlands and Islands region has been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic to date, when compared to Scotland and the UK as a whole
- The region has a greater share of employment in the sectors already most affected by COVID-19. These include the regionally important manufacturing and transportation sectors. Tourism, creative industries and construction have been hardest hit to date
- The region has a higher proportion of self-employed and employment in micro-businesses compared to Scotland; these are businesses most at risk as a result of COVID-19. At the same time, these businesses are the ones that are most flexible and potentially able to respond to the challenge
- COVID-19 is having a major impact on the labour market. Around 72,000 employments were furloughed for at least part of the period to end June 2020 (33% of eligible employments); unemployment has risen to 5.7% with youth unemployment rising to 9.9%
- The consequence of these factors is that GDP in the region is expected to contract significantly in 2020, and likely to decrease by £1.5-£2.6bn, a fall in output of between 11% and 19%.
- Medium-term recovery forecasts for Scotland are for gradual recovery by Q4 2022 – for the region, recovery to pre COVID-19 levels is unlikely until 2023 at the earliest
- The COVID-19 impact is compounded by the region's vulnerability to Brexit – five of the six most vulnerable local authority areas to Brexit are in the Highlands and Islands

The Covid specific bus funding provided to see the industry through the crisis doesn't address the historic and recent decline in rural bus services however, or provide the foundation to fill gaps that exist across rural Scotland. The focus again appears to be more tailored towards more urban areas, with commercial activity.

Covid has seen some strong community action over a range of projects and volunteering in response to funding opportunities to Community Anchor Organisations. Does this then present a new structural foundation to build transport solutions as Rural Scotland eases out of the Covid experience?

Covid has seen the adoption and welcoming of more home working and working closer to home within community hubs etc., both across the public and private sectors. This presents the opportunity to reshape rural bus services and community transport services (with communities), achieving more critical mass, although still within the context of thin routes, which would still require some financial support. But, presents the opportunity through structural change to delivering services more generally to achieve greater value for money for the public purse.

Many of those residents (pre-Covid) that were very reliant on subsidised local bus services and Community Transport for access have become increasingly isolated through lockdown and the Covid experience, and we now have the challenge (with partners) to support these residents, typically older, to become socially active again, to regain their mobility and improve their well-being. A sizeable challenge for the coming months and years, and one in which local bus services and Community Transport should have a significant role if it is supported. This is a prime example of where transport affords benefits far beyond transport itself, benefitting predominantly here wider health and social care services.

The future for rural bus services

Challenges

There is continuing concern about the continuation of further austerity measures and hence pressure placed upon local bus services – predominantly subsidised services, which are most common in rural Scotland. There is the likelihood of further reduction in spend on subsidised local bus services, and so further diminishment of the rural bus network

This downwards pressure is also in the context of increasing costs to provide statutory services – including home to school transport, and services beyond transport.

In rural Scotland there is a predominance of small bus operators, that have limited resources for investment themselves. This is then coupled with no targeted funding in Scotland for rural transport, to develop and test new services, new ways of working etc., as well as to support infrastructure, vehicle purchase and developing routes.

As has been highlighted through this paper, funding appears focussed on city and town contexts, with little thought given to the challenges of accessibility in rural Scotland.

Opportunities

There is potential to benefit from community involvement on the back of the strength of the community response through the Covid experience – growth in, and growth of, Community Anchor Organisations with a will to shape and deliver change and services within their communities.

This could be captured through the development of targeted funding for rural and island areas focussed on delivering across all four of the National Transport Strategy priorities, namely:

- Reducing inequalities – the lack of specific funding for rural bus services, and the decline in subsidy for supported services is contributing to inequalities across rural Scotland.
- Taking climate action – providing viable public transport, and supporting investment in low carbon vehicles will make a marked difference. Small operators, perhaps those that are community-based lack the capacity and capital to invest in new fleet (even the match funding required such as through SULEBS).
- Helps deliver inclusive economic growth – bus services are required to ensure all can access employment and learning, particularly those in lower income households, without the need therefore for car ownership.
- Improves health and wellbeing – social isolation has inevitably increased through reductions in bus services in rural areas, which has been magnified further through Covid experience; more comprehensive local bus services are required to help people get out more and address rural isolation.

There is a real opportunity in the current context to deliver services in new ways, using technology as well as community involvement, to inform good service design and delivery.

Potential Rural Bus and Community Transport Interventions

We can build back better from the pandemic and address the long standing issues of rural bus decline. There are real opportunities to innovate and to make a real difference to rural communities and deliver on the National Transport Strategy objectives. Through this paper HITRANS have set out the challenges and identified a range of interventions that would make a real difference to travel choices across the Highlands and Islands. These measures are set out below:

- Recognition that the national concessionary fare scheme has an in built unfairness for rural areas that should be addressed and consider utilising the Bus Service Operator Grant as a mechanism to deliver equity for rural bus services.
- Introduce a Rural Transport Fund – if managed at RTP level there would be no impacts on local government grant in terms of ring fenced funding or grant formula. This would appropriate targeting and learning between areas across the region.
- Introduce RTP capital passenger transport grant to support improvements to infrastructure and public transport capital assets including within the community transport sector. In the past HITRANS received £3.5m each year to deliver these types of improvements and this level of support would allow us to make a real difference to the infrastructure, interchange and travel information experience offered to passengers.
- Introducing an Enhanced DRT funding stream – managed at RTP level and developed collaboratively with local authorities and community anchor groups including existing CT providers and the CTA.
- Work with bus manufacturers to develop an affordable multi-purpose accessible bus design that is fit for purpose for rural bus service.
- Investigating the potential for more regional collaboration on Public Transport and DRT management and operations.



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