

The future of rural buses

Presentation to The Future of Rural Mobility
conference
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Silviya Barrett

Director Policy and Campaigns
Campaign for Better Transport



Why public transport matters



Congestion



Health



**Environment and
net zero**

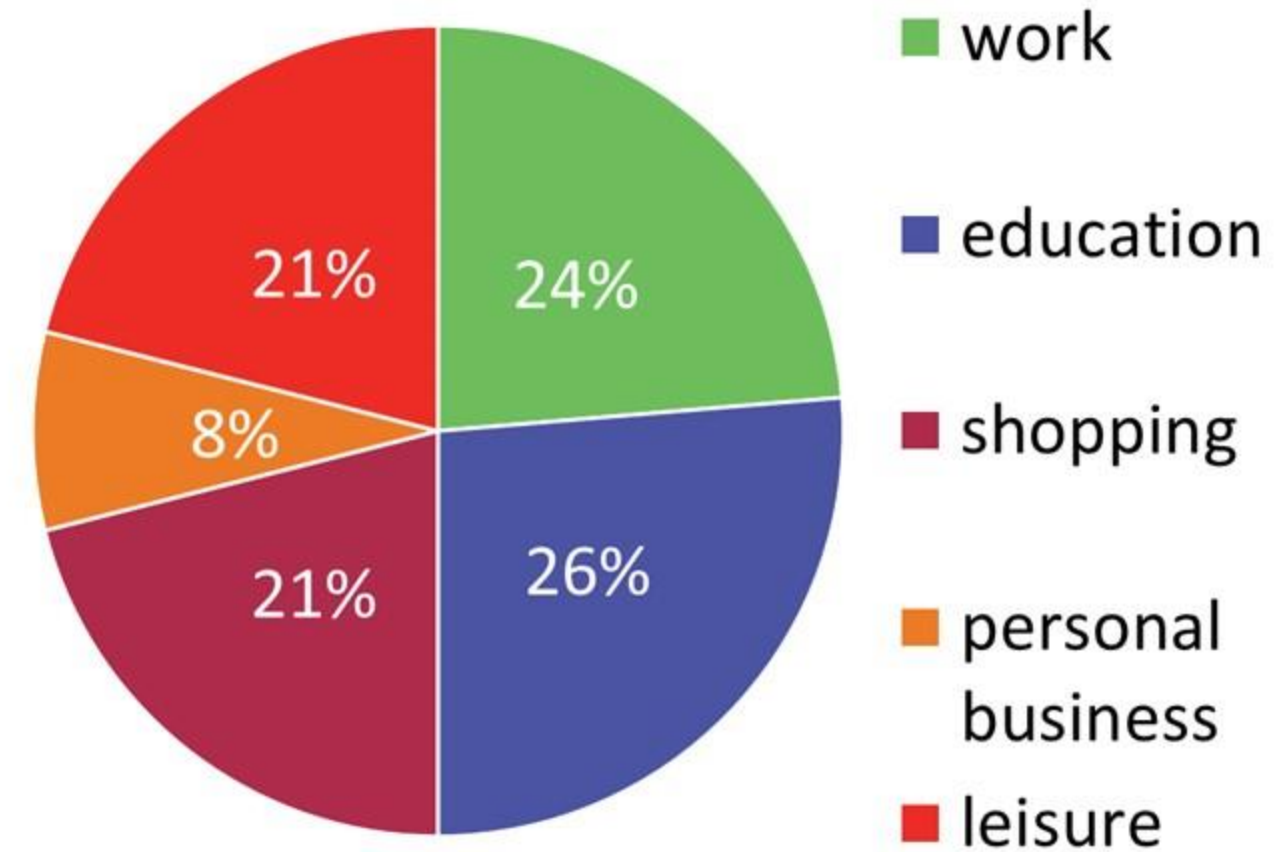


**Wellbeing and
social equity**

Who uses buses

- **3.7 billion** journeys in 2022/23 – most used form of public transport
- **Bus users** are more likely to be:
 - Non-car owners
 - On low incomes
 - Women
 - Young people
 - Older people
 - Disabled people

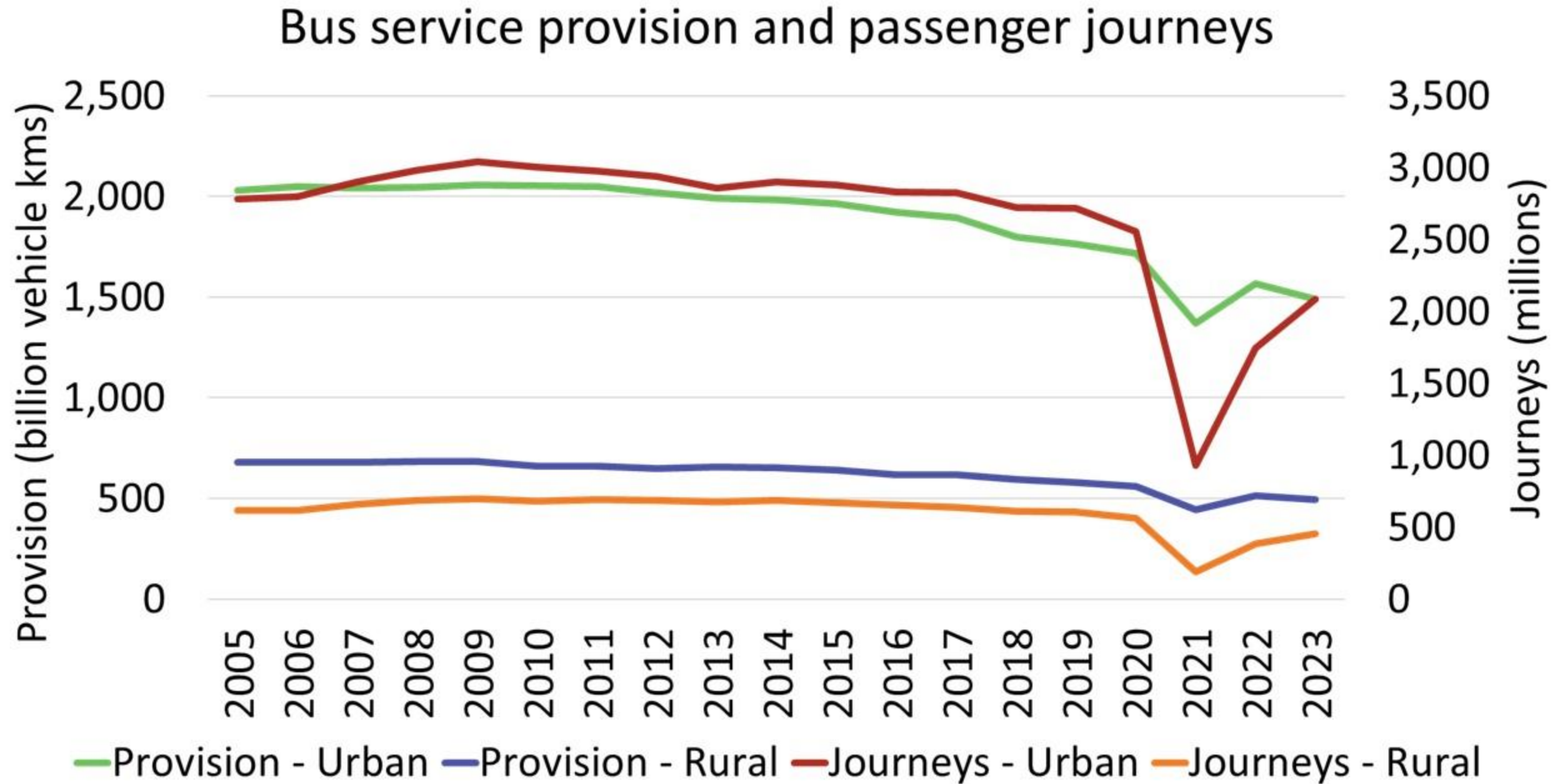
Bus use by purpose (2022)



Source: National Travel Survey (2022)

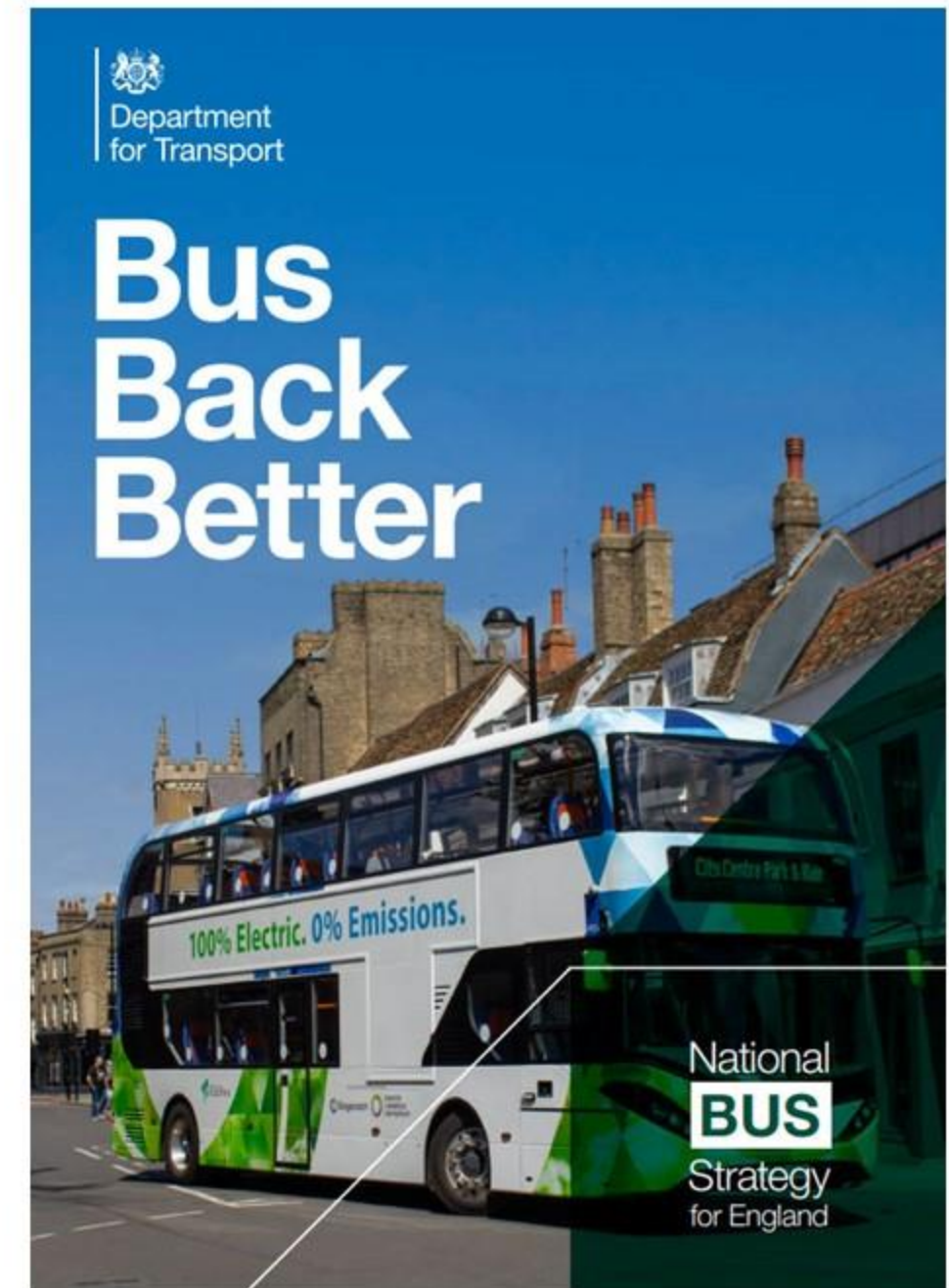
○ Buses have been on the decline but there is
ambition to improve

It is harder to provide buses in rural than urban areas



National bus strategy aims to reverse decline in bus use

“We want to ensure that the needs of rural transport users are given equal consideration to those in urban areas. We have piloted projects targeting rural areas specifically. We are committed to improving the connectivity of isolated rural communities and those with infrequent and unreliable services. We want improved rural transport to support economic growth and development in rural communities”



There have been record amounts of bus funding

Fund	Overall amount	Announced	Years covered	Successful LTAs
Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) - capital and revenue	£1.2 billion	April 2022	2022-2025	31 (40%)
BSIP+ (revenue only)	£160 million	May 2023	2023-2025	Most
Network North BSIP+ (revenue only)	Overall £1 billion (initial £150 million allocated)	October 2023	2024-2025	North and Midlands only
Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) 1 (capital only)	£170 million	October 2021, March 2022	2021-2023	17 (mostly urban)
ZEBRA 2 (capital only)	£143 million	March 2024	2023-2025	25 (many rural)
£2 bus fare cap	£600 million	October 2023	2022-2023	All
Local Transport Fund (local transport including roads)	£4.7 billion	February 2024	2025-2032	North and Midlands only

But allocations have created ‘the abandoned south’

Council	£/head	Council	£/head
Swindon	£3.98	Leicester	£494.51
Dorset	£4.84	Cheshire East	£500.80
Slough	£4.90	East Riding of Yorkshire	£510.36
Suffolk	£5.16	Derby	£634.79
Buckinghamshire	£5.19	Hull	£640.31
Wokingham	£5.20	Telford and Wrekin	£656.35
Southampton	£5.40	Stoke-on-Trent	£671.17
Hampshire	£5.43	Warrington	£685.61
Southend-on-Sea	£5.52	North Lincolnshire	£718.13
Surrey	£6.93	Blackburn with Darwen	£830.26
Bedford	£6.94	Blackpool	£863.26
Essex	£7.02	Rutland County	£1,340.16

Buses should be funded as the essential public service they are

"I rely on buses to access shops and services, including essential services for my child's health and mine. I need buses to take my daughter anywhere, as I live in a rural village and I have not yet been able to pass my driving test, let alone buy a car. Since bus services were cut recently I can no longer take my daughter to the toddler group we had been attending every week."

Sarah, Canterbury

"I relied on the bus to get to work; now the service I used has been cut and I have to get two trains; twice the journey time and three times the cost."

Duncan, Melton Mowbray

What needs to happen

- **Legislate for minimum levels of bus service provision for all communities**
- **Make the provision of socially and economically necessary services a statutory requirement**
- **Fill in gaps left by allocations so all authorities can afford to provide a minimum level of provision**
- **Move to long-term funding settlement for all councils**
- **Move transport element of DLHUC block grant to DfT and ringfence for buses**

○ Thank you!

Silviya Barrett

Director Policy and Campaigns

Campaign for Better Transport

silviya.barrett@bettertransport.org.uk

