



Rural Roots Limited Routes

A study into young
people's transport
access to education and
training



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Background

Transport East launched this study to understand how transport affects young people (16–24) in accessing education, training, and employment -especially in rural areas where their voices are often missing from the conversation.

To address that, Transport East initiated a focused research programme to hear directly from young people and fill the evidence gap. This study brings their experiences and insights to the table - shaping smarter, more inclusive transport policies for the future.



Objectives

Identify how transport access influences post-16 education and training outcomes.

Strengthen the evidence base on youth mobility in the Transport East region.



Why is this important?

Transport plays a huge role in shaping young people's futures - whether it's getting to college, starting an apprenticeship, or simply staying connected with friends and opportunities. For many young people, especially those living in rural areas, unreliable or expensive transport can be a real barrier to progress. This work shines a light on those everyday struggles and brings young voices to the forefront of the conversation. By understanding these challenges, we can push for better, fairer transport solutions that open doors - not close them.



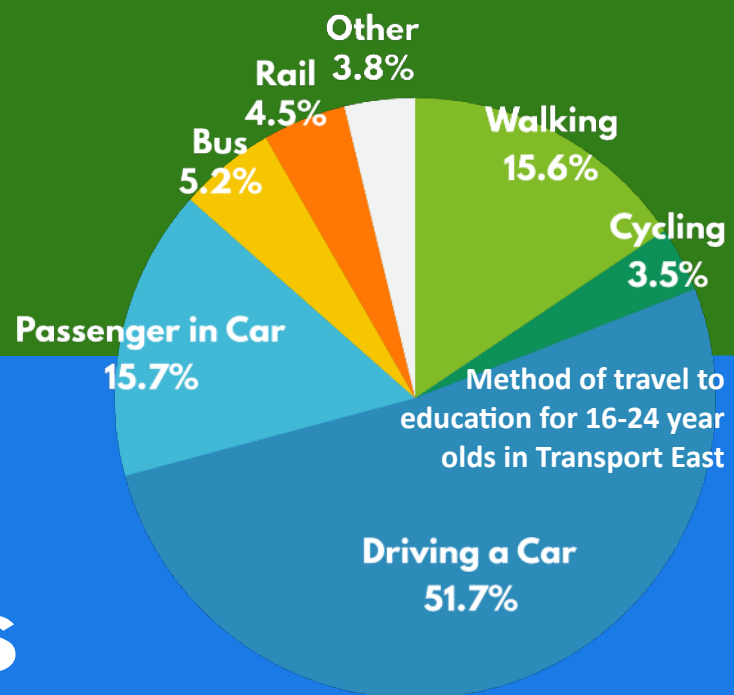
Regional Context

Within the Transport East Region:

- 33% of the region's population lives in rural areas vs. 17% nationally
- 30.3% of young people aged 16–24 live in rural areas
- The region relies heavily on A- and B-roads, with limited and ageing rail infrastructure
- Bus services are sparse in rural areas, leading to high car dependency - even among young people

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Research shows transport is a major barrier to rural education and employment. Larger towns retain more graduates than rural areas, though most still lag behind national averages. Transport may not be the only factor—but it strongly shapes young people's choices.



Key Challenges



Longer journeys: Rural based young people travel 30% farther and for longer than their urban peers



High costs: 20% have limited choices due to high transport costs with apprentices particularly affected



Limited options: Poor public transport forces many to stay local for education. 86% say bad services make them want to leave rural areas altogether



Key Concerns

Cost of
Travel

Safety

Long distance/
travel times

Convenience/
frequency

Availability
of options

Lack of
connections

Communication
of information



"My bus times are really bad so I often have to skip some classes just so I can make it home"



"Most lessons I have to decide if it's worth it to go in or do the work online as the price to travel is so high"



"The wheelchair journey (to the bus stop, then from the bus station to the college) and the bus journey are very exhausting and on horrific paths/roads, so it is very painful"



"The cost of transport for young people who work part time jobs is horrendous. Just because our parents make enough money doesn't mean they give it to us to pay for travel."

Proposed Solutions

Build strong
networks and
strengthen ties with
education and skills
providers

Work with
Government to
spark real policy
change

Advocate for better
value transport for
young people

Methodology

To close the evidence gap on transport challenges facing young people in education and training, a focused research programme was launched:

- ✓ Desktop review of national rural transport access
- ✓ Stakeholder interviews with councils and education providers
- ✓ Online consultations with local authorities, youth organisations, and training providers
- ✓ Survey of 999 young people on their travel habits, challenges, and decision-making



Engagement

To explore the challenges of post-16 transport provision, we held one-on-one meetings with county councils and education providers. These discussions revealed transport as a major barrier to participation in education and training.

An online consultation further captured insights from local authorities, education providers, and students—highlighting key concerns and additional barriers young people face in accessing education.

Next Steps



- > **Focus Groups** with young people and key stakeholders including skills providers to expand Youth and Rural Transport evidence
- > **Workshops** with Local Transport Authorities, districts and key stakeholders
- > **Publication of report** with recommendations to improve access to education and apprenticeships for young people from rural communities



Thanks

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all the young people, education providers, local authorities, and stakeholders who took the time to share their experiences, insights, and perspectives.

Your contributions have been invaluable in helping us better understand the transport challenges faced by young people across the Transport East region.

This evidence will play a crucial role in shaping more inclusive, accessible, and effective transport solutions for the future.

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