

Report: Car dependency can and must be tackled to reduce carbon emissions

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A new report from the University of Hertfordshire claims that car dependency outside cities can and must be tackled to reduce carbon emissions, and spotlights several schemes that could make an immediate

impact on car use in rural areas.

Led by Professor Stephen Joseph, "[The Future of Transport Outside Cities](#)" report highlights how cities dominate research and policy discussions about transport, even though "Shire" counties are responsible for 74 percent of the UK's transport emissions. Despite a reduction in car use during the pandemic, the [transport sector](#) remained the largest emitter of carbon emissions in 2020 (at 29.8 percent). Therefore, transport is key to any strategy aiming to combat climate change.

In many "Shire" counties—which are often made-up of market towns, small villages and in some cases the edges of cities—rural bus services have been cut drastically, leaving few alternatives to private car use. As a result, these areas see large numbers of single-occupancy car journeys, which leads to high transport carbon emissions per head.

In addition to high [carbon emissions](#) and car dependency, rural areas also face congestion in towns and social isolation for those without car access.

The report summarizes the findings of 12 roundtable discussions led by the University of Hertfordshire's Smart Mobility Unit last year. Over 180 people took part from a range of sectors, including national and local government, the transport sector, business, academia, and non-governmental organizations.

The aim was to address and find solutions to transport issues in rural parts of the country. They highlighted several areas where more [government support](#) and funding are needed, and showcased initiatives from across the country that could provide immediate solutions, including:

- On-demand bus services. Services like HertsLynx and

ArrivaClick are designed to improve connections between rural areas and town centers, as well as increase access to employment, education, healthcare and shopping.

- E-bike hire schemes such as Brompton Bike Hire and Beryl Bikes. E-bikes extend typical cycling range from three to five miles, which could be useful in rural areas.
- Improved public transport. For example, the One Public Transport for Cornwall project integrates bus and rail travel under a single brand, with the same ticketing system and joint timetables.
- Shared transport schemes like Liftshare, which reduce the number of single-occupancy car journeys to work.

Professor Stephen Joseph, Visiting Professor of Sustainable Transport and the main author of the report, said: "There is a tendency to think that people outside cities have to drive everywhere, but this leads to high emissions, gridlocked roads, and is isolating for those without their own vehicles. This report concludes that car dependency isn't inevitable and highlights ways this can be reduced in [rural areas](#). Tackling car dependency will have a big impact on climate change.

"Some of these solutions require long-term planning and investment, and the government should support these schemes. But there are other, short-term initiatives—including e-bike hire schemes—that could be adopted by local authorities now and make an immediate impact to rural communities.

"The government should use their forthcoming Rural Mobility Strategy to better support transport services outside cities, and give councils and communities in those areas more help and funding."

The report also emphasizes the need to involve and consult the public when making decisions on local transport provision, particularly after

Low Traffic Neighborhoods were introduced in parts of London at short notice, leading to some backlash from residents.

It also highlights the importance of considering sustainable [transport](#) when building new housing, rather than contributing to car dependence.

Provided by University of Hertfordshire

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