

Transport in Rural Northumberland

Solutions for the future

10 May 2017

**Rural transport –
perceptions and
reality**

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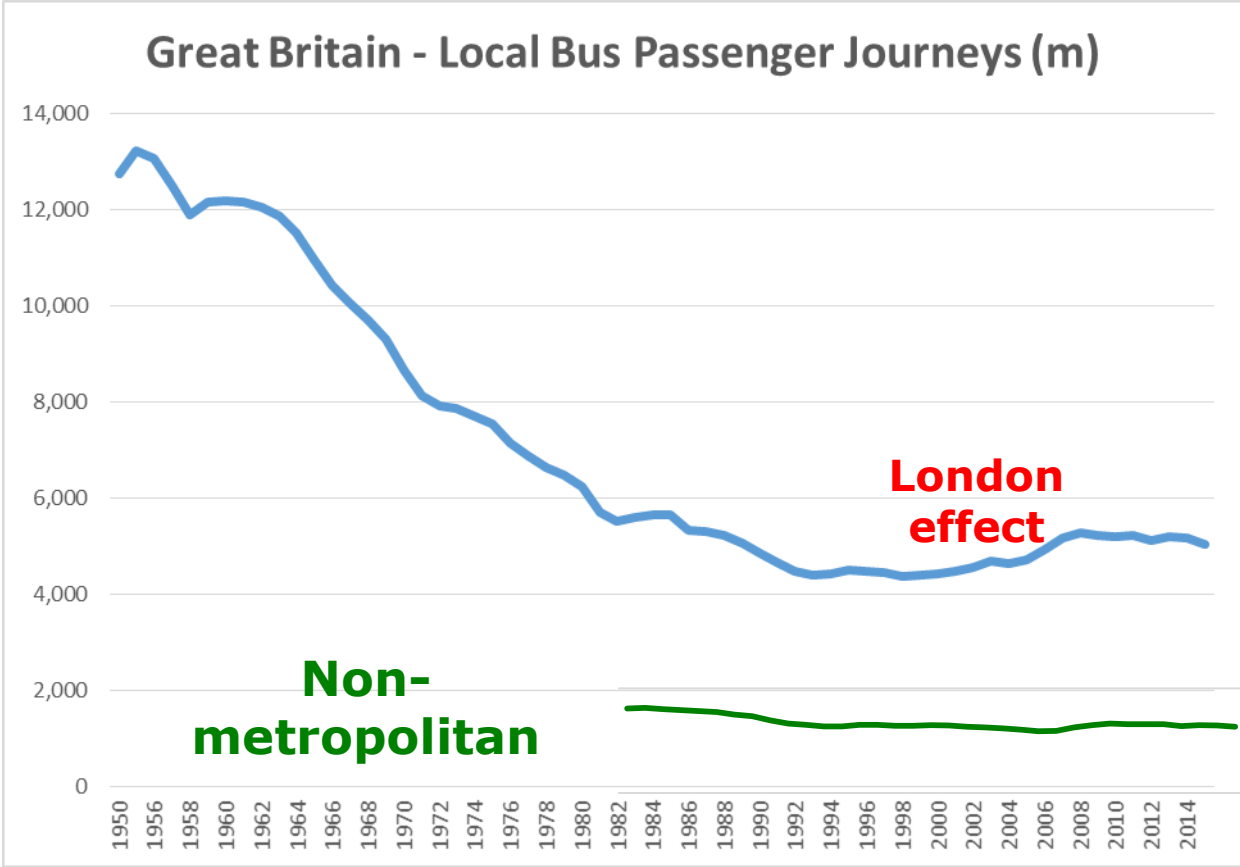


What do I know?

- Background in Community Transport
 - Transport Advisor to CoSIRA, RDC, CA
 - TAS = passenger transport specialists
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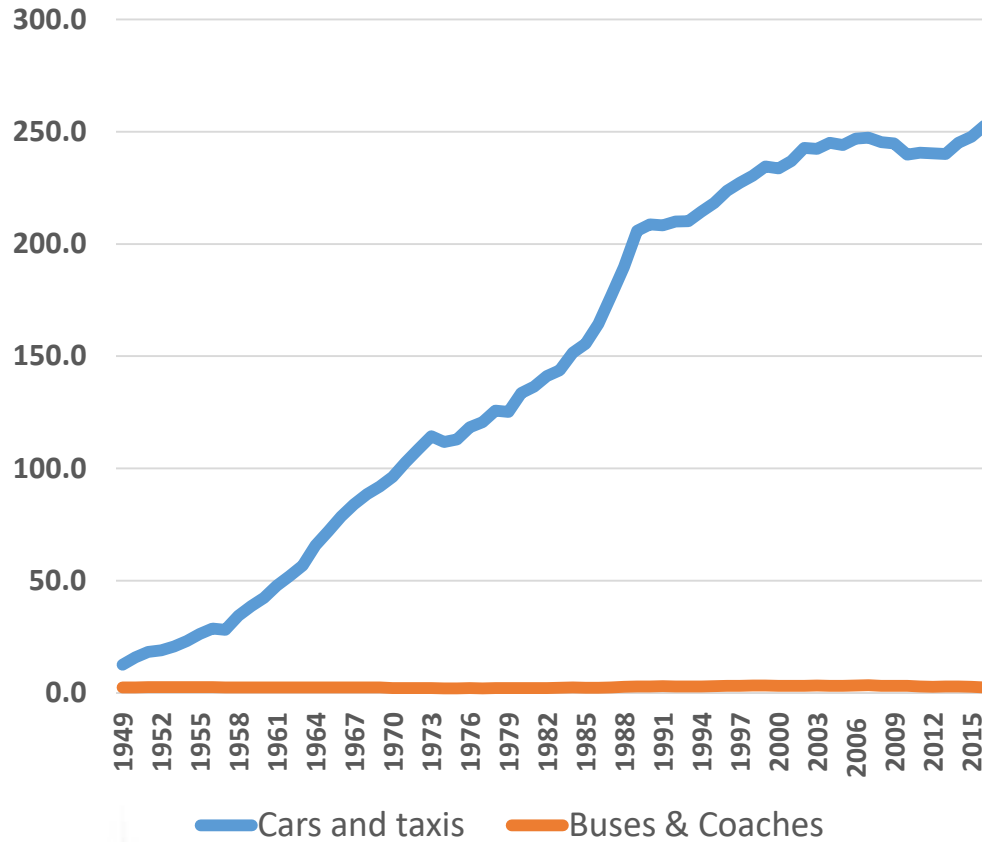
- Some history to give perspective
- Some economics as a reality check
- Some ideas for thought / action

Since 1950



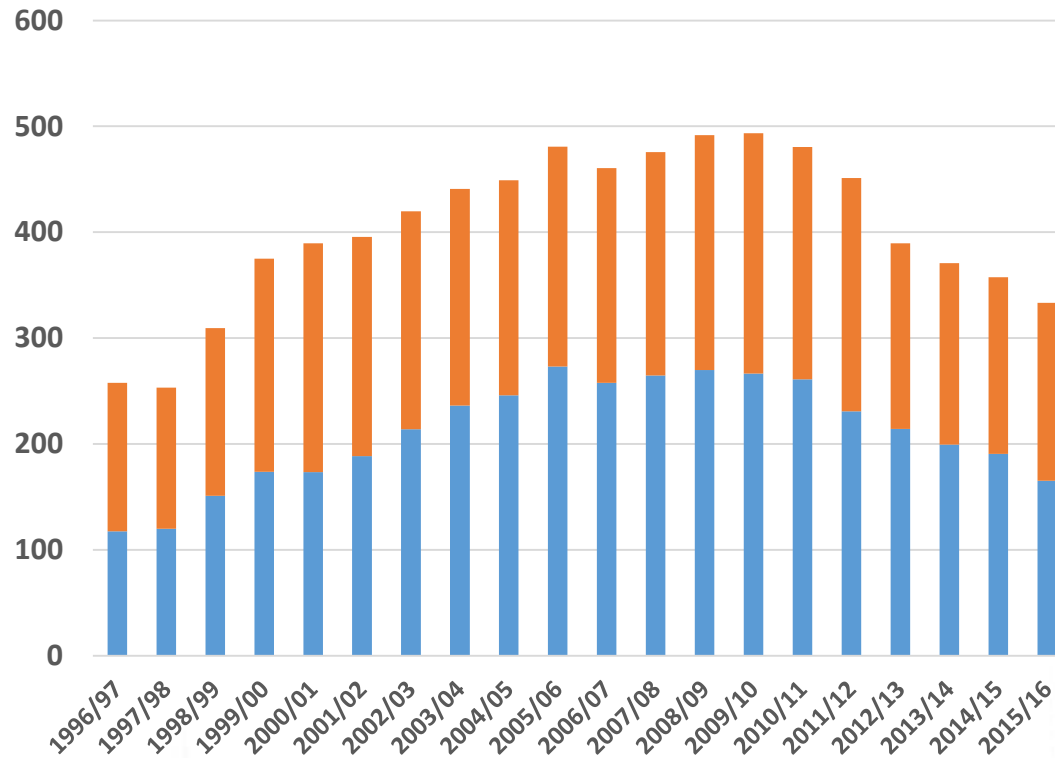
Traffic

GB: Road Traffic (Billion Vehicle Miles)

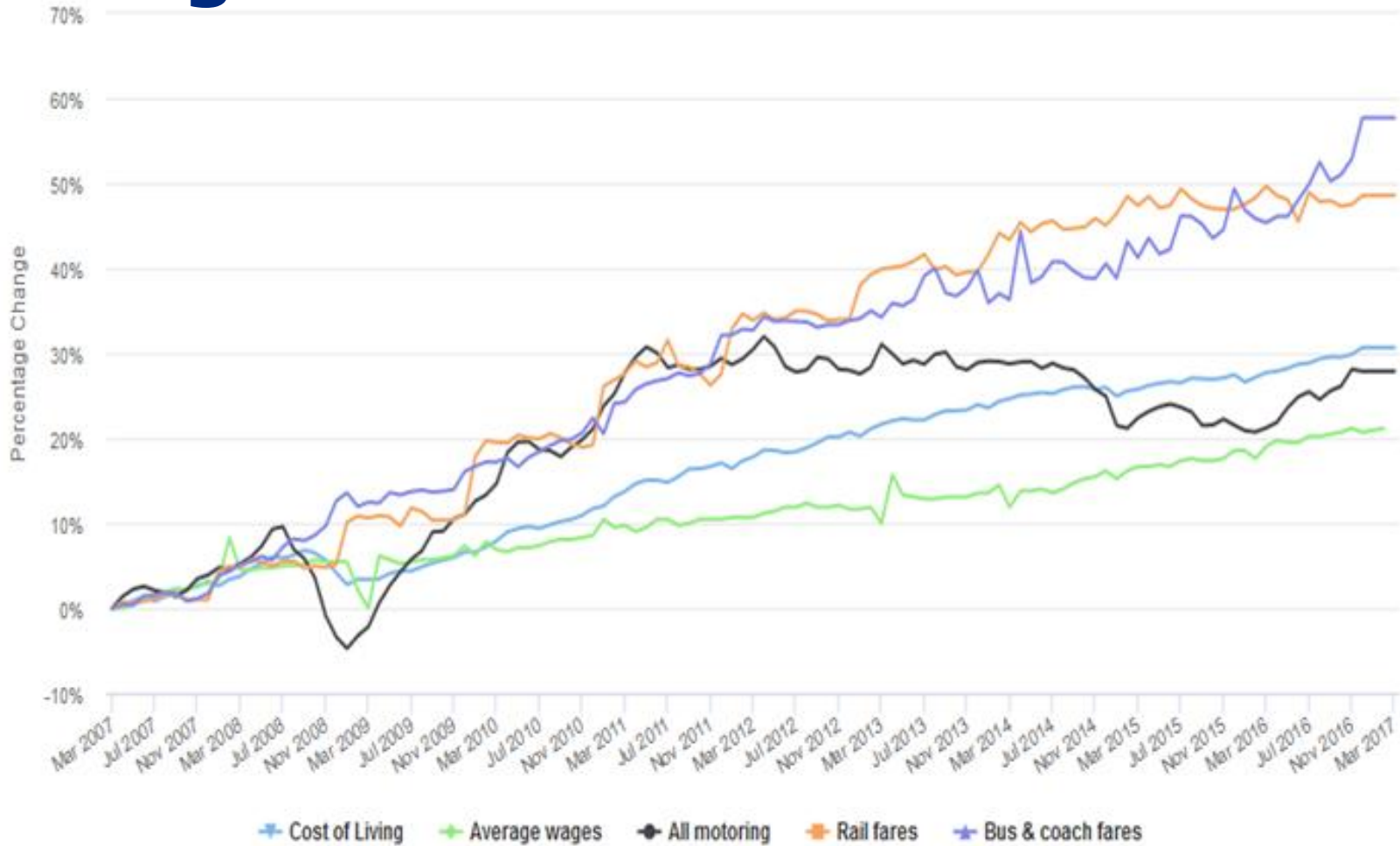


Financial Support for Bus Services

England - Non-Metropolitan Areas (£m)

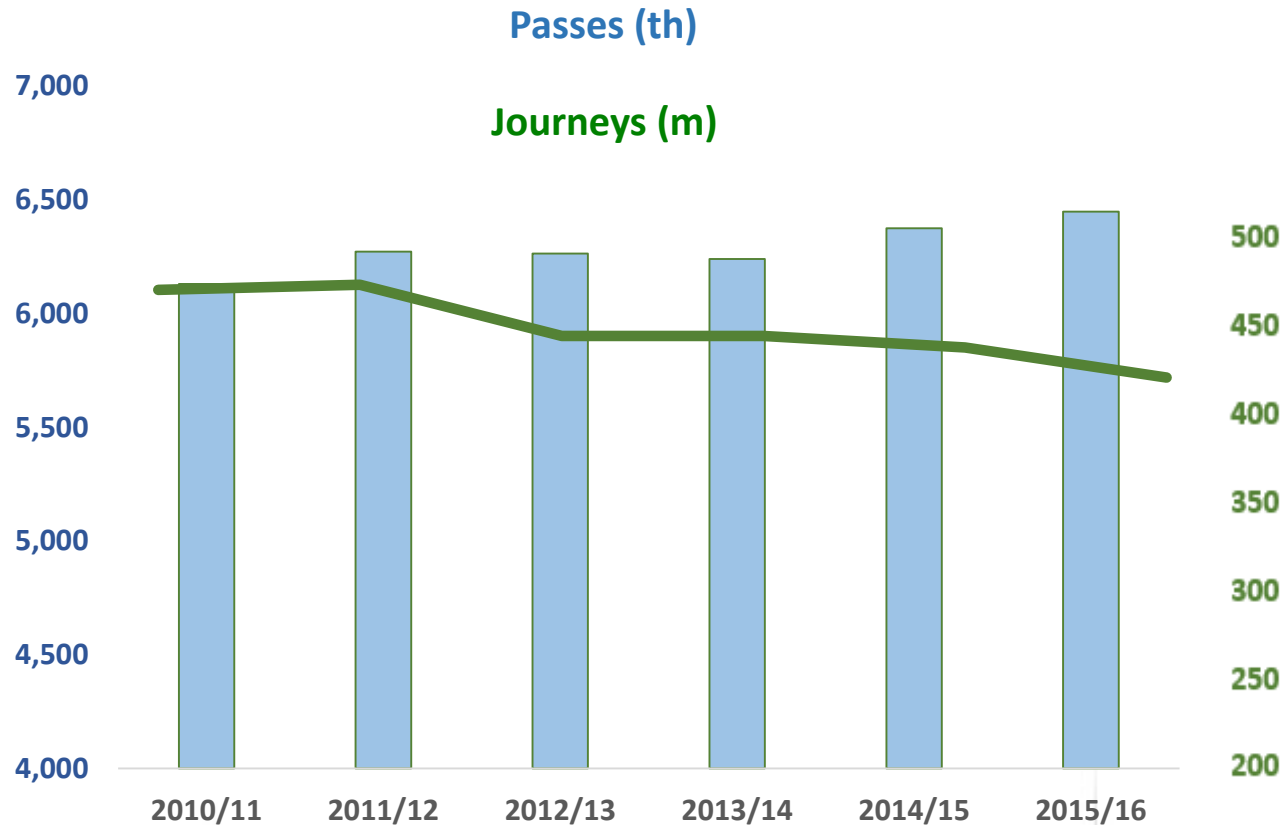


Changes in Cost of Travel since 2007



RAC Foundation (Source: ONS)

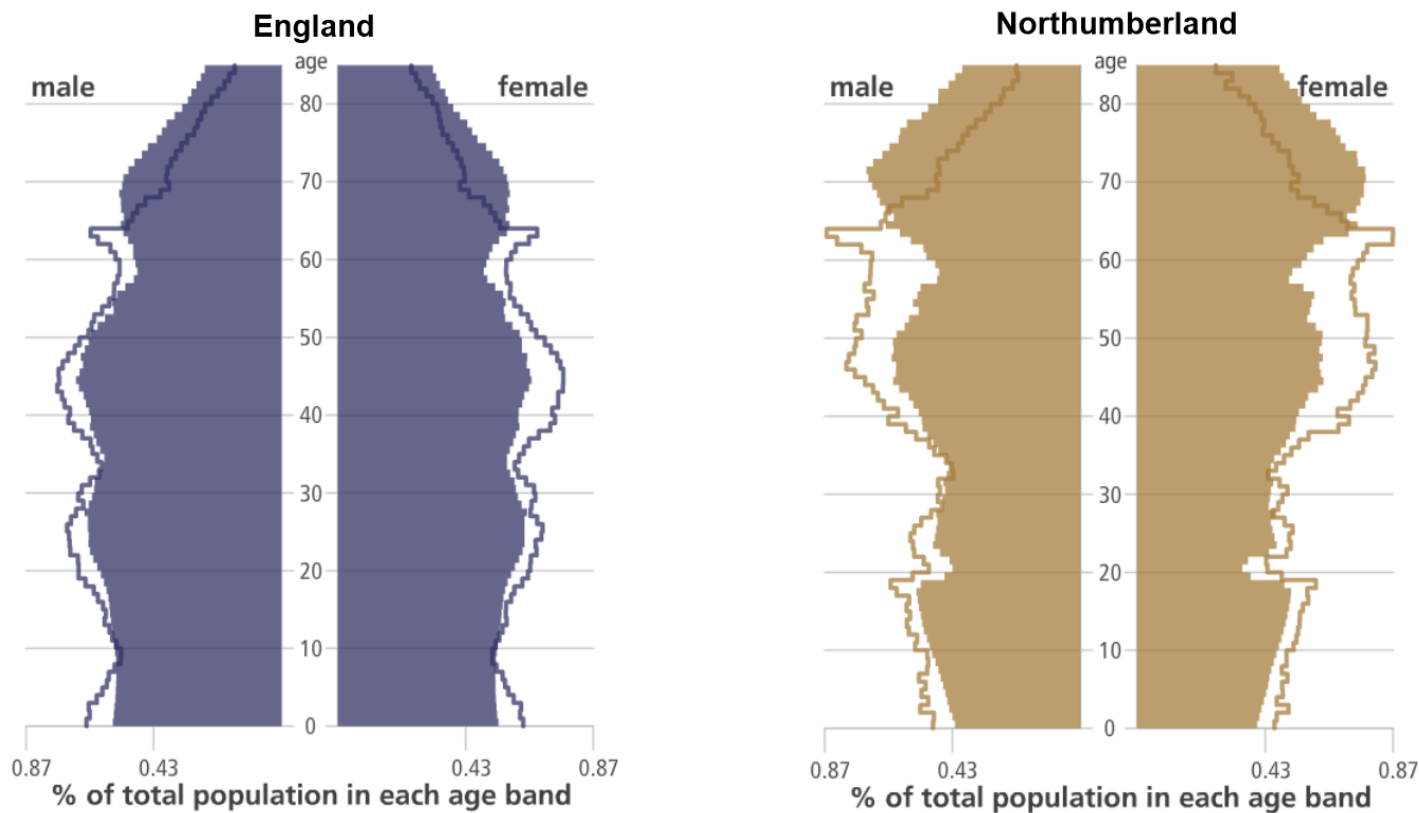
Concessionary travel in Non-Metropolitan Areas



Northumberland Age profile

Outlines = 2010; Shaded = 2035

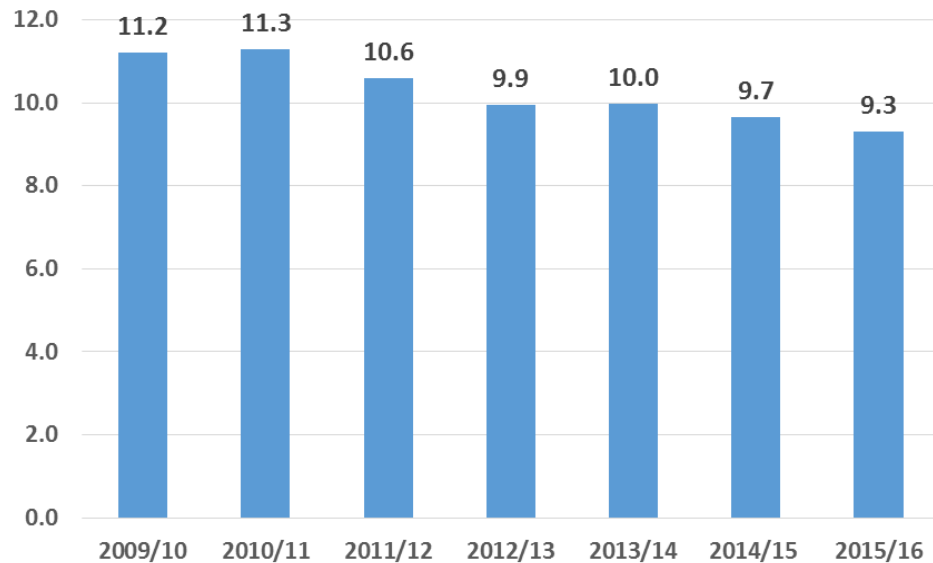
Note the existing age ratio in Northumberland AND the anticipated growth



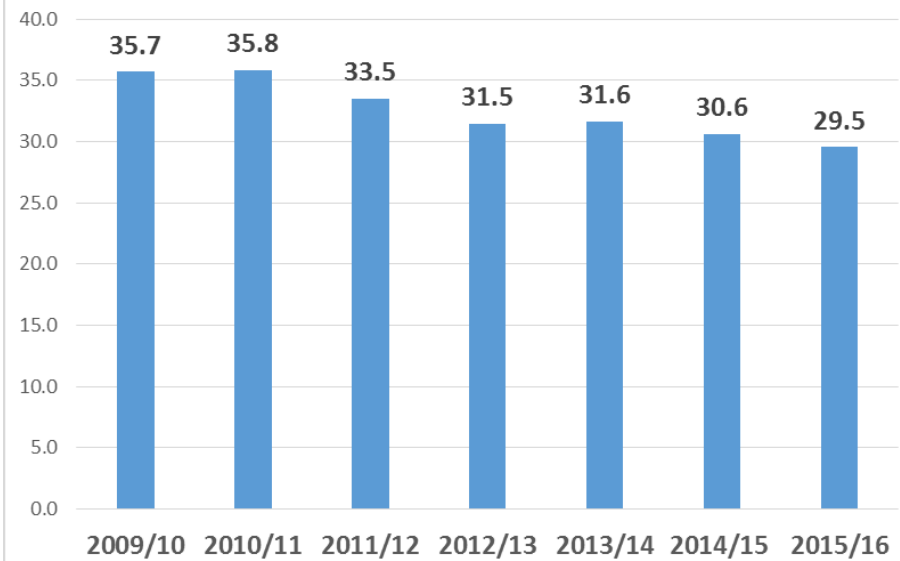
Source = Northumberland InfoNet

Recent Northumberland

Local Bus Passenger Journeys:
Northumberland (m)



Northumberland: Bus Use per head of
population: Journeys p.a.



Post-war decline

- Ministry of Transport: Committee on Rural Bus Services (Jack Committee) report 1961
- *Their report, published in March 1961, concluded that the decline in rural bus services caused hardship to a few people and inconvenience to more.*
- *Among the possible solutions considered by the Committee were:*
 - *car pool schemes (organised lift-giving)*
 - *the carriage of fare-paying passengers on school buses,*
 - *preference for existing stage service operators in awarding school bus contracts,*
 - *extended use of mini-buses,*
 - *combination of the carriage of goods and passengers by 'village carriers',*
 - *carriage of passengers in 'postal buses'*
 - *financial aid – either direct subsidy or fuel tax remission.*

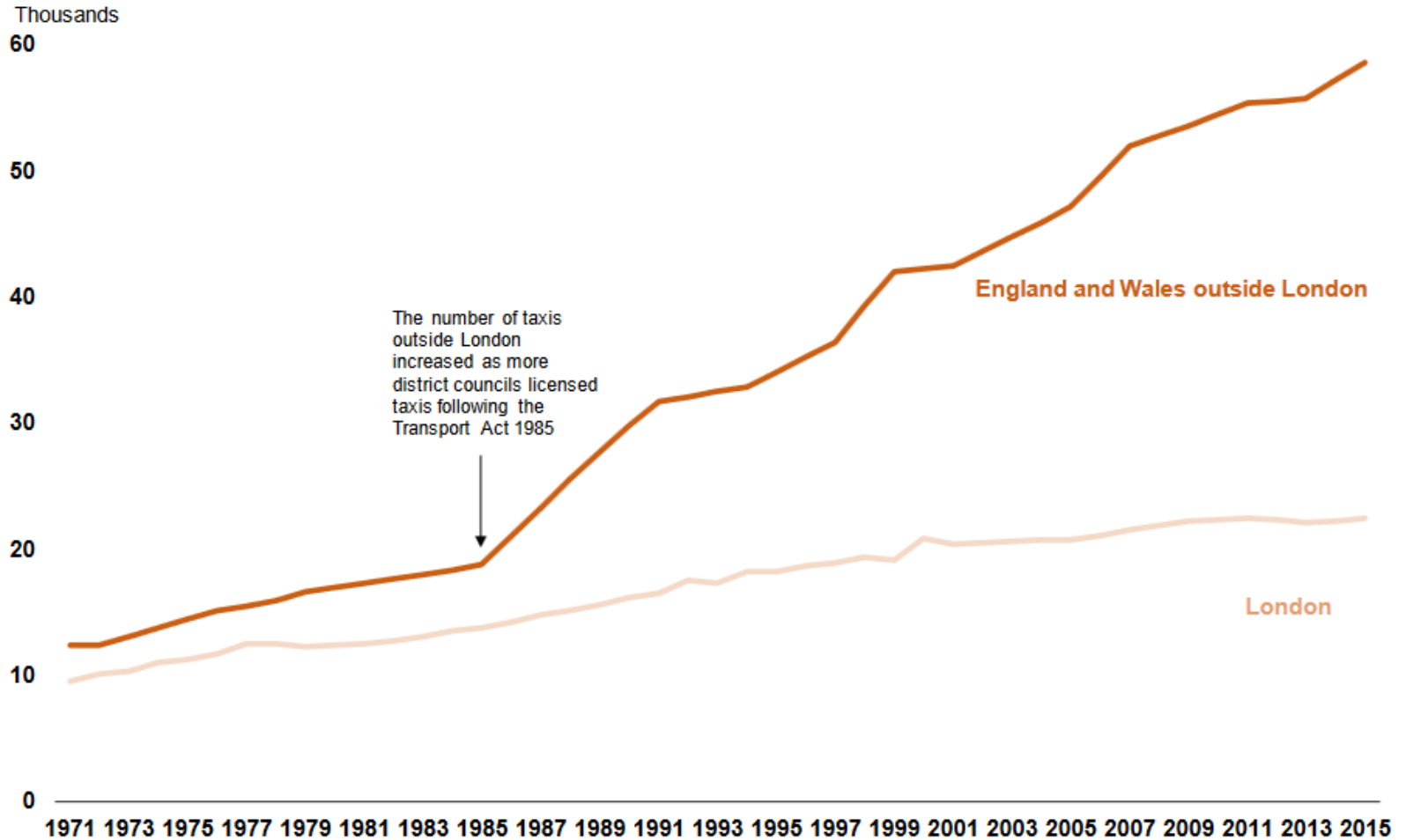
Rural Financial Initiatives

- 1986-1991 Transitional Rural Bus Grant – 6ppm for registered rural service mileage – tapered off
- 1986–1997 Rural Transport Development Fund - £1m p.a. available in England – ca. 2/3rds claimed – 42% on commercial services; 25% community-based
- 1998-2008 Rural Bus Subsidy Grant – paid direct to local authorities to support non-commercial rural bus services ca. £58m p.a., initially for new services only (relaxed from 2002). Rolled into general formula grant in 2008
- 1998-2003 Rural Bus Challenge £110m over 6 years ca. 12% community-based
- 1998 – 2006 Rural Transport Partnership / 2001-2006 Parish Transport Grant ca. £12m p.a. 50% community-based

Regulatory Initiatives to avoid full Public Service Vehicle licensing

- Road Traffic Act 1960 allowed restricted car-sharing
- 1975 Motor Insurers undertaking re contributions to petrol costs
- Minibus Act 1977 – not-for-profit minibus use for social purposes but not general public (s19)
- Transport Act 1978 – Community Buses (s22)
- Transport Act 1980 - Social car schemes
- Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981 – Consolidated the above
- Transport Act 1985 – Taxibuses and taxi-sharing
- Local Transport Act 2008 – Private Hire Car Buses

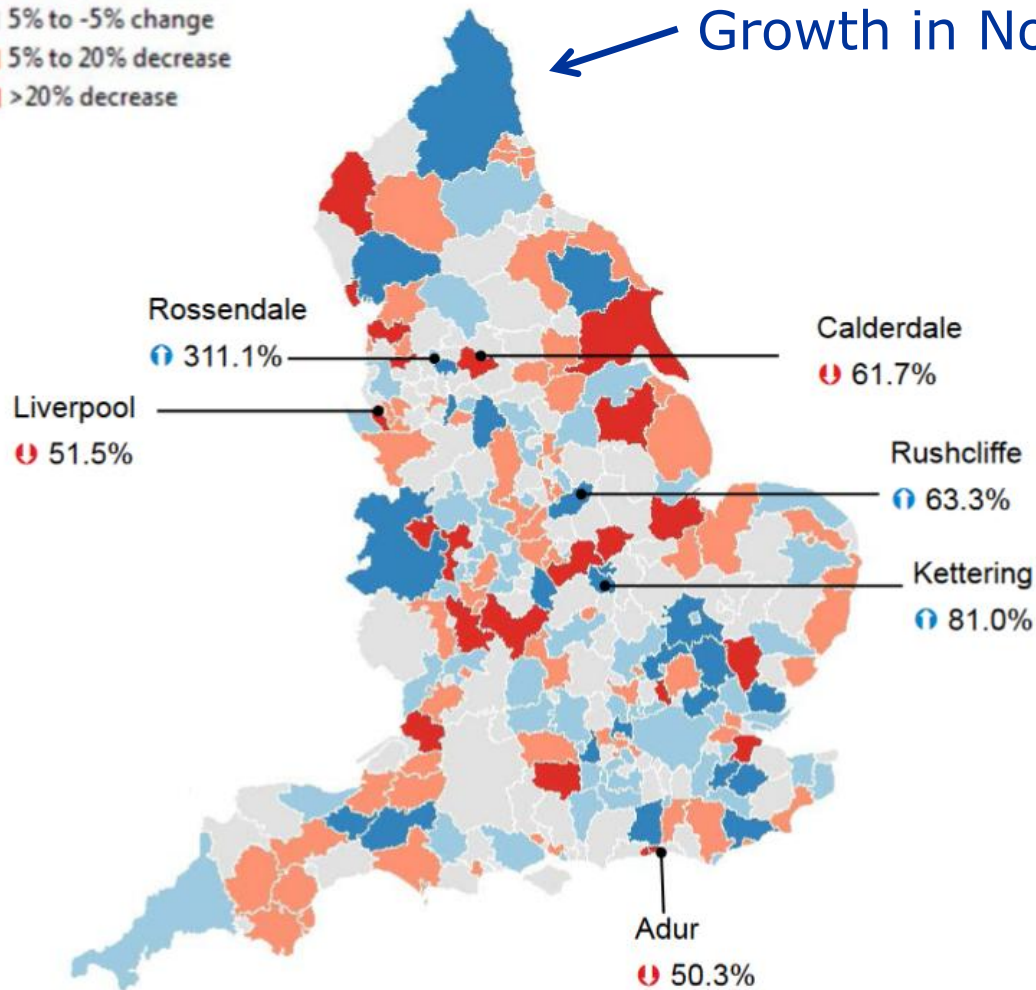
Licensed Taxis



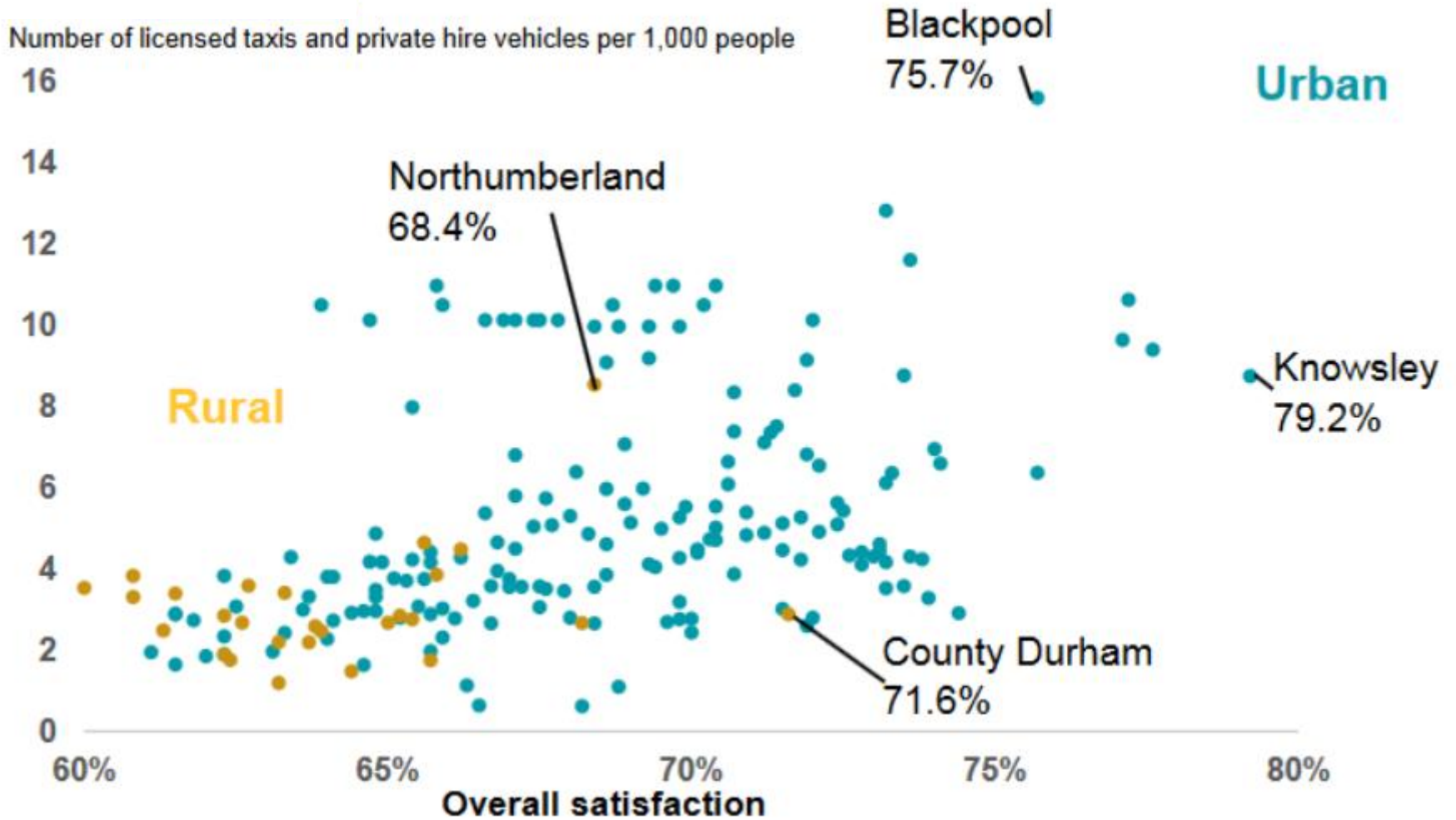
Change in Licensed Taxi/PHV Drivers – 2013-2015



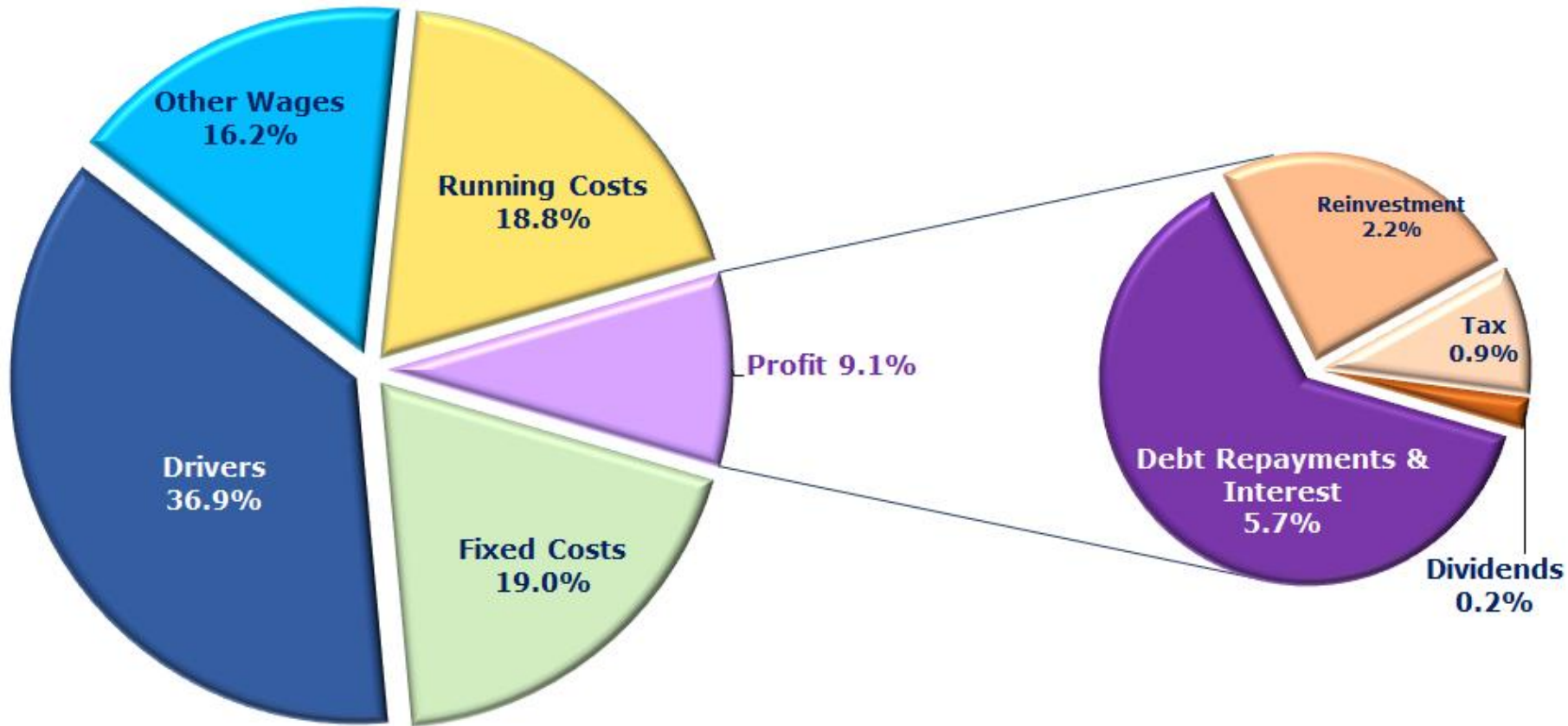
← Growth in Northumberland



Satisfaction with Taxis



Where your bus fare goes



Urban-Rural Cost Coverage

Fully utilised bus costs £140k p.a. Across 52 * 6days * 13hours = ca £35/hour. NB if less well utilised, labour costs per active hour stay the same, but fixed costs go up, as fewer hours coverage.

Urban Bus

- Speed = 6mph
- 1 hour = 6 miles (typical return town service)
- Average fare = £1.80
- Requires 19 passengers to cover costs
- If 40% concessionary reimbursed at 55%
- Requires average 24 passengers per hour to cover costs (12 each way)

Rural Bus

- Speed = 20 mph
- 1 hour = 20 mile one way trip
- Average fare = £2.80
- Requires 12.5 passengers to cover costs
- If 60% concessionary reimbursed at 55%
- Requires average 17 passengers per trip

Implications

- Outside main inter-urban corridors, rural bus services can be considered a 'social service'
- Technical innovation (DRT, etc.) has not worked nor can it, due to driver costs and rural scale
- Regulatory changes (Bus Services Act) won't help
- Political decision as to what gets supported
- Note politicians will subsidise some transport projects and modes e.g.:
 - Borders Railway - capital cost £294m + ca. £6.50/trip
 - Ashington, Blyth & Tyne line (est. £191m + £2m p.a.) – NCC allocation to feasibility studies so far £5.75m
 - Continued road building & improvement (e.g. A1 widening @ £14.2m/mile)
 - Rural roads maintenance – adoption as a public highway = guaranteed service regardless of use (do we need the same for rural bus network)

Thoughts

- Do it yourself – replacing labour cost with volunteer makes operation more viable



Cuckmere Community Bus – one of the original NBC creations in mid-1970s

Thoughts

- Partner with commercial operators - see www.buurtbus.nl



Thoughts

- Lift-giving in cars will remain significant
 - Welfare focus car schemes can grow e.g. Transport Access People (Cornwall) = 100,000+ journeys p.a.
 - Public focus e.g. lift-shares / car pools – can these be embedded in community life?

Thoughts

Continued lobbying for good practice and efficiencies

- Integrating services (bus + CT; CT + Patient Transport; CT + rail)
- Maximising end-user facility contributions e.g. hospitals / prison visiting
- Local promotion e.g. Dales Hubs
- Community joint action e.g. Wealdlink Community Bus - 6 Parish Councils have 37p precept

Final thought

- What is the potential for rural communities to benefit from new information and communications technology?
 - Don't cede the field to Uber (which in any case doesn't offer a rural solution)
 - Can we use this to increase supply of lift-giving from people who are not natural volunteers?
 - Can this better match up support for those who need additional care?