Rural Transport Review

An analysis of rural transport needs for South Staffordshire Local Strategic Partnership

August 2008

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1 Introduction

With some exceptions, South Staffordshire is poorly served by public transport. However, a considerable amount of public monies is expended on enhancing accessibility by Staffordshire County Council, South Staffordshire Council, the voluntary sector and Advantage West Midlands.

Problems for people without access to a motor car have become an increasing concern for the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and its constituent members. To this end, Mott MacDonald was appointed by the LSP to explore ways that the public sector can support rural transport in South Staffordshire.

It was felt to be particularly important to give consideration to the local concessionary fares scheme in the light of recent and proposed changes by the Government regarding concessionary travel.

This report acts as a final report for this research and draws together and summarises the results of the research undertaken by the LSP, its members and Mott MacDonald.

1.1 The Study Methodology

The study brief was commendably clear in outlining the key issues to be addressed during the research process. A simple methodology was developed to identify and consider ways forward for rural transport and access provision in South Staffordshire. This is outlined below.

To assist in meeting the aims and objectives of this project, a considerable amount of information was made available to the project team. This assisted this research in learning lessons from previous activity and building on the efforts of the LSP members. Of note is that:

- Information was supplied by Staffordshire County Council regarding travel patterns, bus services, demographic data and research findings relating to rural transport;

- Staffordshire County Council and South Staffordshire Council provided information on relevant budgets for the provision of transport services in rural areas;

- South Staffordshire Council provided full information on its concessionary fares scheme and licensing arrangements;

- Staffordshire County Council briefed the project team on current public transport and community transport initiatives operating in South Staffordshire and the strategic context for that delivery; and

- The Community Council of Staffordshire and Community Voluntary Action provided contacts relevant for the carrying out of the project, including voluntary transport schemes.

This information was used during the following research stages.
1.1.1 Policy Review

To place this research, and the recommendations resulting from it, in context, the study team undertook a short evaluation and review of existing policy documentation related to transport, travel and access to services in rural areas in South Staffordshire. The intention was not to critique or evaluate the current direction being taken on transport policy; rather, this section of the study has placed a framework within which recommendations for the future could be made.

The information examined in this first stage of the research is presented in section 2.

1.1.2 Accessibility ‘Mapping’

A critical aspect of this research was undertaking a process of accessibility ‘mapping’. Using information provided by Staffordshire County Council the study team produced a series of maps which show levels of access to key services in South Staffordshire and the surrounding areas. These maps were then used to stimulate discussion and debate in the consultation exercise undertaken during the study, and to inform the analysis undertaken on the strengths and weaknesses of different options for the future.

The information examined and results of the accessibility mapping are presented in section 5.

1.1.3 Case Study and Cost Assessment

To inform the appraisal of potential options for the future, and to gather comparative data on the performance of alternative approaches to concessionary fare provision in rural areas, the study team examined the provision of travel concessions in a selection of comparator district areas in other parts of England.

The information on concessionary fare provision in the selected case study areas is presented in section 6.4.

1.1.4 Consultation

The information collected during the previous stages of the study was taken to a workshop session with LSP members to gather their views on the research findings and potential options for the future.

The information gathered during the consultation exercise and the views of the key stakeholders involved in this research are summarised in section 7 as part of a wider consideration of the issues associated with the provision of differing forms of concession.

1.2 Summary

This report provides an analysis of a series of options for the future for the provision of travel concessions in rural areas in South Staffordshire. These options are based upon the information collected during the study process outlined above.
2 The Key Policy ‘Drivers’ in South Staffordshire

2.1 Introduction

In seeking to consider and comment upon the provision of travel concessions in South Staffordshire it is first valuable to consider the political context in which issues relating to rural transport, access to key services such as healthcare, and financial support for key, ‘vulnerable’, groups in rural areas sits. This section therefore provides a summary of the key policy drivers in South Staffordshire which shape the way in which travel concessions may be provided in the future.

2.2 Transport

This section considers the key policy drivers for transport.

2.2.1 The Local Transport Plan for Staffordshire

Staffordshire Council have produced a second Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the period 2006 to 2011. The LTP covers 96% of the total land area and 85% of the population of the County of Staffordshire. To undertake a review of the rural transport needs of South Staffordshire the second Local Transport Plan (2006-2011) for the County of Staffordshire has been studied for this purpose.

(i) Aims

By the end of the LTP period in 2011, Staffordshire Council aims to:

- Improve accessibility of the County’s population to key services, particularly those relating to healthcare;
- Reduce the total number of accidents related to people being killed or seriously injured (KSI) and slight injury casualties; and
- Improve the overall condition of the highway network.

(ii) Objectives

The objectives set out in the LTP are:

- Better accessibility;
- Creating safer roads;
- Effective and efficient highway management;
- Reducing traffic congestion; and
- Improving air quality.
(iii) Accessibility

The Local Transport Plan notes that access to key services in Staffordshire varies within the county as a whole due to the diverse mix of urban and rural communities. Therefore, the use of public or private transport to access services also varies. Deprived communities in rural areas are often situated adjacent to some of the more affluent communities in the county. This can have a marked impact on identifying and supporting individuals requiring support; this is a pertinent issue when considering the provision of concessionary fares.

As mentioned in the Staffordshire LTP, the key accessibility issues experienced in South Staffordshire are:

- Access to town centres by walking, cycling and public transport;
- Access to hospitals, particularly in those rural areas which may be poorly served by public transport and / or who have low levels of car ownership;
- Access to employment sites, particularly those away from the town centres; and
- Enabling higher levels of walking and cycling for shorter journeys through additional infrastructure improvements.

(iv) Rural Transport Issues

One of the important rural transport issues that Staffordshire County Council has identified in the Local Transport Plan is the growing demand for access to healthcare facilities in the county. This demand is mainly from the growing proportion of older people in the county and people living with limiting long-term illness. The following section of this report considers the demographic profile of the county, but it is worth stressing at this point that South Staffordshire displays particular demographic characteristics which highlight the need to support individuals in accessing healthcare.

The key transport issues raised by three of Staffordshire’s Rural Transport Partnerships are:

- Public transport is not considered to be attractive by people living in rural areas;
- Sustainability of some rural bus services is affected by funding;
- Lack of support to the voluntary sector in establishing, maintaining and also improving services where needed;
- Transport costs faced by post-16 pupils coming from low income families is a major issue; and
- Lack of co-ordination between health and voluntary sectors that provide transport services.

The Rural Transport Partnerships suggest that rural non-car owning households in Staffordshire are particularly prone to rural isolation. Individuals living in these households find it difficult to access key services and to visit family and friends. Public transport services that operate at a low frequency in rural areas means people have to stay at home longer that they would like which further contributes to rural isolation.
2.2.2 The Staffordshire LTP - Accessibility Strategy

Within the Staffordshire Local Transport Plan, the Accessibility Strategy gives particular focus to the provision of support and services to improve levels of access. Of note for rural South Staffordshire is the desire to improve access to everyday facilities, particularly for those without access to a car.

Staffordshire County Council recognise that access to key services such as health, retail and leisure can improve the quality of life and life chances of the population. It is hoped that implementation of the strategy will contribute to:

- Developing safer roads;
- Reducing the impact of traffic;
- Improving air quality;
- Supporting economic regeneration; and
- Dealing with issues related to quality of life.

2.2.3 The Staffordshire LTP - Bus Strategy

Alongside the Accessibility Strategy sits a Bus Strategy. This acts as a ‘daughter’ document to the main LTP and provides additional consideration to the provision of bus services in rural Staffordshire.

The key objectives of the bus strategy for Staffordshire County Council in relation to rural transport are:

- To contribute towards improving accessibility;
- To reduce congestion by encouraging a modal shift from car to bus; and
- To improve quality of life;

The bus strategy sets out the following characteristics that rural bus networks in the County should have:

- Provide a link into at least one primary or secondary centre;
- Operate services at least 6 days per week to larger villages, with an evening/Sunday service provided based upon an assessment. Smaller villages may be provided with a service on less than 6 days per week dependent on demand;
- Provide interchange to the primary network wherever possible; and
- Interchange at railway stations where practicable.
The primary objective for rural bus services is to help prevent social exclusion, and then wherever possible to attract journeys away from the car. However, Staffordshire County Council is aware that there is likely to be a conflict with these objectives as meeting social inclusion objectives may lead to a bus route not providing sufficiently competitive journey times to attract car users in significant numbers.

2.3 Community Development

Whilst considering policy and political drivers relating to transport and access is particularly important, the study also examined policy relating to community development and cohesion. The study gave particular consideration to the Staffordshire Community Strategy.

2.3.1 The Staffordshire Community Strategy

The Staffordshire Community Strategy has been produced by ‘The Staffordshire Conference’ which is a partnership of fifty organisations working together to make Staffordshire a better place to live, work, visit and invest in.

The key aims of the strategy are to:

- Ensure everyone can participate in the life of their community and has access to high quality services. The need for communities to identify and address their own needs and priorities was recognised; and
- Recognise the particular needs of rural communities and find innovative ways to respond to rural issues.

The Community Strategy aims to address the issues highlighted by providing sustainable transport facilities by the following means:

- Facilitate greater use of public transport;
- Encourage walking and cycling;
- Discourage unnecessary or excessive use of private cars;
- Reduce the number of car journeys to school;
- Manage the highway network effectively;
- Work towards reducing the effect of transport on the environment; and
- Encourage efficiency and good practice in freight movement.

The Staffordshire Conference aims to achieve this by:

- Improving the levels and quality of public transport services;
• Continuing to promote the availability of travel concession schemes for elderly people and disabled people;

• Providing more cycle routes;

• Managing car parking, developing green travel plans and planning better land use;

• Improving pupils’ access to safe, environmentally sound and healthy alternatives to the car;

• Maintaining the highway network, managing its use and improving it, where appropriate, to provide safe and efficient journeys for everybody; and

• Promoting sustainable transport by maintaining local services.

It is therefore clear that the work of the Staffordshire Conference provides a robust framework which supports further action to improve access to key services in rural areas.

2.3.2 The Rural Access to Services Partnership

Staffordshire Rural Access to Services Partnership (RASP) is a multi agency partnership funded by Advantage West Midlands to support people into work, education, training and support business in rural areas.

The key objectives for RASP are:\1

• Improve access to education, training and employment; this includes the provision of assistance to people entering training or employment;

• Reduce rural isolation and social exclusion;

• Promote sustainable travel patterns;

• Provide support for skills and business development, including providing assistance to rural businesses;

• Promote car share schemes in all areas of the County;

• Provide additional support for Voluntary and Community Transport;

• Provide a local call centre for coordination, booking and scheduling demand responsive services;

• Provide ‘one stop shops’ for community information on issues such as health, travel, learning and work leisure activities and IT support;

• Support initiatives by other agencies/partners;

• Support Jobcentre Plus’s ‘Pathways’ project which helps people on incapacity benefit to return to work;

• Support migrant workers by taking full account of their needs to minimise any difficulties in accessing employment and training; and

• Provide a rural marketing campaign to recruit voluntary drivers for community transport and voluntary car schemes.

The Rural Access to Services Partnership provides a particularly important ‘steer’ in addressing rural transport and travel issues in South Staffordshire. In relation to the provision of travel concessions, RASP is able to link together the use of travel concessions with the development and operation of services provided to complement ‘mainstream’ public transport. By doing this, the impact of providing even relatively small amounts of financial support to one individual can be multiplied considerably where they are given the ability to use their financial support as part of a package of options.

### 2.3.3 The Local Area Agreement

The Local Area agreement for Staffordshire was prepared in March 2007 and represents a fundamental change where decision making and flexibility is transferred to a local area so that local joint action can be taken on local priorities. It has since been updated to cover the period 2008-2011

The following table covers the objectives set out in the Local Area Agreement for Staffordshire.
### Table 2.1: Key objectives set out in Local Area Agreement

<table>
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<td><strong>Access to services and facilities by public transport</strong></td>
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<td>Increasing the percentage of people within 30 and 60 minutes of a hospital / major centre.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Children and young people</strong></td>
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<td>Increasing rates of this age group in physical activity, sport, cultural activities and recreational programmes.</td>
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<td><strong>Safer and stronger communities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Improving rural accessibility.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Healthier communities and older people</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to employment for 18-64 year olds with learning disabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Economic development and Enterprise</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing access to higher education</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainable development</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>At least 64% of rural households should be within 800m of an hourly bus service to a major centre.</td>
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<td>An overall reduction of CO2 emissions per capita to the levels in 2004.</td>
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### 2.3.4 ‘Changing Lives’

Staffordshire County Council’s ‘Changing Lives’ programme aims to improve social care and access to services for older people and individuals with disabilities. The programme aims to enable this group of people to continue living in the area they wish to by providing them with access to services that the rest of the community uses. It is hoped that this will promote independence, inclusion and well-being for older or disabled residents.

### 2.4 Health and Well-being

Finally, in considering access to key services, it was deemed important to consider the key political driver related to the provision of healthcare and its relationship with rural areas and transport.

#### 2.4.1 The Staffordshire Health Strategy

The Staffordshire Health Strategy developed by Staffordshire County Council set outs the following aims in relation to older people having control over their own lives:

- Live a safe and healthy life;
- Have an active role within the community they live in; and
• Access the support they require to live as independently as they choose.

These issues are particularly pertinent for elderly rural residents.

2.4.2 South Staffordshire Sustainable Community Strategy

The South Staffordshire Sustainable Community Strategy provides a vision and plan for the future for South Staffordshire. It provides the key mechanism by which the recommendations from this study can be taken forward.

2.4.3 South Staffordshire’s Corporate Strategy

The South Staffordshire Corporate Strategy sets out South Staffordshire Council’s overarching aims and objectives. Aim 3 is particularly pertinent to this study:

‘Aim 3 - To be a District of thriving and sustainable communities’

Within Aim 3, the Corporate Strategy supports the development of further transport services in rural areas by supporting access to key services such as hospitals and employment opportunities.

2.5 Summary

In considering the provision of travel concessions and support for rural residents wishing to access key services it was felt important to place any recommendations for action within a supportive policy framework which would underpin action to address rural social isolation. The policy documentation considered above does this by identifying key aims and objectives for action in rural areas. By ensuring that the recommendations from this study accord with these aims and objectives, those tasked with implementing the ‘next steps’ outlined later in this report are doing so in accordance with wider efforts to support rural communities in accessing key services.

Following the review of the key policy influences on transport provision in rural areas, it was felt worthwhile to identify the potential travel needs of different groups within rural South Staffordshire. The next section examines the population of South Staffordshire.
3 The Population of South Staffordshire

This section considers demographic and socio-economic information for South Staffordshire. The aim of this section is to provide an understanding as to the key socio-demographic ‘drivers’ which may influence the provision of concessionary fares in rural South Staffordshire.

3.1 Where do people live in South Staffordshire?

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 provide a graphical indication as to the distribution of people within South Staffordshire. Figure 3.1 shows the classification of rural areas in South Staffordshire according to the former Countryside Agency rural area classification. Figure 3.2 shows the distribution of members of the public within the district area. Together, these two maps show that there are greater concentrations of members of the public closer to the major conurbations of the West Midlands with population density steadily decreasing the further west one travels. Population density decreases and level of ‘rurality’ increases as well, thus highlighting those areas where particular attention must be directed when considering the travel and transport needs of rural residents in South Staffordshire.
Figure 3.1: Map showing rural and urban areas in South Staffordshire
Figure 3.2: Map showing levels of Population Density in South Staffordshire
3.2 What is the ‘age profile’ of the population of South Staffordshire?

In considering the transport and travel needs of rural residents in South Staffordshire it is particularly important to examine the needs of particular groups in the community who are particularly dependent on public and community transport and travel services provided by Staffordshire County Council and South Staffordshire Council. The following tables, graphs and maps provide information which highlights the need to consider the transport and travel needs of particular community groups in South Staffordshire.

As illustrated in Figure 3.3 the population of South Staffordshire demonstrates the following demographic characteristics:

- The number of young people between the ages of 5-17 living within South Staffordshire is in-line with the demography for the West Midlands and England;

- One in eight (12.86%) people living in South Staffordshire fall between the ages of 18-29; this is lower than the West Midlands (15.88%) and England (16.28%);

- Individuals between the ages of 30-65 years constitute exactly half of the population of South Staffordshire; this is higher than the rest of the West Midlands and England where this age group makes up 46% of the population. This indicates that the district of South Staffordshire has an emerging ageing population; and

- The number of people above the age of 65 living within the district is the same as that in the West Midlands and England.

**Figure 3.3: Age of population living within South Staffordshire District**

![Age Distribution Graph](image)

---

2 National Statistics, 2001
It is also important to note that the recent Audit Commission Report 'Don't Stop me Now - Preparing for an Ageing Population' notes that:

"The older population of most areas will increase between 2009 and 2019, but the rate of change will vary. For example, the biggest increase will be in South Staffordshire Council. The area's proportion of people aged 50 or more will grow by 7 per cent from 42 per cent to 49 per cent. The rate of growth will slow between 2019 and 2029, when the proportion of people aged 50 or more will have grown to 51 per cent."

It is therefore particularly important to consider these changes in population growth and demographics when planning future transport services in rural areas.
Figure 3.4: Map showing the distribution of people aged 60+ (female) and 65+ (male) in South Staffordshire
3.3 How do people travel in and around South Staffordshire?

The district of South Staffordshire has high levels of car ownership, 86% of households in the district own at least one car; this is well above the national average of 73%. It is estimated that there are around 60,615 cars in the district which is an average of 1.4 cars per household. The number of households in the district who do not have access to a car is 14.36%; this is well below the national average of 26.84%.

Table 3.2: Car ownership levels in South Staffordshire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of cars owned</th>
<th>South Staffordshire (%)</th>
<th>West Midlands (%)</th>
<th>England (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No car or van</td>
<td>14.36</td>
<td>26.77</td>
<td>26.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 car or van</td>
<td>40.48</td>
<td>42.89</td>
<td>43.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 cars or vans</td>
<td>35.13</td>
<td>24.21</td>
<td>23.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 cars or vans</td>
<td>7.45</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more cars or vans</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cars or vans owned by households in South Staffordshire</td>
<td>60615</td>
<td>2406815</td>
<td>22607629</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.5 shows the distribution of households in South Staffordshire with no access to a car or van. Whilst the map shows that there are a higher number of households with no access to private transport in the more ‘urban’ areas in South Staffordshire, as expected, it does also highlight that there are rural areas with lower levels of private car ownership than other areas. In considering how best to meet the travel needs of rural communities, residents in these areas may particularly benefit from the provision of improved public transport services and financial support to travel.

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3 National Statistics, 2001
Figure 3.5: Map showing the percentage of households with no access to a car or van in South Staffordshire.
3.4 What is the employment profile of South Staffordshire?

Travel to employment acts as a principal reason to travel for many residents in South Staffordshire. For rural residents, travel to work brings a number of particular problems due to distance to travel, travel time and therefore restricted employment opportunities. The provision of improved public transport services can offer rural residents the opportunity to access a wider range of potential employment sites. It is in this context that the study brief asked that consideration be given to highlighting and examining the transport needs of rural residents wishing to access employment.

Employment opportunities in rural areas of Staffordshire have increased by 11.1% (+7,200) between 2003 and 2005. Employee growth in Staffordshire for the period 2003 to 2005 stood at 1.1%. This is a significantly greater growth for a rural area than other similar areas in England and the West Midlands Region.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the difference of the broad employee profile of the rural wards in Staffordshire from the average of rural areas within England and the West Midlands. Staffordshire as a whole has high proportions of employment in manufacturing, transport and communications and other services in comparison to other rural areas within the West Midlands region. However, there are a low proportion of employees in the County working in banking, finance and insurance, public administration, education and heath and distribution, hotels and restaurants.

Figure 3.6 shows the percentage of people who work in higher managerial and professional occupations. For rural areas in South Staffordshire it shows that the proportion of those in these types of profession may actually be higher than for neighbouring urban areas. The challenge therefore is to ensure that these individuals are provided with appropriate alternatives to the private car and that they are able to access public transport at the point at which they feel they are no longer able to drive.

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4 Rural Matters-Staffordshire. The State of the rural Economy, December 2007
5 Rural Matters-Staffordshire. The State of the rural Economy, December 2007
Figure 3.6: Map showing the percentage of people (17-64) who are in large employer or higher managerial / professional occupations

% of people (16-74) who are in large employer and higher managerial/professional occupations, Census 2001

Source: Census 2001

% large employers and higher managerial/professional occupations

- > 15
- 10 to 15
- 5 to 10
- 2 to 5
- < 2

Local Authority Boundary
Figure 3.7: Employment by Industry (2005)

Source: Annual Business Inquiry, NOMIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIC (BIGs)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C,E</td>
<td>Energy and water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G,H</td>
<td>Distribution, hotels and restaurants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Transport and communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J,K</td>
<td>Banking, finance and insurance, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L,M,N</td>
<td>Public administration, education and health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O,P,Q</td>
<td>Other services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6 Rural Matters-Staffordshire. The State of the rural Economy, December 2007
Figure 3.8: Map showing the percentage of people (aged 16-74) who travel more than 10km to work
3.5 Are people ‘healthy’ in South Staffordshire?

The health status of rural residents can also influence the type of services provided by local authorities. Residents may require improved access to hospitals or GP surgeries, or the age profile of the area may highlight the need for additional public transport services to meet an anticipated growth in demand for transport to health services.

The following are the health and social care issues faced by residents of Staffordshire as a whole:

- The coal mining and manufacturing industry has influenced life expectancy in the County;
- Mortality rates in the County are higher than the national average; circulatory diseases and cancer have contributed to this;
- Almost 1 in 4 children are overweight with some of these obese and 45% of adults took little or no exercise. Obesity was also found to be more prevalent among lower income groups; and
- Levels of diabetes among the resident population of Staffordshire were found to be above the national average.

This information has been used later in this report when considering the provision of improved transport and travel services, and financial support for rural residents wishing to travel.
4 Public Transport in South Staffordshire

This section considers the current provision of public and community transport in South Staffordshire.

4.1 Introduction

In examining the provision of public transport in South Staffordshire it is clear that communities located on routes between major towns are well served by public transport, but services are infrequent between isolated rural communities.

Staffordshire County Council’s transport team is working to support, improve and co-ordinate Staffordshire’s public transport network. The team works with private bus operators, rail companies, public organisations and user groups to raise standards and make the service more responsive to local needs. The County Council spends over £3 million every year on funding vital bus services for communities who would otherwise not have a link to shops, employment and leisure.

Many residents are of the opinion that the County Council operates buses and controls the routes. However the public bus services in the County are privatised and routes are deregulated; therefore these services are run by private bus operators to make a profit which the council has no control over. The Council does fund many services which are not profitable but are socially necessary to the communities in the area. This is particularly pertinent for rural areas that may be particularly dependent on the use of subsidised bus services. With regard to the use of concessionary fares, the relative lack of public bus services in comparison to neighbouring urban areas does mean that rural residents have less opportunity to take advantage of the travel concessions available to them.

4.2 The Public Transport Network

The public bus network and community and voluntary transport services are briefly discussed below.

4.2.1 The Bus Network

The public bus network in South Staffordshire provides services in a manner similar to many rural areas; vehicles operate between larger communities with infrequent services providing access for rural residents at a reduced level of frequency compared to services in urban areas.

Many local bus services provided for residents of South Staffordshire also operate outside the boundary of the district and county of Staffordshire and serve the population living on either side of the boundary. The routes are jointly planned with the relevant neighbouring authorities and the cost of providing the services is shared as appropriate between the two local authorities concerned. This issue of cross boundary travel is particularly pertinent for residents of rural areas living close to the boundary between South Staffordshire and a neighbouring area. Where residents may wish to access services in a neighbouring authority area and wish to do so through the use of their travel concession provided by the District Council, they will only be able to use their concession for the proportion of the journey within South Staffordshire. This has implications for their ability to access key services and the financial restrictions they may face. This issue is discussed further in a later section.
Information is available on views of residents of South Staffordshire on the bus services they use. This information provides a number of particularly interesting issues for consideration when examining the provision of services in rural areas.

A Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) survey was carried out in 2006 for Staffordshire County Council to gauge the levels of satisfaction of rural and urban residents to the overall and individual aspects of bus services operating in the County. This survey highlights a number of areas where divergence in the views of rural and urban residents provides a useful indication of areas to be addressed in revising the range of travel concessions offered to rural residents in South Staffordshire.

The BVPI survey found that the overall satisfaction with the local bus service is considerably lower in rural areas; more than 40% of respondents were very satisfied and 33.6% fairly satisfied, in comparison to 13.3% and 45.7% respectively in urban areas.7

Rural respondents cited their highest level of dissatisfaction (43.0%) with the frequency of bus services. This differed significantly from 18.8% of urban respondents who cited dissatisfaction with this aspect of the service. In relation to the provision of bus stops, 71.9% of rural respondents were satisfied; this is still lower than the almost 80% of urban respondents who were satisfied with this aspect of the bus service.

![Figure 4.9: Levels of Satisfaction with Local Bus Services in Staffordshire](image)

**Figure 4.9: Levels of Satisfaction with Local Bus Services in Staffordshire**

### 4.2.2 Community and Voluntary Transport

A range of Community and Voluntary Transport services are available for rural residents alongside the ‘conventional’ public bus services provided by Staffordshire County Council.

Staffordshire County Council supports the following voluntary car schemes operating in the district of South Staffordshire. These are:

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7 Rural Matters-Staffordshire. The State of the rural Economy, December 2007
Brewood Voluntary Car Scheme;

Landywood & District Vol. Help Centre;

Penkridge & Acton Trussell VCS;

Kinver Community Transport;

South Staffs Local Village Transport; and

Wombourne Volunteer Bureau.

In addressing the transport and travel requirements of rural residents in South Staffordshire, and in thinking about the range of services available to address their needs, it is vitally important to assess the role the Voluntary and Community sector can play in providing transport for those in receipt of travel concessions.

(i) ‘Wheels to Work’ in South Staffordshire

‘Wheels 2 Work’ is a scheme which provides access to employment and education in rural areas in Staffordshire as a whole. The scheme has been operational in the County since February 2007 and is funded by Advantage West Midlands and Staffordshire County Council but managed by the County's Transport unit. The scheme is open to individuals who have no access to public or private transport but have an opportunity to take part in education or training or have an offer of employment.

The scheme provides successful applicants with travel vouchers to use public transport, a loan of a moped or bicycle, subsidised driving lessons or grants to help repair vehicles. Since February 2007, the Wheels 2 Work scheme has assisted in enabling 300 people across the County to access work, education or training.
5 Levels of Access to Key Services

This chapter considers levels of access to key services in South Staffordshire.

5.1 Introduction

In considering the range of travel concessions available to rural residents within South Staffordshire it is important to consider and assess the ability of the public transport network to provide access to key services. Rural residents wishing to use some form of travel concession may be restricted in their ability to access services through a lack of available services rather than through financial restrictions.

This section presents the results of a simple accessibility mapping process undertaken by the study team using information provided by Staffordshire County Council on current public transport services. This information has been analysed to consider access to a series of key service types.

5.2 Access to Local Centres

The first ‘service type’ considered was access to ‘key local centres’ as defined by Staffordshire County Council. Figures 5.12 and 5.13 provide a graphical indication of levels of access to local centres by public transport. They show that communities in the east of the district enjoy better levels of access to service centres compared to residents living in more rural areas in the west of the district. There is little difference in the level of public transport service between the ‘peak’ and ‘inter-peak’ with a particularly negligible difference for residents of more rural areas.

It is important to note that the majority of the population of Staffordshire live within 30 or 60 minutes of a main town centre as seen in Table 5.3. Population living outside the 60 minute travel time boundary is very dispersed across the County. The table emphasises that it is residents without access to a car, those with a long-term limiting illness and those over the age of 65 who are particularly disadvantaged in accessing key service centres through a lack of public transport.
Table 5.3: Access to major centres in Staffordshire: AM Peak\(^8\) (07:00 to 09:00 on weekdays)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travel Bands</th>
<th>Characteristics of the Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within minutes 30</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within minutes 60</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside minutes 60</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^8\) LTP Staffordshire 2006-2011
Figure 5.10: Map showing levels of Accessibility to Local Centres by Public Transport (Peak)
Figure 5.11: Map showing levels of Accessibility to Local Centres by Public Transport (Inter-Peak)
5.3 Access to Supermarkets

The next service type considered by the study team was access to supermarkets. Figures 5.14 and 5.15 show levels of access to supermarkets within and outside South Staffordshire by public transport. They show that again, residents who live in or close to larger centres of population have good levels of access to supermarkets. However, levels of access quickly deteriorate in the district’s rural areas with many rural residents unable to travel to their nearest supermarket by public transport.
Figure 5.12: Map showing levels of Accessibility to Supermarkets by Public Transport (Peak)
Figure 5.13: Map showing levels of Accessibility to Supermarkets by Public Transport (Inter-Peak)
5.4 Access to Employment Sites

As discussed previously, levels of access to employment can vary considerably between urban and rural areas. Therefore, consideration is given below as to current levels of access to employment for residents in rural areas within South Staffordshire.

In 2001, 50% of the population residing in South Staffordshire District travelled to work by car, this is significantly higher than the national average of 38.54%, but lower than the average for the County of Staffordshire which is 73%\(^9\).

Table 5.4: Method of Travel to work in Staffordshire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of travel to work</th>
<th>South Staffordshire (%)</th>
<th>West Midlands (%)</th>
<th>England (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works mainly at or from home</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>5.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underground, metro, light rail or tram</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus, minibus or coach</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>4.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi or minicab</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving a car or van</td>
<td>46.10</td>
<td>37.03</td>
<td>34.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passenger in a car or van</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>3.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorcycle, scooter or moped</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On foot</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>6.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not currently working</td>
<td>33.07</td>
<td>38.25</td>
<td>36.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9 Staffordshire LTP, 2006-2011
Table 5.5 provides an indication as to the location of employment for residents of South Staffordshire. It highlights that for a significant number of residents, they travel outside of the district for employment. This stresses the need to consider cross-boundary public transport services to facilitate travel by public transport to their place of work.

**Table 5.5: Location of Employment for Residents of South Staffordshire**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District of Employment</th>
<th>In Same District</th>
<th>In Rest of County</th>
<th>In County Total</th>
<th>Stoke-on-Trent</th>
<th>Out of County (Excluding Stoke-on-Trent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home District</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Staffordshire</td>
<td>32.71%</td>
<td>11.30%</td>
<td>44.01%</td>
<td>0.26%</td>
<td>55.73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 Staffordshire LTP 2006-2011
Figure 5.14: Map showing the percentage of People of Employment Age who travel to work by Car

% of employed people (16-74) travelling to work by car (driver / passenger), Census 2001
Figure 5.15: Map showing the percentage of People of Employment Age who travel to work by Public Transport
Figure 5.16: Map showing levels of Accessibility to key Employment Sites by Public Transport (Peak)
Figure 5.17: Map showing levels of Accessibility to key Employment Sites by Public Transport (Inter-Peak)
5.5 Access to GP Surgeries

This study also considered levels of access to GP surgeries. The current provision of travel concessions provides a welcome level of support for members of the public eligible for travel support to access local healthcare. This section considers access to GP surgeries.

Access to primary health care in Staffordshire is slightly better than the national average. Table 5.6 shows that the majority of households in the County where residents have no car, aged over 65 or have a limiting long term illness live within 30 to 60 minutes access time to a GP surgery.

Table 5.6: Access to main GP surgeries in Staffordshire: AM Peak (07:00 to 09:00 on weekdays)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travel Bands</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Households with no car</th>
<th>Population aged over 65</th>
<th>Population with limiting long-term illness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within minutes 30</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within minutes 60</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside minutes 60</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research undertaken by Staffordshire County Council has identified that residents of the County have experienced difficulties in accessing hospitals in the area, mainly due to:

- The location of hospitals in non-town centre sites; and
- Certain treatments not being provided at all hospitals.

Sometimes patients have to travel to hospitals in other Counties; this leads to longer and more expensive journeys. Elderly residents in South Staffordshire have been found to travel to hospitals in the West Midlands conurbation which are not covered by existing forms of travel concession apart from their ‘All England’ Bus Pass. For rural residents without access to public bus services this is a particular problem.

Some of the barriers faced in accessing transport to healthcare facilities are:

- Appointment times have to coincide with the availability of transport;
- Mobility restricts the types of transport that can be used;
- Treatment required by an individual may only be available at a limited number of hospitals; and
• Cost of travel can be greater because journeys tend to involve more than one bus which increases journey time.

Figures 5.20 and 5.21 show current levels of access to GP surgeries by public transport. As with the other images produced as part of this accessibility assessment, they highlight the significantly reduced level of access offered to rural residents compared to their urban counterparts.
Figure 5.18: Map showing levels of Accessibility to GP Surgeries by Public Transport (Peak)
Figure 5.19: Map showing levels of Accessibility to GP Surgeries by Public Transport (Inter-Peak)
5.6 Access to Hospitals

Travel concessions such as travel tokens, bus passes and discount cards are often of greatest value for residents wishing to access hospitals and sites offering healthcare services. Therefore, this study has also examined the ability of rural residents to access health services, and hospitals in particular.

Whilst residents diagnosed with a limiting long-term illness may be able to take advantage of dedicated patient transport services, their family may not be able to do so. For elderly rural residents, whose partner is in hospital, the provision of travel concessions which assist them financially in accessing transport can help overcome feelings of isolation, particularly in times of concern due to illness.

Figures 5.22 to 5.24 provide a graphical indication of the distribution of residents with a long term limiting illness and levels of access to hospitals. They show that there are rural areas in South Staffordshire with upto 25% of the population diagnosed with some form of limiting long term illness. The maps for public transport access to hospitals show that it is these rural areas in South Staffordshire which suffer from low levels of public transport access to hospitals. Therefore, the provision of financial support to facilitate access to these services is particular important for residents in these areas.
Figure 5.20: Map showing the percentage of People in South Staffordshire with a Limiting Long-Term Illness
Figure 5.21: Map showing levels of Accessibility to Hospitals by Public Transport (Peak)
Figure 5.22: Map showing levels of Accessibility to Hospitals by Public Transport (Inter-Peak)
6 Concessionary Travel

6.1 Introduction

This section outlines the range of concessionary fare services offered in South Staffordshire and comparator local authorities. This information has been used to assess the relative merits of differing forms of travel concession for rural communities in South Staffordshire later in this report.

6.2 The Types of Concession available

This section details the following types of travel concessions that are available:

- Bus Pass;
- Rail Pass;
- Travel Tokens;
- Carer Pass; and
- Other forms of concession.

Each of these forms of concession is considered below.

6.2.1 The ‘All England’ Bus Pass

The following are the features of the All England Bus Pass:

- The All England Bus Pass was introduced on the 1st April 2008;
- The pass is issued at no cost to an individual;
- The pass enables residents of England who are aged 60 and over to travel for free during the off-peak period on all local bus services in England;
- Free journeys can be made across local authority boundaries and not just within the local authority area of residence;
- Individuals with a disability as specified by the Department for Transport are also eligible to receive the All England Bus Pass;
- Individuals with a visual impairment are also eligible to obtain the pass; and
- A Companion Pass is also available for a disabled person. The pass allows the companion to travel free of charge along with the disabled person on the same journey.
6.2.2 Rail Pass

This section provides a description of the various types of railcards that are issued by Network Rail:

(i) Senior RailCard

Any individual over the age of 60 is eligible to receive a Senior Railcard which costs £24 for 12 months. A Senior Railcard user can travel throughout Great Britain and can save a third on Standard and First Class rail fares. Railcards can be used anytime during the week, weekends and public holidays. As mentioned in Section 6.2, South Staffordshire Council allows individuals aged 60 and over to use £23 worth of travel tokens to pay for a Senior Railcard.

(ii) 16-25 RailCard

This Railcard is eligible for those aged between 16-25 and mature students over the age of 26 in full-time education. The Railcard can be used to get a discount of a third on Standard and First Class rail fares on journeys throughout Great Britain for a year. The cost of the railcard is £24 for a whole year.

(iii) Disabled Persons RailCard

As the name suggests, this Railcard is for individuals who have a disability. Individuals with a visual impairment, hearing impairment or have epilepsy may qualify for this Railcard. Those who are in receipt of a disability related benefit are also eligible to obtain a Disabled Persons Railcard. The Disabled Persons Railcard costs £18 for twelve months; a three year card is also available for a cost of £48. The Railcard also allows a companion to travel with the Railcard holder, the companion will get a third off most Standard and First Class Fares throughout Great Britain.

6.2.3 Travel Tokens

Travel tokens issued by South Staffordshire Council are an alternate form of travel concession to the bus pass. The following are the salient features of the Travel Tokens issued by South Staffordshire Council:

- Individuals living in the district who are elderly, disabled and / or blind are eligible to receive travel tokens from the Council;
- The tokens are accepted by certain bus operators in the district who have chosen to participate in the scheme as well as, voluntary car schemes, local taxi firms and taxi firms in adjoining councils;
- Tokens are also accepted by a number of other service providers such as Luncheon Clubs;
- South Staffordshire Council offer travel tokens to the value of £43 for 2008/09, this amount doubles for those who are blind or partially sighted. The amount reduces quarterly to £30, £20 and then £10 for the final quarter for a new applicant or an applicant renewing their concession for the year;
• The token colours alternate between green and blue each year. The Council currently offers a 50p and a 20p token to allow greater flexibility in paying fares as bus operators and taxis generally do not give change; and

• The Council writes to all operators annually to inform them of the following year’s arrangements.

6.2.4 Carer Pass

This section discussed the provision of the Carer Pass:

• A Carer Pass allows those who are disabled or have any form of visual impairment or mental disability to have a companion or carer travel with them for free;

• To qualify for a Carer Pass, the disabled individual has to provide the same information as they do for a bus pass in addition to information stating that they cannot travel unaided; this information is then confirmed by their GP;

• The Carer Pass has to be used in conjunction with a disabled pass; therefore the carer cannot use the pass while travelling alone; and

• The Carer Pass allows disabled passengers to take different carers on different journeys.

6.2.5 Other forms of concession

In addition to providing concessions to travel on bus, train and taxi some local authorities also provide other forms of concession to improve the quality of life of their residents. Examples of these are provided below to provide an indication as to alternative forms of concession which could be introduced in South Staffordshire.

(i) The NE Derbyshire Gold Card

North East Derbyshire Council offer the Gold Card which provides the following benefits:

• Free travel during the off-peak period on local buses throughout the whole of England;

• Pay only a half fare on local train travel;

• Avail of discounts at more than 1,400 shops and other local businesses; and

• Borrow material at all Derbyshire and Derby city libraries.

To qualify for a Gold Card the individual must live within North East Derbyshire and must be within one of the following categories:

• Aged 60 or over;

• Blind or partially sighted;

• Profoundly or severely deaf;
• Without speech;
• Be a Blue badge holder;
• Have a permanent disability which seriously impairs their ability to walk;
• Have a learning disability;
• Without arms or have the long term loss of the use of both arms; and / or
• Disqualified from driving on medical grounds which includes some people with severe mental disorder.

(ii) Contribution to partial payment of TV License

Residents of Eastleigh Borough Council who are permanently housebound are entitled to £32 in payment for their TV license, as they are unable to make best use of the travel concessions that the Council offers.

The individual must be 75 years of age and responsible for the payment of the TV License and there should be no other individual living with them who is over 75 years of age.

6.3 Current Concessionary Fare provision in South Staffordshire

Staffordshire County Council in partnership with Stoke-on-Trent City Council launched the Advantage pass in April 2001. In April 2006, the scheme was improved to provide county-wide free travel, in line with national guidelines.

The scheme is currently available to residents in South Staffordshire. Advantage Pass holders are entitled to free travel on all bus services operating within Staffordshire, including Stoke-on-Trent, and on cross-boundary services where the journey starts or finishes in this area.

South Staffordshire Council offers the statutory full fare adult bus pass for individuals of pensionable age and those with various types of disabilities. Instead of receiving the adult bus pass, an individual can opt for tokens with a value of £42 p.a. (for individuals who are blind or partially sighted). These tokens can be used on services provided by local taxi and bus operators. The tokens are issued every year in April from various village halls. However, tokens are also available from the Council offices daily on production of proof of age / disability and address.

There are currently 20,600 people using the travel token scheme of which 6,500 have a bus pass. South Staffordshire Council anticipates this number to increase once the new All England Bus Pass is issued from the 1st April 2008.

Individuals over the age of 60 can choose to forego £20 worth of tokens for a Senior Rail Card or just use a rail card instead of a bus pass.
In a survey carried out by South Staffordshire Council, the majority (69.4%) of individuals interviewed who used the concessionary travel scheme indicated that they would prefer to receive travel tokens as an alternative to the All England Bus Pass. This highlights the continuing need for South Staffordshire Council to continue to offer some form of alternative travel concession to the standard bus pass, particularly in rural areas.

6.4 Concessionary Travel in other Districts

Case studies from elsewhere in England and Wales have been identified to facilitate a comparative assessment with the concessionary fare scheme currently operating in South Staffordshire.

6.4.1 Selection Process

Case studies were chosen from the ‘family list’ provided by South Staffordshire Council and a wider list generated by Mott MacDonald. The ‘family list’ consists of non-metropolitan areas which have a similar socio-demographic composition to South Staffordshire. Additional case study authorities were identified by Mott MacDonald as being similar to South Staffordshire based on a number of factors including their rural/urban classification, the age profile of the population and general census data.

Lichfield and Staffordshire Moorlands both feature on the ‘family list’ and the list developed by Mott MacDonald. North East Derbyshire features on the Mott MacDonald list as having a similar socio-demographic composition as South Staffordshire and was contained within an old ‘family list’. Bromsgrove, Forest of Dean and New Forest were all selected by Mott MacDonald during comparison analysis. Eastleigh Borough Council was chosen by officers at South Staffordshire Council to be added to the list and Vale Royal, Newark & Sherwood and Hinckley and Bosworth are all contained within the new model ‘family list’. Stafford and Wychavon were added as outliers for comparative analysis.

6.4.2 The Authorities Selected

The following are the 12 case study authorities that were selected to study the provision of concessions:

- Lichfield;
- New Forest;
- Staffordshire Moorlands;
- Vale Royal;
- North East Derbyshire;
- Eastleigh;
- Bromsgrove;
- Newark and Sherwood;
6.4.3 Qualification Criteria in Other Districts

All of the 12 case study districts require their residents to be 60 or over or disabled to qualify for travel concessions. However, these districts also set additional criteria for their residents to qualify for travel concessions. They should:

- Be registered blind or partially sighted;
- Be profoundly or severely deaf;
- Be without speech;
- Have a disability, or have suffered from an injury, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to walk;
- Have no arms or have long-term loss of the use of both arms;
- Have a learning disability; and / or
- Have a driving license refused or revoked on medical or physical grounds.

6.4.4 Age Criteria

The following table outlines the age criteria set by the case study districts in providing concessionary travel to their residents.

- Forest of Dean;
- Hinckley and Bosworth;
- Wychavon; and
- Stafford.
### Table 6.7: Age criteria for receiving concessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Age set to qualify for concessionary travel in the district</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lichfield</td>
<td>Over 60 years of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Forest</td>
<td>Over 60 years of age. (Young People between the ages of 14-18 qualify for travel vouchers to the value of £40 per annum which can be used on public transport in addition to the educational transport service offered by the County Council.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffordshire Moorlands</td>
<td>Over 60 years of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vale Royal</td>
<td>Over 60 years of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Derbyshire</td>
<td>Over 60 years of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastleigh</td>
<td>Aged 60-70 years rail voucher entitling them to a third of all rail travel. Aged 70-80 years £32 in tokens for use on taxis, buses or trains. Aged over 80 years £52 in tokens for use on taxis buses or trains. Disabled residents over 5 years but less than 18 years entitlement to free bus pass. 18 years or over disabled applicants entitled to bus pass or tokens value of £32. Housebound residents entitled to £32 in TV licence contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newark and Sherwood</td>
<td>Over 60 years of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest of Dean</td>
<td>Over 60 years of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinckley and Bosworth</td>
<td>No information available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wychavon</td>
<td>Over 60 years of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford</td>
<td>Over 60 years of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromsgrove</td>
<td>Over 60 years of age.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.4.5 Concessionary Travel on other Services

The following table details other forms of travel concession provided in some of the case study districts.

Table 6.8: Other forms of concessionary travel provided by other case study districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Type of concessionary travel provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Derbyshire</td>
<td>Concessions accepted on Dial-A-Ride bus services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Dean</td>
<td>The Forest of Dean has a resource centre for blind and visually impaired people. The centre is called the ‘Forge’ and is run by an independent local charity, which provides transport services for those accessing the centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vale Royal</td>
<td>Concessions accepted on Dial-a Ride services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Eastleigh BC     | Concessions accepted on Dial-A-Ride and Parish Link services, and the Hedge End Park minibus service (This local shopping service provides door-to-door transport for people with disabilities from home to Marks & Spencer and Sainsbury’s at Hedge End. Cost varies with the length of their journey.)

Hospital taxi services are available for those who have a hospital appointment but have no access to a car or public transport. In these cases the GP or Consultant may be able to arrange for a volunteer worker from the Hospital Car Service to take them for their appointment.

Good neighbour schemes operate in the borough to provide assistance with transport to doctors, hospital or other medical related appointments.

6.4.6 ‘Area-Wide’ Concessionary Fare Schemes

The following table shows the different types of concessionary fares schemes which operate on an ‘area wide’ basis.
### Table 6.9: ‘Area-wide’ Concessionary Fares

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Type of ‘Area-Wide’ Concessionary Fares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vale Royal</td>
<td>The concessionary bus pass entitles the holder to free travel on most local bus services throughout England within the following periods:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From 9.30am–11.00pm on Mondays–Fridays;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Free travel on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residents of Cheshire are charged approximately half fare for journeys starting before 9.30am in the County only; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The bus pass also entitles the individual to travel at half price before 9.30am and free between 9.30am and midnight on local buses to and from destinations in Wales, provided their journey starts or finishes in Cheshire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastleigh BC</td>
<td>Concessionary passes can be used for travel all day within and beyond the County provided the journey is continuous and is on a Community Transport Service. (There are 4 services including Dial-A-Ride service)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newark and Sherwood</td>
<td>Holders of a Nottinghamshire pass are entitled to the following benefits:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Half price bus travel before 9.30 (Monday to Friday) and free travel after 23.00 except on premium fare night buses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Free travel on the Nottingham tram (NET) between 9.30 and 16.00 and after 18.00 Monday to Friday and all day at weekends and on Bank holidays. Before 9.30 and between 16.00 and 18.00 Monday to Friday half fare travel is available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Half fare rail travel on local journeys in and around Nottinghamshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The pass can be used only in journeys beginning or ending in Nottinghamshire and not on journeys in other parts of the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The pass can be used to travel on any train service operating between any two stations on the following lines, provided the journey starts or finishes in Nottinghamshire (including Langley Mill and Alfreton)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wychavon</td>
<td>Bus pass can be used at any time in Worcestershire after 9.30am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromsgrove</td>
<td>Travel from outside Worcestershire (to Worcestershire) is free after 9.30am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.4.7 Cost of Provision

This research also attempted to gather information on the cost of providing concessionary travel in each of the selected case study districts. However, information was only forthcoming from a selection of those identified for comparison with South Staffordshire. This information is provided in Table 6.10 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Cost of providing concessionary travel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Staffordshire</td>
<td>£607,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vale Royal</td>
<td>£1,038,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastleigh</td>
<td>£1.137m (cost of tokens, passes, railcards-excludes all administration costs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newark and Sherwood</td>
<td>£1,003,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wychavon</td>
<td>£820,000 (700 passes and 120 tokens)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromsgrove</td>
<td>£600k (approx)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table highlights the significant differences in providing travel concessions. In some areas, concessions are only available for those wishing to travel by bus; in other areas, the range of concessions is much broader with members of the public able to choose a form of concession which best fits their needs.

The next section has examined the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of concession, and developed a series of options for the future for South Staffordshire.
7 Options for the Future

7.1 Introduction

The information presented in the preceding sections has been used to inform a debate around the provision of travel concessions in rural South Staffordshire. This section presents the key findings from this process and includes a series of recommendations for the future for South Staffordshire Local Strategic Partnership and South Staffordshire Council.

7.2 The Advantages and Disadvantages of Different Forms of Concession

As part of the assessment of different ways forward for the provision of travel concessions in South Staffordshire the study team considered the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of travel concession for residents of rural areas. This process was also guided by discussions with the project steering group and key stakeholders at a workshop event conducted as part of this research. Outlined below are the key comments raised during this process.

7.2.1 All-England Bus Pass

The study team first discussed the merits of the current ‘All England’ bus pass system now in operation across England. This makes travel on all public bus services free of charge between pre-defined times of the day for individuals over the age of 60.

It was felt that the advantages of the current pass were that:

- The use of the bus pass for free bus journeys across local authorities in England allows individuals to travel further potentially expanding the range of services they are able to access;
- South Staffordshire Council are now able to work together with their neighbouring authorities to provide travel concessions for residents; and
- The bus pass can be used for journeys across Staffordshire even during peak times of travel.

However, there were felt to be a number of disadvantages with the current Bus Pass system.

- People who live in rural areas, where bus services maybe infrequent with potentially limited bus services to local centres and hospitals will not be able to make best use of their bus pass and may still require another form of concession; and
- Older individuals and those with severe disabilities would find it difficult to access bus stops and also particularly difficult to board buses negating the benefit of their bus pass.

Both the research undertaken by the study team and the views expressed by key stakeholders interviewed during this research have supported the need for some form of additional travel concession to complement the ‘All England’ bus pass for those most in need of support.
7.2.2 RailCard

In South Staffordshire residents are able to apply for a concessionary rail pass through the offices of South Staffordshire Council. This provides a two-thirds discount on rail travel for residents mirroring the concession available for individuals over the age of 60 available from larger railway stations. Discussions with key stakeholders suggested that the key benefits of providing the RailCard facility through South Staffordshire Council offices were that

- Residents of South Staffordshire would be able to gain a RailCard through South Staffordshire Council offices even when they do not have immediate access to larger stations with ticket and information desk facilities;
- The use of a Railcard offers immediate benefits to those who live in close proximity or have easy access to railway stations; and
- In the case of a Senior and 16-25 Railcard, South Staffordshire Council would just have to cover a one-off cost of issuing the Railcard. The rest of the discounted fare would be paid for by the Railcard holder.

However, there are felt to be a number of disadvantages in offering the ability to apply for a RailCard through South Staffordshire Council offices:

- Less affluent rural residents may be unable to afford the rest of the cost of the rail journey even after the 33% discount they get with their Senior Railcard has reduced the cost of the fare;
- Older and severely disabled individuals would find it difficult to access railway stations; and
- Railcards are of little benefit to those who do not live along main railway routes or where trains services are of low frequency.

Perhaps the greatest area of discussion was in considered the level of ‘added value’ South Staffordshire Council provides for residents in offering the ability to apply for a Senior RailCard. Rural residents in particular may make little use of such a card to access regular key services and where an individual wishes to hold a RailCard they are able to apply at larger rail stations for them. Whilst the cost of administrating the application process for South Staffordshire Council may be relatively small, this is still a cost to be borne by the District Council.

7.2.3 Travel Tokens

At present South Staffordshire Council provide Travel Tokens for eligible members of the public. The benefits of tokens were considered by stakeholders in relation to the travel and access needs of rural residents. It was felt that they offer a number of particular benefits:

- Travel tokens provide residents with the flexibility to choose how, when and where they would like to travel;
- Tokens provide them with the ability to afford direct door-to-door services provided by the taxi sector;
This in turn offers an increase in levels of convenience as more vulnerable members of rural communities are able to reduce the period of time they wait for transport;

By setting a clearly defined set of parameters which define eligibility according to age, this form of travel concession is relatively easy to administer; and

Individuals entitled to travel tokens are potentially free how they would like to use their concession, be it for access to key services or leisure travel.

This last point does also illustrate a disadvantage of travel tokens:

Whilst South Staffordshire Council may wish to restrict token use to travel for ‘necessary’ trips to key services, residents may choose to use them as a form of subsidy for travel for social purposes. More prosperous residents may simply use them as a method of reducing the cost of travel for leisure purposes;

It was felt that there is the potential for taxi operators who have chosen to accept travel tokens to overcharge on fares to offset any perceived costs associated with their involvement in administering the acceptance of tokens; and

Those receiving travel tokens may try to barter them for other purposes. Anecdotal evidence suggests that they are occasionally used in public houses.

There was however general recognition that if carefully administered and managed, travel tokens can play an important role in providing financial support for rural residents.

### 7.2.4 Carer Pass

Finally, key stakeholders and the study team considered the benefits of continuing to offer a pass to carers which allows them to accompany disabled or mobility impaired people. In particular it was felt that carer passes:

- Provide elderly and more disabled individuals with the ability to continue to travel with assistance and more confidence in accessing public transport;
- Having an accompanying person on a journey improves the quality of life of the individual receiving support and also provides a form of companionship; and
- Issuing carer passes encourages more people to volunteer in providing support to elderly and disabled people in their communities.

Whilst the advantages of carer passes were felt to be considerable it was acknowledged that there are disadvantages to their provision:

- Offering carer passes does entail an additional cost to the Local Authority; and
- Any misuse of carer passes is difficult to monitor.
7.3 Issues Influencing the Provision of Concessionary Fares

Alongside the assessment of the relative advantages and disadvantages of differing forms of travel concession, the study team also considered a number of issues influencing the provision of concessionary fares. The information for this part of the study was derived from two key sources:

- The analysis of key socio-economic and accessibility issues undertaken to inform the development of the preceding chapters; and
- The results of discussions with key stakeholders.

These key influences are considered below.

7.3.1 Age

At present, the age of the individual requiring assistance in accessing key services forms a principal factor in determining whether or not that person is eligible for support. In South Staffordshire individuals over the age of 60 are automatically entitled to travel vouchers irrespective of their travel and access needs.

Using 65 as an age to define eligibility is based on the idea that once an individual retires, their access to a private car or other forms of personal mobility is significantly reduced but in many instances individuals continue to enjoy a good quality of life and level of personal health well beyond the point at which they retire. The socio-economic analysis undertaken as part of this research, and the discussions with key stakeholders, have given weight to the argument that there maybe benefit to be gained in redefining the way ‘age’ is used to bestow eligibility. There maybe considerable benefit in offering travel concessions to those perhaps aged 75 and over where there is greater likelihood that they derive greater benefit from financial support. In turn, by altering the age at which eligibility is defined, the limited financial resources of South Staffordshire Council will be focussed on those most in need of support and by inference least likely to abuse any concession made available to them.

7.3.2 Providing access to services across Local Authority Boundaries

The mapping and accessibility analysis have highlighted the need to consider the issue of ‘cross-boundary’ travel when considering travel concessions. Whilst users of the ‘all England’ bus pass are able to travel across local authority boundaries freely, there is often uncertainty amongst transport operators and users about their ability to travel using travel tokens (for example) to services outside their local authority area. In turn, local authority members can often be uneasy about providing financial support for travel to leisure facilities outside of the area when there may be an unwritten assumption made that the financial support provided is really to access key services such as healthcare as close as possible to the resident’s home; preferably within the local authority area.
The mapping does however highlight the difficulty resident’s face in accessing key services within South Staffordshire. It may therefore be advisable to accept that travel concessions will be used to move outside the local authority area, but perhaps some form of restriction should be placed on the type of destinations residents are able to travel to using their concession. This does however bring with it issues regarding the administration and monitoring of travel concessions which may outweigh any potential cost saving in restricting travel to key services. Indeed, it could be argued that if concessions were primarily directed to the over 75’s for example, they may only be willing to travel longer distances in instances where they needed to access key services.

**7.3.3 Centralising Services**

There is now an increasing move towards the centralisation of key services for purposes of efficiency and management. This is particularly the case in the health sector where the argument is proposed that the centralisation of services gives users access to a wider range of facilities in one location.

For rural residents however this poses particular problems. For example, the centralisation of services in a larger town may deprive residents of smaller rural communities of the ability to access even the most basic of healthcare. Therefore, it may be appropriate to;

1. Consider focussing the provision of travel concessions on access to key services such as healthcare to address the potential for increasing distances to services; and

2. Focus the provision of travel concessions on those who need it most, whether they be the most elderly members of the community or those with defined healthcare needs who are restricted in their level of mobility.

**7.3.4 The role of the Voluntary and Community Sectors**

The Voluntary and Community Sectors (VCS) are playing an ever-increasing role in the provision of services in rural areas and with greater pressure placed on the finances available to support ‘conventional’ public bus services, local authorities such as Staffordshire County Council are looking to work in partnership with the VCS to meet the travel needs of residents unable to access key services through a lack of public transport. This in turn makes the relationship between VCS organisations involved in the provision of transport and travel concessions particularly important.

Discussions with key stakeholders identified that the voluntary sector can play an important role in providing transport to people who have difficulty in accessing public transport, as they provide a direct and journey specific form of travel. It may therefore be appropriate to consider the administrative issues surrounding the acceptance of travel concessions such as travel tokens on services for the general public provided by VCS organisations.

**7.3.5 Providing Concessions for Young People**

In considering levels of access to key services in rural South Staffordshire, the study team and key stakeholders noted the need to address the transport and travel problems facing young people in rural areas. Whilst travel concessions are traditionally available for older members of the public, young people in rural areas often face considerably difficulties in accessing leisure and social facilities.
During this study it was suggested that some form of travel concession be made available for young people to reduce the potentially high travel costs they incur. In theory this would allow them to travel further at an appropriate cost rate to destinations appropriate to their needs.

A number of disadvantages were noted with providing young people with the ability to decide on where expenditure on travel. It was felt that it would be harder to administer and monitor the provision of concessions to young people due to the relative lack of existing mechanisms available to facilitate the disbursement of financial support. It was also felt that it would be more appropriate to direct financial support directly to organisations providing services for young people rather than placing finances directly in the hands of young people; it was felt that this would provide a more secure method of monitoring and appraising the use and benefits of these financial resources.

### 7.4 Options for the Future

The issues raised above and the comments made on the relative advantages and disadvantages of different forms of travel concession were used to inform the development of a series of ‘options’ for the future provision of travel concessions in South Staffordshire. It was not the intention for each of these options to be viewed in isolation; rather, there may be merit in selecting a number of options for implementation as a revised portfolio of travel concessions in South Staffordshire.

#### 7.4.1 Option 1 - The ‘Status Quo’

In considering the provision of travel concessions in South Staffordshire it was felt appropriate to first examine the strengths and weaknesses of the current approach taken in the district. The current provision of concessionary travel includes:

- The All England Bus Pass; and
- Providing travel tokens to the value of £43 per annum to those aged 65 and over.

It was felt that this approach provides users with the flexibility to decide how best to access key services. It is also relatively simple to administer.

However, there are several disadvantages with the current system:

- South Staffordshire Council has to incur the cost of providing both the All England Bus Pass and Travel tokens;
- For residents of the district living in rural areas and who have no access to any form of public transport or motor car, the value of travel tokens being provided is not substantial enough to provide for the cost of essential travel by taxi;
- The current provision does not take into account the needs of young people; and
- There is no restriction on those who are able to travel by bus but may prefer to use travel tokens to travel by taxi, therefore passing on a greater financial burden to South Staffordshire Council.
The disadvantages outlined above were accompanied by a general willingness on the part of the study steering group to examine alternatives for the future. Therefore, a number of further options are considered below.

### 7.4.2 Option 2 - The Legal ‘Minimum’

A simple alternative is to provide only the legal minimum. This would have the immediate effect of reducing the financial burden placed on South Staffordshire Council.

This option considers the option of simply providing only the All England Bus Pass. This would have two principal advantages

- It would be easier for the District Council to allocate and administer the provision of concessions through only providing the All England Bus Pass; and
- The Council would not incur the cost of the pass holder’s bus journey when they travel outside the boundaries of the district. Where users travel outside the district using travel tokens, the District Council still incur the cost of travel.

These advantages were however felt to be outweighed by the following disadvantages:

- The ‘All England’ pass is of little use to those who live in areas which are poorly served by ‘conventional’ buses;
- Those who are severely disabled or living with a long-term illness would find it difficult to access bus stops and therefore bus services; and
- The mapping exercise has highlighted that even where residents are able to travel by bus to key services, the length of travel required may act as a disincentive to travel, especially for older residents.

The analysis of this option identifies a number of key areas where additional forms of travel concession are necessary to address the travel needs of rural residents. Therefore, further options have been considered below.

### 7.4.3 Option 3 - Age targeted-Over 75

This option considers the provision of concessionary travel for those above the age of 75 in addition to the provision of the All England Bus pass for those aged 60 and over. Those under the age of 75 who are severely disabled or find it difficult to access a bus stop would also be provided with travel tokens.

It was felt that this approach would have a number of benefits:

- It would target resources at those most in need of support;
- It would continue to address the travel needs of those experiencing mobility difficulties irrespective of their age; and
- It would continue to provide some form of concession to those aged between 60 and 75 who are able to access ‘conventional’ bus services.
However, it is acknowledged that rural residents between 65 and 75 without access to regular bus services would see a reduction in levels of accessibility. However, the results of the socio-economic analysis would suggest that the transference of resources from this group to those over the age of 75 would give greater return on the limited financial resources available to South Staffordshire Council.

7.4.4 Option 4 - Providing concessionary travel on market days

The provision of travel concessions for the over 75’s appears to be a positive way forward for many rural residents. It does however mean that those between 65 and 75 would be dependent on their ‘All England’ bus pass. To this end, the study team considered the benefit of providing a reduced level of concession, additional to the ‘All England’ bus pass for this group at certain times of the week; the maps produced as part of the accessibility analysis noted the difficulty individual’s face in accessing food shops and it was felt that there could be benefit in providing concessionary travel on market days.

This type of travel concession is very journey specific and caters for rural residents for whom market days are the main reasons they access town centres. Discussions with key stakeholders suggested that this option could be difficult to monitor; considerable onus would be placed on operators to ensure that they did not accept travel tokens issued for specific days at times of the week when the use of travel concessions would be restricted by the parameters set by South Staffordshire Council. In addition, whilst rural residents may be able to pool their travel tokens they would still be restricted to travelling within a relatively ‘narrow’ time period for a very specific journey purpose.

7.4.5 Option 5 - Providing concessionary travel in rural areas

The assessment of the above options has noted the benefit of providing travel concessions for those over the age of 75 and the dis-benefits associated with simply offering travel at very rigidly defined times of the day and week.

The study team therefore considered the benefit of defining eligibility for concessionary travel through a resident’s home location in relation to level of ‘rurality’. It is suggested that those living in very rural areas where public transport services are poor would be entitled to receive travel tokens which they would use on taxi services. This would give them the opportunity to travel where and when they required overcoming the issue of poor levels of public transport in their area relative to their urban counterparts.

Stakeholders suggested that individuals who have to access GP surgeries for example or hospital appointments for a particular time would find it easier to travel by taxi instead of using a scheduled bus service which would not coincide with the appointment time allocated to them. Residents of very rural areas would also be provided with a form of public transport where previously no service of any form had been available to them.

A number of difficulties are immediately apparent with this approach however. It would be difficult to classify areas of the district as being more rural than others. Whilst residents living both one mile and twenty miles from the nearest large settlement may categorise themselves as rural they may experience very different travel needs. Indeed, the residents of the district may see the provision of concessionary fares in very rural areas as an unequal and inconsistent distribution of a public service.
7.4.6 Option 6 - Transport to Healthcare services

Discussions with key stakeholders noted the potential for the provision of travel concessions to be tied into the provision of transport to key services such as healthcare. Therefore option 6 considers the allocation of travel tokens for access only to healthcare facilities like GP services, hospital appointments etc.

It was felt that this option would provide those requiring to access healthcare facilities with a direct means of travel to healthcare. In many instances at present, residents are required to change bus service at least once to travel to hospital. This is a particular problem for residents with mobility difficulties. However, whilst the benefits of providing financial support to healthcare are clearly defined, tying this into the provision of financial support to travel through concessions is more problematic. Evidence collected through the assessment of other authorities suggests that it would be difficult for South Staffordshire Council to administer the distribution of concessionary fares purely for healthcare unless a strict set of criteria were set depending on an individual’s mobility and severity of illness. In turn unless taxi operators in the area could monitor any misuse of tokens it would be difficult for the Council to police the use of travel tokens issued for healthcare purposes.

7.4.7 Option 7 - Transport for young people

Discussions with South Staffordshire Council highlighted the need to consider the travel needs of younger members of the public in rural parts of the district. It was suggested that providing concessionary travel for young people would enable them to have a better level of access to higher education, employment opportunities and social events. It was noted that South Staffordshire Council would have to make appropriate arrangements with local transport operators in the district to ensure that they will accept travel tokens for this purpose.

Discussions with key stakeholders and examination of the accessibility mapping conducted as part of this research have highlighted a number of potential benefits to providing financial support to young people to support their requirement to travel:

- For young people living in rural areas, most sixth form and further education colleges are located in main towns. Therefore, some form of travel concession would provide those who wish to pursue post-16 education a means to access further education;
- Concessionary travel would provide young people living in rural areas an opportunity to socialise in the evenings with their friends without having to worry about arranging lifts home;
- A group of young people living within the same rural area would be able to travel together and take turns for paying with their allocation of travel tokens;
- Young people would be less reliant on their parents to transport them; and
- Providing young people with transport to access employment, education and social events would lessen the likelihood of anti-social behaviour taking place in the local community.

However, whilst these benefits appear to be significant and persuasive in supporting the introduction of concessions for young people there are a number of key issues which may deter South Staffordshire Council from providing financial support directly to young people:
• Taxi operators may be reluctant to provide transport for a group of unaccompanied young people;

• Providing transport for young people to socialise may draw criticism from other residents in the district as it might be seen as promoting unruly behaviour in towns, unless additional adequate supervision was made available;

• Placing direct financial support in the hands of young people may lead to abuse of the concessions made available.

The discussions around this issue noted a desire to assist young people with travel too and from key services such as further education, healthcare and appropriate social activities. Without additional monitoring and supervision of the use of travel concessions the use of this financial support may be directed in a way which runs counter to the clearly defined objectives of the local authority. It may be more appropriate to focus the use of the limited financial resources on the direct provision of services for young people, rather than offering what is in essence money to travel which is clearly open to misuse. The additional costs incurred in policing the use of any concession would outweigh any benefit gained by altering the range of concessions available to target resources more effectively.

7.4.8 Option 8 - Provide transport according to mileage limit

Finally, this project has considered the provision of travel concessions within a framework which restricts travel according to a mileage limit. The mileage limit would be related to the distance a particular community would have to travel to access a local centre or GP for example. Whilst this would restrict any misuse of the scheme as the conditions attached to the mileage limit would only allow for travel to essential and key services, calculating the mileage limit would be a contentious issue and South Staffordshire Council may have to deal with each individual entitled to concessionary travel on an individual basis, which would further lead to complicated administrative issues.

The information presented above has been used to prepare recommendations for the provision of travel concessions in South Staffordshire. These recommendations are outlined in the next section.
8 Summary

This report presents the results of research on the provision of travel concessions in rural South Staffordshire.

8.1 Recommendations for the Future

The analysis of options for the future provision of travel concessions in South Staffordshire has highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of travel concession for rural areas. It has however also noted the potential benefit for implementing an approach to the provision of travel concessions which combines the benefits of a number of different forms of concession.

It is therefore recommended that South Staffordshire Council provide a portfolio of travel concessions which:

- Provide travel tokens for those over the age of 75, rather than the current age of 60. This acknowledges the issue of mobility and car ownership outlined in the preceding section and would target the provision of limited financial resources at those most in need of support;

- Continue to provide travel tokens for those registered disabled, whatever their age

- Increase the amount of concession available from the current £43 to a new rate of, for example, £60;

- This new rate should be updated annually to take into account increases in cost of living and travel expenses; and

- Restrict the use of travel tokens to a set of pre-defined trip types.

In using travel tokens it is suggested that South Staffordshire Council engage with the local taxi sector to define a series of conditions regarding the use of travel tokens. We would suggest that rather than noting which destinations can be travelled to using travel tokens, guidelines should be produced which state the type of destination not to be accessed using tokens such as airports or nightclubs. In this way, users will perceive that there is little restriction on the use of tokens rather than feeling that they must ensure that their trip meets a set of rigid guidelines.

Policing the use of travel tokens is acknowledged as being difficult. We would therefore advocate an approach which includes the taxi sector in discussions on the use of travel tokens and introduces a simple requirement for taxi operators to submit a note outlining the trip destinations served by those using their travel tokens. This could be handled quickly through the taxi office rather than driver and this information need only be submitted at times when the operator seeks reimbursement for the tokens collected.

We would also urge South Staffordshire Council to:

- Continue to support and provide the ‘All England’ bus pass;

- Continue to offer a ‘carer’ pass, and make this available to carers supporting those who are partially sighted or blind;
• Allow the use of travel tokens on voluntary car schemes and Community Bus services; and

• Continue to offer the token / rail card split, though the impact of this for rural residents is acknowledged as being of limited value.

In undertaking this research the study team attempted to gather information on the cost of providing transport in other district areas to inform the development of these recommendations. The impact of the cost of providing this revised level of concession is provided below.

**8.2 The Cost of providing these ‘Options’**

In assessing travel concessions offered in comparable districts to South Staffordshire this project has attempted to gather information on the cost of providing alternative forms of concession. This analysis has also highlighted the difficulty in attempting to draw direct comparison between the provision of concessions in different district areas and rural and urban communities.

Generating cost information on the likely finances required to support a revised tranche of travel concessions is very difficult as it is necessary to make assumptions on potential future demand for financial support to travel. However, the study team attempted to generate information on the likely cost of providing revised concessions using a simple approach based on the current use of the existing range of travel concessions and population data.

The method used was as follows:

- At present there are 23,169 individuals over the age of 60 in South Staffordshire\(^\text{11}\), and 21,336 currently claim concessionary travel. This constitutes 93% of the population eligible to claim travel concessions;

- At present, South Staffordshire Council redeems £43 worth of travel tokens for 10,587 people at a cost of £455,241;

- The study team looked at the financial implications of offering £60 and £70 worth of tokens to those individuals over the ages of 70 and 75. These are shown in table 8.11 below. This assumes that the overall number of potential claimants aged 60+ remains static.

**Table 8.11: Table showing cost of providing increased Travel Token Concessions to residents of South Staffordshire aged 60+, 70+ and 75+**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Concession</th>
<th>60+</th>
<th>70+</th>
<th>75+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£43</td>
<td>£455,241</td>
<td>£228,029</td>
<td>£142,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£60</td>
<td>£635,220</td>
<td>£318,180</td>
<td>£198,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£70</td>
<td>£741,090</td>
<td>£371,210</td>
<td>£231,210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{11}\) Census (2001)
This table shows that, for South Staffordshire as a whole (not distinguishing between urban and rural areas), the cost of providing the same level of concession as at present (£43) would naturally decrease as eligibility was redefined to provide concessions for those over 70 years of age and 75 years of age. It also shows that, if South Staffordshire Council were to increase the amount of concession provided from £43 to £60 or £70 the cost of provision would increase considerably unless the age at which concessions were provided also altered to compensate.

The study team then attempted to consider the implications of providing a greater number of travel tokens, in comparison to bus passes, in an attempt to replicate the potential increase in demand for tokens to be generated by residents of rural areas. This is naturally a very subjective exercise with numerous variables likely to influence the cost of provision.

Two alternative scenarios were examined:

- Option 2 - Where the proportion of tokens issued increases to a moderate level, due to a moderate increase in demand from rural residents (generated by increasing by a third the number of potential claimants); and
- Option 3 - Where the proportion of tokens issued increases considerably, due to a significant increase in demand for travel concessions from rural residents (generated by doubling the number of claimants).

Cost information for each of these scenarios was generated by increasing the proportion of residents claiming travel tokens rather than bus passes over the ages of 70 and 75. It was felt that this would give an indicative indication as to the potential cost implications of an increasing number of rural residents claiming tokens. The increased token claimant numbers used for this process are outlined below.

**Table 8.12: Table showing increased claimant numbers used in generating cost estimates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All over 60</th>
<th>All over 70</th>
<th>All over 75</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Option 1 – Status Quo</strong></td>
<td>10,587</td>
<td>5,303</td>
<td>3,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Option 2</strong></td>
<td>10,587</td>
<td>6,497</td>
<td>4,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Option 3</strong></td>
<td>10,587</td>
<td>8,550</td>
<td>5,326</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These hypothetical claimant numbers, generated through altering the % of the population potentially claiming tokens, were then used to generate information on providing travel concessions for an increasing number of people above each age boundary. Note that the % of the population claiming tokens over the age of 60 was not changed; only when the study team were looking at population numbers over the ages of 70 and 75 were proportions changed.

The cost estimates for each ‘scenario’ are outlined below.
### Table 8.13: Table showing cost of providing increased travel concessions to an increasing number of people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Token Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£43</td>
<td>£60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Option 1</strong></td>
<td>All 60+</td>
<td>£455,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All 70+</td>
<td>£228,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All 75+</td>
<td>£142,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Option 2</strong></td>
<td>All 60+</td>
<td>£455,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All 70+</td>
<td>£298,721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All 75+</td>
<td>£186,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Option 3</strong></td>
<td>All 60+</td>
<td>£455,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All 70+</td>
<td>£367,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All 75+</td>
<td>£229,018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key information has been highlighted in the table above:

1. The first box, shaded in red shows the current level of expenditure on concessionary travel tokens = £455,241;

2. The second set of boxes, shaded in blue show the likely costs of increasing the amount of token concessions available to those over the age of 60, assuming the ratio between the number of tokens and bus passes issued remains the same;

3. The next set of boxes, shaded in green, provide an indication as to the likely cost increases to come about by an increase in demand for tokens from rural areas. They show that, by offering the same amount of concession, but to potentially more people, the cost increases accordingly, as expected;

4. The final boxes to consider are shaded in yellow. They show that even when a significant increase in the number of claimants is anticipated and welcomed, by altering the amount offered, and changing the age boundary which defines eligibility, a greater amount of financial support can be provided to those most in need within the budgetary parameters currently in place. This shows that:

   a. Where a moderate increase in demand is expected from rural areas, tokens should be offered to those over the age of 60 to the value of £60; whilst
b. Where a greater increase in demand is expected from rural areas, tokens should be offered to those over the age of 75 to the value of £70.

Giving consideration to those issues highlighted in preceding sections, it is this latter scenario that forms the basis of our recommendations listed previously.

It is important to acknowledge that this process aims to give a ‘best estimate’ of potential cost. In the longer term, it may be appropriate to examine in more detail potential demand for travel from specific rural areas given that travel conditions in certain areas can vary so widely.

8.3 Additional Issues

The process outlined above, and the discussions held at the study workshop have outlined a number of key issues South Staffordshire Council may want to address in the future. These include:

- The use of existing voluntary and community transport vehicles in South Staffordshire;
- The provision of cross-boundary services to key locations outside of the district;
- Methods of developing services for young people in the district; and
- The implications of changing service provision in the health sector on the way people travel to and from key locations.

Alongside alterations to the provision of travel concessions in South Staffordshire, this project has also provided evidence which supports the further development and provision of support to Voluntary and Community Transport services in South Staffordshire.