Rural Mobility Fund Phase 1 Evaluation: Final Report

A report prepared for the Department for Transport

Version number

Final v1.0

Issued September 2025

Citation

This document was produced by the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) for the Department for Transport.

The preferred citation is:

Chatterjee, K., Beyazit, E. & Shergold, I. (2025). *Rural Mobility Fund Phase 1 Evaluation: Final Report*. Report to Department for Transport

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Acknowledgements

We want to explicitly thank the local authorities, vehicle operators and technology providers involved in this research for their participation. Local authority officers have devoted a considerable amount of time and effort into obtaining and collating the monitoring data and we are particularly grateful for their efforts. We would like to thank the DfT staff who managed the evaluation project, namely Jenny Dickson, Frances Carpenter, Nathan Cole and Rachel Glab.

We acknowledge that this report presents a variety of information and data, with local authority statistics differing from one another, as would be expected. The purpose of the RMF pilot project and the monitoring and evaluation is to learn about what best works, in which circumstances and why. Therefore, all data is valuable and contributes to supporting learning around how to increase the viability of DRT and assess whether it can provide an effective solution to rural transport provision in some areas. Without local authorities trialling different processes and set ups for their DRT schemes, giving the variation in the data, little useful information would be gained.

The Rural Mobility Fund Phase 1 Evaluation project was commissioned by DfT from a consortium holding a contract for ‘Provision of Evaluation Research Support for Local and Regional Transport Analysis’ and consists of UWE Bristol, Sustrans, Transport for Quality of Life and the University of Westminster. We wish to thank our colleagues across the consortium for their support during the contract. In particular, we are grateful for contributions of Beth Hiblin, Evangelia Pantelaki and Vinita Nawathe to this research project.

Image credit

Cover photos: Vinita Nawathe, Essex County Council, North Lincolnshire Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and Warwickshire County Council.

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Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning
All-time (average/figure)	The average/figure for the entire operational period of each scheme up to September 2024.
Award/RMF award	A successful bid to the RMF which received funding.
Confidence level	A confidence level, in statistical terms, is a measure of certainty or assurance that a particular value lies within a specific range, which is known as the confidence interval. It is expressed as a percentage and indicates how often the true value would fall within the confidence interval if the same experiment or study were repeated multiple times under the same conditions.[1]
Corner to corner (C-to-C)	A service picking up and dropping passengers off at designated stops (a combination of pre-existing physical bus stops and new virtual stops).
Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)	Flexible service that provides shared transport to users who specify their desired location and time of pick-up and drop-off.[2] This is in contrast to traditional buses which follow fixed routes and timetables.
D-DRT	Digital Demand Responsive Transport (i.e. Demand Responsive Transport utilising digital technology).
England national concessionary travel scheme (ENCTS)	The national scheme offering free bus travel to eligible older and disabled people in England between 9:30am and 11pm on weekdays and all day at weekends and on bank holidays. RMF DRT schemes are not part of ENCTS as bus services where the majority of seats are bookable in advance do not qualify. Local authorities are able to offer additional concessions outside ENCTS at their discretion, including on DRT services, but these do not qualify for ENCTS reimbursement.

[1] https://www.statsig.com/blog/confidence-levels-in-statistical-analysis

[2] www.gov.uk/government/publications/demand-responsive-transport-local-authority-toolkit/demand-responsive-transport-local-authority-toolkit

Feeder location	Location at the edge of the travel zones which are trip attractors in their own right or interchange points for onward travel.
Hub and spoke system	A transport system in which passengers travel from smaller stops/stations to one large central stop/station to make longer trips.[3]
Land use patterns	Spatial distribution of residential areas, businesses (commercial and industrial), agricultural and recreational areas and public services such as health and education.
National Public Transport Access Node (NaPTAN)	National dataset of all public transport 'stops' in England, Scotland and Wales.[4]
Passenger aggregation	Process of increasing the number of passengers carried at the same time to achieve greater vehicle occupancy.
Pilot/RMF pilot	A single RMF award.
Pilot area	Geographical area in which DRT pilot scheme operates.
Road network	Network of all public roads including motorways and local roads managed by different public bodies.
Roundtable	Involving several people who talk about something as equals.[5]
Scheme area	Geographical area in which a DRT scheme operates. Same as service area. (There may be multiple schemes within the pilot e.g. in Gloucestershire and Nottinghamshire).
Second-generation DRT	Used to describe a more recent product or model that uses improved technology, making it better than when it was first available.[6]

[3] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/hub-and-spoke-system

[4] www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-public-transport-access-node-schema/html-version-of-schema

[5] dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/roundtable

[6] dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/second-generation

Service	Bus service which is part of a DRT scheme or separate to it.
Service area	Geographical area in which a DRT scheme operates.
Travel zone	Geographical area served by a DRT service within which travel must start and/or end.
Unfulfilled journey bookings	Booking requests that were submitted but not fulfilled due to supply factors (e.g. unavailability of vehicle) or demand factors (e.g. passenger cancelling booking).
Vehicle (revenue) hours	Vehicle revenue hours are defined as the hours when vehicles are in revenue service (i.e. the time when a vehicle is available to the general public and there is an expectation of carrying passengers)[7]. This is calculated as the product of number of vehicles, days of operation and hours of operation. It should be noted that estimates of vehicle hours in this report are over-estimates as DRT schemes will not use all vehicles for all hours of operation.
Vehicle utilisation	The rate of passenger usage of the vehicle.
Virtual bus stop	Pick up or drop off in an area that does not have a physical bus stop.[8]

[7] Pettersson, F., 2019. An international review of experiences from on-demand public transport services. The Swedish Knowledge Centre for Public Transport.

[8] www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/parking-travel-roads/transport-travel/bus-travel/westlink

Executive Summary

Overview

In 2020, the Department for Transport (DfT) invited English Local Authorities (LAs) outside London to bid for funding to trial demand responsive transport (DRT) services in rural or suburban areas. In March 2021, the Rural Mobility Fund (RMF) awarded one-off funding of £19.4m to 15 different LAs to implement and run DRT pilot schemes for between two to four years. All of the schemes use digital solutions to schedule passenger journeys and dispatch and route vehicles. This is sometimes referred to as Digital Demand Responsive Transport (D-DRT) and enables passengers to book a journey, track a vehicle and often make a payment within a mobile app.

The trials offer the opportunity to investigate the performance of DRT schemes in a variety of rural and suburban settings in England. The significance of this opportunity has been heightened due to a growing interest in DRT since 2021 with schemes introduced in England supported by other funding sources.

The primary objectives of the RMF are:

- To improve understanding of whether DRT can fill a gap in current service provision, or work with existing services to create an improved public transport package that better meets the needs of residents in rural and suburban areas.
- To better understand the specific barriers unique to DRT and any potential solutions that may establish it as a viable and sustainable alternative.

This report presents findings from phase 1 of the programme level evaluation commissioned by DfT to the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol). The phase 1 evaluation addressed the two primary objectives of the RMF through two research activities:

1. Collecting monitoring data from LAs for each DRT pilot scheme, analysing the data and summarising programme-level results. The data was collected on a six-monthly basis and included operational, usage and financial data.
2. Conducting a programme-level process evaluation of the RMF to understand the experiences of designing, mobilising and implementing the DRT pilot schemes and what lessons can be learned. This entailed two rounds of interviews and roundtables with LAs and their delivery partners.

Findings based on data collected from these activities up to September 2024 are presented in this report. Phase 2 is being conducted separately and will undertake impact and value for money evaluation to supplement the findings of phase 1 with a more in-depth assessment of the outcomes and impacts of the pilot schemes.

The DRT pilot schemes

DRT schemes had started in all but two LAs (previously one single LA at the time of the RMF award) by the end of the monitoring data collection period for this report in September 2024. The delay in implementing the DRT schemes in Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness (previously Cumbria) arose due to capacity and capability challenges and the separation of the county council into two new unitary authorities in April 2023.

This report includes results for 18 schemes operational by the start of 2024. Two schemes were serving towns and their surrounding villages, three schemes were serving urban edge and rural areas, seven schemes were serving areas with a mix of urban and rural development and six schemes were serving largely rural areas. The residential populations served vary from about 11,000 to 184,000 people.

All the DRT services were designed as flexible bus services that provide shared transport to users who specify their desired location and time of pick-up and drop-off. Most of the schemes consisted of a single travel zone within which journeys could be booked. Typically, the travel zones covered low population density areas with 'feeder' locations at the edge of the travel zones which are trip attractors in their own right or interchange points for onward travel. Nearly all the DRT services provided a 'corner to corner' service picking up and dropping passengers off at designated stops (a combination of pre-existing physical bus stops and new virtual stops).

The number of vehicles per scheme varied between one and six and the DRT schemes were using minibuses with between 12 and 16 seats. The majority of schemes were running six days a week (Monday to Saturday) for at least 12 hours per day. In most cases, the new DRT schemes were introduced with no changes to existing fixed route bus services, but in some cases fixed route bus services were withdrawn.

LA experiences in running the DRT pilots

The RMF provided the opportunity to trial a DRT solution in local areas and demonstrate to the public and local stakeholders what DRT is and how it can work in practice in their local areas. The RMF pilots set out with a goal to learn about digitally enabled DRT and it is important to capture and share that learning.

Setting up the DRT pilots

A number of governance and management lessons were learnt from the experience of LAs in setting up and running the DRT pilots.

Flexibility in contracts with scope for system development is important. Several LAs found themselves constrained or poorly supported as a result of the initial specification of their DRT schemes, or of the way that they tendered for partners. For some this reflected the lack of existing available data on passenger demand, or the (short) timescales for implementing the RMF pilots, but for others it was inexperience with DRT or with interacting with the new technology partners needed to deploy it. LAs felt it was important to build in scope for system development within contracts.

Effective partnership working is required with technology providers. Whilst LAs have worked with bus operators on fixed route services and sometimes on DRT in the past, the partnership with technology providers in these pilots was new. Most of these companies operate globally. The language, operating practice, and styles of communication were unfamiliar to begin with for LAs, and the scale and complexity of DRT operating contexts in rural and suburban England were often new to these transport technology companies. Working relationships have worked well in the main, but it is an area where standards, common approaches and training might offer some benefits in the future.

LAs need adequate resources to procure and manage DRT schemes. All the LAs noted that there was additional and unanticipated effort required to operate a DRT service, over and above the resource needs of standard, fixed route bus contracts. LAs need to be adequately and appropriately resourced to manage DRT schemes, both in terms of procurement and ongoing management. Retaining responsibility for aspects of scheme delivery (for example, service design and marketing) was considered beneficial in terms of greater transparency about scheme performance and greater visibility to the public of the role of the council in delivering the DRT service to residents.

LAs need to retain knowledge gained on running DRT schemes. LAs have learnt a great deal about D-DRT solutions – some more than others – depending on whether the scheme was operated in house or contracted to external transport operators. This knowledge is often held by a small team, or even individuals, within an authority. Effective knowledge management practices are needed and it is important to widen the pool of those with appropriate knowledge and skills, with potentially new skills brought in from elsewhere (e.g. for data analysis and presentation).

Technical knowledge lessons

The LAs reported the following technical knowledge lessons from their experience in running the DRT schemes.

LAs require the skills and tools to exploit data available from DRT schemes. The data available from D-DRT was a key benefit for many participants, helping LAs know what journeys were being made and requested. The usefulness of the data could be limited however if the LA did not have tools to analyse it or the capacity to fully exploit the data. Schemes receive real-time customer feedback from passengers. Understanding how to more systematically collate, analyse and respond to this feedback would help schemes balance user experience against operational priorities (such as aggregation). The use of a booking app provides an opportunity to collect additional user feedback beyond the review facility, for example to support understanding of customer profiles, journey purposes and modal shift. However, taking advantage of this opportunity was often seen to be constrained by capacity and capability within the LA.

Mechanisms for sharing knowledge between LAs would be beneficial. It would be valuable to share knowledge amongst LAs on what they can do with the technology available for DRT, the functionality and how to adjust and set parameters to achieve operational goals. This includes learnings in respect of zoning and vehicle

allocation, service models (e.g. point-to-point versus corner-to-corner), routing and ride scheduling algorithms and booking practice and payment options.

Technical and legal guidance on running DRT schemes would be welcomed by LAs. Increased knowledge (and experience) of the range of operational and technical solutions for running DRT services in England would help LAs work with vehicle operator and technology providers to ensure appropriate solutions are deployed. Clear guidance on legal and regulatory features of deployment in England would also be helpful when working with international partners whose experience may be different.

Standardisation of performance metrics will assist benchmarking. The information available to LAs to support service planning tended to be quite limited pre-implementation. This presented difficulties for assessing operational success and resulted in the need for adjustments to schemes during implementation. There are common data analysis tools in use across LAs and it may be that some standardisation of approaches would be helpful in managing and reporting on schemes. Their use might be further aided by the availability of common metrics for measuring performance of DRT schemes.

Monitoring results

Passenger usage and service efficiency

Passenger usage. Monthly passenger journeys in the latest six-month monitoring period varied from 117 to 6,458 with a mean value of 2,101 across the 18 schemes. Differences in passenger journey numbers across schemes are likely to be influenced by a variety of factors with data showing the number of operational vehicles plays an important role. Most schemes have seen growth over time after their initial launch. In some cases, growth mainly occurred in the first few months, after which usage levelled off, while, in other cases, growth has continued over a longer period.

Service efficiency. Passenger journeys per vehicle hour saw small increases over time and by the last six-month monitoring period the average was just over two across schemes with a range from 0.9 to 3.9. Schemes with smaller areas generally recorded higher figures for passenger journeys per vehicle hour and lower figures for empty running ratios. Some LAs took steps to increase service efficiency during the trial period and evidence of an improving situation is apparent in two-thirds of schemes. LAs focussed in particular on aggregating passengers making similar journeys through measures such as modifying travel zones, reducing the number of available stops, introducing wider pick-up time slots for journey bookings and allowing group tickets. The system data on journeys available from technology providers was indispensable for informing such changes.

Trends in bus passenger journeys in pilot areas. There were increases in total passenger journeys (DRT and other bus passenger journeys combined) in DRT pilot areas after the introduction of the DRT schemes in nearly all cases where this could be assessed. This implies the schemes are likely to be meeting at least one of the RMF programme objectives of enabling journeys, otherwise not possible, to be made

and attracting people to public transport from private transport. In most cases where comparisons were possible, total bus passenger journeys increased more over time in RMF pilot scheme areas compared to non-pilot areas, which suggests that introducing DRT can facilitate additional bus usage.

Journey patterns and connectivity

Journey distances. The DRT schemes have been introduced in diverse contexts with areas served ranging in size from 4 square miles to 337 square miles. This is reflected in average journey distances varying from 2.3 to 10.2 miles. Journey distance tends to increase with service area size and decrease with population density.

Destinations served. The most popular destination type has been rail/bus stations, highlighting that DRT is likely to be meeting the expectation of connecting people to the wider public transport network. Town/village local centres and employment/business/retail parks were also popular destinations, indicating DRT is enabling people to access local service centres with job, retail and other opportunities, and therefore supporting local economies. Visualisations of journey flows available for some DRT schemes show how DRT can serve diverse journey demands which would be difficult to serve by fixed route bus services and enable time and cost savings for users.

Day of week and time of day. Most schemes had a similar number of passenger journeys on weekend days and weekdays. Overall, there was higher demand than average between 8am and 10am and between 3pm and 5pm but demand was evident at other times of day, including evenings where an evening service was available.

User profiles and experience

Concessionary fare users and user demographics. The average percentage of journeys made with concessionary fares across the 18 DRT schemes was the same (26%) as for local bus services in English non-metropolitan areas. There was a large range of values across schemes. Where concessionary fares were available to children/young people, there was evidence they were being used. The majority of users of most DRT schemes were full fare paying users. LAs who used a combination of digital marketing methods (social media) with traditional marketing methods (posters, leaflet drops, roadshows) considered this had worked well to attract a broad range of users, including young people who they felt are not typically well represented as users of fixed route, rural bus services.

Journey bookings and passenger experience. Most journeys (87%) were booked with the mobile apps. Phone bookings to a call centre constituted 11% of all bookings. LAs said that putting time and effort into helping the public to use apps was beneficial, although the provision of a call centre to handle telephone bookings was still considered important for inclusion purposes. They also spoke of additional benefits for LAs/service operators from customers using the booking app, including enabling the LA/operator to interact more directly with passengers and to obtain instant feedback.

The average advance booking time for DRT services was 2.7 days. Schemes with a higher percentage of phone bookings and concessionary fare journeys experienced longer lead times for bookings. Also schemes reporting a higher ratio of unfulfilled bookings to fulfilled bookings experienced longer lead times for bookings. Some LAs were concerned that allowing journey bookings too far in advance without requiring payment until the journey is made leads to no shows and wasted vehicle trips. This led to some LAs requiring payment in advance or introducing shorter advance booking windows. Almost half of unfulfilled bookings were attributable to the service provider and about one in five to the user. Sample feedback available from one scheme showed difficulties using the app booking system and finding a suitable time slot, as well as user cancellations, were the main contributors to unfulfilled bookings. Where rides were completed, this was generally a positive experience with driver care cited in particular.

Revenues and funding

Revenue per passenger journey for the latest six-month period varied from £0.86 to £5.22 across the 18 schemes. However, this should be treated with caution as reimbursements from the £2 fare cap scheme were not always included in the reported revenue figures. The lower fares available due to the £2 fare cap in 2023-24 may be regarded to have played a part in encouraging people to use the DRT pilot schemes given the findings from a national evaluation of the fare cap scheme found that it contributed to bus patronage growth[9].

In total, £1,654,530 revenue has been reported for 823,490 passenger journeys since the schemes started operating, representing an average of £2.01 revenue per passenger journey. As mentioned above, this is an under-estimate as there are some known gaps in revenue data availability. LAs acknowledged that schemes were only covering a small proportion of their operating costs through passenger revenue and accepted that rural DRT schemes were likely to require ongoing subsidy. Several authorities spoke about the importance of including more than just the operating costs and ticket revenue in assessments of financial sustainability, looking to also factor in the benefits that accessibility and social value provided by DRT might offer. They also felt the subsidy required for the overall bus network with the DRT schemes in place had the potential to be lower than would be the case with fixed route bus contracts, and that DRT schemes could be more effective at feeding passengers into wider public transport services. Nevertheless, LAs considered there were opportunities to increase revenues through marketing activities to attract more users and operational changes to increase passenger aggregation and to reduce costs by reducing vehicle size and outsourcing some elements of the service.

Reflections and legacy of the RMF

The RMF pilots have provided LAs the opportunity to trial provision of a new transport solution in rural and suburban areas. They have shown that DRT can play

[9] Frontier/Systra (2024). Evaluation of the first 10 months of the £2 bus fare cap. Report to DfT. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-2-bus-fare-cap.

a role in providing transport in rural areas under the existing regulatory structure, and that it is worth considering as one of the available options. Some LAs had needed to make changes after deployment to optimise delivery, most were still working on issues such as passenger aggregation and some felt they had a way to go to meet demand for their service. However, DRT services were now operating, some in areas where there had previously not been any public transport, and they were providing connectivity and access to services for people. This was how most judged success. Bringing levels of journey subsidy to what was seen as acceptable (for each LA) remained a major challenge. There were clear calls for greater consideration of social value in the economic assessment of DRT services in locations where LAs felt they were never likely to fully cover their financial costs.

1. Introduction

This report documents phase 1 of an evaluation of the Rural Mobility Fund (RMF), a £20 million Department for Transport (DfT) fund to trial Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) schemes in rural and suburban areas of England. It presents findings based on data obtained during the trial period (and for the small number of schemes where the original pilot has already concluded and the DRT scheme continues to run). It includes outcomes on DRT performance as well as lessons learnt from the experiences of the local authorities who had set them up and managed them. Phase 2 of the evaluation is being undertaken separately and will conduct impact and value for money evaluation to supplement the findings from phase 1 with a more in-depth assessment of the outcomes and impacts of the pilot schemes.

1.1. Background to Demand Responsive Transport

DRT was defined by DfT in 2002 in its 'Demand responsive transport: local authority toolkit'[10] as:

> *"a flexible service that provides shared transport to users who specify their desired location and time of pick-up and drop-off"*

In the case of the RMF, it specifically refers to flexible bus services operating in areas where demand is more dispersed and the distances involved make it more challenging to maintain or provide services meeting residents' needs, and in mixed use or residential areas at the outer fringe of urban areas where links to existing transport hubs are often less developed.

The local authority toolkit states that DRT services are primarily aimed at improving social inclusion and access to services, but they can also contribute to reducing carbon emissions by replacing car journeys and facilitating multi-modal travel, for example by linking users to a train station or fixed route bus service. For providers, they might also be more economical compared to a fixed route bus service by only running when there is demand and on an optimised route. From the perspective of users, DRT can enable travel at a convenient time and provide an almost door-to-door service. DRT may also be able to support growth and reduce barriers to opportunity, two of the Government's missions, through enabling people to access leisure and social activities, as well as places of employment and education.

In the UK, the broad concept of DRT has existed for many years, with community bus and car schemes in the 1960s and more mainstream but unsuccessful experiments with 'Dial-A-Ride' schemes for the general public in the 1970s. Community transport has continued to use these concepts to offer both a specialised form of transport for people with disabilities and older people. It can also provide

[10] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/demand-responsive-transport-local-authority-toolkit/demand-responsive-transport-local-authority-toolkit

transport to a broader group, with different schemes having different criteria to be a member, sometimes as broad as there simply being no other form of transport that they can access. The availability of dedicated funding for rural buses, starting with Rural Bus Challenge funding in 1998, saw many DRT schemes trialled in rural areas in the UK. Legislation introduced in 2004, permitting the registration of flexibly routed local bus services and the ability to claim Bus Service Operators' Grant for them, was another significant development. The experiences at this time were valuable for developing new technology for vehicle tracking, routing and scheduling, but high costs and limited revenues meant most schemes were withdrawn when funding ended in the first decade of this century.

A review of DRT schemes in England and Wales in 2009, based on a survey of Local Authority (LA) officers in 2005, found schemes were predominantly aimed at "increasing accessibility to locations that were currently inaccessible" [11]. LA officers reported their schemes to be largely successful at achieving their objectives. Where lack of success was reported, common reasons were "generating sufficient demand and surmounting psychological barriers of prospective users". It found "the majority of the schemes were operating at a subsidy level exceeding £2.00 per passenger trip, with slightly over half having a subsidy exceeding £5.00 per passenger trip". A subsequent survey in 2011 found cost and funding remained dominant concerns of DRT service providers[12].

In the 2010s a new generation of DRT emerged, underpinned by the availability of sophisticated algorithms that coordinate the scheduling of passengers, dispatch and routing of vehicles and ensure the continuous optimisation and efficiency of the service. Passengers can usually book a journey, pay for it and track a vehicle within a mobile app. This second-generation DRT is sometimes referred to as Digital Demand Responsive Transport (D-DRT).

A 2019 review of D-DRT schemes[13] looked at 35 schemes in nine countries and found they were operating in a mixture of contexts (often low density, low-demand peripheral urban or semi-rural areas) but it was not clear that productivity, measured as passengers/revenue hour, was greater than for traditional DRT.

1.2. RMF pilot programme

In 2020, the Department for Transport (DfT) invited English LAs outside London to bid for funding to trial DRT services in rural or suburban areas. In March 2021, the RMF awarded one-off funding of £19.4m across 15 different LAs to implement and run DRT pilot schemes for between two to four years.

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[11] Laws, R., Enoch, M., Ison, S. & Potter, S. (2009). Demand responsive transport: a review of schemes in England and Wales. Journal of Public Transportation, 12(1), 19-37. https://doi.org/10.5038/2375-0901.12.1.2

[12] Davison, L., Enoch, M., Ryley, T., Quddus, M. & Wang, C. (2014). A survey of demand responsive transport in Great Britain. *Transport Policy*, 31, 47-54. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tranpol.2013.11.004

[13] Pettersson, F., 2019. An international review of experiences from on-demand public transport services. The Swedish Knowledge Centre for Public Transport.

The current funding provided through the RMF is facilitating trials of second-generation DRT or D-DRT. Since the funding was awarded, one of the LAs has merged their two pilot schemes. Another has separated into two LAs which are the only authorities yet to launch their schemes by the time of this report. Both anticipate launching their schemes during 2025. Some schemes have now come to the end of their RMF funding term.

The trials offer the opportunity to investigate the performance of DRT schemes in a variety of rural and suburban settings in England. The significance of this opportunity has been heightened due to a growing interest in DRT since 2021 with schemes introduced in England supported by other funding sources. A number of LAs have allocated a share of their Bus Service Improvement Plan funding to DRT schemes[14].

The primary objectives of the RMF are:

- To improve understanding of whether DRT can fill a gap in current service provision, or work with existing services to create an improved public transport package that better meets the needs of residents in rural and suburban areas.
- To better understand the specific barriers unique to DRT and any potential solutions that may establish it as a viable and sustainable alternative.

These objectives will be partly assessed in terms of the extent to which the DRT services help contribute to the following wider policy goals:

- Improve access to employment, education, healthcare and other services.
- Enable greater social inclusion and reduce isolation.
- Provide a public transport offer that attracts a diverse customer base.
- Support the government's commitments to tackling air pollution and reducing carbon emissions by reducing reliance on private vehicles.

A logic model has been developed to provide a systematic and visual representation of how the RMF programme is expected to achieve its objectives. This is included in **Appendix A**. It shows how enhanced and more efficient provision of local public transport, via the addition of DRT services, is intended to: improve perceptions of public transport; lead to journeys being made using the DRT services that would otherwise be made using other forms of private transport, or not made at all; and get more people overall using public transport in the pilot areas. This is expected to lead to positive outcomes for local economies, social inclusion and decarbonisation.

[14] House of Commons Transport Committee 2023. Implementation of the National Bus Strategy: Fourth Report of Session 2022–23.

1.3. Monitoring and evaluation

DfT commissioned the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) to undertake a four-year programme-level evaluation of the DRT pilots. The programme-level evaluation addressed the two primary objectives of the RMF through two research activities:

1. Collecting monitoring data from LAs for each DRT pilot scheme, analysing the data and summarising programme-level results.
2. Conducting a programme-level process evaluation of the RMF to understand the experiences of designing, mobilising and implementing the DRT pilot schemes and what lessons can be learned.

DfT is interested in what can be learnt from the RMF with respect to the following six research questions:

1. What has been the experience of LAs in the delivery and implementation of the DRT pilot schemes?
2. Are rural and suburban residents using DRT and what is their experience?
3. What evidence is there for wider benefits of DRT?
4. How does DRT perform in different contexts and circumstances?
5. What are the barriers and enablers to establishing viable and sustainable DRT services in rural and suburban areas?
6. What has been learnt to assist with future policy making and provisions for DRT?

A set of 22 sub-questions associated with the six main research questions is included in **Appendix B**.

The research questions will be partly addressed through the two research activities above (monitoring data analysis and process evaluation). A separate impact and value for money assessment is being undertaken as phase 2 of the evaluation and will supplement the findings of this phase 1 evaluation with a more in-depth assessment of the outcomes and impacts of the pilot schemes.

1.4. Scope and structure of report

This report presents findings from phase 1 of the programme-level evaluation based on data collected up to September 2024.

Table 1 shows the RMF-funded DRT schemes with their award amounts, durations and start dates. Short-form names are given to the DRT schemes during the report, and these are listed in **Appendix C** as a reference.

Schemes had started in all but two LAs (previously one single LA at the time of the RMF award) by the end of the monitoring data collection period for this report in September 2024. These were Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness (previously Cumbria) where implementation delays arose due to capacity and capability

challenges and the reorganisation of the county council into two new unitary authorities in April 2023.

This report includes results for 18 schemes. In addition to there being no DRT operational monitoring data for the schemes in Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness, there was insufficient data available for the Buckinghamshire Aylesbury scheme as this only started one month before the end of the data collection period.

The results presented in this report include outcomes on DRT usage, service efficiency, journey patterns, user profiles and revenues. They also include lessons learnt from the planning and implementation stages of the DRT schemes.

Table 1: RMF-funded DRT schemes with start dates

	RMF award	DRT scheme (brand name)	Award amount	Duration	Start date
1	Buckinghamshire - Aylesbury	Buckinghamshire – Aylesbury (Village Connect)	£1,114,000	4 years	Aug 24
2	Buckinghamshire - High Wycombe	Buckinghamshire - High Wycombe (PickMeUp)	£736,000	4 years	Sep 22
3	Cheshire East	Cheshire East – South-West of Nantwich (go-too)	£1,259,296	3 years	Oct 21
4	Cheshire West and Chester	Cheshire West and Chester - South of Frodsham and Helsby (itravel)	£1,075,000	3 years	Jul 23
5	Cumbria[15]	Four DRT schemes in Penrith, Egremont-St Bees, Ulverston and Wigton	£1,500,000	4 years	Not launched yet
6	Essex - Central Essex	Essex - Central Essex and South Braintree (DigiGo)	£1,493,000	2 years	Mar 22 (two schemes merged Sep 22)
7	Essex - South Braintree		£1,082,000	2 years	
8	Gloucestershire	Gloucestershire - South Forest of Dean (The Robin)	£1,352,000	2 years	Oct 22
		Gloucestershire – North Cotswolds (The Robin)			
9	Hertfordshire	Hertfordshire - North and East Herts (HertsLynx)	£1,470,000	4 years	Sep 21

[15] Cumbria Council was replaced by two new unitary authorities on 1 April 2023 – Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council. Egremont-St Bees and Wigton DRT schemes lie in Cumberland Council area and Penrith and Ulverston schemes lie in Westmorland and Furness Council area.

	RMF award	DRT scheme (brand name)	Award amount	Duration	Start date
10	Leicestershire	Leicestershire – South West Leicestershire (Fox Connect)	£1,300,000	4 years	Jul 22
11	Norfolk	Norfolk – Swaffham (Flexibus+)	£700,000	4 years	Mar 22
12	North Lincolnshire	North Lincolnshire (JustGo)	£912,232	3 years	Sep 20
13	Nottinghamshire	Nottinghamshire - North Ollerton (Nottsbus On Demand)	£1,497,000	4 years	Aug 22
		Nottinghamshire - South Ollerton (Nottsbus On Demand)			Aug 22
		Nottinghamshire – Mansfield (Nottsbus On Demand)			Aug 22
		Nottinghamshire – West Rushcliffe (Nottsbus On Demand)			May 23
14	Staffordshire	Staffordshire – Moorlands (Moorlands Connect)	£1,038,091	4 years	Oct 21
15	Surrey	Surrey – Mole Valley (Surrey Connect)	£662,000	3 years	Jun 22
16	Warwickshire	Warwickshire - Hatton and West Warwick (IndieGo PLUS)	£1,020,000	4 years	May 22
17	Wiltshire	Wiltshire - Pewsey Vale and Marlborough (Wiltshire Connect)	£1,200,000	4 years	Jul 23

After this introduction, Section 2 explains the methodology for collecting and analysing data. Section 3 summarises the DRT schemes. Section 4 reports on the experiences of LAs in setting up and managing their schemes and the lessons that emerge from these. Sections 5 to 8 present results from monitoring data collected from the start of the pilots to September 2024. Finally, Section 9 has conclusions on what has been learnt from the RMF based on the programme-level evaluation.

2. Methodology

Phase 1 of the RMF evaluation involved the following two research activities:

1. Scheme-level monitoring: collection of monitoring data from LAs to analyse performance of DRT pilot schemes.
2. Process evaluation: interviews and roundtables with LAs to explore their experience in designing, mobilising and implementing the DRT pilot schemes.

The data collection process for each of these research activities is summarised below with further details included in **Appendix D**.

Scheme-level monitoring data was required from LAs for each of their DRT schemes to analyse outcomes of the pilots and of the programme as a whole. Standardised data collection templates were provided to LAs and monitoring data has been collected every six months from when schemes started operation up to September 2024. Most of the data was collected on a monthly basis. **Appendix E** shows availability of six-monthly data by DRT scheme.

The following items of data have been collected for each DRT scheme where possible.

DRT scheme performance:

- Operational data (number of vehicles, operating hours, number of miles running with and without passengers, average journey length etc.)
- Usage data (passenger journeys by month, passenger journeys by days of the week, passenger journeys by time of day, fulfilled and unfulfilled bookings)
- Passenger demographics (age and gender of users, concessionary fare users)
- Journey patterns (key origins and destinations)
- Financial data (revenue, public subsidy)
- Marketing and promotional activities and any other notable events
- Any changes to the DRT scheme

Non-DRT bus services serving the DRT pilot scheme area:

- Passenger journey data
- Any changes to bus services

Comparison bus services operating outside the DRT pilot scheme area

- Passenger journey data
- Any changes to bus services

Where possible, baseline data has been obtained for passenger journeys on non-DRT bus services serving DRT pilot scheme areas and comparison bus services operating outside DRT pilot scheme areas. The former was collected to enable

investigation of how the introduction of the DRT scheme affected overall bus use in the scheme areas. The latter was collected to enable a comparison to be made between the trend in bus passenger journeys over time in the DRT pilot scheme areas and the trend in wider local authority areas. This data was requested dating back to April 2019 to enable assessments of how the introduction of DRT schemes affected bus use trends and to provide a pre-Covid baseline.

All 15 LAs who received funding provided monitoring data for their schemes. It has not been possible for some LAs to provide all the requested data because some data was not available to them. Data that was challenging to provide is explained in **Appendix D**. It includes passenger demographic data that was not collected by most DRT technology providers and data for other bus services that was not available to LAs due to its commercial sensitivity.

The results of analysing the monitoring data presented in sections 5 to 8 focus on the latest reporting period of April to September 2024 to reflect the most recent performance of the DRT schemes. Comparisons are often also made to performance across the full scheme durations from their launch to September 2024, referred to as the 'all-time average'.

2.1. Process evaluation

The process evaluation was undertaken in two stages. Each stage involved:

- In-depth interviews with LA officers and other relevant individuals involved in the operation of schemes.
- Group roundtables with officers from a number of other LAs in receipt of RMF awards.

The first stage took place between February 2022 and September 2022 with a focus on experiences during the planning and launching of the DRT schemes. The second stage took place in July and August 2024, two years on from stage one, with a focus on experiences while running the schemes.

Of the four LAs involved in the first stage interviews, three (Essex, North Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire) were also invited to participate in the second stage interviews in order to get an appreciation of their experiences over time. It was not possible to interview Cumbria again, as the authority split into two unitary authorities in 2023 and, at the time the stage two interviews were undertaken, both had yet to launch their RMF pilot. Cumbria was replaced by Norfolk. In contrast, the selection of LAs for the roundtables was independently considered at the two time points to maximise the learning that could be achieved on each occasion.

The interviews differed in approach from the roundtable. The former involved talking directly to one or more individuals and seeking in-depth reflections on their experience, whilst the latter was deliberately a group event, with the expectation of a more discursive context.

The participants in the stage one interviews and roundtables were asked to share their perspectives and experiences regarding the design of their schemes, as well as the challenges and successes in their design and mobilisation activities. At stage

two, the focus was on experiences of running the schemes with questions on: how they perceived scheme performance; challenges faced and how they were addressed; capability and capacity to deliver the schemes; and areas for improvement in future operation of DRT.

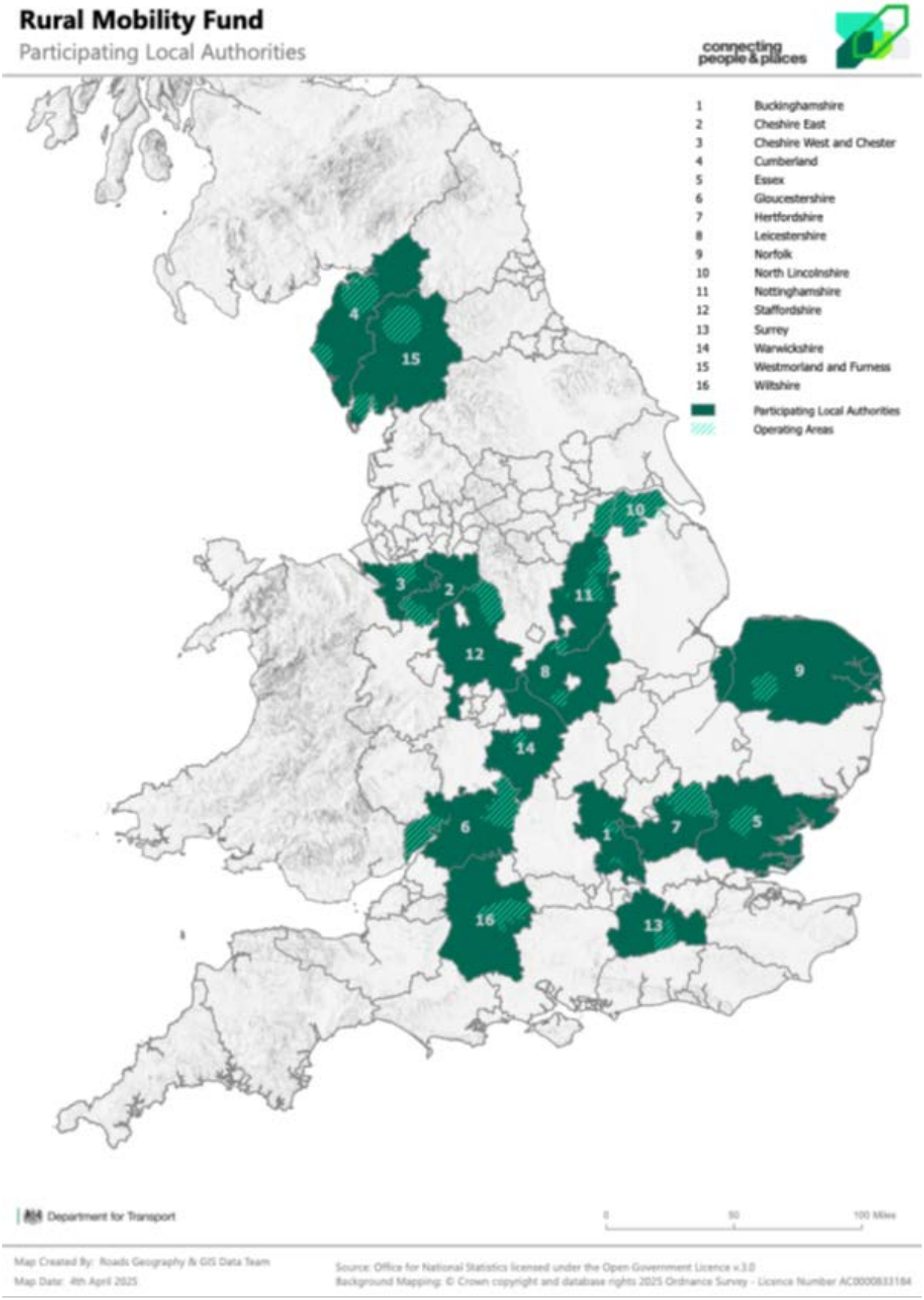
The findings from both sets of interviews and roundtables are reported in Section 4.

3. The DRT Pilot Schemes

This section summarises the 19 RMF-funded DRT schemes in 14 different LAs in operation by April - September 2024 (the final six-month monitoring period considered in this report). It provides an overview of the DRT pilots in terms of scheme areas and design characteristics, coordination with other public transport services, booking and ticketing, and marketing and publicity activities. Fuller details can be found in **Appendix F**.

The locations of the DRT schemes are shown in **Figure 1**. This includes the 19 schemes in operation between April - September 2024, as well as schemes in Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness that had not started by then.

Figure 1: Map of England showing RMF-funded DRT schemes



3.1. Scheme areas and design characteristics

The DRT schemes were operating in varying geographical contexts as shown in **Table 2**. Two schemes (in Buckinghamshire) were serving towns and their surrounding villages, three schemes were serving urban edge and rural areas, seven schemes were serving areas with a mix of urban and rural development and seven schemes were serving largely rural areas.

Area sizes varied from 4 square miles for the Notts Mansfield scheme to 337 square miles for the North Lincolnshire scheme which constituted the entire local authority area. Residential populations served varied from about 11,000 for the Notts South Ollerton scheme to 184,000 for the North Lincolnshire scheme. The schemes were operating in areas with a range in population density from 148 persons per square mile (Staffordshire) to 7,874 persons per square mile (Notts Mansfield). The figures provided for area size, population and population density reflect the service areas in place by April - September 2024 with some schemes having expanded since they were first launched.

Table 2 shows the number of operational vehicles varied between one and six with the number generally higher for service areas with greater population size. The schemes were using mini-buses with between 12 and 16 seats with 16-seater buses being the most common.

Table F1 in **Appendix F** has fuller details of the scheme area and design characteristics. Most of the schemes consisted of a single travel zone within which journeys could be booked. Typically, the travel zones covered low population density areas with ‘feeder’ locations at the edge of the travel zones which are trip attractors in their own right or interchange points for onward travel.

Most of the DRT pilot schemes operated entirely as flexible, on-demand services that provided shared transport to users who specified their desired location and time of pick-up and drop-off. In two schemes (Norfolk and Wiltshire) vehicles operated as timetabled, semi-flexible services part of the time.

Nearly all the DRT schemes had established pick-up/drop-off locations as a combination of:

- Physical stops registered as national public transport access nodes (NaPTAN)
- ‘Virtual’ stops identified specifically for the purpose of the DRT scheme and are often street corners or points of interest.

The number of physical and virtual stops impacts the overall density of stop coverage and how long people will need to walk to get to a stop. This arrangement is described as a ‘corner-to-corner’ (C-to-C) model in contrast to a ‘door-to-door’ model (D-to-D) which picks up and drops off users at a specific chosen address.

Most DRT schemes were running six days a week (Monday-Saturday) with hours of operation varying between the DRT schemes, although roughly following the same pattern of starting between 6am and 7am and ending between 7pm and 9pm.

Table 2: Scheme areas and vehicle numbers

DRT scheme	Geographical area served	Settlement structure[i]	Area size (square mile)[ii]	Pop-ulation[ii]	Pop. density (people/ mi^2)	No. veh.
Bucks - Ayl	Aylesbury and surrounding villages	Town with rural fringe	22	104,611	4,753	3
Bucks - HW	High Wycombe and surrounding villages	Town with rural fringe	14	84,686	5,978	6
Cheshire E	Rural area between Nantwich and Whitchurch	Rural	86	30,887	173	2
Cheshire W&C	Frodsham, Helsby and surrounding rural areas	Mixed urban and rural	60	34,406	572	2
Essex	Rural area northwest of Chelmsford	Urban edge and rural	90[iii]	69,162	772	6
Glos – S.FoD	Small towns and villages in south Forest of Dean	Mixed urban and rural	124	64,148	519	1.5
Glos – N.Cots	Villages in north Cotswolds	Rural	100	23,025	229	1
Herts	Rural area around Buntingford	Rural	232	44,579[iv]	192	5
Leics	Rural area between Leicester and Hinckley	Urban edge and rural	53	34,000	1,405	3
Norfolk	Rural area to the south of Swaffham	Rural	85	15,386	181	1
North Lincs	All of North Lincolnshire	Mixed urban and rural	337	184,047	545	4
Notts – N.Oll	Rural area between Gainsborough & Ollerton	Rural	70	17,716	253	2.5
Notts – S.Oll	Rural area between Ollerton and Newark	Rural	64	10,922	170	2.5
Notts – Mans	Mansfield suburban fringe	Urban edge and rural	4	33,290	7,874	1
Notts – W.Rush	Rural western parts of Rushcliffe District	Mixed urban and rural	30	23,869	804	2
Staffs	Moorlands area between Ashbourne and Buxton	Rural	188	27,724[v]	148	3
Surrey	Mole Valley District Council area incl. Dorking	Mixed urban and rural	126	102,969	816	4
Warwicks	Rural area west of Warwick and Kenilworth	Mixed urban and rural	28	47,008	1,686	3
Wilts	Pewsey Vale and Marlborough areas	Mixed urban and rural	194	64,581	332	3

Notes:

i. Settlement structure is an assessment by the evaluation team based on information included in DRT funding applications to DfT.

ii. Land area was obtained from the websites of each scheme and drawn on Google Earth when the .KML files were unavailable for data export. The areas were transferred to ArcGIS, where the population was calculated based on the UK Census 2021 LSOA (Lower layer Super Output Area) populations. There may be slight variations from the actual population due to the boundaries not always aligning with LSOA boundaries.

iii. The Essex scheme was expanded in July 24 with a north travel zone introduced (37.8 sq. miles). The total area covered by the scheme after this change was 113.9 sq. miles when accounting for the original south zone, the new north zone and the overlap between the two zones. The area size and population shown in this table reflect the situation before this change.

iv. The Hertfordshire scheme was expanded in December 2023 to include destinations in the towns of Hertford and Ware as feeder locations on the edge of the scheme area. The scheme population is estimated based on the scheme operating zone which includes over 500 virtual stops (between which travel is permitted). It does not include people living near to feeder destinations in Stevenage, Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock, Royston, Bishop's Stortford, Hertford, and Ware for whom the DRT can only be used for travel to/from the operating zone and not travel within these locations.

v. The Staffordshire DRT service was expanded to include Cheadle in July 2024, which resulted in a larger number of residents. The area size and population shown in this table reflect the situation before this change.

3.2. Coordination with other public transport

DRT schemes have been designed to fill gaps in public transport provision in the areas served and to complement existing public transport services (including commercial and local authority supported fixed route bus services, community transport and rail services). DRT schemes have been designed not to compete with fixed route bus services. Often, the booking technology has been designed to identify from pick-up and drop-off locations and time of travel if there is a timetabled bus option and suggest use of it.

In most cases, the new DRT schemes were introduced with no changes to existing fixed route bus services, but in some cases supported fixed route bus services were withdrawn. **Table F1** in **Appendix F** summarises changes to bus services that took place at the time the DRT schemes were introduced.

LAs have aspired to offer joint ticketing with other public transport services but this was not possible for most of the DRT schemes during the pilot trials - see **Table F2** for details.

3.3. Booking and ticketing

Journey bookings could be made via mobile app and phone for all DRT schemes with website bookings possible for some schemes. The lead time for rides refers to the time in advance that passengers are required to book their seat. Maximum lead times range from 5 days to 30 days. For some schemes it was possible to make live on-demand bookings, while for other schemes bookings needed to be made at least one hour in advance. **Table F3** presents booking methods and lead times for the DRT schemes.

Most of the schemes had different ticket offers for adults, children/young people, and older/disabled people. Often the same ticketing structure applied to adults and children/young people but with lower fares for children/young people. Fares were either a fixed amount or based on distance travelled. Free travel (between 9:30am – 11pm on weekdays and any time on weekends and bank holidays) was available for England national concessionary travel scheme (ENCTS) pass holders on most of the

schemes with discounts available on other schemes[16]. Nine LAs participated in the £2 Bus Fare Cap scheme. **Table F4** presents ticketing options and discounts for the DRT schemes.

3.4. Marketing and publicity activities

Most LAs focussed marketing and publicity on residents of their service areas, often with the ambition to attract a wide range of users including commuters, young adults, school children and concessionary pass holders.

In general, traditional media was widely used pre-launch with leaflet drops to households and posters and flyers at bus stops. High-profile public events and roadshow events were organised when the schemes launched along with free and discounted ticket offers. Once the schemes were operational, there was targeted marketing to small businesses and community groups, promotion via social media and marketing campaigns at particular times of year. **Table F5** has details of the marketing and publicity activities reported for each DRT scheme.

[16] RMF DRT schemes are not eligible for ENCTS reimbursement but LAs are able to offer additional concessions outside ENCTS at their discretion.

4. Local Authority Experiences in Running the DRT Pilots

The first stage of the process evaluation carried out from February to September 2022 explored the experiences of LAs in planning and launching their DRT schemes. The second stage carried out from July to August 2024 explored their experiences in running the schemes. Key findings from both stages of the process evaluation are summarised in this section. They shed light on the challenges and opportunities faced by LAs in setting up and managing a new form of public transport. They provide valuable lessons for other LAs who are considering DRT.

4.1. Scheme planning and design

The timing of the RMF in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic was welcome, in providing an opportunity to help with re-starting public transport in rural and suburban areas, but it was also a challenge to launch DRT services in a period when there was financial pressure on bus services. Demands on LA public transport officers were high during the RMF bidding, procurement and launch periods, particularly with work required at a local level to produce Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs). This also provided an opportunity, however, to consider the role of DRT in longer-term bus network planning.

The stage one interviews and roundtables highlighted a number of practical and regulatory challenges that needed to be overcome in the DRT scheme design process. All the LAs were focused on introducing a new type of service in areas with limited public transport. There was no existing data on demand for these areas, therefore design of the DRT schemes (for example, determining the hours of operation and the number of vehicles) was based partly on desk-based research using geo-demographic data and partly on expert opinion of where and when people were likely to want to travel.

Under the Transport Act 1985, LAs are effectively restricted to only subsidising a bus service to fill a gap in provision. Such services must not distort the local commercial bus market. This determined where DRT schemes could operate and their fare structures. LAs needed to work with commercial bus operators to agree issues such as through-ticketing and how DRT would feed into commercial fixed route routes.

DRT has the potential to offer a larger number of possible journey start and end points compared to traditional bus services. However, challenges in determining stop locations include considering vehicle access to roads and safety/accessibility issues for passengers. A pragmatic approach was therefore often adopted to build the DRT network around existing formal bus stops, supplemented with virtual stops.

4.2. Scheme procurement

Some LAs decided to contract out all the operational elements of their DRT scheme (fleet, drivers, booking system), others to manage them in-house and others to take a mixed approach. Contracting out was seen to reduce demands on internal

resources and reduce exposure to risk. Managing schemes themselves was seen to give more ready access to information which could be used to learn from the pilot.

A number of LAs were delayed in starting their pilots. Some of the reasons for the delays were external to the projects themselves (such as need for LA officers to devote time to preparing Bus Service Improvement Plans) but others centred around the introduction of new technology. All the DRT schemes introduced app-based booking platforms. While one LA developed an in-house travel planning app with a DRT option, the majority chose to work with mobility technology providers with DRT experience. However, these companies did not all have experience of the UK transport context and bus market and this resulted in delays in setting up the DRT schemes. LAs also reported experiencing delays and frustration contracting with companies outside of the UK around in-app payment processing, due to a lack of familiarity with UK public sector institutional requirements relating to role designations and financial accountability.

DRT drivers have to work in a different way to drivers of other bus services, but some LAs noted that their hours of service (later starts and earlier finishes) and vehicle types (smaller vehicles) were attractive to applicants during recruitment. This is despite bus driver recruitment being a national challenge at the time. Bespoke driver training was needed for the DRT schemes given the many new features involved such as driver hand-held technology for receiving and acknowledging bookings.

The stage two interviews and roundtable revealed that several LAs found themselves constrained by the contractual specifications agreed with technology providers. For some this reflected the (short) timescales for implementing the RMF pilots, but for others it was inexperience with DRT or with interacting with the new technology partners needed to deploy it. LAs felt it was important to build in scope for system development within future DRT technology provider contracts.

4.3. Scheme launch

All the pilots wanted the DRT schemes to appeal to a broad cross-section of the public. They wanted to avoid any pre-conception of DRT being a community service intended only for older or disabled people. Various efforts were taken to reach out to a wider user market compared to traditional bus services. LAs worked with their communications teams using a wide variety of publicity media and techniques, including posters, YouTube videos, and roadshows. Promotions such as “first ride free” were used to incentivise the public to try the service. LAs who used a combination of digital marketing methods (social media) with traditional marketing methods (posters, leaflet drops, roadshows) considered this had worked well to attract a broad range of users, including young people who they felt are not typically well represented as users of fixed route rural bus services.

Where DRT was replacing or modifying existing bus services, it was seen as essential to reassure existing customers that the new service would fulfil previous needs while offering advantages. In situations where fixed route services had been replaced, there had sometimes been complaints about what was seen as a

diminished offer for passengers, but such responses had decreased as people became accustomed to the new DRT service and became familiar with how to use it.

4.4. Scheme management

After launching, the popularity of some DRT schemes meant there were calls to provide a greater number of stops and to extend service areas. For schemes with spare capacity this could increase passenger numbers without compromising user experience (in terms of being able to make successful bookings and have reasonable journey times).

Data from the technology platform helped LAs in reviewing their design and making service modifications. This was particularly important for considering how to increase passenger aggregation[17]. LAs made adjustments to the service design of their pilots (service areas, travel zones, vehicle allocation, stop locations) during the trial period to improve efficiency and serve as many journeys as possible. Some schemes modified their travel zones. For example, one LA divided a single travel zone into two travel zones during the trial to enable fewer longer journeys and free up capacity to take on more journeys. Some schemes reduced the number of available stops to cut journey times and serve demand more efficiently.

Allowing journey bookings to be made several weeks in advance, without payment until the journey is made, was seen to lead to no shows and wasted vehicle trips and hence it was considered important to require payment in advance or have shorter advance booking windows. By using wider pick-up time slots for journey bookings (for example, 20-minute pick-up slots instead of 10-minute pick-up slots), it was possible to increase passenger aggregation, but if time slots were too wide then this risked discouraging passengers from travelling. Some LAs introduced group tickets to avoid multiple vehicles being used for the same journey and help avoid services being overwhelmed by school transport provision.

Putting time and effort into helping the public to use apps was seen to be beneficial, although the provision of a call centre to handle telephone bookings was still considered important for inclusion purposes.

As mentioned, the data available from their DRT schemes was a key benefit for many participants, helping LAs know what journeys were being made and requested. The usefulness of the data could be limited however if the LA did not have tools to analyse it or the capacity to fully exploit the data. Schemes receive real-time customer feedback from passengers, and understanding how to more systematically collate, analyse and respond to this feedback would help schemes balance user experience against operational priorities (such as aggregation). The use of a booking app provides an opportunity to collect additional user feedback beyond the review facility, for example to support understanding of customer profiles, journey purposes

[17] Process of increasing the number of passengers carried at the same time to achieve greater vehicle occupancy.

and modal shift. However, taking advantage of this opportunity was often seen to be constrained by capacity and capability within the LA.

4.5. Lessons learned

The RMF pilots set out with a goal to learn about D-DRT and it will be important to capture and share that learning. Sharing of knowledge and experience will be of benefit to future schemes. Below are key lessons that emerged.

LAs need adequate resources to procure and manage DRT schemes. All the LAs noted there was additional and unanticipated effort required to operate a DRT service, over and above the resource needs of standard, fixed route bus contracts. LAs need to be adequately and appropriately resourced to manage DRT schemes, both in terms of procurement and ongoing management. Retaining responsibility for aspects of scheme delivery (for example, service design and marketing) was found to be beneficial in terms of greater transparency about scheme performance and greater visibility to the public of the role of the council in delivering the DRT service to residents.

LAs need to retain knowledge gained on running DRT schemes and mechanisms for sharing knowledge between LAs would be beneficial. LAs have learnt a great deal about D-DRT solutions – some more than others – depending on whether the scheme was operated in house or contracted to external transport operators. This knowledge is often held by a small team, or even individuals, within an authority. Effective knowledge management practices are needed and it is important to widen the pool of those with appropriate knowledge and skills, with potentially new skills brought in from elsewhere (e.g. for data analysis and presentation). It would be valuable to share knowledge amongst LAs on what the technology available for DRT can do, the functionality and how to adjust and set parameters to achieve operational goals. This includes learnings in respect of zoning and vehicle allocation, routing and ride scheduling algorithms and booking practice and payment options.

Effective partnership working is required with technology providers. Whilst LAs have worked with bus operators on fixed route services and sometimes on DRT in the past, the partnership with technology providers in these pilots was new. Most of these companies operate globally. The language, operating practice, and styles of communication were unfamiliar to begin with for LAs, and the scale and complexity of DRT operating contexts in rural and suburban England were often new to these transport technology companies. Working relationships were generally positive in the main, but it is an area where standards, common approaches and training might offer some benefits in the future.

Technical and legal guidance on running DRT schemes would be welcomed by LAs. Increased knowledge (and experience) of the range of operational and technical solutions for running DRT services in England would help LAs work with vehicle operator and technology providers to ensure appropriate solutions are deployed. Clear guidance on legal and regulatory features of deployment in England would also be helpful when working with international partners whose experience may be different.

Standardisation of performance metrics will assist benchmarking. The information available to LAs to support service planning tended to be quite limited pre-implementation. This presented difficulties for assessing operational success and resulted in the need for adjustments to schemes during implementation. There are common data analysis tools in use across LAs and it may be that some standardisation of approaches would be helpful in managing and reporting on schemes. Their use might be further aided by the availability of common metrics for measuring performance of DRT schemes.

The process evaluation has identified a range of lessons on how DRT can be effectively delivered in practice. The logic model in Appendix A sets out how the RMF programme was expected to achieve its objectives through various inputs, activities and outputs. **Table 3** brings together lessons learned from the process evaluation in terms of inputs, activities and outputs required for effective implementation of DRT schemes.

Table 3: Lessons on the delivery of DRT schemes from RMF process evaluation

Inputs
LAs had very limited experience of D-DRT at the start of the DRT pilots but have gained expertise, especially where they have been more hands-on in operating the service. However, this expertise often resides with one or two people. LAs have needed to expend more time and resources than expected to manage the pilots. **Vehicle operators** who partnered LAs usually had little experience of DRT but were keen to gain this. They sometimes needed to adapt their ways of working to reflect the particular needs of DRT. **Technology providers** with specialist expertise in D-DRT were essential to the DRT pilots. Their experience previously was largely outside the UK and considerable joint working was required by LAs with technology providers to set up the DRT schemes. Many LAs have secured **funding** from other sources (e.g. Bus Service Improvement Plan funding, developer contributions) to continue DRT pilots and/or expand DRT operations in their area. **Public feedback** has generally been positive **and local politicians** have actively supported expansion of DRT to other parts of local authority areas. However, it is important to manage expectations as the service offered by DRT is likely to require significant subsidy per journey. Also, there is a need to more systematically collect user feedback to capture the experience of all users.
Activities
Despite a lack of existing data on passenger demand, the analysis conducted at the **planning and design stage** was found to be adequate to identify relevant target groups and destinations. After the pilots started operating, the data obtained via the booking app has enabled changes to be made to service design to cater for unanticipated demand. **The procurement process** needs to build in flexibility in contracts with tech providers and operators and ensure provision is made for system modifications and on-going performance management. LAs had not been certain what **monitoring data** would be available from their DRT pilots and have taken time to familiarise with this. It is important that LAs build in resources to analyse operational data, either in contracts with technology providers or using their own staff resources. While some LAs have been able to make good use of monitoring data for operational management, availability of guidance on performance benchmarking would further support this.
Outputs
It has proven valuable to adjust aspects of **service design** during the pilots to improve customer experience, increase passenger demand and increase service efficiency. These include the number and size of travel zones, locations of virtual stops and routing and ride scheduling algorithms. Similarly, adjustments have been made to parameters in **booking and payment systems**. The length of time in advance bookings can be made and the magnitude of time windows for journey bookings are two examples. The pilots have also grappled with how to give call centres and drivers versions of the booking and payment systems with greater functionality. Many LAs had used a wide variety of publicity media and techniques to **raise awareness** of their DRT pilots. Some LAs were struggling to meet the volume of journey requests and had found the diversity of journey needs was not conducive to passenger aggregation and efficient operations. The DRT software is generating valuable data on journey needs but not on the **socio-demographic characteristics of users**. In future contracts with technology providers, LAs should explore whether socio-demographic information can be collected and made available to them. **Smaller minibus vehicles** have allowed DRT to serve a more fine-grained road network than traditional bus services which has increased accessibility to public transport across areas served. **Electric vehicles** have raised additional issues around range and charging which have needed to be factored into routing software.

5. Passenger Usage and Service Efficiency

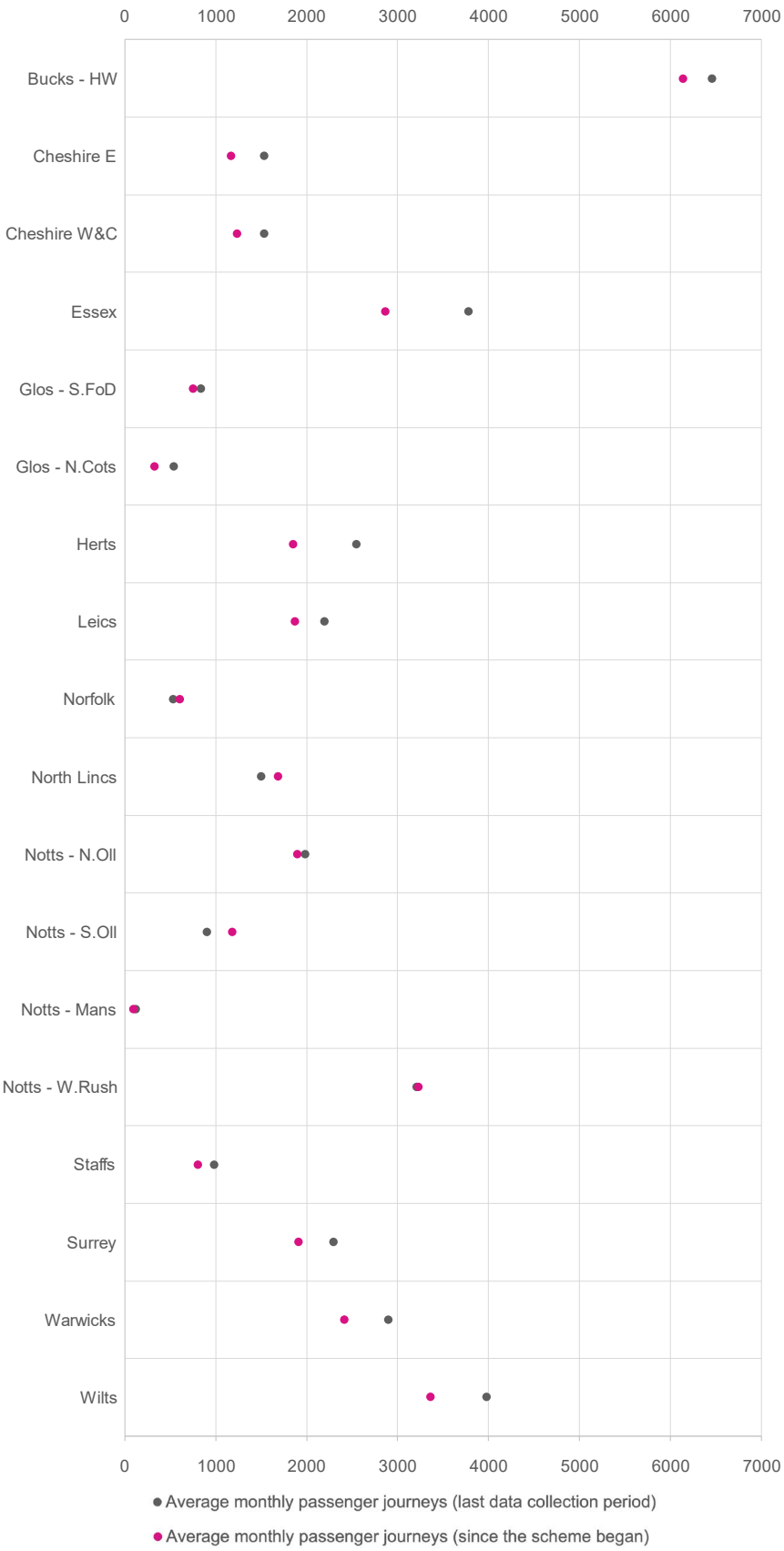
Section 5 presents results on passenger usage and service efficiency of the DRT schemes based on the monitoring data provided by the LAs in the six-monthly spreadsheets. The section includes results on passenger journeys, passenger journeys by vehicle hour, empty running and differences in trends in bus use between DRT pilot areas and comparison areas. A table with a full set of scheme-level results for the different indicators covered in Section 5 is included at the end of the section in **Table 6**.

5.1. Passenger journeys

Passenger journeys are compared between DRT schemes[18] in **Figure 2**. The average monthly number of passengers in the latest reporting period (April to September 2024) and the average monthly number of passengers for the full scheme durations (from their launch to September 2024) are shown. For most schemes (14 out of 18), the average monthly number of passenger journeys was higher during the latest data collection period than the overall average. This indicates a growing adoption of DRT schemes by users. Differences in passenger journey numbers across schemes are likely to be influenced by a variety of factors including number of vehicles and the size and scale of the schemes and populations served.

[18] The Bucks Aylesbury scheme is omitted as data was only available for one month.

Figure 2: Average monthly passenger journeys (April - September 2024 and all-time averages)



Notes:

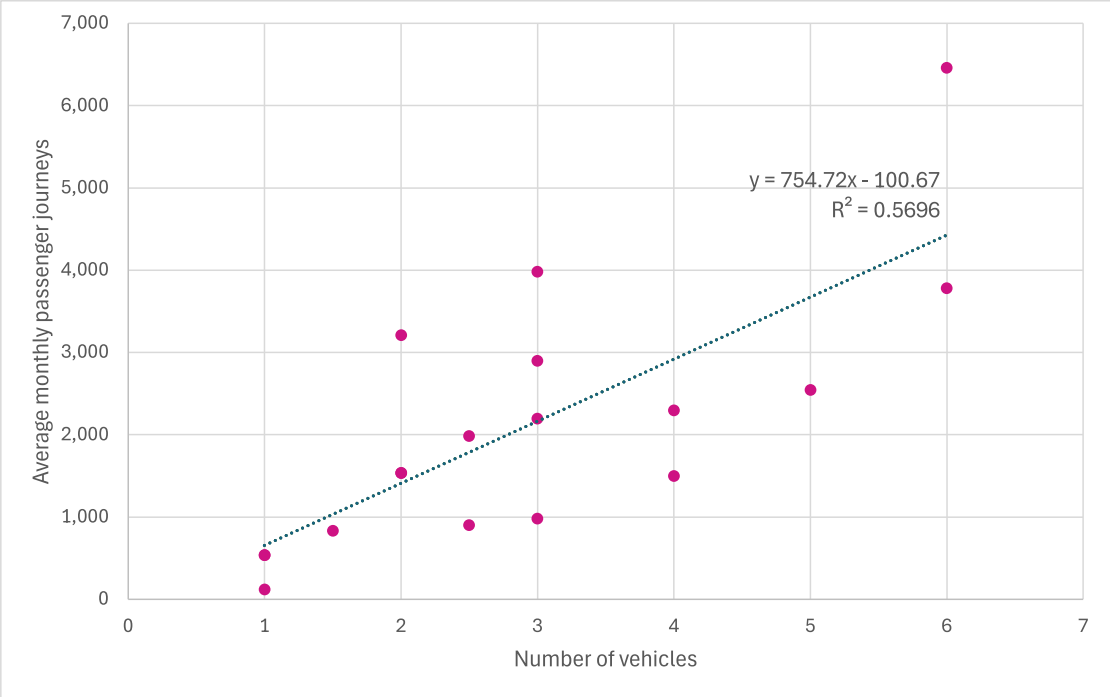
i. The latest data collection period is April-September 2023 for the Hertfordshire scheme, while it is April-September 2024 for all other schemes. This is due to data provided for the Hertfordshire scheme including passengers using a separate new DRT scheme since December 2023. The average for the scheme duration for the Hertfordshire scheme only considers data up to September 2023.

ii. The differences between the two different average values are not easily visible for the Notts Mansfield and Notts West Rushcliffe schemes as they are very similar.

The mean value for monthly passenger journeys for the latest period was 2,101 (see **Table 6**). The highest figure was recorded for the Bucks High Wycombe scheme with 6,458 passenger journeys per month. Passenger journeys per month of at least 3,000 were recorded for another three schemes: Essex, Notts West Rushcliffe, and Wiltshire. Fewer than 1,000 passenger journeys per month were recorded for the Glos South Forest of Dean, Glos North Cotswolds, Norfolk, Notts South Ollerton, Notts Mansfield and Staffordshire schemes.

There is a strong positive association (statistically significant at a 99% confidence level) between passenger journeys and number of vehicles, as highlighted in **Figure 3**. For example, the Bucks High Wycombe scheme reporting the largest number of passenger journeys had a fleet of six vehicles. However, there is also some variation in passenger journeys between schemes with the same number of vehicles. For example, the Wiltshire scheme reported more passenger journeys than other schemes with three vehicles which could be related to the greater size of population served but also a history of operating non-digital DRT services prior to the launch of the new Wiltshire Connect DRT scheme. No statistically significant association was found between the number of passenger journeys and scheme area size or population density.

Figure 3: Average monthly passenger journeys versus number of vehicles (April – September 2024)



Note: The best-fit equation implies for each additional vehicle there is an increase in average monthly passenger journeys of 754. The R^2 value of 0.57 indicates a strong association between average monthly passenger journeys and number of vehicles (the R^2 value can lie between 0 and 1 with a value of 1 indicating 100% of the variance in the data is explained).

Figure 4 shows trajectory plots in monthly passenger journeys for each scheme between October 2021 and September 2024. Most schemes have seen growth over time after their initial launch, although some schemes have had fairly consistent numbers of passengers. In some cases, growth mainly occurred in the first few months, after which usage levelled off, while, in other cases, growth has continued over a longer period.

The Essex scheme saw continued growth after launching in March 2022 up to the end of 2023 (see **Figure 5**) with a number of measures taken during this period to encourage greater use. These included combining two separate schemes in September 2022 and marketing drives involving leaflet drops, roadshow events and social media paid adverts. Similarly, the Hertfordshire scheme saw steady growth after launching in September 2021 up to December 2023 (after which the data includes passengers using a separate new DRT scheme introduced in Hertfordshire so cannot be interpreted in the same way) (see **Figure 6**). It saw the introduction in April 2023 of an evening service on Fridays and Saturdays, as well as similar marketing activities to those mentioned above for Essex. The Warwickshire scheme has seen steady growth after launching in May 2022 up to September 2024 (see **Figure 7**) with one possible factor being an extension of the service area in May 2023.

Figure 4: Monthly passenger journeys over time for 18 DRT schemes from scheme start dates to September 2024

Note: The y-axis scale represents variations from 0 to 12,000 passenger journeys, with Bucks - HW recording the peak value in June 2023.

Figure 5: Monthly passenger journeys over time for Essex scheme

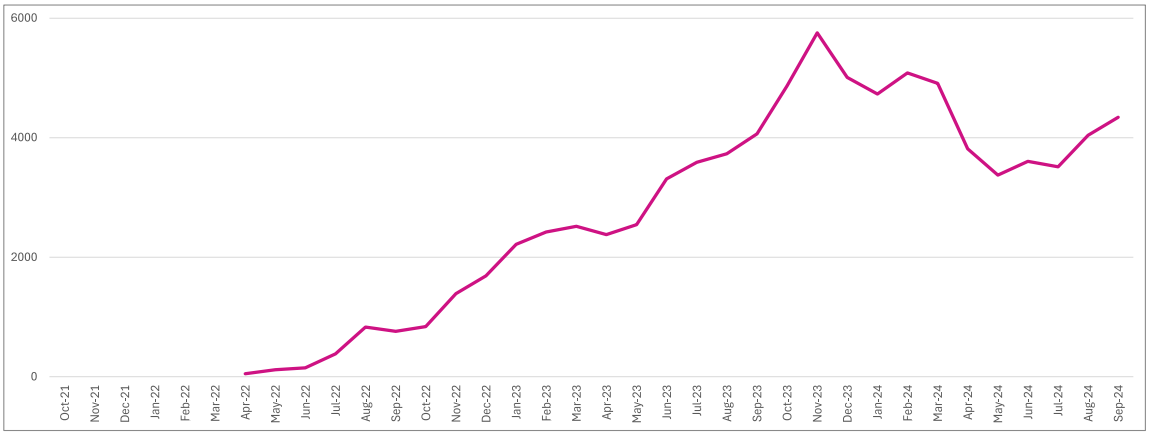


Figure 6: Monthly passenger journeys over time for Hertfordshire scheme

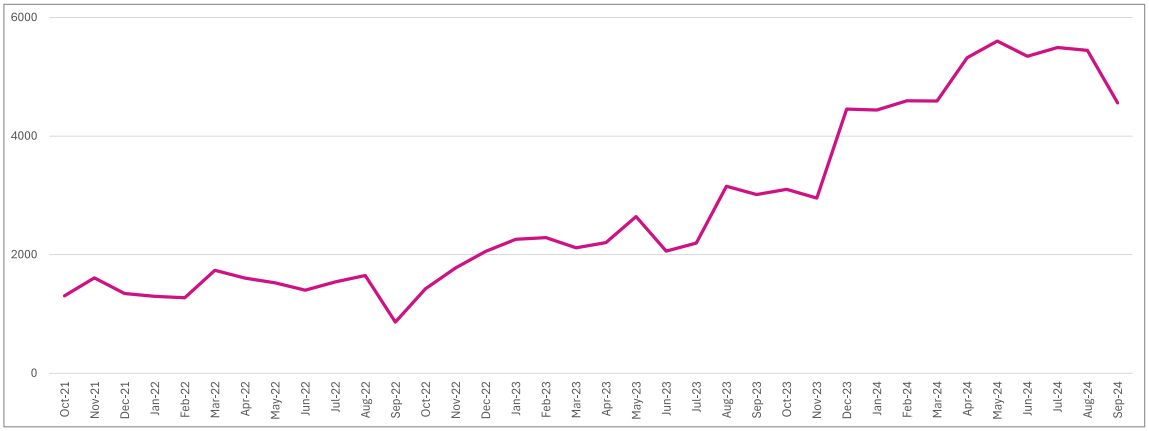
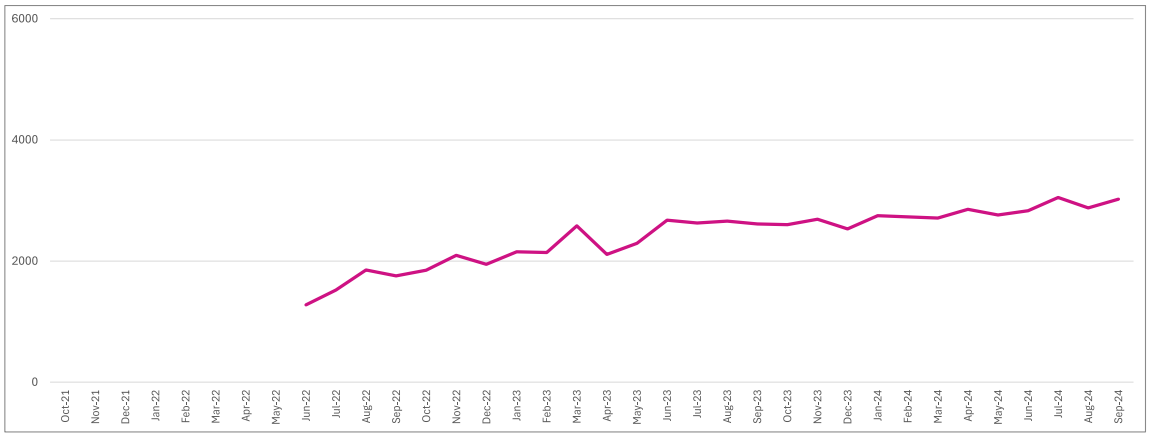


Figure 7: Monthly passenger journeys over time for Warwickshire scheme



5.2. Passenger journeys per vehicle hour

When comparing usage levels, it is important to recognise that the schemes vary in scale in terms of vehicle numbers and hours of operation. Passenger journeys per vehicle hour is an indicator of vehicle utilisation and is both a measure of usage and of service efficiency. **Figure 8** compares passenger journeys per vehicle hour across the DRT schemes. This is again shown as an average monthly figure for the latest reporting period (April to September 2024) and for the full scheme duration.

Figure 8: Passenger journeys per vehicle hour (April - September 2024 and all-time averages)

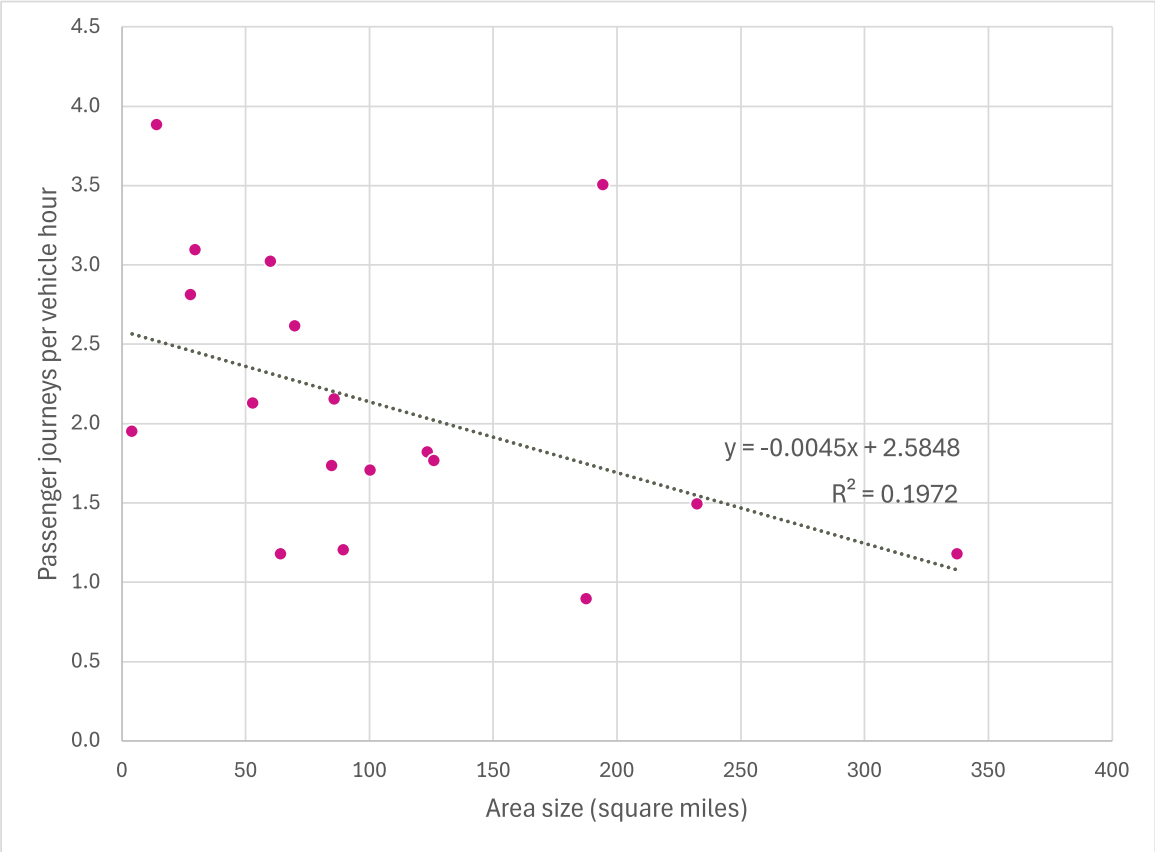
Note: Passenger journeys per vehicle hour has been calculated on a monthly basis as the total number of passenger journeys divided by the product of number of vehicles, days of operation and hours of operation.

Values in the latest reporting period varied from 0.9 passenger journeys per vehicle hour (Staffordshire) to 3.9 (Bucks High Wycombe) with an average across the 18 schemes of 2.1. Values for the full scheme duration up to September 2024 varied from 0.7 (Staffordshire) to 4.0 (Bucks High Wycombe) with a scheme-wide average of 1.9. This indicates an improving situation over time which is also reflected by 12 out of 18 schemes reporting a higher value in the latest reporting period than the all-time average.

While total passenger journeys per month can be expected to be influenced by number of vehicles and hours of operation, passenger journeys per vehicle hour could be influenced by other factors. This is apparent as schemes recording the highest number of passenger journeys per vehicle hour were not only those with the most vehicles. For example, the Notts West Rushcliffe and Cheshire West and Chester schemes had only two vehicles but over three passenger journeys per vehicle hour.

Further investigation showed a weak negative association between passenger journeys per vehicle hour and service area size (statistically significant at a 90% confidence level), as highlighted in **Figure 9**. Also, a weak positive association was found between passenger journeys per vehicle hour and population density (again statistically significant at a 90% confidence level). Smaller service areas and higher population densities have the potential to enable multiple journeys to be served simultaneously and less time to be spent travelling to pick up the next passenger(s) after completing a journey.

Figure 9: Passenger journeys per vehicle hour versus service area size (April – September 2024)



Note: The best-fit equation implies for each additional 100 square miles there is a decrease in passenger journeys per vehicle hour of 0.45. The R^2 value of 0.20 indicates a small association between passenger journeys per vehicle hour and area size (the R^2 value can lie between 0 and 1 with a value of 1 indicating 100% of the variance in the data is explained).

Scheme providers can also make service design modifications to seek greater vehicle utilisation or what they commonly refer to as passenger aggregation. The process evaluation interviews and roundtables revealed that LAs tried various measures to seek greater passenger aggregation such as modifying travel zones, reducing the number of available stops, introducing wider pick-up time slots for journey bookings and allowing group tickets (see Section 4.4).

5.3. Empty running

LAs were asked to report miles travelled by their vehicles with and without passengers for each month of operation of their DRT scheme. **Table 4** presents results for the latest reporting period (April - September 2024), expressed in terms of six-month totals with and without passengers, empty running ratios (calculated as the division of miles without passengers by miles with passengers) and daily averages per vehicle with and without passengers.

Table 4: Distance travelled with and without passengers and empty running ratios (April – September 2024)

DRT scheme	Six-month total miles with pass.	Six-month total miles without pass.	Ave. monthly empty running ratio	Ave. daily miles per vehicle with pass.	Ave. daily miles per vehicle without pass.	Average daily miles difference
Bucks - HW	128,267	87,611	0.68	166.99	114.12	52.87
Cheshire E	33,075	30,897	0.94	108.26	101.10	7.16
Cheshire W&C	22,761	14,709	0.65	89.61	57.95	31.66
Essex	86,979	93,421	1.09	67.98	73.93	-5.95
Glos – S.FoD	22,342	13,938	0.62	97.45	60.73	36.71
Glos – N.Cots	18,408	12,777	0.69	117.21	81.40	35.81
Herts	70,808	31,683	0.45	107.36	48.15	59.21
Leics	52,257	27,099	0.52	113.92	59.07	54.84
Norfolk	20,268	20,216	1.00	131.56	131.27	0.29
North Lincs	47,818	27,452	0.57	78.11	44.84	33.28
Notts - N.Oll	47,875	44,461	0.93	78.85	73.23	5.62
Notts - S.Oll	44,682	34,871	0.78	97.46	76.09	21.37
Notts - Mans	1,579	1,512	1.04	20.04	18.90	1.15
Notts - W.Rush	57,370	59,930	1.05	156.76	163.75	-6.99
Staffs	42,557	39,403	0.95	77.51	71.81	5.70
Surrey	36,348	27,300	0.75	57.48	42.88	14.60
Warwicks	39,698	17,706	0.45	86.55	38.63	47.92
Wilts	63,931	47,921	0.75	155.71	117.19	38.53

Notes:

i. The values in this table have been derived from monthly data provided by LAs.

ii. Average monthly empty running ratios for the April to September period have been calculated by (1) dividing the average monthly miles without passengers by average monthly miles with passengers each month, (2) summing up these values occurring over six months, and (3) dividing the sum by six. Consequently, minor differences would be observed between the reported empty running ratios and a calculation based on the six-month total values for distance with and without passengers shown in the table.

iii. The calculations for Wiltshire exclude June 2024 when data was not available.

iv. All values, apart from those for Hertfordshire, are based on data from April to September 2024, whereas calculations for Hertfordshire apply to data from April to September 2023.

The empty running ratio is an indicator of service efficiency. A lower value represents greater efficiency as it indicates that vehicles are spending a low proportion of their travel without passengers. An empty running ratio of less than one means the vehicle is doing more miles with passengers than without passengers. Values have ranged from 0.45 to 1.09 in the latest reporting period with a mean value of 0.77 across 18 schemes.

Average daily miles per vehicle with passengers is an indicator of service utilisation and varies from 57 to 167[19] with the highest figures reported by the three schemes which also reported the highest number of passenger journeys per vehicle hour (Bucks High Wycombe, Notts West Rushcliffe and Wiltshire). However, the Norfolk scheme reported 132 miles per vehicle with passengers, with a lower number of passenger journeys per vehicle hour of 1.73. This may be explained by the scheme serving a larger geographical area with longer journey distances.

Figure 10 compares empty running ratios across the DRT schemes, showing both the average values for the latest data collection period, as well as the averages for the full scheme duration up to September 2024. Empty running has decreased over time for most schemes. The most notable reductions in empty running ratios have been observed for the Staffordshire scheme and the two Gloucestershire schemes. Empty running ratios and passengers per vehicle hour are indicators of service efficiency. As population density increased, empty running ratios were found to decrease[20] and passengers per vehicle hour increased. Based on these measures, findings suggest there is greater service efficiency in areas with higher population density.

[19] This excludes Notts Mansfield which is an evening only DRT service.

[20] If the suburban Notts Mansfield and Bucks High Wycombe schemes are omitted, the relationship is statistically significant at a 95% confidence level, with an R^2 value of 0.26.

Figure 10: Empty running ratios (April – September 2024 and all-time averages)

Note: The calculations for Wiltshire cover the months when data was available. From August 2023, when the scheme was launched, to the last collection period in September 2024, missing data includes the months of October to December 2023 and June 2024.

5.4. Trends in bus passenger journeys in pilot areas compared to wider local authority areas

As explained in Section 2, LAs were asked to provide monthly passenger journey data for other bus services serving the DRT pilot scheme areas as well as comparison bus services operating outside the pilot scheme areas.

LAs provided data for:

- Number of passenger journeys for a selection of non-DRT bus services (commercial and supported) serving the pilot scheme areas to enable investigation of how the introduction of the DRT scheme affected overall bus use within the scheme areas.
- Number of passenger journeys for a sample of comparison bus services operating outside DRT pilot scheme areas. This was collected to observe the trend in bus use across the wider local authority (the counterfactual) and enable comparison of the trend in bus use within and outside of the DRT pilot scheme areas.

In both cases, baseline data was collected from April 2019 until the schemes started operating and then for each six-month period DRT services were operating up until September 2024. Comparing trends in passenger journeys between the pilot scheme areas and on bus services in the wider local authority areas provides an indication of whether the introduction of DRT has affected overall bus use in the pilot scheme areas relative to the wider authority.

There were various challenges for LAs in providing this data which are detailed in Appendix D. However, it has been possible to produce results comparing trends in passenger journeys between the pilot scheme areas and wider local authority areas for seven DRT schemes as shown in **Table 5**.

In **Table 5,** the baseline ('before') periods are the 12-month periods prior to the month when the DRT schemes started operating. The post-DRT ('after') periods are the 12-month periods after the month when DRT services started operating. **Table 5** details these precise dates by scheme.

The pilot area total for the baseline period shows the number of passenger journeys on bus services serving the areas where DRT was going to be introduced. The pilot area total for the post-DRT period shows the number of passenger journeys on the DRT service plus other bus services serving the DRT pilot scheme areas. The comparison total for the baseline period shows the number of passenger journeys on a sample of comparison bus services operating outside the areas where DRT was going to be introduced. The comparison total for the post-DRT period shows the number of passenger journeys on the same sample of bus services for the post-DRT period.

Table 5: Changes in bus passenger journeys in pilot areas compared to wider local authority areas for selected DRT schemes

DRT scheme	Baseline			Post-DRT			Change (%)		
	Period	Pilot area total	Compar-ison total	Period	Pilot area total	Compar-ison total	Pilot area	Compar-ison	Differ-ence
Cheshire E	Oct 20 Sep 21	19,327	58,937	Nov 21 Oct 22	39,519	120,880	104.5	105.1	-0.6
Cheshire W&C	Aug 22 Jul 23	156,182	147,734	Sep 23 Aug 24	194,855	138,459	24.8	-6.3	31.0
Herts	Sep 20 Aug 21	40,381	10,375	Oct 21 Sep 22	84,741	30,217	109.9	191.2	-81.4
Leics	Aug 21 Jul 22	1,363,759	1,383,945	Sep 22 Aug 23	1,582,795	1,490,246	16.1	7.7	8.4
Norfolk	Apr 21 Mar 22	6,113	55,955	May 22 Apr 23	15,573	63,268	154.8	13.1	141.7
Warwicks	May 21 Apr 22	35,956	1,627,557	Jun 22 May 23	31,668	1,959,700	-11.9	20.4	-32.3
Wilts	Aug 22 Jul 23	57,845	209,439	Sep 23 Aug 24	75,128	259,804	29.9	24.0	5.8

There were increases in passenger journeys in six of the seven pilot areas after the introduction of the DRT scheme with this being particularly high for the two schemes where the baseline period was most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic (Cheshire East and Hertfordshire schemes). These schemes started earliest with a baseline period more likely to be impacted by a reduction in bus use due to the pandemic. The RMF programme had the objectives of enabling journeys to be made that were otherwise not possible and attracting people to public transport from private transport. The increase in overall bus passenger journeys in six of the DRT pilot scheme areas provides evidence that one or both of these has been achieved.

It is notable that some supported, timetabled bus services were withdrawn when DRT was introduced in Norfolk, Warwickshire and Wiltshire. It could be hypothesised that overall bus use would be more likely to decrease in these pilot areas. This occurred for the Warwickshire scheme, but not the Norfolk or Wiltshire schemes, which implies the DRT schemes in the latter cases are meeting a higher level of demand than was previously met by the withdrawn services.

When comparing changes in bus use in the pilot areas to wider local authority areas, there were more positive trends for four of the seven schemes. Cheshire West and Chester, Leicestershire, Wiltshire and Norfolk all show an increase in bus use in pilot areas relative to elsewhere. The comparison data for Norfolk was for only one bus service and hence caution should be applied to its result.

Different trends were observed in the three other authorities. In Warwickshire the number of passenger journeys decreased in the pilot area but increased in the wider local authority area. In Hertfordshire, bus use increased less in the pilot area than the wider local area. In Cheshire East there is a negligible difference in change in bus use between the pilot and comparison areas. However, caution should be applied to the results for Cheshire East and Hertfordshire schemes because their earlier scheme start dates means that baseline data on the number of passenger journeys could have been affected by the impacts of Covid-19 (to a more severe extent than other schemes).

Overall, the results for the four schemes where there is most confidence with the data (Cheshire West and Chester, Leicestershire, Warwickshire and Wiltshire)[21] show an increase in bus use in pilot areas relative to elsewhere for three of the schemes, with Warwickshire the exception. Hence, the evidence available supports the hypothesis that DRT can facilitate greater public transport use in areas served.

5.5. Key findings

Section 5 has presented results on passenger usage and service efficiency for the DRT schemes. At the time this report was written, data was available from all 14 LAs whose schemes had commenced by September 2024. The period of data availability varied by LA depending on the launch date of the DRT schemes. One scheme, Buckinghamshire Aylesbury, was launched in August 2024, therefore its data was not included in this report. **Table 6** brings together the passenger usage and service efficiency outcomes for each scheme in one place.

Key findings are:

- Monthly passenger journeys in the latest six-month monitoring period varied from 117 to 6,458 with a mean value of 2,101 across the 18 schemes. Differences in passenger journey numbers across schemes are likely to be influenced by a variety of factors with data showing the number of operational vehicles plays an important role. 14 out of 18 schemes had increased monthly passenger journeys in the last six-month period compared to their overall average.
- Passenger journeys per vehicle hour varied from 0.9 to 3.9 with a mean value of 2.1. Schemes with smaller scheme area sizes generally recorded more journeys per vehicle hour. LAs took steps to increase vehicle utilisation by seeking improvements to passenger aggregation (using various measures, including dividing single travel zones into two zones, reducing the number of available stops, introducing wider pick-up time slots for bookings or using group tickets) and evidence of an improving situation is apparent in two-thirds of schemes.
- Empty running ratios varied from 0.45 to 1.09 with a mean value of 0.77, indicating 77 miles driven empty for every 100 miles with passengers. Empty running ratios decreased over the trial period for most schemes.
- There were increases in total passenger journeys in DRT pilot areas after the introduction of the schemes in nearly all cases where this could be assessed. This implies the schemes are likely to be meeting at least one of the RMF programme objectives of enabling journeys to be made that were otherwise not possible and attracting people to public transport from private transport. In most cases where comparisons were possible, total bus passenger journeys increased more over time in RMF pilot scheme areas compared to non-pilot

[21] There is less confidence in the data for the Norfolk scheme due to only one comparison bus service and for Cheshire East and Hertfordshire schemes due to earlier DRT scheme start dates meaning that baseline data on the number of passenger journeys could have been affected by the impacts of Covid-19.

areas, which suggests that introducing DRT can facilitate additional bus usage.

Table 6: Passenger usage and service efficiency outcomes for each DRT scheme

DRT scheme	Population	Area size (sq. m.)	Population density (pers./ sq. m.)	Number of vehicles	Average monthly passenger journeys (April - Sep 2024)	Average monthly passenger journeys (all-time averages)	Passenger journeys per vehicle hour (April - Sep 2024)	Passenger journeys per vehicle hour (all-time averages)	Empty running ratio (April - Sep 2024)	Empty running ratio (all-time averages)
Bucks - HW	84,686	14	5,978	6	6,458	6,138	3.9	4.0	0.68	0.73
Cheshire E	30,887	86	359	2	1,533	1,168	2.2	1.7	0.94	1.03
Cheshire W&C	34,406	60	572	2	1,535	1,233	3.0	2.5	0.65	0.68
Essex	69,162	90	772	6	3,782	2,867	1.2	1.0	1.09	1.26
Glos – S.FoD	64,148	124	519	1.5	833	751	1.8	1.6	0.62	0.98
Glos – N.Cots	23,025	100	229	1	535	327	1.7	1.1	0.69	1.29
Herts	44,579	232	192	5	2,545	1,848	1.5	1.4	0.45	0.65
Leics	34,000	53	642	3	2,195	1,867	2.1	1.7	0.52	0.49
Norfolk	15,386	85	181	1	534	607	1.7	2.0	1.00	0.96
North Lincs	184,047	337	545	4	1,499	1,681	1.2	0.9	0.57	0.66
Notts - N.Oll	17,716	70	253	2.5	1,983	1,894	2.6	2.5	0.93	1.01
Notts - S.Oll	10,922	64	170	2.5	899	1,183	1.2	1.6	0.78	0.93
Notts - Mans	33,290	4	7,874	1	117	95	1.9	1.6	1.04	1.23
Notts - W.Rush	23,869	30	804	2	3,208	3,228	3.1	3.3	1.05	0.98
Staffs	27,724	188	148	3	979	802	0.9	0.7	0.95	1.46
Surrey	102,969	126	816	4	2,294	1,912	1.8	1.8	0.75	0.72
Warwicks	47,008	28	1,686	3	2,900	2,413	2.8	2.1	0.45	0.46
Wilts	64,581	194	332	3	3,981	3,363	3.5	3.2	0.75	0.88
Scheme average	**50,689**	**105**	**1,226**	**2.9**	**2,101**	**1,854**	**2.1**	**1.9**	**0.77**	**0.91**

6. Journey patterns and connectivity

Section 6 presents results on journeys made using the DRT schemes based on monitoring data provided by the LAs. It gives an indication of journey patterns and the connectivity between locations enabled by DRT. It includes results on journey distances, popular origins and destinations and variations in DRT usage by day of week and time of day.

6.1. Journey distances and times

LAs were asked to report average journey length (in miles) and time (in minutes) on a monthly basis for their DRT schemes.

Table 7 presents all-time average figures across the scheme durations. Average journey distances and times were consistent over time for each scheme and therefore only the all-time average figures are reported.

The longest average journey distances of 10.0 miles and 9.2 miles were recorded by the Norfolk and Staffordshire schemes respectively. The shortest journey distances were recorded by Cheshire West and Chester, Nottinghamshire Mansfield and Warwickshire schemes. Journey times generally reflected journey distances, although there were some variations such as the average journey time for the Norfolk scheme being 16 minutes which was less than that for many schemes with shorter average journey distances. The result for Norfolk may be explained by faster, more direct roads with fewer junctions.

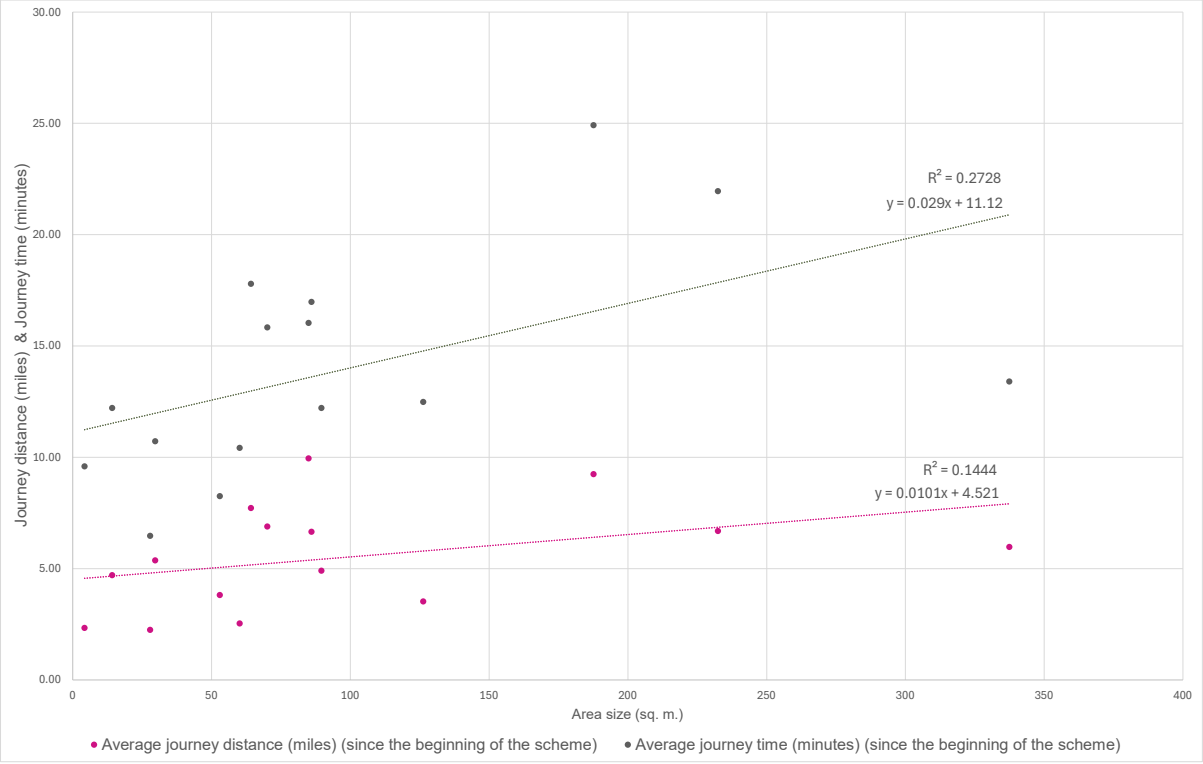
Figure 11 shows that journey distances and times tend to increase with service area size. It was also found they tend to decrease with increased population density. They will also be affected by other local factors such as land use patterns, road network connectivity and congestion levels. The scheme with the largest service area, North Lincolnshire, was divided into two separate travel zones in July 2022 in order to avoid excessive journey lengths and increase vehicle utilisation. It has seen average journey distances decrease from 6.8 miles in the first year of operation in 2021 to 5.4 miles in April – September 2024 but there was no marked decrease after July 2022.

The results show that DRT schemes are being used for journeys which are generally too long to walk and would need other vehicular transport if DRT was unavailable. It would be valuable to have data on the distribution of journey lengths/times to appreciate the diversity within them (but this was not collected for this monitoring exercise).

Table 7: Average journey distances and times (all-time averages)

DRT scheme	Average journey distance (miles)	Average journey time (minutes)	Service area size (sq. m.)
Bucks - HW	4.7	12.2	14
Cheshire E	6.7	17.0	86
Cheshire W&C	2.5	10.4	60
Essex	4.9	12.2	90
Herts	6.7	22.0	232
Leics	3.8	8.3	53
Norfolk	10.0	16.0	85
North Lincs	6.0	13.4	337
Notts - N.Oll	6.9	15.8	70
Notts - S.Oll	7.7	17.8	64
Notts - Mans	2.3	9.6	4
Notts - W.Rush	5.4	10.7	30
Staffs	9.2	24.9	188
Surrey	3.5	12.5	126
Warwicks	2.3	6.5	28

Figure 11: Average journey distances and times versus service area size (all-time averages)



6.2. Journey patterns

The DRT schemes were designed to serve specific populations and enable journeys to be made to key local destinations. LAs were asked to report in each six-monthly data collection period the three most popular destinations and three most popular origins for trips undertaken using their DRT schemes as well as the number of trips made to each of these.

The places identified have been categorised into six types and **Table 8** identifies the destination types that were most popular during the latest data collection period (for schemes where this data was available). It shows the destination categories for the three most popular destinations for each DRT scheme. Results are similar when looking at origins (unsurprisingly since journeys will often be two-way) and so unnecessary to show separately.

Rail/bus stations were the most popular destination type, accounting for 22 out of 47 cases. This indicates that DRT is likely to be facilitating multi-modal journeys. Town/village local centres accounted for 13 cases and employment/business/retail parks for three cases which indicates DRT is enabling people to access local service centres with job, retail and other opportunities. Healthcare centres accounted for five cases and schools for two cases which indicates DRT is contributing to meeting the need for health-related and education travel in some schemes.

Table 8: Most popular destinations by type (April - September 2024)

DRT scheme	Employment, retail & business parks	Health services	Rail /bus station or stop	Residen-tial areas	Schools	Town/ village - local centre
Bucks - HW	1		1		1	
Cheshire E		1	2			
Cheshire W&C				1		2
Essex		1	1			1
Glos – S.FoD		1	1			1
Glos – N.Cots				1	1	1
Herts			2			1
Leics	1		2			
Norfolk			1			2
North Lincs	1		1			1
Notts - N.Oll			2			
Notts - S.Oll			1			
Notts - W.Rush			2			1
Staffs			3			
Surrey		2				1
Warwicks			3			
Wilts						2
Total number of unique destinations	**3**	**5**	**22**	**2**	**2**	**13**

Note: The table shows for each DRT scheme the numbers of each destination type amongst the top three destinations (some schemes reported fewer than three destinations). The values are based on the latest data collection period (April – September 2024), except for the Hertfordshire scheme which are based on April – September 2023 data.

More detailed information about the most popular destinations served by each scheme is given in **Table 9**. It identifies specific locations and gives the monthly average of trips made to them in the latest data collection period along with the percentage of all trips.

Rail stations were important for seven of the schemes (Bucks High Wycombe, Cheshire East, Essex, Hertfordshire, Leicestershire, Notts West Rushcliffe and Warwickshire). In areas without major rail stations, bus stations/stops and interchanges were significant destinations. Notably, the Notts West Rushcliffe scheme includes East Midlands Airport within its service area and the airport features as one of the most popular destinations. The importance of town/village centre locations is evident in Norfolk where 45% of all rides were to Swaffham town centre (stopping at two different locations). Similarly, in Wiltshire, 36% of all rides ended at two different town centre locations.

Table 9: Passenger journeys to the top three destinations (April - September 2024)

DRT scheme	Key destination	Monthly average journeys to destination	Total monthly average journeys (to all destinations)	% of total monthly average journeys to destination
Bucks - HW	Eden Shopping Centre and Bus Station	374	6,458	6%
	High Wycombe Railway Station	64	6,458	1%
	St Michael's Catholic School	241	6,458	4%
Cheshire E	Bus Station, Nantwich Town Centre	216	1,533	14%
	Station Road, Nantwich (Near Rail Station)	66	1,533	4%
	Wrenbury Nursing Home	64	1,533	4%
Cheshire W&C	Helsby Park Homes	120	1,535	8%
	Main Street Morrisons	123	1,535	8%
	Bridge Stores	114	1,535	7%
Essex	Braintree Train Station and Bus Interchange	469	3,782	12%
	Broomfield Hospital	292	3,782	8%
	Braintree Town Centre Shopping (B&M)	171	3,782	5%
Glos – S.FoD	Lydney bus station	67	833	8%
	Yorkley Health Centre	48	833	6%
	Lydney Town Hall	40	833	5%
Herts	Stevenage - Bus Station Stop L, for Rail Station	236	2,545	9%
	Buntingford - The Crown Inn	179	2,545	7%
	Royston - Royston Railway Station Stop B	80	2,545	3%
Leics	Hinckley Bus Station	525	2,195	24%
	Hinckley Train Station	88	2,195	4%
	Fosse Park (Retail Park)	213	2,195	10%
Norfolk	Swaffham - King's Arms	185	534	35%
	Gooderstone - Walnut Place	51	534	10%
	North Pickenham - Bus Shelter	48	534	9%
North Lincs	Scunthorpe Bus Station	127	1,499	8%
	Brigg, Cary Lane	82	1,499	5%
	Europa Way, Brigg	65	1,499	4%

DRT scheme	Key destination	Monthly average journeys to destination	Total monthly average journeys (to all destinations)	% of total monthly average journeys to destination
Notts - N.Oll	Newark Bus Station	111	1,983	6%
	Retford Bus Station	463	1,983	23%
Notts - S.Oll	Newark Bus Station	280	899	31%
Notts - W.Rush	East Midlands Airport	97	3,208	3%
	East Midlands Parkway	39	3,208	1%
	Sutton Bonington	121	3,208	4%
Staffs	Leek Bus Station	102	979	10%
	Ashbourne Bus Station	21	979	2%
	Ilam Primary School	17	979	2%
Surrey	Queen Elizabeth Foundation Neuro Rehab.	62	2,294	3%
	Epsom hospital (front entrance)	49	2,294	2%
	Tesco, Leatherhead, UK	35	2,294	2%
Warwicks	Warwick Bus Station	333	2,900	11%
	Warwick Parkway Station	64	2,900	2%
	Kenilworth (Abbey End)	212	2,900	7%
Wilts	Devizes Market Place	591	3,981	15%
	Marlborough High Street	854	3,981	21%

Notes:

i. The values are based on the latest data collection period (April – September 2024), except for the Hertfordshire scheme which are based on April – September 2023 data.

ii. The monthly average for key destinations was calculated by dividing the total number of journeys ending at those destinations by the number of months data was available (i.e. in Surrey, the top three destinations had five months of available data; otherwise, six months of data was available for all other destinations).

A comparison of the most popular destinations reported in **Table 9**, with destinations mentioned in the business cases that were submitted with RMF funding applications, shows a close correspondence. For example, Leicestershire mentioned Fosse Park retail area and railway stations at Hinckley and Narborough and both Fosse Park and Hinckley railway station feature in the top three destinations.

Some LAs had been able to import origin-destination data for DRT journeys into a Geographic Information System (GIS) and produce visualisations of journey flows (often referred to as desire lines) in their service areas. For instance, **Figure 12** shows desire lines for DRT journeys made between October 2023 and March 2024 for the Surrey scheme.

It shows multiple journeys between Leatherhead and Queen Elizabeth Foundation Neuro Rehabilitation Services and between Leatherhead and Epsom Hospital. It also shows multiple journeys between Great Bookham and Dorking, and Great Bookham and Cobham. Journeys between smaller settlements south of Dorking in the Surrey Hills area are visible in the January-March 2024 period. The journey flows show how DRT can serve diverse journey demands which would be difficult to serve with fixed route bus services running along main corridors between population centres. Taking the example of a journey between Capel and Leith Hill, the journey is estimated to take 20 minutes and cost £4 with the Surrey Connect DRT service. In contrast it would take 1 hour 10 minutes and otherwise require two fixed route buses with a cost of £6 (with the current £3 fare cap). This illustrates how DRT can save time and money and provide a more direct public transport connection.

Figure 12: Journey flows for DRT use for Surrey scheme

Note: From left to right starting on the top row, each square represents a month from October 2023 to March 2024.

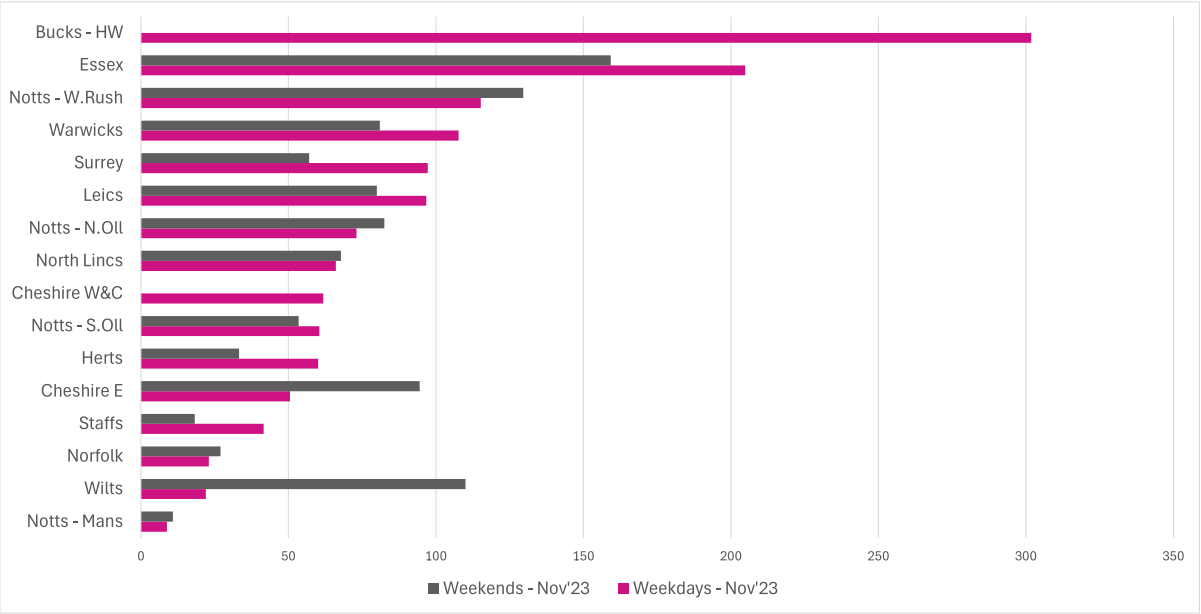
6.3. Variation in journeys by day of week and time of day

This section examines variation in passenger journeys by day of the week and time of day. For this analysis, two months at different times of year, November 2023 and May 2024, have been selected to see if any seasonal differences are evident.

Figure 13 and **Figure 14** compare weekday and weekend daily passenger numbers for November 2023 and May 2024. They cover 16 of the DRT schemes where this information was available. Apart from the Bucks High Wycombe and Cheshire West schemes, all DRT schemes operated on Saturdays. Four schemes also operated on Sundays (Essex, Hertfordshire, Notts West Rushcliffe and Staffordshire).

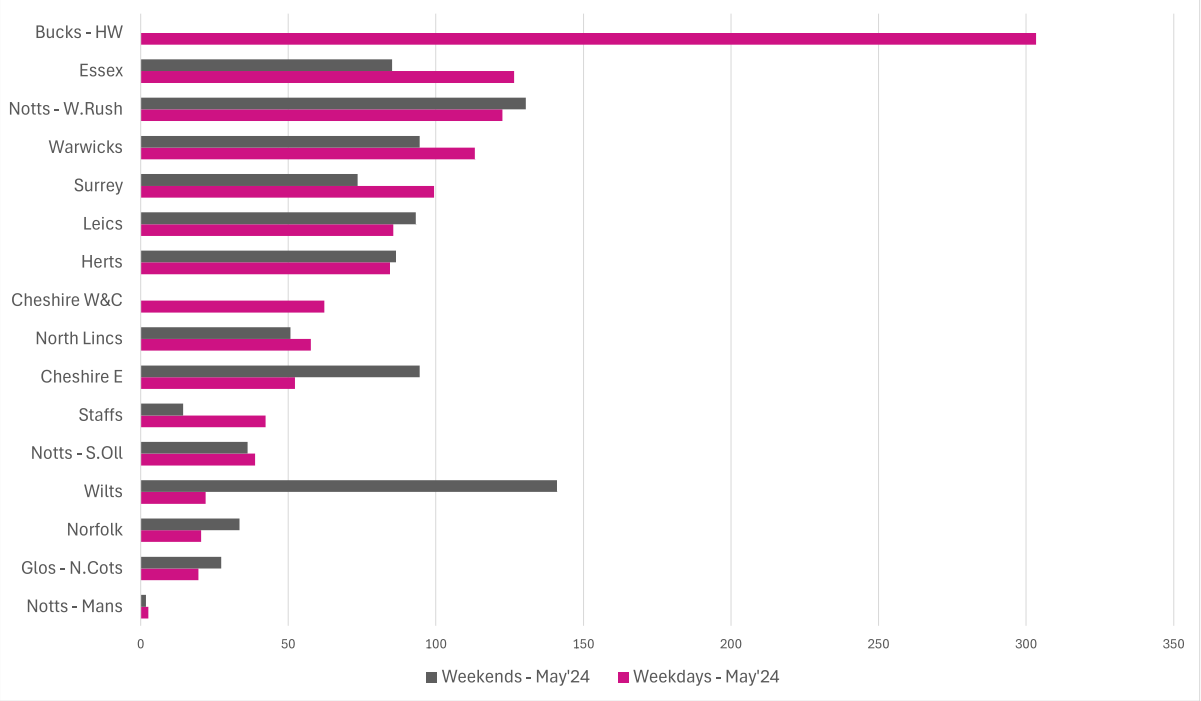
Most schemes had a similar number of passenger journeys on weekend days and weekdays. Two schemes (Cheshire East and Wiltshire) had markedly more passenger journeys on weekend days, while one scheme (Essex) had markedly more on weekdays. Comparing the two different times of the year, no systematic difference is evident.

Figure 13: Average daily passenger journeys on weekend days and weekdays in November 2023



Note: The values are based on data for November 2023, except for Hertfordshire with data for November 2022.

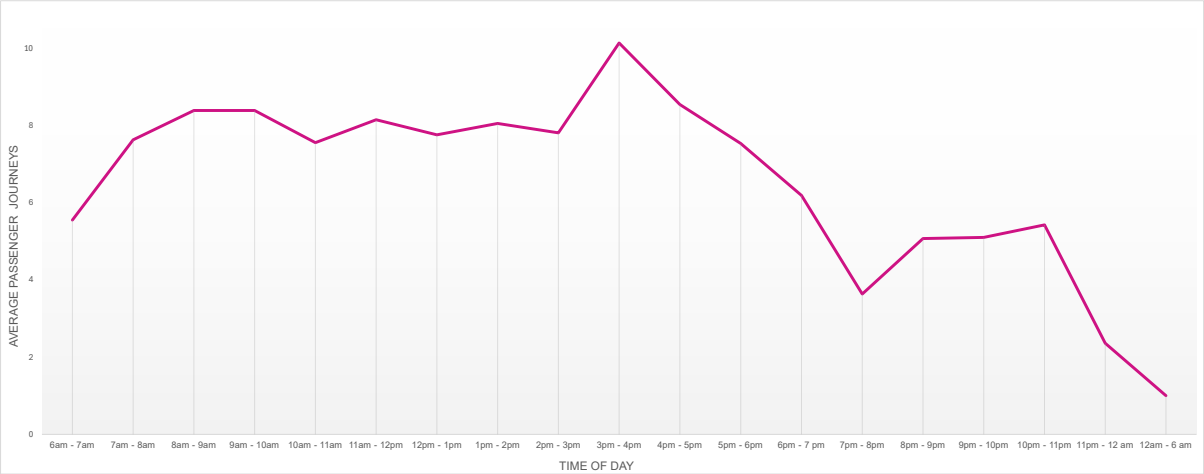
Figure 14: Average daily passenger journeys on weekend days and weekdays in May 2024



Note: The values are based on data for May 2024, except for Hertfordshire with data for May 2023.

An aggregation of passenger journeys by time of day across all schemes[22] gives an indication of the distribution of passenger demand, noting that all schemes apart from Notts Mansfield operated between 7am and 7pm but a subset of schemes operated 6am – 7am and after 7pm. **Figure 15** shows slightly higher demand than average between 8am and 10am and maximum demand between 3pm and 5pm. Demand was lower in the early evenings than the rest of the day before picking up between 8pm and 11pm and tailing off after 11pm.

Figure 15: Average passenger journeys by time of day across all schemes (May 2024)



Note: The values are based on data for May 2024, except for Hertfordshire with data for May 2023.

Distributions in average passenger numbers broadly followed a similar pattern with some exceptions as discussed below. For example, **Figure 16** shows demand was highest in the early morning for the Bucks High Wycombe scheme. A number of schemes had greatest demand in the afternoon which is likely to reflect school travel, given schools appeared amongst the most popular destinations in Section 6.2. This was particularly notable for the Essex, North Lincolnshire and Wiltshire schemes. **Figure 17** shows demand was highest at 3pm – 4pm for the Wiltshire scheme.

[22] As not every scheme operates at all times, the averages of the schemes that are active during the specific time periods have been considered using data from May 2024. For example, only the Hertfordshire, Notts West Rushcliffe and Notts Mansfield schemes operate between 23:00 and 00:00, and thus, their averages have been used to calculate this time frame. Notts Mansfield is the only scheme that operates after midnight; therefore, its average of one ride per time period is shown in the graph.

Figure 16: Passenger journeys by time of day for Bucks High Wycombe scheme

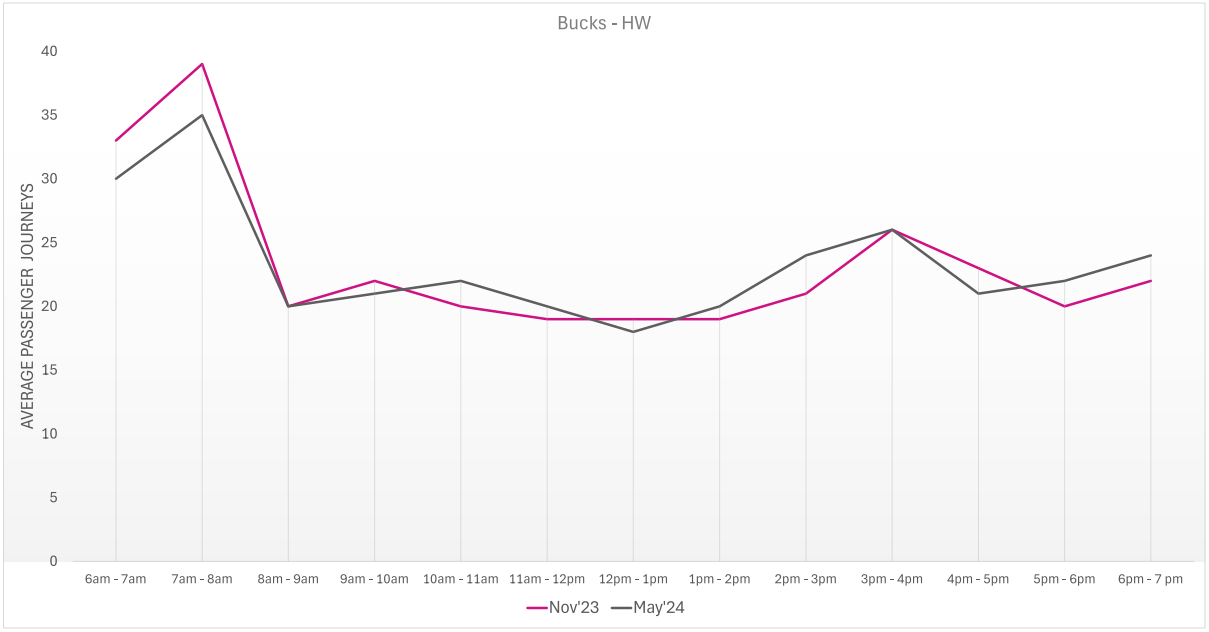
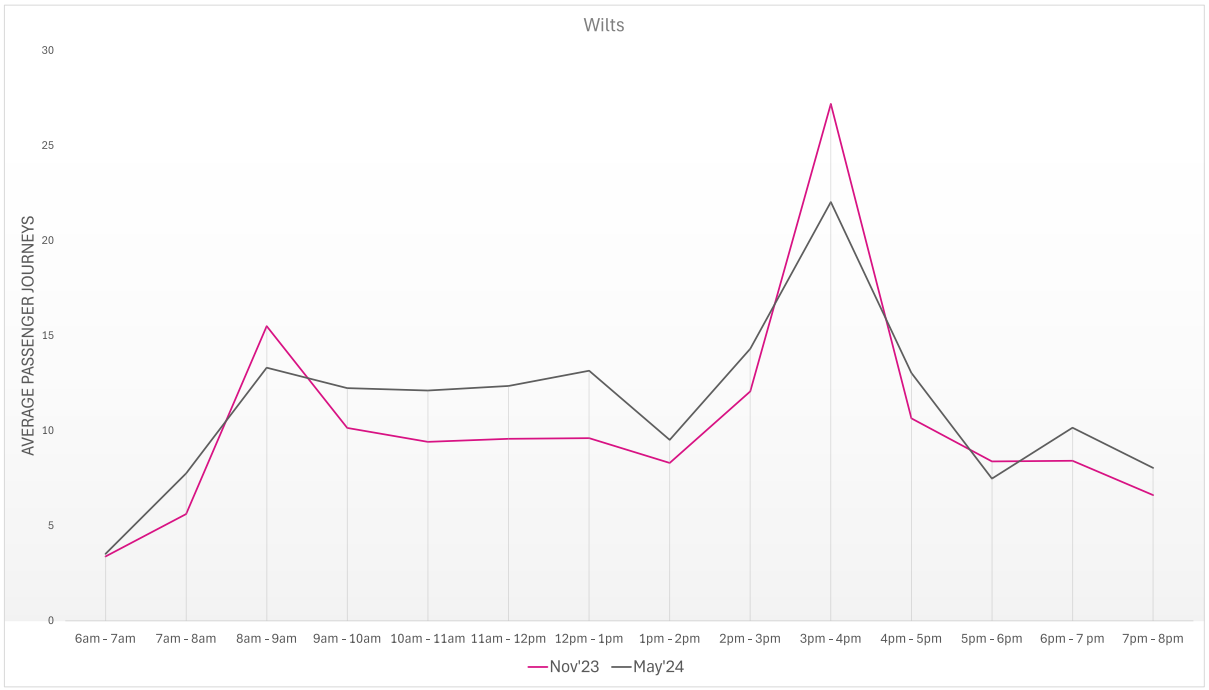


Figure 17: Passenger journeys by time of day for Wiltshire scheme



6.4. Key findings

Section 6 provided insights into journey patterns and how DRT supported connectivity between locations in the pilot areas.

Key findings are:

- Average journey distances varied from 2.3 to 10.0 miles across the schemes with journey times generally reflecting journey distances. They both tend to increase with service area size and decrease with population density.
- Rail/bus stations were the most popular destination type, indicating DRT may be facilitating multi-modal journeys. Local town/village centres and employment/business/retail parks were also popular destinations, suggesting DRT is enabling people to access local service centres with job, retail and other opportunities, and therefore supporting local economies.
- Visualisations of journey flows available for some DRT schemes show how DRT can serve diverse journey demands which would be difficult to serve by fixed route bus services and enable time and cost savings for users.
- Most schemes had a similar number of passenger journeys on weekend days and weekdays. There was higher demand than average between 8am and 10am and between 3pm and 5pm but demand was evident at other times of the day, including evenings where an evening service was available.

7. User profiles and experience

Section 7 presents results available from the monitoring data supplied by LAs on the characteristics of DRT users and results related to their experiences of using DRT.

7.1. Concessionary fare users

The use of concessionary fares provides a basic indication of some different demographic characteristics of RMF scheme users. **Table 10** presents figures on the number of concessionary fare paying passenger journeys for each scheme between April to September 2024. It also shows calculations of the total percentage of passenger journeys made using concessionary fares for each scheme.

Schemes vary in the extent to which they offer concessionary fare travel (see **Table F4** in Appendix F). Most schemes offer free travel to English national concessionary travel scheme (ENCTS) pass holders (available to older people and eligible disabled people between 9.30am and 11pm Monday to Fridays and all day at weekends and on bank holidays), but in some cases they offer discounted fares instead of free travel to ENCTS pass holders. Some schemes offer discounted concessionary fares to other groups (under 16s in particular). Schemes which only offer concessionary fare travel to ENCTS pass holders have only provided a total figure for concessionary fare users. Schemes with additional concessionary fare offers have provided a breakdown of different concessionary fare categories.

There was a large range in the percentages of passenger journeys travelling on concessionary fares across the schemes. North Lincolnshire and Warwickshire had the highest percentages (60% and 55% respectively). Notts West Rushcliffe had the lowest percentage at 5%. The mean percentage of passenger journeys travelling on concessionary fares was 26% across the 18 DRT schemes. This is the same as the figure reported for concessionary passenger journeys (including youth schemes) as a percentage of total passenger journeys on local bus services in English non-metropolitan areas in the year from April 2023 to March 2024[23]. Overall, this suggests the DRT schemes are being used by a cross-section of the population in a similar way to bus services in general outside major urban areas. It also demonstrates that the majority of users are full fare paying users, likely to be mostly of working age.

There is evidence that children and young people are using services where concessionary fares are available to them, constituting 6% of total passenger journeys in Surrey, 8% in Cheshire East, 10% in Leicestershire and Warwickshire, 17% in Staffordshire and 19% in North Lincolnshire. The demand profile by time of day presented in Section 6.3 shows peaks during the usual home-to-school/school-to-home travel times between 8am and 10am and between 3pm and 5pm which suggests children and young people were using services for home to school travel.

[23] BUS01d table in Local bus passenger journeys (BUS01) tables found at https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/bus-statistics-data-tables

Table 10: Passenger journeys on a concessionary fare (April – September 2024)

DRT scheme	Child/ young person journeys	Older person journeys	Persons living with a disability journeys	Other journeys	Total concessi-onary journeys	Total passenger journeys	% older / disabled	% concess-ionary
Bucks - HW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7,260	38,750	N/A	19%
Cheshire E	764	1,654	N/A	N/A	2,418	9,199	18%	26%
Cheshire W&C	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2,211	9,211	N/A	24%
Essex	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5,505	22,689	N/A	24%
Glos – S.FoD	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,180	5,000	N/A	24%
Glos – N.Cots	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	430	3,208	N/A	13%
Herts	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2,464	15,270	N/A	16%
Leics	1,323	3,224	670	N/A	5,217	13,172	30%	40%
Norfolk	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	929	3,203	N/A	29%
North Lincs	1,732	N/A	N/A	3,700	5,432	8,995	41%	60%
Notts - N.Oll	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,872	11,897	N/A	16%
Notts - S.Oll	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	928	5,395	N/A	17%
Notts - Mans	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	73	703	N/A	10%
Notts - W.Rush	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	932	19,247	N/A	5%
Staffs	731	1,063	54	262	2,110	5,875	19%	36%
Surrey	758	4,899	N/A	N/A	5,657	13,766	36%	41%
Warwicks	1,742	7,282	471	N/A	9,495	17,399	45%	55%
Wilts	N/A	2,752	N/A	N/A	2,752	23,887	12%	12%

Notes: i. The table is based on data for April – September 2024 period, except for Hertfordshire where it is based on April – September 2023 period. ii. North Lincolnshire's 'other' category combines older people and disabled people NCTS journeys. During the summer holidays (2024), a £1 fare cap for young people (17 and under) was introduced to encourage travel usage. iii. Staffordshire's 'other' category reflects student passes. iv. Cheshire East cannot separate disabled pass users from all other concessionary pass users and they are included with older people. Until recently, the scheme offered free passes for the sixth ride. More recently, Cheshire East began to offer free travel to ENCTS pass holders which had previously cost £2.00. v. Wiltshire - concessionary pass holder data may be affected by the availability of ticket machines on DRT vehicles (now resolved).

7.2. Passenger demographics

Demographic data has not generally been available to share for this evaluation, as it has not been collected from DRT users when they install the DRT apps or make journey bookings. An exception is the Leicestershire scheme which has collected this information.

Table 11 shows the age breakdown for journeys made in the latest data collection period (April to September 2024) for Leicestershire. It shows 18% of all passengers were 20 years old or younger, 42% were aged 21-59, 27% were 60 years old or over and 13% did not disclose their age. Leicestershire also reported 56% of journeys were made by females, 30% by males, 1% by other and 13% no gender stated.

Table 11: Age characteristics for journeys made on Leicestershire scheme (April - September 2024)

Age	Percentage of passenger journeys
under 17	4%
17-20	14%
21-29	16%
30-39	10%
40-49	9%
50-59	7%
60-69	12%
70-79	10%
80-89	3%
90+	2%
Age not disclosed	13%

Cheshire East carried out a survey of DRT users in February 2024 with 244 responses received. 9% were in the 16-24 age category, 66% were aged 25-64 and 25% were aged 65 and over. 62% of respondents identified as female and 33% as male.

These results add to those in the previous section on concessionary fare users and suggests that passenger journeys have been evenly distributed across the age range in schemes where data was available.

7.3. Booking data

This section considers data on booking methods used, the extent of advance booking and reasons for unfulfilled bookings.

Booking method

All schemes offer the option to book via a mobile app or phone call with some offering a website booking facility. **Table 12** shows that most bookings during the latest data collection period of April to September 2024 were made using mobile

apps with a scheme average of 87%. The highest percentages were reported for the Notts West Rushcliffe (98%), Essex (95%) and Notts Mansfield (92%) schemes.

North Lincolnshire had the highest percentage of phone bookings, at 28%, followed by schemes in Norfolk, Staffordshire, and Surrey, each at a rate of 23%. The five DRT schemes with the highest rates of phone bookings were also those reporting the highest percentage of concessionary fare journeys. This suggests concessionary fare users (older people and disabled people) may have a greater tendency to make phone bookings. Website bookings were a maximum of 8% of total bookings although many schemes did not have this facility.

In summary, most DRT journeys were booked using a mobile app but phone bookings (and to a lesser extent website bookings) also played a role in enabling people to use DRT. LAs participating in the process evaluation interviews and roundtables emphasised the importance of having a call centre to enable phone bookings for those without access to, or the ability to use, the app. They had also put time and effort into helping the public to use the DRT app as it gives users access to more information than if they make a phone booking. Although users who book via call centres receive phone calls before their vehicle arrives, those without smart phones will not get further information while they wait outside, which may lead to difficulties during their journey home if, for example, pick up times are delayed. The app helps users track the vehicle and receive real-time updates on the pick-up time.

Table 12: Percentages of total bookings by booking method (April - September 2024)

DRT scheme	App bookings	Phone bookings	Online bookings
Bucks - HW	85%	13%	2%
Cheshire E	85%	15%	N/A
Cheshire W&C	85%	13%	2%
Essex	95%	5%	N/A
Glos – S.FoD	76%	17%	7%
Glos – N.Cots	85%	8%	7%
Herts	89%	4%	7%
Leics	86%	14%	N/A
Norfolk	71%	23%	6%
North Lincs	72%	28%	N/A
Notts - N.Oll	87%	13%	N/A
Notts - S.Oll	90%	10%	N/A
Notts - Mans	92%	8%	N/A
Notts - W.Rush	98%	2%	N/A
Staffs	77%	23%	N/A
Surrey	69%	23%	8%
Warwicks	80%	20%	N/A
Wilts	83%	16%	1%
Scheme average	**87%**	**11%**	**1%**

Notes:

i. The table is based on data for April – September 2024 period, except for Hertfordshire where it is based on April – September 2023 period.

ii. N/A = not applicable.

Advance bookings

Figure 18 displays the average number of days users booked their journeys in advance for the latest reporting period of April to September 2024. It covers 15 of the DRT schemes where this information was available. Minimum and maximum lead times for booking journeys are also shown. The average lead time was 3.5 days. If North Lincolnshire is excluded from the calculation as an outlier, this figure decreases to 2.7 days, showing most users are booking journeys a few days before they travel.

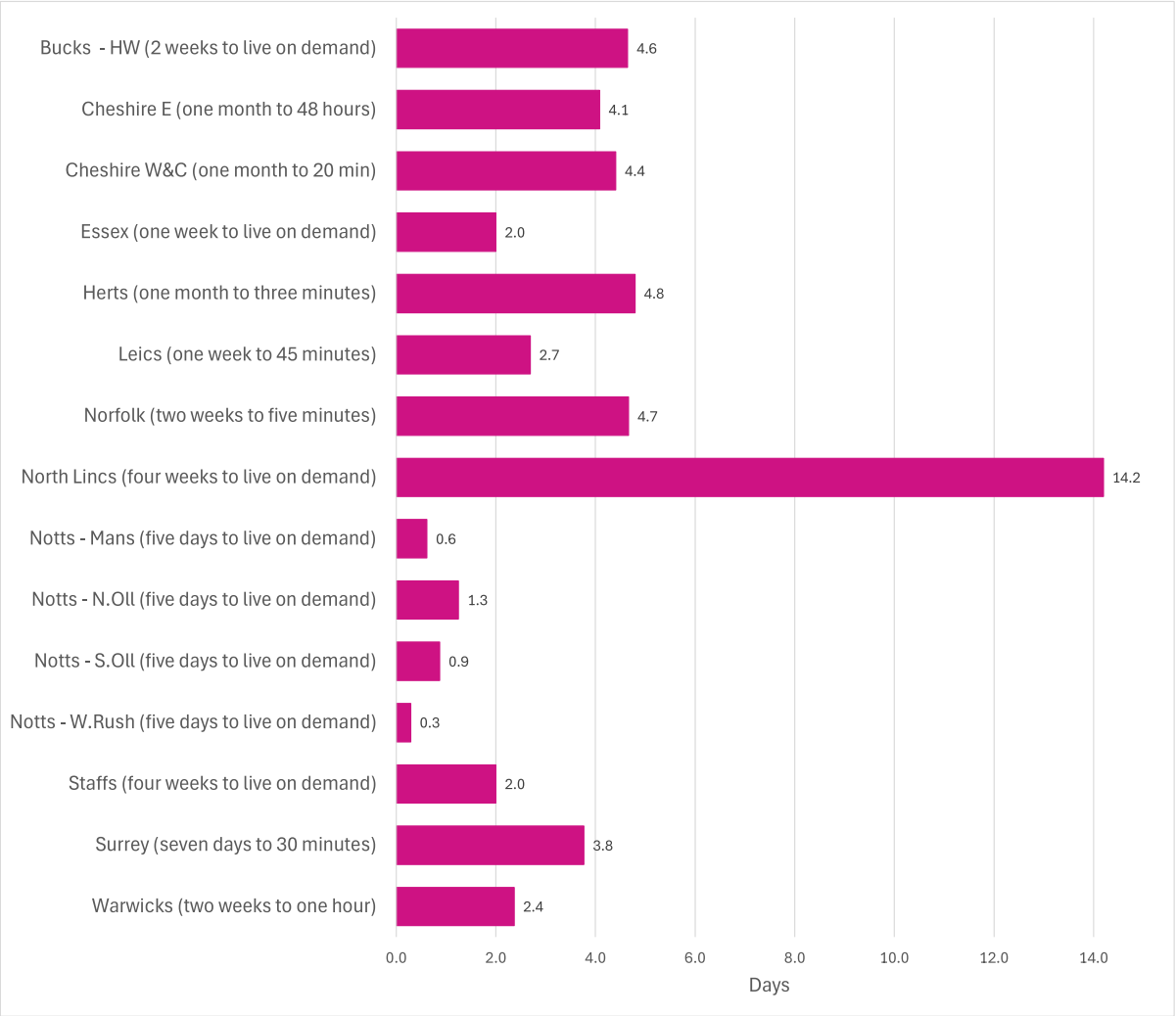
The JustGo scheme users in North Lincolnshire booked the DRT service furthest in advance. This may be a legacy of how users in North Lincolnshire were accustomed to using the predecessor CallConnect non-digital DRT service.

The users of the Nottinghamshire schemes made their bookings closest to the time of travel at less than two days before travel for all schemes. Schemes which reported a high ratio of unfulfilled bookings to fulfilled bookings (see following section), such as Bucks High Wycombe, Cheshire East, Leicestershire and Surrey, reported longer lead times for bookings.

Relating advance booking times to booking methods used reveals a strong association, highlighting that in DRT schemes where bookings tend to be made through the app, journeys are booked the least far in advance (statistically significant at a 95% confidence level). Similarly, in DRT schemes with the highest level of phone bookings, passengers are more likely to book further in advance. This may illustrate the flexibility that users gain from the app. DRT schemes with a higher percentage of concessionary fare journeys also see passengers more likely to book further in advance (statistically significant at a 95% confidence level).

From the perspective of scheme operators, the process evaluation revealed a concern amongst some LAs that allowing journey bookings to be made too far in advance, without requiring payment until the journey is made, leads to no shows and wasted vehicle trips. This led to some LAs requiring payment in advance or introducing shorter advance booking windows.

Figure 18: Average time in advance that journeys are booked (April - September 2024)



Note: This figure is based on data for April – September 2024 period, except for Hertfordshire where it is based on April – September 2023 period. Most schemes allow same-day bookings. Additionally, the advance booking period for all schemes varies from five to 30 days.

Unfulfilled bookings

LAs were asked to report the number of fulfilled and unfulfilled bookings on a monthly basis for their DRT schemes. The relative number of unfulfilled bookings compared to fulfilled bookings is an indicator of the capacity of the DRT service to meet demand and of the service experience of users. It is important to note there are different reasons for booking attempts being unfulfilled, some attributable to service providers and others to customers. Also, when a booking attempt is unsuccessful due to a lack of vehicle availability for a particular time slot, the customer may go on to make a successful booking at a different time.

LAs were asked to give a breakdown of unfulfilled bookings by reason (due to no service/vehicle being available; due to passenger cancellation/no show; due to cancellation by provider; and due to other reasons). It did not prove straightforward for LAs to provide data on booking information broken down in this way and data

was held in different ways across technology platforms (there were five different technology providers: Via, Padam, Moovit, loki, and Liftango).

First, results on the relative number of unfulfilled bookings compared to fulfilled bookings are reported, before results on the reasons for unfulfilled bookings.

Figure 19 shows the ratio of unfulfilled bookings to fulfilled bookings across the schemes. A low ratio indicates a higher proportion of bookings result in completed journeys. Both the average values for the latest data collection period from April to September 2024 and the full scheme duration up to September 2024 are shown. There is considerable variation in the ratios reported for April to September 2024 with a minimum value of 0.06, maximum value of 2.23 and mean value of 0.87. Individual values should be treated with caution due to the differing data available to LAs, but the mean value indicates almost one in two booking attempts does not directly lead to a journey being made.

More schemes had a higher ratio of unfulfilled bookings to fulfilled bookings in the latest reporting period compared to the average for the trial period which may be explained by increased demand in this period (see Section 5.1) but could also reflect increased capability over time to track unfulfilled bookings via the technology platform.

Figure 19: Ratio of unfulfilled bookings to fulfilled bookings (April-September 2024 and all-time averages)

Note: North Lincolnshire is excluded from this chart due to lack of available data.

Table 13 shows reasons for unfulfilled bookings for the schemes where data was available in the latest reporting period. The figures should be treated with caution and direct comparisons should not be made between schemes, given the difficulty LAs had in providing this information. What can be seen overall is that at least 45% of unfulfilled bookings were attributable to the service provider (no service/vehicle being available or cancellation by provider) and at least 28% unfulfilled bookings were attributable to the user (passenger cancellation/no show).

Table 13: Percentages of unfulfilled bookings classified by reason (April - September 2024)

DRT scheme	Total bookings	No service / vehicle being available	Passenger cancellation / no show	Cancellation by provider	Other reasons
Bucks - HW	62,582	35%	31%	0%	34%
Cheshire E	12,433	47%	24%	0%	29%
Cheshire W&C	8,124	63%	33%	4%	0%
Essex	6,480	0%	90%	10%	0%
Glos – S.FoD	2,068	0%	84%	16%	0%
Glos – N.Cots	1,499	0%	86%	14%	0%
Herts	5,472	0%	85%	15%	0%
Leics	19,161	27%	1%	0%	73%
Norfolk	162	0%	93%	0%	7%
North Lincs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Notts - N.Oll	5,643	59%	31%	0%	11%
Notts - S.Oll	3,191	48%	46%	0%	6%
Notts - Mans	90	13%	76%	0%	11%
Notts - W.Rush	16,044	56%	30%	0%	13%
Staffs	6,443	43%	3%	28%	25%
Surrey	31,140	82%	15%	3%	0%
Warwicks	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wilts	27,065	36%	24%	0%	40%
Scheme average	**207,597 (Total)**	**43%**	**28%**	**2%**	**26%**

Notes:

i. The table is based on data for April – September 2024 period, except for Hertfordshire where it is based on April – September 2023 period.

ii. A 0% in the table may indicate a lack of data for those categories or that no bookings were stated as unfulfilled for this reason.

iii. The Gloucestershire scheme categories were identified as 'cancelled by passenger' and 'cancelled by admin/call centre/driver', assigned to categories two and three, respectively.

iv. N/A = not available.

7.4. Passenger experience

Very limited data was available on passenger experience and LAs had generally not conducted surveys of users. They were able to arrange for post-ride feedback to be obtained from users via the DRT app. Leicestershire made some of this feedback available to the evaluation team.

Between April and September 2024, Leicestershire collected feedback via the DRT app on 965 booking attempts. Of these, 314 bookings resulted in completed rides. The remaining bookings did not result in journeys being made. Passengers were asked to provide their sentiment (positive or negative) regarding their experience, along with comments. According to the responses, 60% of the completed rides resulted in positive experiences. Furthermore, 60% of these positive experiences related to driver disposition, punctuality, safe driving and the service being attentive to passenger needs. 28% of all completed rides resulted in negative experiences. Amongst negative experiences, 54% were linked to issues of vehicles being late without any notification and not being collected by the time the feedback was provided. 31% of all negative experiences were driver-related, including issues around punctuality, speed of travel or customer service.

Feedback was also provided on non-completed bookings which revealed difficulties using the app booking system and finding a suitable time slot, as well as reasons for user cancellations.

These results are for one period of time for one scheme but indicate it can be challenging to make a booking at a preferred time and, whilst most journeys are positively experienced, there are challenges in achieving that for all journeys.

7.5. Key findings

Section 7 presented results on the characteristics of DRT users and results related to their experiences of using DRT.

Key findings are:

- The average percentage of journeys made with concessionary fares across the 18 DRT schemes was the same (26%) as for local bus services in English non-metropolitan areas, although there was a large range across schemes. Where concessionary fares were available to children/young people, there was evidence they were being used. The majority of passengers in 16 out of 18 DRT schemes paid full fares.
- Most DRT users (87%) were booking journeys using the mobile apps. Phone bookings to a call centre constituted 11% of bookings overall but were more common for schemes with a greater number of concessionary fare users. The option to book by phone was generally considered essential for inclusion reasons.
- The average advance booking time for DRT services was 2.7 days. Schemes with a higher percentage of phone bookings and concessionary fare journeys experienced longer lead times for bookings. Schemes reporting a higher ratio

of unfulfilled bookings to fulfilled bookings experienced longer lead times for bookings.

- At least 45% of unfulfilled bookings were attributable to the service provider and at least 28% to the user. Sample feedback showed difficulties using the app booking system and finding a suitable time slot, as well as user cancellations, were the main contributors to unfulfilled bookings. Where rides were completed, this was generally a positive experience with driver care cited in particular.

8. Revenues and funding

Section 8 reports on revenues received from DRT passengers for the latest reporting period (April to September 2024) and for the full period since the DRT pilot schemes started operating.

8.1. Revenues

Table 14 presents six-month revenue figures for the DRT schemes for April to September 2024 along with calculations of revenue per passenger and revenue per full fare paying passenger (i.e. removing concessionary fare paying passengers).

The LAs were asked to provide revenue figures inclusive of £2 fare cap reimbursements. The £2 national bus fare cap was introduced in January 2023 and continued until December 2024 before being replaced by a £3 fare cap which will operate until March 2027 (outside the scope of this report which only considers data up to September 2024). Some LAs included reimbursements in their revenue figures and some did not; those that did not (identified in the notes) will be under-estimates in comparison.

Revenues were generally higher for those schemes with more passenger journeys, although revenues for the Bucks High Wycombe and Notts West Rushcliffe schemes were lower than would be expected from their usage levels. This is explained by these two schemes not including reimbursements from the £2 fare cap.

Revenue per passenger journey varied from £0.86 for the Warwickshire scheme (another scheme not including reimbursements from the £2 fare cap) to £5.22 for the Essex scheme. For the Essex scheme adult fares were between £2.50 and £8.00, depending on distance travelled, and with £2 fare cap reimbursements included in the revenue figure, this is a plausible value.

Table 14: Revenues for April - September 2024

DRT scheme	Revenue (£)	Revenue (£) per passenger journey	Revenue (£) per full fare passenger journey	Includes £2 fare cap reimbursement
Bucks - HW	47,931	1.24	1.52	N
Cheshire E	23,712	2.58	3.50	N/A
Cheshire W&C	19,757	2.14	2.82	Y
Essex	118,442	5.22	6.89	Y
Glos – S.FoD	11,211	2.34	2.61	Y
Glos – N.Cots	4,902	1.96	2.65	Y
Herts	56,817	3.72	4.44	Y
Leics	31,855	2.42	4.00	Y
Norfolk	3,949	1.23	1.74	Y
North Lincs	18,678	2.08	5.24	N/A
Notts – N.Oll	51,890	4.36	5.18	N
Notts – S.Oll	8,866	1.64	1.98	N
Notts – Mans	1,061	1.51	1.68	N
Notts – W.Rush	21,670	1.13	1.18	N
Staffs	14,842	2.53	3.94	N
Surrey	25,443	1.85	3.14	N/A
Warwicks	15,040	0.86	1.90	N
Wilts	72,338	3.03	3.42	Y

Notes:

i. Gloucestershire figures are for Oct 23 – Mar 24 as not available for Apr – Sep 24.

ii. Hertfordshire figures are for Apr 23 – Sep 23 as revenue figures after this include an additional non-RMF DRT scheme.

iii. Wiltshire revenue figures include revenue from associated semi-flexible/timetabled services which are not funded by RMF but the revenue per passenger calculations are based only on passengers using RMF funded DRT.

Table 15 presents total revenue and passenger journeys for the DRT schemes since they started operating up to September 2024. It also calculates revenue per passenger journey across the whole RMF operating period up to September 2024. In total, £1,654,530 revenue has been reported for 823,490 passenger journeys, representing £2.01 revenue per passenger journey.

The period covered is indicated for each scheme in **Table 15**. There were some gaps in revenue data availability which are mentioned in the notes section. Again, it should be noted that some LAs included reimbursements in their revenue figures, therefore those that did not will be under-estimates in comparison. The lower fares available due to the £2 fare cap in 2023-24 may have played a part in encouraging people to use the DRT pilot schemes. The findings from a national evaluation of the fare cap scheme showed that it contributed approximately a 5% increase in bus patronage, out of a total 13% patronage increase between January and October 2023, compared to the same period in the previous year[24]. It is not possible to say what impact the fare cap has had on overall RMF revenues. For example, if the £2 fare cap was not in place, fares would have been higher, which could increase revenue per journey, but may have reduced the number of journeys taken.

LA participants in the process evaluation acknowledged schemes were only covering a small proportion of their operating costs through passenger revenue and accepted that rural DRT schemes were likely to require on-going subsidy. Several authorities spoke about the importance of including more than just the operating costs and ticket revenue in the financial sustainability equation, looking to also factor in the benefits and social value that accessibility provided by DRT might offer. Some LAs also felt the subsidy required for the overall bus network with the DRT schemes in place had the potential to be lower than would be the case with fixed route bus contracts, and that DRT schemes could be more effective at feeding passengers into wider public transport services.

[24] Frontier/Systra (2024). Evaluation of the first 10 months of the £2 bus fare cap. Report to DfT. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-2-bus-fare-cap

Table 15: Total revenues since schemes started up to September 2024

DRT scheme	Period covered (months)	Total revenue (£)	Total passenger journeys	Rev/ pass	Includes a £2 fare cap reimbursement
Bucks - HW	24	168,388	147,323	1.14	N
Cheshire E	36	102,706	42,061	2.44	N/A
Cheshire W&C	14	38,770	18,498	2.10	Y
Essex	24	373,051	83,735	4.46	Y
Glos – S.FoD	18	35,931	17,338	2.07	Y
Glos – N.Cots	18	14,061	7,529	1.87	Y
Herts	24	124,340	44,340	2.80	Y
Leics	26	105,810	48,536	2.18	Y
Norfolk	30	22,901	18,209	1.26	Y
North Lincs	49	161,576	81,908	1.97	N
Notts – N.Oll	24	81,607	45,453	1.80	N
Notts – S.Oll	24	34,913	28,389	1.23	N
Notts – Mans	24	2,787	2,289	1.22	N
Notts – W.Rush	16	52,268	58,095	0.90	N
Staffs	24	55,274	21,957	2.52	N
Surrey	24	65,465	45,885	1.43	N/A
Warwicks	28	79,270	67,898	1.17	N
Wilts	12	135,414	44,047	3.07	Y
Total	**439**	**1,654,530**	**823,490**	**2.01**	

Notes:

i. Where there were gaps in revenue data for a six month period preceding previously reported revenue data periods, the revenue for the previously reported period has been assumed as revenues tended to be fairly consistent across periods.

ii. Hertfordshire figures do not include Oct 23 – Sep 24 as revenue figures for this period include revenue from additional non-RMF DRT scheme.

iii. Revenues for initial operating period missing for Essex (6 months), both Gloucestershire schemes (6 months) and Staffordshire (1 year) with passenger figures modified accordingly.

iv. Wiltshire revenue figures include revenue from associated semi-flexible/timetabled services which are not funded by RMF but the total passenger journeys figures reported do not include use of these services.

8.2. Key findings

Section 8 presented results on revenues received from DRT passengers for the latest reporting period and for the full scheme periods since they started operating.

Key findings are:

- Revenue per passenger journey for the latest six-month period varied from £0.86 to £5.22 across the 18 schemes. Some LAs were not able to include reimbursement figures for the £2 fare cap scheme and hence their revenue

figures will be under-estimates when compared to areas that have included reimbursements.

- In total, £1,654,530 revenue has been reported for 823,490 passenger journeys since the schemes started operating, representing an average of £2.01 revenue per passenger journey.
- LAs considered there were opportunities to increase revenues through marketing activities to attract more users and operational changes to increase passenger aggregation and to reduce costs by reducing vehicle size and outsourcing some elements of the service.

9. Conclusions

The phase 1 evaluation results in this report have provided a basis for understanding the performance of the DRT pilots and experiences of local authorities. This section presents answers to the research questions introduced in Section 1.3 based on the results available in this report from process evaluation and monitoring data. It also has some final reflections on the LA experience of the RMF programme. The separate impact and value for money assessment which is being undertaken in phase 2 will supplement these findings with more in-depth assessment of outcomes and impacts of the pilot schemes, particularly with regard to users and local areas.

9.1. Research questions

What has been the experience of LAs in the delivery and implementation of the DRT pilot schemes?

Have the pilots been delivered as intended and why?

The pilot schemes were implemented largely as proposed in the funding applications. Where changes to schemes have been made, they have been to increase passenger numbers, improve service efficiency and to improve the customer experience. Pre-implementation planning proved beneficial for the operational phase of the pilots, with successes in respect of target groups and target destinations.

What worked well, less well, for whom and why?

The research participants in the process evaluation believed that they had deployed their RMF pilot in an appropriate setting and delivered a public transport service to many people who would not have one otherwise. Scale of deployment was perceived to be relevant to success, with schemes with more vehicles better able to satisfy demand at peak times and to fulfil the potential of DRT. There had been concern that those who could not use the app-based booking and payment system, or needed the certainty of timetables, would not benefit from DRT. However, it was found that initial opposition in the cases where fixed route buses were removed tended to fade quite quickly with bus users migrating to use DRT.

What could have been improved in the delivery and implementation of the DRT schemes?

Contractual constraints stemming from the procurement process, as well as lack of experience in specifying and operating a DRT service, led to some LAs being delayed or unable to work with partners to make changes to service design. At the time of this research, many of the LAs were looking to meet a higher proportion of journey requests than currently possible and were often actively working with their technology provider to increase passenger aggregation rates.

How did context and local authorities' capabilities and capacity influence delivery?

Those LAs with DRT pilots operating at greater scale (in terms of population served and number of vehicles and staff) perceived they were more successful, especially in terms of passenger numbers. They were able to deploy additional vehicles dynamically to areas of predicted/known demand and had the capacity to utilise the technology and data available. None of the authorities involved in this research felt that they had the right expertise at the beginning of the pilot, although several believe they had gained this during the pilot, especially where they were more hands-on in managing their scheme(s). Lack of expertise meant they were initially unsure how to seek greater passenger aggregation but over time they understood what service modifications could be made to address this.

How willing are rural and suburban residents to use DRT and what is their experience of using it?

How and in what circumstances does a digitally enabled DRT service support existing bus user groups and/or those who may not use (or be unable to use) digital technologies, e.g. some older and disabled people?

Most DRT journeys were booked using a mobile app but phone bookings also played a role in enabling people to use DRT. LAs emphasised the importance of having a call centre to enable phone bookings for those without access to, or the ability to use, the app. DRT schemes reporting the highest percentage of concessionary fare journeys also reported relatively high rates of phone bookings.

How and in what circumstances does a DRT service enabled by new digital technologies provide a public transport offer that attracts a diverse (and potentially new) customer base, reaching new target groups / markets?

The average percentage (26%) of passenger journeys made across DRT schemes on a concessionary fare was the same as the percentage of total passenger journeys made on local bus services in English non-metropolitan areas on a concessionary fare (also 26% in the year April 2023 to March 2024). This suggests the DRT schemes are being used by a cross-section of the population in a similar way to non-DRT bus services outside major urban areas. It also demonstrates that the majority of users are full fare paying users, likely to be mostly of working age. It is apparent that children/young people were using DRT in schemes where concessionary fares were offered to them. The demand profile by time of day showed greatest demand occurring at the usual home-to-school/school-to-home travel times between 8am and 10am and between 3pm and 5pm, which suggests children and young people may be using services for home to school travel.

What and how effective have communications and promotional activities been in generating patronage, and in increasing the understanding of the opportunities provided by DRT?

DRT schemes where sustained growth occurred over the trial period were notable in undertaking significant marketing activities during the trial such as leaflet drops, roadshow events and social media paid adverts.

What benefits does DRT deliver to passenger experience, for example what improvements are there to journey travel times, reliability, safety, satisfaction with the journey?

LAs reflected that their passengers were now able to make journeys they had not been able to make before, although there was some caution that, because of the need to aggregate passengers, these might take longer than using private transport. The booking app provides certainty to users on pick-up times and delays and allows them to track the progress of their vehicle. There was a slight concern over information availability for return journeys for those who had booked by phone and had no access to the app. Insufficient, or inconveniently placed, virtual stops could be a barrier to use for some passengers who might be less able to walk longer distances to a stop. User feedback volunteered via the app was largely very positive but there is a need to more systematically collect user feedback to capture the experience of all users.

What evidence is there for wider benefits of DRT?

Direct and attributable evidence is not available on modal shift in the absence of surveys or tracking of DRT target groups such as pilot area residents. There is indirect evidence from increases in total bus journeys in DRT pilot areas after the introduction of DRT schemes. This implies the DRT schemes have either attracted people to public transport from other transport modes (including private transport) or enabled journeys otherwise not possible to be made. Also, the popularity of rail/bus stations as destinations of DRT journeys implies that DRT is facilitating multi-modal journeys that might otherwise have been undertaken by private motorised transport. An assessment of air pollution and carbon emissions impacts will require data on modal shift and the emissions characteristics of DRT vehicles. The impact and value for money evaluation of the RMF programme aims to assess DRT impacts on modal shift by conducting research with DRT users.

The evidence that local town/village centres and employment/business/retail parks were popular destinations suggests that DRT is enabling people to access local service centres with job, retail and other opportunities and that it may be supporting economic activity in rural towns and neighbouring urban areas. The ongoing impact and value for money assessment of the RMF programme aims to more directly assess DRT impacts of these things by conducting research with DRT users.

How does DRT perform in different contexts and circumstances?

From the perspectives of LAs, the location chosen for DRT deployment and its spatial and socio-demographic characteristics affected both the service that was delivered in the pilots and its operational performance. For example, the presence of major trip attractors within service areas, or at their edges, influenced demand patterns and the possibility of aggregating passengers. LAs operating at greater scale believed they were starting to see projected benefits across the economic, social and environmental impacts anticipated in their RMF business cases.

The monitoring data showed that monthly passenger journeys were linked to number of operational vehicles and schemes with higher population densities generally recorded higher vehicle utilisation figures. LAs took steps to increase vehicle utilisation during the trial period and evidence of an improving situation was apparent in two-thirds of schemes.

In most cases where comparisons were possible, total bus passenger journeys increased more over time in RMF pilot scheme areas compared to non-pilot areas, which suggests that introducing DRT can facilitate additional bus usage. This applied to cases where DRT supplemented existing fixed route bus services and where some supported, fixed route bus services were withdrawn. Findings suggest that DRT can meet demand beyond that which is being met by other bus services and/or previously met by withdrawn services and can contribute to an improved public transport package for the areas served.

What are the barriers and enablers to establishing viable and sustainable DRT services in rural and suburban areas?

What are the specific barriers to viable and sustainable DRT implementation in rural and suburban areas?

LAs said that the key barrier was achieving an acceptable level of subsidy. What is acceptable will vary by context, and LAs often felt that the subsidy required for the overall bus network with the DRT schemes in place had the potential to be lower than would be the case with fixed route bus contracts. LAs are aware of the need to maximise the number of passengers served by reaching out to all potential user groups and increasing vehicle occupancy rates. The experience across the LAs participating in the research was that not being able to invest at a sufficient scale of delivery (in terms of vehicles and staff) limits the scope for achieving sufficient passenger numbers to adequately cover costs. It was also found that appropriate contracts are needed with vehicle operators and technology providers which make provision for refinement and continual improvement of DRT services.

What are the particular aspects of the pilots that help facilitate DRT as a viable and sustainable alternative in rural and suburban areas?

The new technology (the app, routing and ride scheduling software, data analytics, etc.) deployed in the pilots was seen as pivotal in their perceived initial success and their longer-term viability. This had enabled the pilots to achieve a broad base of users and maximise use of vehicles. It had also facilitated making changes to service design (operating zones, stop locations) which increased operational efficiency. More generally, the pilots were seen to have demonstrated how DRT can work in practice and this has generated public and political support.

How, and in what circumstances, can DRT be financially viable/sustainable (including considerations of wider economic benefits and social value)?

The LAs who participated in the process evaluation said scheme revenues were unlikely to ever fully cover operating costs and for most the challenge was to reach, what was for them, an acceptable level of subsidy. The goal for LAs was firstly to reduce subsidy levels to something more acceptable, or to the equivalent of that needed for fixed route services, and secondly to explore other avenues for funding. Several LAs were keen to incorporate some measure of social value in their economic assessments of DRT but had not made progress themselves in doing this.

What has been learnt to assist with future policy making and provisions for DRT?

How does the learning from the RMF programme-level evaluation build on existing understanding of the role of DRT in public transport?

There can be public and political enthusiasm for DRT but it is important to manage expectations, as it can be a struggle to meet the volume of journey requests and the diversity of journey needs may not be conducive to passenger aggregation and efficient operations. The service offered by DRT is therefore likely to require some subsidy per journey.

What are the implications of the RMF pilots for future DRT solutions delivered by LAs?

LAs awarded funding by the RMF have gained expertise in running DRT schemes but have realised that considerable time resources are required to manage them. System data available on DRT usage and performance can be valuable to refine service design but LAs need capacity and capability to make good use of it. The availability of analytical tools and guidance on performance benchmarking would support this. In future contracts with technology providers, LAs should explore whether socio-demographic information can be collected and made available to them.

What are the implications for DfT of the RMF pilots for future DRT policy making, regulatory structures and funding?

The RMF has demonstrated that DRT can play a role in providing transport in rural areas under the existing regulatory structure, and that it is worth considering as one of the available options. Guidance by DfT on legal and regulatory features of DRT deployment would be welcomed by LAs, as would DfT's support in the sharing of knowledge (for example, in the form of Best Practice Guidance). LAs felt that longer term funding settlements would help them to invest in vehicles and to plan DRT schemes.

9.2. Final reflections

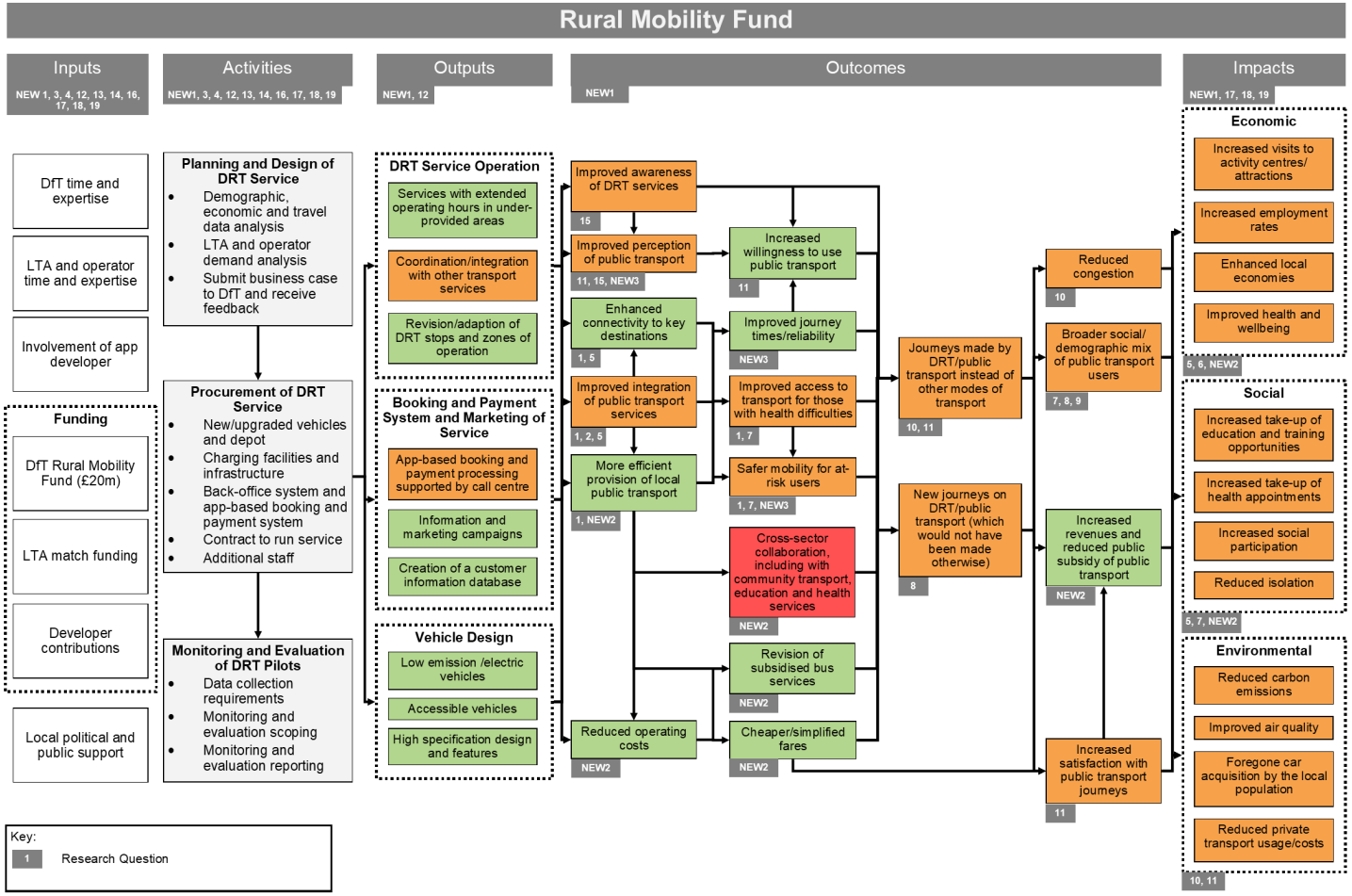
The RMF pilot programme has provided 15 LAs in England the opportunity to fund, or part-fund, digitally enabled DRT services in their area. All the LAs with pilots in operation by September 2024 have embraced the opportunity and have learnt from the experience. Many of those spoken to in this research were enthusiastic about future opportunities to either add to what is already implemented or to deploy further schemes across their areas.

The RMF pilots have been perceived as successful by the LAs. This is generally due to the pilots providing an enhanced level of public transport access in the areas they serve. For some LAs the pilot has also provided an opportunity to trial a transport solution that is new to them or would not be feasible without RMF funding. The pilots meant LAs were able to demonstrate to the public and local stakeholders what DRT is and how it can work in practice in their local areas.

LAs and partners involved in the process evaluation felt that there are inherent tensions operationally between maximising revenue, maximising passenger numbers and maximising access to services. It was accepted that the numbers of passengers carried on DRT services in the pilot areas would be unlikely to cover operating costs from ticket income alone. Whilst the level of subsidy might vary between schemes, the aspiration in the longer term was to achieve at least equivalence with fixed route bus contracts.

Many of the LAs saw DRT in the context of wider policy objectives for public transport, such as reducing car usage and providing equitable access to employment, education, health or leisure facilities for dispersed populations. Several LAs made the point they would like to consider wider benefits when they are looking at the viability of funding of DRT schemes. Whilst not ignoring the need to optimise the delivery and operation of schemes, they argued it is not possible to effectively consider value-for-money for DRT without taking account of the social value created.

Appendix A: Rural Mobility Fund Programme Logic Model



Appendix B: Research Questions

The six main research questions and 22 sub-questions addressed by the programme-level evaluation of the Rural Mobility Fund are as follows. RQ numbers are those shown in the logic model in Appendix A.

1. What has been the experience of LAs in the delivery and implementation of the DRT pilot schemes?
    a. Have the pilots been delivered as intended and why? (RQ12)
    b. What worked well, less well, for whom and why? (RQ13)
    c. What could have been improved in the delivery and implementation of the DRT schemes? (RQ14)
    d. How did context and local authorities' capabilities and capacity influence delivery? (RQ16)
2. Are rural and suburban residents using DRT and what is their experience?
    e. How and in what circumstances does a digitally enabled DRT service support existing bus user groups and/or those who may not use (or be unable to use) digital technologies, e.g. some older and disabled people? (RQ9)
    f. How and in what circumstances does a DRT service enabled by new digital technologies provide a public transport offer that attracts a diverse (and potentially new) customer base, reaching new target groups / markets? (RQ8)
    g. What and how effective have communications and promotional activities been in generating patronage, and in increasing the understanding of the opportunities provided by DRT? (RQ15)
    h. What benefits does DRT deliver to passenger experience, for example what improvements are there to journey travel times, reliability, safety, satisfaction with the journey? (RQNEW3)
3. What evidence is there for wider benefits of DRT?
    i. How and in what circumstances do the new DRT services encourage modal shift from the private car and reduce dependence on it? How might DRT have an influence on driving licence holding longer term (e.g. younger people feeling less need to get a driving licence or older people giving up giving up a driving licence because of the availability of public transport)? (RQ11)
    j. How and in what circumstances does DRT improve access to employment, education, healthcare and other services in rural and suburban areas? Does it facilitate new / additional access to such services (i.e., new employment taken, greater take up of further

education and training, fewer missed appointments for healthcare)? (RQ5)

k. How and in what circumstances do DRT services facilitate (greater) social inclusion and help to reduce isolation in rural and suburban communities? (RQ7)

l. How and in what circumstances does DRT play a role in supporting economic activity in rural towns and neighbouring urban areas? How does it support both daytime (i.e., retail, services) and/or night-time economic activities (i.e., leisure, culture)? (RQ6)

m. What are the impacts of DRT in rural and suburban areas in respect of air pollution and carbon emissions? (RQ10)

4. How does DRT perform in different contexts and circumstances?

    n. In what circumstances and contexts does DRT work and why? (QNEW1)

    o. What is the potential for DRT to fill gaps in current public transport provision in rural and suburban areas? (RQ1)

    p. In what circumstances does DRT work when implemented as a standalone service and in what circumstances does it work with existing services to create an improved public transport package that better meets the need of residents in rural and suburban areas? (RQ2)

5. What are the barriers and enablers to establishing viable and sustainable DRT services in rural and suburban areas?

    q. What are the specific barriers to viable and sustainable DRT implementation in rural and suburban areas? (RQ3)

    r. What are the particular aspects of the pilots that help facilitate DRT as a viable and sustainable alternative in rural and suburban areas? (RQ4)

    s. How, and in what circumstances can DRT be financially viable/sustainable (including considerations of wider economic benefits and social value)? (RQNEW2)

6. What has been learnt to assist with future policy making and provisions for DRT?

    t. How does the learning from the RMF programme-level evaluation build on existing understanding of the role of DRT in public transport? (RQ19)

    u. What are the implications of the RMF pilots for future DRT solutions delivered by LAs? (RQ17)

    v. What are the implications for DfT of the RMF pilots for future DRT policy making, regulatory structures and funding? (RQ18)

Appendix C: Short-form Names for DRT Schemes

Full scheme name (brand name)	Short form used in text	Short form used in tables and charts
Buckinghamshire – Aylesbury (Village Connect)	Bucks Aylesbury	Bucks - Ayl
Buckinghamshire - High Wycombe (PickMeUp)	Bucks High Wycombe	Bucks - HW
Cheshire East – South-West of Nantwich (go-too)	Cheshire East	Cheshire E
Cheshire West and Chester - South of Frodsham and Helsby (itravel)	Cheshire West and Chester	Cheshire W&C
Essex - Central Essex and South Braintree (DigiGo)	Essex	Essex
Gloucestershire - South Forest of Dean (The Robin)	Glos South Forest of Dean	Glos – S.FoD
Gloucestershire – North Cotswolds (The Robin)	Glos North Cotswolds	Glos – N.Cots
Hertfordshire - North and East Herts (HertsLynx)	Hertfordshire	Herts
Leicestershire – South West Leicestershire (Fox Connect)	Leicestershire	Leics
Norfolk – Swaffham (Flexibus+)	Norfolk	Norfolk
North Lincolnshire (JustGo)	North Lincolnshire	North Lincs
Nottinghamshire - North Ollerton (Nottsbus On Demand)	Notts North Ollerton	Notts – N.Oll
Nottinghamshire - South Ollerton (Nottsbus On Demand)	Notts South Ollerton	Notts – S.Oll
Nottinghamshire – Mansfield (Nottsbus On Demand)	Notts Mansfield	Notts – Mans
Nottinghamshire – West Rushcliffe (Nottsbus On Demand)	Notts West Rushcliffe	Notts – W.Rush
Staffordshire – Moorlands (Moorlands Connect)	Staffordshire	Staffs
Surrey – Mole Valley (Surrey Connect)	Surrey	Surrey
Warwickshire - Hatton and West Warwick (IndieGo PLUS)	Warwickshire	Warwicks
Wiltshire - Pewsey Vale and Marlborough (Wiltshire Connect)	Wiltshire	Wilts

Appendix D: Methodological Details

The RMF evaluation study involved the following two research areas:

1. Scheme-level monitoring: collection of monitoring data from LAs to analyse performance of DRT pilot schemes.
2. Process evaluation: interviews and roundtables with LAs to explore their experience in designing, mobilising and implementing the DRT pilot schemes.

These are each described in this section.

Scheme-level monitoring

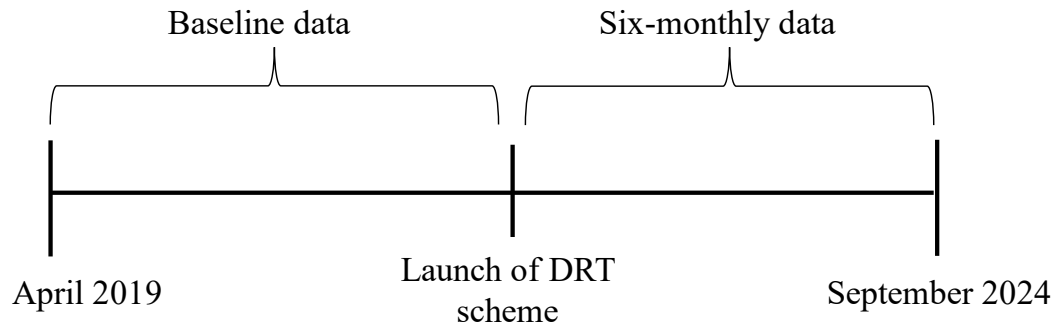
Scheme-level monitoring data was required from LAs for each of their DRT schemes to analyse outcomes of the pilots and of the programme as a whole.

It was expected that much of the data required for the national programme-level evaluation would already be being collected by LAs, for example through the technology platforms being deployed as part of the DRT schemes. However, to ensure consistency in data across the schemes, standardised data collection templates were prepared and provided to LAs, along with a data collection guidance document outlining the data required and the reason for requesting it.

Monitoring data has been collected before the schemes start operation in the form of baseline data and continued after this in the form of six-monthly data. Both the baseline and six-monthly data collections have been carried out at fixed, six-month intervals during the lifetime of the project funding via Excel spreadsheets provided to LAs.

The data collection schedule is shown schematically in **Figure D1**.

Figure D1: Data collection schedule



Baseline data

An initial request was made in December 2021 for baseline data for the period before the launch of the DRT schemes covering the following information:

DRT plans:

- Planned operational and ticketing characteristics of DRT scheme
- Planned integration between DRT scheme and other public transport services
- Planned marketing and promotional activities
- Any expected barriers to deployment of the DRT scheme

Existing bus services serving the DRT pilot scheme area:

- Passenger journey data from April 2019 to September 2024

Comparison bus services operating outside the DRT pilot scheme area:

- Passenger journey data from April 2019 to September 2024

Data was requested dating back to April 2019 for existing bus services serving the DRT pilot scheme area and selected bus services operating outside the DRT pilot scheme area. This request was made due to bus services being affected by the Covid-19 pandemic from March 2020 and the wish to obtain data reflecting a one-year period unaffected by social distancing rules and guidelines. In addition to passenger journey data, data was requested on fares, ticketing and financial data but the availability of this data was limited.

Since September 2021, monitoring data from operational RMF schemes has been collected every six months and has focused on obtaining data on DRT scheme performance. For schemes that launched after September 2021, data continued to be collected for other bus services.

Six-monthly data

In April 2022, a request was made for the following data for the period October 2021 to March 2022:

DRT scheme performance:

- Operational data (number of vehicles, operating hours, number of miles running with and without passengers, average journey length etc.)
- Usage data (passenger journeys by month, passenger journey by day of week, passenger journeys by time of day, fulfilled and unfulfilled bookings)
- Passenger demographics (age and gender of users, concessionary fare users)
- Journey patterns (key origins and destinations)
- Financial data (revenue, public subsidy)
- Marketing and promotional activities and any other notable events
- Any changes to DRT scheme

Non-DRT bus services serving the DRT pilot scheme area:

- Passenger journey data

- Any changes to bus services

Comparison bus services operating outside the DRT pilot scheme area:

- Passenger journey data
- Any changes to bus services

The DRT pilot schemes commenced operation at different points in time. Those DRT schemes that started before October 2021 were asked to provide DRT data from the month when the service started. The DRT schemes that started after March 2022 could not provide DRT data at this data collection point but could provide data on existing bus services serving the DRT scheme area and selected bus services operating outside the DRT scheme area.

Further six-monthly data collection requests were made on five occasions for the periods April 2022 to September 2022, October 2022 – March 2023, April 2023 to September 2023, October 2023 – March 2024 and April 2024 to September 2024. Appendix C shows availability of six-monthly data by DRT scheme.

Existing bus services serving the DRT pilot scheme area

Passenger journey, fares/ticketing and financial data was sought for non-DRT bus services (commercial and supported) serving the pilot scheme areas. This data was sought from April 2019 to September 2024 to enable investigation of how the introduction of the DRT scheme affected overall bus use in the scheme areas. In some cases, changes were made to existing supported bus services on introduction of the DRT schemes. Changes to bus services occurred for other reasons and information was requested on any changes to non-DRT bus services in the six-monthly spreadsheets. Although requested, fares, ticketing and financial data were often not available.

Comparison bus services operating outside the pilot scheme area

Passenger journey, fares/ticketing and financial data was also sought for a selection of bus services operating in different geographical parts of the LAs from the DRT pilot scheme. This data was collected to enable a comparison to be made between the trend in bus passenger journeys over time in the DRT pilot scheme area and the trend in the wider local authority area (acting as a ‘comparator’ or ‘control’). This was aimed at assessing whether the DRT schemes had made a difference to overall bus use in the areas they were serving. This data was also sought from April 2019 up to September 2024. Again, fares, ticketing and financial data were often not available.

Other data

All the LAs awarded funding had anticipated carrying out surveys of DRT users and/or residents of DRT scheme areas during the RMF funding period. The evaluation team provided guidance on how to conduct surveys with suggestions for questions that could be included in user and resident surveys. Some LAs reported they had conducted surveys and in one case shared headline results from their survey with the evaluation team. However, LAs noted that it had been difficult to arrange surveys with DRT users due to the complexities of partnership working with technology providers and vehicle operators. Also, it was more straightforward to

obtain simple feedback from users via the DRT app and post-ride quick-fire sentiment questions and hence LAs felt this was a more practical way of understanding user needs and experience. Reference is made in this report to cases where survey results were available.

Availability of data

LAs were required to collate data from a number of different sources to provide full responses in the baseline and six-monthly spreadsheets. It has not been possible for some LAs to provide all the requested data because some data was not available to them. Data that has proven challenging to provide is identified below in **Table D1**. Some LAs faced particular difficulties in providing data for existing bus services serving the pilot scheme area and for comparison bus services operating outside the pilot scheme area. The difficulties included selecting suitable bus services in the pilot scheme and comparison areas, changes/introduction/withdrawal of bus services and gaining access to commercially sensitive data on passenger numbers, revenues and subsidy. The evaluation team worked closely with LAs to resolve these difficulties and a large volume of data was received.

Table D1: Data gaps

Data area	Data item	Difficulty experienced
Operational data	Number of DRT vehicles operational	Detailed time-log not available of operational vehicles.
	Number of unfulfilled bookings by reason	Bookings may not lead to rides for a number of reasons but the total number of unfulfilled bookings are not routinely collected in all schemes and there is no common approach to categorising them.
Passenger demographics	Age and gender data	Not available as this information is not requested when people install DRT apps and make bookings to use DRT.
	Concessionary fare users	Some LAs/schemes offer concessionary fares to English national concessionary travel scheme (ENCTS) pass holders only and other LAs/schemes to other groups (such as under 16s). Concessionary fare users were not always recorded separately for different concessionary fare types.
Journey patterns	Usage data for key destinations	LAs were asked to identify the three most popular destinations for DRT trips in each six-month period. Not all LAs were able to access trip-level data or to identify meaningful destinations from the stops recorded as trip ends.
Financial data	Revenue and public subsidy data	Revenue data missing reimbursed data from £2 national bus fare cap scheme. Funding received from Rural Mobility Fund and other sources not always able to be identified for six-month period requested.
Existing bus services serving the pilot scheme area	Selection of bus services	Bus services often only partially served the pilot scheme areas and it was hard to decide whether to include these. Instability in bus services serving pilot scheme areas made it difficult to track bus services over time. There was one case (Staffordshire Moorlands) where there was no existing bus service serving the pilot scheme area.
	Fares and ticketing data	Too many different fares and ticket types to report.
	Passenger journey and financial data	Some LAs were not able to obtain data for commercially run bus services which resulted in an incomplete picture of bus use in scheme area.
Comparison bus services operating outside the pilot scheme area	Selection of bus services	Unclear how to select suitable comparison bus services operating outside pilot scheme areas which represent similar operating conditions. There was one case (North Lincolnshire) where the DRT scheme operates across the whole local authority area and hence the LA could not provide comparison data
	Fares and ticketing data	Too many different fares and ticket types to report.
	Passenger journey and financial data	Some LAs were not able to obtain data for commercially run bus services which limited bus services to select.

The data gaps outlined in **Table D1** have had implications for the evaluation:

- **Operational data**: Lack of high-resolution (e.g. hourly) data on the number of vehicles in operational service has compromised the ability to evaluate service efficiency. The inability of LAs to provide accurate data categorising unfulfilled bookings by reason has meant the evaluation has had a limited basis to assess user experience in booking DRT trips.
- **Passenger demographics**: Lack of data on DRT passenger age and gender has meant the contribution of DRT schemes to the mobility of different population groups has not been able to be established. Data on concessionary fare users (of different types where these exist) has partly compensated for lack of demographic data.
- **Journey patterns**: Data on the most commonly requested destinations has been provided by some LAs but not others. This data gives an indication of the contribution of DRT schemes to improved access to employment, education, healthcare and other services. This therefore cannot be considered for all DRT schemes.
- **Financial data:** Lack of complete information on revenues and subsidies received during the scheme period of operation prevents full financial assessment of the DRT schemes and consideration of the level of support that might be needed after the end of the RMF pilot project**.**
- **Existing bus services serving the pilot scheme area:** Changes to bus services serving scheme areas and lack of full data availability has meant it has not always been possible to track overall bus use over time in the pilot scheme areas.
- **Comparison bus services operating outside the pilot scheme area:** The difficulties faced by LAs in selecting comparison bus services operating outside scheme areas, and lack of full data availability, has meant careful assessment of selected bus services and their data was needed by the evaluation team to ensure they serve the intended purpose of providing comparator/control data.
- **Fares and ticketing data for other bus services:** Limited data on fares and ticketing for other bus services meant it has not been possible to consider the relative cost of using the DRT scheme compared to other bus services.

The implications of missing data for existing bus services serving the pilot scheme area and comparison bus services operating outside the pilot scheme area are discussed further now. The purpose of obtaining this data was to compare the changes in passenger journeys between the pilot scheme areas and elsewhere to generate evidence for whether the introduction of DRT had affected overall bus use in the pilot scheme areas.

For the schemes where data was available, both for bus services serving the pilot area and comparison bus services, the evaluation team carefully checked the data was fit for purpose. This was not always the case due to gaps in the data series. In some cases, the data could not be used for all the comparison bus services due to some services experiencing major changes and a subset was used in the analysis. Consideration was given to comparing the change in pilot

area passenger journeys to the change in area-wide passenger journeys for the relevant LAs for the same period. This was not possible as area-wide data for LAs (and other geographies) is only available on an annual basis (April to March) and it would not be possible to match the baseline and post-DRT periods[25].

Process evaluation

The process evaluation was undertaken in two stages. Each stage involved:

- In-depth interviews with LA officers and other relevant individuals involved in the operation of schemes.
- Group roundtables with officers from a number of other LAs in receipt of RMF awards.

The first stage took place between February 2022 and September 2022 with a focus on experiences during the planning and launching of the DRT schemes. The second stage took place in July and August 2024, two years on from stage one, with a focus on experiences while running the schemes. The aim was to interview the same four LAs on both occasions to get a full appreciation of their experiences. In contrast, the selection of LAs for the roundtables would be independently considered at the two time points to maximise the learning that can be achieved on each occasion.

Participants

The participant LAs in the interviews and roundtables are identified in Table D2.

Table D2: Process evaluation participants

Stage One Participants	Stage Two Participants
Interviews	
Cumbria	Essex
Essex	Norfolk
North Lincolnshire	North Lincolnshire
Nottinghamshire	Nottinghamshire
Round table discussions	
Gloucestershire Hertfordshire Norfolk Staffordshire Warwickshire	Buckinghamshire Leicestershire Surrey Warwickshire

[25] Local bus passenger journeys (BUS01) tables can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/bus-statistics-data-tables

At stage one, the four LAs participating in the interviews (Cumbria, Essex, North Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire) were selected to include: schemes varying in scale; aiming to attract new users to public transport; and provide a more joined up transport network by integrating with other public transport modes. The selection of five LAs (Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Staffordshire and Warwickshire) for the first set of group roundtables was focussed on involving those LAs whose DRT schemes had started operating at the time (or were imminently about to launch) and could therefore share experiences of their mobilisation and launch.

For the stage two interviews, it was possible to return to three of the four authorities interviewed in stage one. It was not possible to interview Cumbria again, as the authority split into two unitary authorities in 2023 and, at the time the stage two interviews were undertaken, both had yet to launch their RMF pilot. So, for the purposes of this research, they were replaced by Norfolk. Norfolk had previously contributed to stage one research as a roundtable participant. The choice of LAs for the roundtable was aimed at bringing together authorities who were partnering with a diversity of vehicle operators and technology providers and who were operating in a range of rural and suburban contexts. This approach allowed the evaluation team to include schemes that had experienced high levels of usage, as well as some of the more recently launched pilot schemes. Cheshire West and Chester was invited to participate and was supportive of the roundtable but was unable to attend.

Conducting the interviews and roundtables

The LAs interviewed were invited to bring key team members who had been involved in planning and operational matters of the RMF pilots. Authorities were represented by two or three people, usually LA lead officers responsible for the pilots but in some cases representatives of the vehicle operator and technology provider partners. At the roundtables, LAs were represented by one to three LA officers.

At stage one, the LAs participating were at different stages in the development and mobilisation of their schemes, ranging from having been operating for 18 months to having started running a few weeks before or not yet running DRT services.

The participants in the stage one interviews and roundtables were asked to share their perspectives and experiences regarding:

1. The design of their schemes, including how the scope and delivery mechanisms were chosen.
2. Challenges and successes in their design and mobilisation activities including:
    - Targeting areas and users
    - Introducing new technology
    - Working with partners and stakeholders

At stage two, the focus was on experiences of running the schemes. Questions in the interviews and roundtables covered the following topic areas:

3. Perceptions of how the schemes performed from the point of view of those delivering them, users and other stakeholders.

4. Challenges faced by LAs and delivery partners and how they were addressed.
5. Capability and capacity of LA and delivery partners to deliver the schemes.
6. Areas for improvement in future operation of DRT and legacy of the RMF.

Appendix E: Availability of six-monthly data by DRT scheme

DRT scheme	Wave x	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7
	October 20 - March 21	April 21 - September 21	October 21 - March 22	April 22 - September 22	October 22 - March 23	April 23 - September 23	October 23 – March 24	April 24 - September 24
Bucks - Ayl	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Partial months
Bucks - HW	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				
Cheshire East	N/A	N/A						
Cheshire W&C	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Partial months		
Essex	N/A	N/A	N/A					
Glos – S.FoD	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Partial months			
Glos – N.Cots	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Partial months			
Herts	N/A	N/A						
Leics	N/A	N/A	N/A	Partial months				
Norfolk	N/A	N/A	N/A					
North Lincs	Partial months							
Notts – N.Oll	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				
Notts - S.Oll	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				
Notts - Mans	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				
Notts – W.Rush	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Partial months		
Staffs	N/A	N/A	Partial months					
Surrey	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				
Warwicks	N/A	N/A	N/A	Partial months				
Wilts	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Partial months		

Appendix F: DRT Pilot Scheme Details

This section includes details of the DRT pilot schemes in terms of their scheme design characteristics, coordination with other public transport services, booking and ticketing, and marketing and publicity activities.

Scheme design characteristics

Table F1 describes the scheme design characteristics of the 19 DRT schemes operational in April - September 2024 (the final six-month monitoring period considered in this report). Some LAs made modifications to their schemes after their initial introduction based on reviewing performance and customer feedback. There have been changes to service areas, travel zones, feeder locations and the number and location of stops. These are described in the notes after the table.

Most of the schemes consisted of a single travel zone within which journeys could be booked. The Wiltshire scheme consisted of four different travel zones which were partly overlapping. After operating as a single travel zone, the North Lincolnshire scheme was divided into two zones in July 2022 with trips only permitted within each zone. Dividing scheme areas into more than one travel zone avoids the need to serve long distance trips across the scheme area.

Table F1: Scheme design characteristics

DRT scheme	Service area	Feeder locations external to travel zone	Service model	No. of vehicles	No. of days of operation per week	Hours of operation (Mon-Fri)
Bucks - Ayl	One travel zone for Aylesbury but journeys must start or end in one of 10 surrounding villages of Aylesbury (other journey end can be anywhere in the travel zone)	None	Flexible C-to-C	3	5	6am-7pm
Bucks - HW	One travel zone covering town and surrounding area	None	Flexible C-to-C	6	5	6am-7pm
Cheshire E	One travel zone in rural area south-west of Nantwich	Nantwich	Flexible C-to-C	2	6	7am-9pm
Cheshire W&C	One travel zone covering Frodsham, Helsby and rural areas to south (bounded by seven railway stations)	None	Flexible C-to-C	2	5	7am-7pm
Essex	One travel zone covering rural area northwest of Chelmsford and suburban area to south of Braintree[i]	Braintree	Flexible C-to-C	6[ii]	7	7am-10pm
Glos – S.FoD	One travel zone covering southern part of Forest of Dean	None	Flexible C-to-C	1.5[iii]	6	7am-7pm
Glos – N.Cots	One travel zone covering north Cotswolds[iv]	None	Flexible C-to-C	1	6	7am-7pm
Herts	One travel zone covering rural area around Buntingford	Six towns (Stevenage, Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock, Royston, Bishop's Stortford) [v]	Flexible C-to-C	5	7	7am -7pm[vi]
Leics	One travel zone covering rural area of south-west Leicestershire	Transport hubs at edge of travel zone (Hinckley Bus and Train Station, Fosse Park, Magna Park, Next HQ, Enderby Park & Ride)	Flexible C-to-C	3	6	6am-7:30pm

DRT scheme	Service area	Feeder locations external to travel zone	Service model	No. of vehicles	No. of days of operation per week	Hours of operation (Mon-Fri)
Norfolk	One travel zone covering rural area south of Swaffham	Swaffham	Part-flexible C-to-C and part-timetable [vii]	1	6	7am-7pm
North Lincs	One travel zone covering all of North Lincolnshire with journeys not permitted in Scunthorpe or along certain corridors[viii]	None	Flexible C-to-C	4	6	7am-7pm
Notts – N.Oll	One travel zone between Gainsborough and Ollerton in Bassetlaw district	Retford, Gainsborough, Tuxford & Ollerton	Flexible C-to-C	2.5[ix]	6	7am-7pm
Notts – S.Oll	One travel zone between Ollerton and Newark in Newark & Sherwood district	Ollerton & Newark)	Flexible C-to-C	2.5	6	7am-7pm
Notts – Mans	One travel zone in Mansfield but journeys must start or end in two travel zones on suburban fringe of Mansfield (other journey end can be anywhere in the travel zone)	None	Flexible C-to-C	1	3	Thu-Sat 7:30pm-12am
Notts – W.Rush	One travel zone in rural western parts of Rushcliffe District which included East Midlands Airport	None	Flexible C-to-C	2	6	7am-12am
Staffs	One travel zone in Moorlands District around towns of Leek, Ashbourne, Buxton and Cheadle[x]	Leek, Ashbourne, Buxton & Cheadle	Flexible C-to-C	3	7	7am-7pm
Surrey	Initially launched in four micro zones north-west of Leatherhead as a trial phase and expanded to one travel zone in Mole Valley District Council area in May 2023[xi]	Cobham & Epsom Hospital	Flexible D-to-D	4[xii]	6	7am-7pm
Warwicks	One travel zone in rural area west of Warwick and Kenilworth[xiii]	Kenilworth & Warwick	Flexible C-to-C	3	6	6am-7:30pm
Wilts	Four travel zones (two in Pewsey Vale, two around Marlborough) within which journeys can be made but journeys not permitted within market towns of Devizes, Marlborough and Hungerford	None	Part-flexible C-to-C and part-timetable [xiv]	3[xv]	6	6am-8pm

Notes:

i. The Essex scheme was expanded in July 2024 with a north travel zone introduced. Journeys only permitted within the south or north zone. Operating hours modified to 6am-10pm.

ii. Following the expansion of the service area, the number of vehicles increased to ten in August 2024.

iii. Two vehicles available part of the day and one vehicle at other times.

iv. Two new travel zones (Tewkesbury, South Cotswolds) adjacent to North Cotswolds introduced in June 2024 with some overlap.

v. Service area expanded to include feeder towns of Hertford and Ware in December 2023.

vi. Evening Friday and Saturday service introduced from April 2023.

vii. Operates on-demand and with some timetabled, semi-flexible services for some parts of the day for commuting and school travel.

viii. Single travel zone divided into two zones (west and east) in July 2022.

ix. Five vehicles were shared between North Ollerton and South Ollerton schemes.

x. Expanded travel zone to south-west in March 2022 and to south in July 2024.

xi. New larger Central Surrey service area introduced in September 2024 consisting of two travel zones (north and south). C-to-C service replaced D-to-D service.

xii. The number of vehicles increased to five in August 2024.

xiii. Service area extended to Norton Lindsay in May 2023.

xiv. Operates on-demand and with some semi-flexible, timetabled services (not funded by RMF and hence passenger journeys not included in reporting).

xv. The number of vehicles increased to four in September 2024.

Typically, the travel zones covered low population density areas with ‘feeder’ locations at the edge which are trip attractors in their own right or interchange points for onward travel. In some cases, these feeder locations were within the travel zones and in other cases they were located just outside.

This is illustrated below for three DRT schemes. **Figure F1** shows the Glos North Cotswolds scheme area where it can be seen that the Robin served the villages of Chipping Campden, Moreton-in-Marsh and Northleach at the edge of the travel zone but falling within it. In **Figure F2** for the Leicestershire scheme it can be seen that there were external feeder locations lying outside the travel zone, for example at Magna Park. Similarly, in **Figure F3** for the Cheshire East scheme, it can be seen that Nantwich itself acted as the feeder location. Journeys were permitted within the travel zone (dark green area) and to and from Nantwich (light green area) but not solely within it. This enabled residents of the travel zone to gain access to shops, services and the railway station and bus and coach station in Nantwich. External feeder locations ensure DRT services are not used for short trips within those locations, or trips between feeder locations, where there are timetabled bus service alternatives.

Two of the DRT schemes had additional restrictions on travel within the main travel zone. The Bucks Aylesbury and Notts Mansfield schemes were targeted at peripheral areas of the towns with either the origin or destination needing to be in the designated peripheral sub-zones.

Also, many of the DRT schemes did not permit trips between locations served by timetabled bus routes. In these cases, the booking technology identified from the pick-up and drop-off locations and time of travel if there was a timetabled bus option and suggested use of this.

Two schemes (Hertfordshire, Staffordshire) expanded their travel zones during the pilot trial.

Figure F1: Glos North Cotswolds DRT scheme area

Figure F2: Leicestershire DRT scheme area

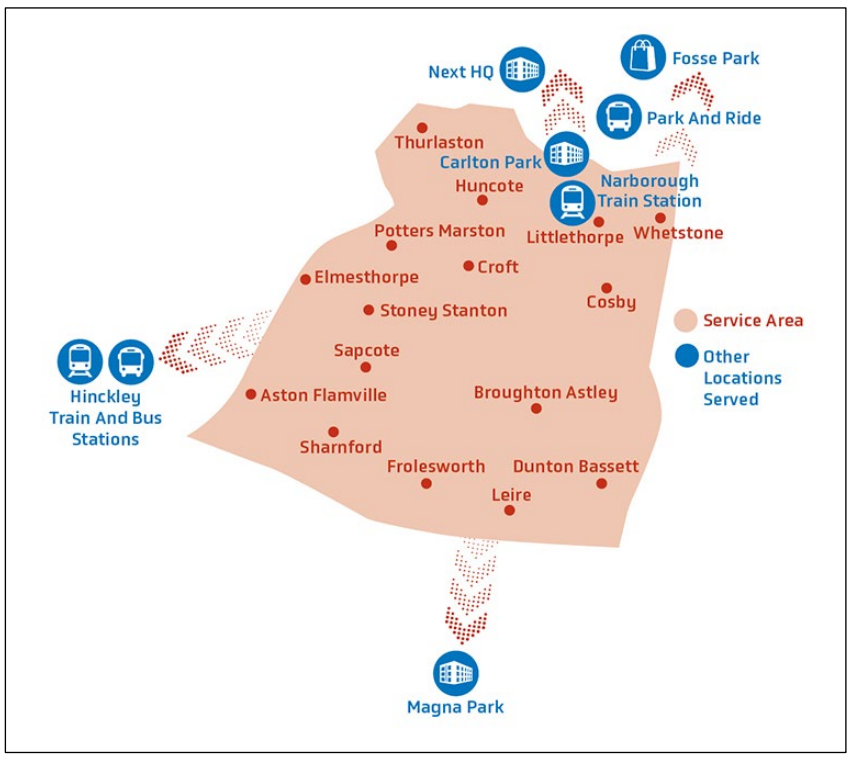


Figure F3: Cheshire East DRT service area

Most of the DRT pilot schemes operated entirely as flexible, on-demand services that provide shared transport to users who specify their desired location and time of pick-up and drop-off. Two schemes (in Norfolk and Wiltshire) involved vehicles operating as timetabled, semi-flexible services part of the time.

Nearly all the DRT schemes had established pick-up/drop-off locations as a combination of:

- Physical stops registered as national public transport access nodes (NaPTAN)
- 'Virtual' stops identified specifically for the purpose of the DRT scheme and are often street corners or points of interest.

The number of physical and virtual stops chosen impacts the overall density of stop coverage and how long people will need to walk to get to a stop. This arrangement is described as a 'corner-to-corner' (C-to-C) model in contrast to a 'door-to-door' model (D-to-D) which picks up and drops off users at a specific chosen address. The Surrey scheme operated as a door-to-door service up to September 2024. Some schemes offered a door-to-door service to vulnerable users such as those with mobility constraints.

Table F1 shows the number of operational vehicles varied between one and six with the number generally higher for service areas with greater population size. The schemes were using mini-buses with between 12 and 16 seats with 16-seater buses being the most popular. The Essex and Surrey schemes were using fully electric vehicles.

Most DRT schemes were running six days a week (Monday-Saturday) with schemes in Essex and Hertfordshire running seven days a week. The scheme in Staffordshire operated seven days a week in Summer months. The Notts Mansfield scheme was an evening service on Thursday to Saturday.

The hours of operation varied between the DRT schemes, although they followed roughly the same pattern of starting between 6am and 7am and ending between 7pm and 9pm. The Essex scheme was running later to 10pm, while the Notts

Mansfield evening scheme was running from 7.30pm until midnight. The Notts West Rushcliffe scheme, which started operating in May 2023, was operating from 7am until midnight.

Coordination with other public transport

DRT schemes have been designed to fill gaps in public transport provision in the areas served and to complement existing public transport services (including commercial and local authority supported fixed route bus services, community transport and rail services). As noted previously, DRT schemes have been designed not to compete with fixed route bus services. Often, the booking technology has been designed to identify from pick-up and drop-off locations and time of travel if there is a timetabled bus option and suggest use of it.

In most cases, the new DRT schemes were introduced with no changes to existing fixed route bus services, but in some cases LAs took the opportunity to withdraw supported bus services. **Table F2** summarises changes to bus services that took place at the time the DRT schemes were introduced. Supported bus services have been withdrawn in five LAs (in Norfolk, North Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire (all four schemes), Warwickshire and Wiltshire). Existing DRT services were replaced by new D-DRT services in North Lincolnshire, Staffordshire and Wiltshire.

In all cases, the service areas (travel zones, feeder locations) were designed to enable the DRT schemes to connect with the wider public transport network by serving major transport interchanges (bus, coach and rail stations, and Park and Ride sites). This is evident in **Figure F2** for the Leicestershire DRT scheme.

Table F2: Coordination with other public transport services

DRT scheme	Changes to other bus services when DRT introduced	Integrated ticketing with other bus services
Bucks - Ayl	None	No
Bucks - HW	None	Yes, local area tickets/cards accepted (e.g. Wycombe SMARTzone tickets)
Cheshire E	None	No
Cheshire W&C	None	No
Essex	Commercial bus services withdrawn unrelated to DRT	Yes, tickets booked via TravelEssex app which covers other public transport services
Glos – S.FoD	No fixed line bus services were withdrawn or altered as a result of RMF DRT	No – this is a priority for the future
Glos – N.Cots	No fixed line bus services were withdrawn or altered as a result of RMF DRT	No – this is a priority for the future
Herts	None	No
Leics	None	No
Norfolk	Supported bus services withdrawn	Yes, countywide day ticket accepted from August 2022.
North Lincs	Replaced Call Connect DRT service (non-digital) and supported services withdrawn	No
Notts – N.Oll	Supported services withdrawn	Yes, through tickets accepted
Notts – S.Oll	Supported services withdrawn	Yes, through tickets accepted
Notts – Mans	One supported evening service withdrawn	Yes, through tickets accepted
Notts – W.Rush	One supported service withdrawn	Yes, through tickets accepted
Staffs	Enhanced an existing DRT service which was limited to weekdays at off-peak times (non-digital).	No
Surrey	None	No
Warwicks	One supported service withdrawn	No
Wilts	Extension of existing part flexible, part timetabled, services (non-digital). Supported bus network revised with some timetabled services withdrawn and some re-routed.	No

LAs have aspired to offer joint ticketing with other public transport services but **Table F2** shows this was not possible for most of the DRT schemes during the pilot trials. In the Bucks High Wycombe scheme, area-wide bus tickets and cards were accepted but only by selecting the option to pay on the bus when using the PickMeUp mobile app. The Nottinghamshire DRT schemes accepted through tickets purchased from other operators. The Norfolk scheme started accepting use of a countywide day ticket from August 2022. It was not straightforward to offer joint ticketing due to the DRT schemes being run by different operators from other public transport services and using dedicated mobile apps separate from other booking systems. One exception is Essex where the DigiGo service was booked through the TravelEssex app.

The DRT schemes allowed customers to book a journey for a particular departure time from their journey origin location or an arrival time at their journey destination location. This allowed customers to arrange to make connections for onwards public transport journeys from transport interchanges, although these arrival times could not be guaranteed by DRT operators.

Booking and ticketing

Table F3 presents booking methods and lead times for the DRT schemes. It shows journey bookings could be made via mobile app and phone for all DRT schemes with website bookings possible for some schemes. The app-based booking systems (and broader technology platforms) were provided by five different mobility technology providers (Via, Padam, Moovit, loki, and Liftango). Details about booking methods and any assistance offered to vulnerable users can be found on scheme websites.

The lead time for rides refers to the time in advance that passengers were required to book their seat. There were maximum and minimum lead times. Maximum lead times varied from 5 days to 30 days. For some schemes it was possible to make live on-demand bookings, while for other schemes bookings needed to be made at least one hour in advance.

Table F3: Booking methods and lead times for bookings

DRT scheme	Booking method	Maximum time in advance	Minimum time in advance
Bucks - Ayl	App, telephone and website	15 days	15 minutes
Bucks - HW	App, telephone and website	Seven days	Live on-demand bookings
Cheshire E	App and telephone	14 days	Live on-demand bookings
Cheshire W&C	App, telephone and website	30 days	20 minutes
Essex	App and telephone	Seven days	Live on-demand bookings
Glos – S.FoD	App, telephone and website	Two weeks	One hour
Glos – N.Cots	App, telephone and website	Two weeks	One hour
Herts	App, telephone and website	30 days	Three minutes
Leics	App and telephone	Seven days	45 minutes
Norfolk	App and telephone	Two weeks	30 minutes
North Lincs	App and telephone	Four weeks	Live on-demand bookings
Notts – N.Oll	App and telephone	Five days	Live on-demand bookings
Notts – S.Oll	App and telephone	Five days	Live on-demand bookings
Notts – Mans	App and telephone	Five days	Live on-demand bookings
Notts – W.Rush	App and telephone	Five days	Live on-demand bookings
Staffs	App and telephone	Four weeks	Live on-demand bookings
Surrey	App and telephone	Seven days	30 minutes
Warwicks	App and telephone	Two weeks	One hour
Wilts	App and telephone	Seven days	30 minutes

Table F4 presents ticketing options and discounts for the DRT schemes. Most of the schemes had different ticket offers for adults, children/young people, and older people/disabled people. Often the same ticketing structure applied to adults and children/young people but with lower fares for children/young people. Fares were a fixed amount or based on distance travelled. Young people were variously identified as individuals under the age of 16, 18, 19 or 25 years. Free travel (either between 9:30am and 11pm on weekdays and all day at weekends and on bank holidays, or at any time) was available for England national concessionary travel scheme (ENCTS) pass holders on most of the schemes with discounts available on other schemes.

Table F4 shows ticket prices prior to the introduction of the £2 Bus Fare Cap in January 2023. The fare cap scheme was originally scheduled to run for three months until the end of March 2023 but ran until December 2024 after which the price cap increased to £3. Nine LAs participated in the £2 Bus Fare Cap scheme.

Table F4: Ticketing options and discounts

DRT scheme	Adults	Children/young people	Older people/ disabled	Other	£2 Bus Fare Cap
Bucks - Ayl	£2.00 - £4.50 depending on distance	Approximately 65% of adult fare	Free for ENCTS pass holders		No
Bucks - HW	£2.00 - £3.50 depending on distance	Approximately 65% of adult fare	Free for ENCTS pass holders	Accepts local area tickets/ discounts	Yes
Cheshire E	£3 (age 16+)	£2 (under 16s and 16-19 year olds registered for the 16-19 Bus Saver)	Free for concessionary bus pass holders after 9:30am, and £1.50 before then)		No
Cheshire W&C	£3	£1.50 (under 19) Under 5s travel for free	Free for ENCTS pass holders as per the terms and conditions of the ENCTS scheme and care leavers		Yes
Essex	Distance-based (e.g. 0-2 miles £2.50, 2-4 miles £4) but currently applying flat fare £3, £2.50 up to 2 miles)	Distance-based (e.g. 0-2 miles £1.87, 2-4 miles £3) (under 18s) but currently applying flat fare £3, £1.87 up to 2 miles)	Free for ENCTS pass holders		Yes
Glos – S.FoD and Glos - N Cots	£3	£2.50 (under 16s) Under 5s travel for free	Free for ENCTS pass holders		Yes
Herts	£3-£6 depending on distance		Free for ENCTS pass holders	Saver Card holders travel at £1.50	Yes
Leics	£3.50	£1.75 for children (under 16s) Under 5s travel for free	Free for ENCTS pass holders (after 9.30am on weekdays and all day Saturday and public holidays		Yes
Norfolk	Inner zone: £2 single, £3.50 day, ten trip £16 Outer zone: £3 single, £5 day, 10 trip £24	Inner zone: £1.50 single, £2.60 day, 10 trip £12 Outer zone: £2.30 single, £4 day, 10 trip £18	Free for ENCTS pass holders (after 9.30am on weekdays and anytime on Saturdays)		Yes
North Lincs	Distance-based starting from £2.50	Discounted child fares (under 16s)	Free for ENCTS pass holders		No

Notts – N.Oll Notts S Oll Notts - Mans Notts – W Rush	£2.50 single £4.40 day	£1.50 single £2.80 day (under 22s)	Free for ENCTS pass holders	10-trip and month tickets available. Each extra adult or young person is £1	Yes
Staffs	£3. under 13 miles, £6 over 13 miles	£2 under 13 miles, £4 over 13 miles (under 19s/ students)	£2-£4 based on distance (ENCTS pass holders)	Weekly, 28-day and group tickets available. Any additional person is £1	Yes
Surrey	0-5 miles £2, 5+ miles £4-£8 based on distance	0-5 miles £1, 5+miles £2 - £4 based on distance (under 20s)	Free for ENCTS pass holders (after 9.30 am Monday – Friday)		No
Warwicks	£4 single £6 return	£3 single £4.5 return (under 16s) Half adult single fare (5-18 year olds)	Free for ENCTS pass holders	Weekly ticket available	Yes
Wilts	£2 for 0-5 miles £3 for 5+ miles	Under 5s travel for free	Free for ENCTS pass holders (after 9.00am on weekdays and anytime on Saturdays)	10-ride bus passes available	Yes

Marketing and publicity activities

LAs were asked what groups of people they are targeting for their DRT schemes. Most had a focus on residents of their service areas, often with the ambition to attract a wide range of users including concessionary pass holders, adults (including young adults), commuters and school children. Some LAs reported targeting those lacking other options to access destinations, such as those without access to a car or who have difficulty using traditional bus services. Some LAs had a focus on major businesses and services in their service areas and targeting these. Staffordshire was unusual in emphasising visitors to the service area, an area popular with walkers and cyclists.

Some LAs took the opportunity in advance of launching their DRT schemes to hold consultation events with the public and businesses to help inform scheme design. These also served to raise awareness of the future scheme.

Table F5 sets out the marketing and publicity activities reported for each DRT scheme. The following activities were commonly mentioned:

1. Pre-launch:
    - Leaflet drops to households in service area
    - Posters and flyers at bus stops in service area (avoiding those serving commercial bus services)
    - Notices in traditional press and council newsletters
    - Targeted communications to businesses and community groups
    - Pop-up engagement stands at transport interchanges
    - Social media posts, local radio advertising, press releases
2. At-launch
    - Public event launch at high-profile locations involving MPs and councillors
    - Roadshow events at different places in the service area
    - Free and discounted ticket offers immediately after launch
    - Targeted push-notifications and in-app messaging
    - Digital marketing as well as distribution of printed materials
    - Targeted engagement with small businesses, community groups, and libraries
3. Post-launch
    - In-app messaging with offers and information
    - Marketing campaigns to coincide with service changes
    - Free and discounted ticket offers at particular times (holiday periods, one-year anniversary, summer campaigns targeting children and students)
    - Targeted marketing at education facilities with welcome packs
    - Promotion via social media, online channels, local radio and press releases
    - Communication with local stakeholders and residents
    - Roadshow events with local communities

All LAs set up dedicated websites for their DRT scheme(s) or have included the scheme(s) on an existing public transport website.

Table F5: Marketing and publicity activities by DRT scheme

DRT scheme	Pre-launch marketing actions	Launch date	At launch and/or post-launch marketing actions
Bucks – Ayl	Door-dropped leaflet and local radio advert campaign. Photo shoot, social media, radio advertising, door drop, local briefings and press release.	Aug-24	Media campaign including radio appearance and adverts; Leaflets produced and distributed to communities (at-launch actions).
Bucks – HW	Door-dropped leaflets, local radio advert campaign, leaflets included in university fresher packs, posters and digital displays in bus stations and a launch event in High Street.	Sep-22	Media campaign including radio appearance and adverts; Market stall in town centre; Leaflets produced and distributed to communities, including around expansion area; Information to students at University and College in welcome packs; Communication via social media (post-launch actions).
Cheshire E	Two free trips to each new rider during the first month of operation. Ongoing promotions: (a) a free sixth journey when five journeys have already been made and (b) a spring promotion encourages new passengers, those who have downloaded the app but have not used or not used since with two free journeys in March.	Oct-21	Continuation of the promotion that entitles users to a free 6th consecutive trip (this was terminated on 1 March 2024). 'First ride free' promotion between January - March 2024 (post-launch actions).
Cheshire W&C	Leaflet drops, dedicated web pages, pop-up engagement stands at the two main stations, publicity at interchange points, a public launch (with PR build up) and continued engagement with the stakeholders listed above. Awareness through public consultation on scheme design and engagement with large employers, medical facilities, parish councils and community bodies within the area.	Jul-23	Leaflet distribution via Libraries, community centres, small businesses in the area; Webpage and Social media messaging; Drivers promoting itravel during downtime; Localities promoted service to Town and Parish Councils; Officers attended face-to-face Frodsham, Helsby and Elton Community Partnership meeting; Transport and Highways e-newsletter; Media release by the technical supplier (technical/trade press); Media release and photo call with councillor, passengers and officers; Social media messaging; Press release celebrating the first year anniversary (at-launch actions). Promotion of the service via social media; Press surrounding the first anniversary of the service (post-launch actions).

Essex	A marketing plan, put in place before launch, engaged with local parishes to raise awareness and assist with dissemination of marketing materials (digital and print). There was also a launch event (involving local stakeholders, Local MP and councillors etc.). Roadshow events were carried out in local area, as was engagement with business.	Mar-22	Social media posts; Targeted push notifications and In-App Messaging to account holders; Roadshows in villages/at key locations (at-launch actions). Leaflet drop to all households in late October 2022; Promotion of the £2 cap fare; Roadshow engagement events with the local community; Constant social media paid adverts (post-launch actions).
Glos – S.FoD	Online media (Twitter etc.), leaflets/posters, press events and in-app communications.	Oct-22	Information not available
Glos – N.Cots			North Cotswolds marketing campaign launched March 2024 (post-launch actions).
Herts	Webpage, local authorities' communications, social media, posted leaflets, ad vans, virtual outreach, targeted emails, magazine articles, discounted or promotional fares and parish newsletters.	Sep-21	Summer campaign during school summer holidays (children under 10 travelled free of charge); A promotional campaign for the launch of the evening service; Roadshow events in key town hubs and a social media campaign, along with leaflets, posters & billboard adverts (post-launch actions).
Leics	Online presence, digital marketing (including social, search and targeted online advertising), social media (including organic and paid-for campaigns), print and outdoor advertising (where cost effective), local media relations, design and print marketing materials for use in pre-launch promotions, regional TV, engagement with district councils, parishes, and community groups. Bus stop advertising also considered.	Jul-22	Distribution of flyers by the drivers and demonstration of app use at various locations; Collaboration with Betterpoints app to promote FoxConnect service (point collection); Initiative run by Carbon Reduction Team to encourage public transport use. £20 worth of travel to be sponsored and targeted towards new users. Promoting FoxConnect via the CrossCountry website; In-App Push Notifications; Information events at libraries; Foxiversary Prize Draw; Information events at libraries; Festive emails targeting different users; Celebration event held for public & other stakeholders; Promotion/presence at local family events; Free fares for all on Saturdays between 19th Oct – 30th Nov 2024; Publication of passenger blogs on LCC website (post-launch actions).

Norfolk	One or more of: targeted outreach, out of home publicity, user engagement, and traditional PR/marketing material.	Mar-22	Information not available
North Lincs	Launch events in the Summer of 2020, ongoing social media campaign and direct emails.	Sep-20	Information not available
Notts – N.Oll	Development of a marketing and information strategy with the Local Authority's comms team, and commission of paper based and social media content to promote pilots.	Aug-22	Information not available
Notts – S.Oll		Aug-22	Information not available
Notts – Mans		Aug-22	Information not available
Notts – W. Rush		May-23	Information not available
Staffs	Leaflets, posters and local press releases.	Oct-21	Information not available
Surrey	Information not available	Jun-22	Leaflet drop to each individual dwelling within the service area; Promotion via various channels such as Surrey County Council social media platforms, local district council, local resident associations; Additional leaflet drop to announce the expansion of the service (post-launch actions).
Warwicks	Leaflet drops in the scheme area, targeted social media marketing, leaflets handed out to passengers of replaced fixed route service, three launch events carried out in areas of densest population, and a main launch event outside a Shire Hall with press, senior officers and local dignitaries.	May-22	Information not available
Wiltshire	Includes social media, dedicated web pages on 'Connecting Wiltshire' website, promotional videos, posters, printed material, livery on vehicles, signposting at rail stations, parish councils and area boards, roadshows and fare promotions.	Aug-23	Full service launch including roadshows, online and digital marketing, new website, printed literature including leaflets and posters etc. (at-launch actions). Various actions including reduced fares and free ride promotions (post-launch actions).