

**Rural Transport: Service
Audit and Needs
Assessment**

Mayo County Report

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1. Overview

1.1 Introduction

This service audit and needs assessment was undertaken as part of a wider national rural transport study. The study was commissioned by the Interdepartmental Working Group on Rural Transport, chaired by the Department of the Environment and Local Government. Under the study the consultants were required to:

- develop a template for use by County Development Boards (CDBs) in carrying out service audits and establishing reasonable rural passenger transport needs in their counties;
- work with four CDBs – Westmeath, Laois, Mayo and Kerry – to undertake pilot studies in their counties.

This is the report of the pilot study in Mayo. It is based on a combination of a survey of rural residents about their travel patterns and needs, a consultative workshop with key interest groups, and relevant desk research regarding the county.

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the county in terms of the topography, socio-economic profile and spatial structure. Chapter 2 details existing scheduled and non-scheduled passenger transport services in the county. Chapter 3 describes overall rural travel patterns, and assesses the perceived travel needs of rural residents in Mayo. Chapter 4 summarises key findings and draws conclusions in relation to rural passenger transport services in the county.

1.2 Topography

Mayo is the 3rd largest county in Ireland, covering an area of 5,586 km² (558,605 hectares), 8% of the national land mass. A coastal county, its topography varies from the relatively flat lowlands of East Mayo, through to the island-dotted lakes of Loughs Conn, Mask and Cullin, the mountains along Mayo's Atlantic coastline and the extensive blanket bogs of North Mayo. Mweelrea, which rises to 819 meters, is the highest peak in Connacht.

Being one of Ireland's largest counties, the topography of Mayo poses particular transport issues. The sheer size of the county means that certain areas are extremely remote. Residents in many parts of the county, especially in Erris and in Achill/Corraun, face journey times of over an hour to reach the three key centres, Ballina, Castlebar and Westport. Most of the mountainous regions occur in the coastal area, and the main transport routes are generally not obstructed.

1.3 Socio-economic Profile

Co. Mayo had a population of over 111,000 in 1996, just over 3% of the total national population. It is a very rural county, with nearly 80% of the population (88,600) living in rural areas. Population density is low, at 20 persons per km² (compared to a national average of 22 per km²). Mayo also has three Gaeltacht areas, with a combined population of 11,494. These areas have a population density of 13 persons per km².

Table 1.1: Socio-economic Profile of Co. Mayo 1996

	County Mayo	Rural Mayo	STATE
Population 1996	111,524	88,628	3,629,860
Overall population density (per km ²)	19.96	-	51.65
Rural population density (per km ²)	-	15.58	21.81
% population aged over 65	14.9%	16.2%	11.4%
- % male	45.5%	46.0%	42.8%
- % female	54.5%	54.0%	57.2%
% population aged 14 or under	23.0%	24.6%	23.7%
% in socio-economic groups A & B	9.9%	8.7%	11.6%
% in socio-economic group G	8.0%	8.0%	5.8%
% in socio-economic groups I & J	23.7%	28.4%	8.2%
% of population with third level education	12.7%	10.8%	12.7%
% of population with access to car (1991 census)	65.5%	66.6%	66.0%

Note: The socio-economic groups are defined as follows: A = Employers and Managers; B = Higher Professional; C = Lower Professional; D = Non-manual; E = Manual Skilled; F = Semi-skilled; G = Unskilled; H = Own Account Workers; I = Farmers; J = Agricultural Workers; Z = All Others Gainfully Employed.

Source: CSO Census of Population

Nearly 15% of the population in Mayo is aged 65 or over (compared to 11.4% nationally). For rural areas, the corresponding figure is 16%. The percentage proportion of people aged 65 or over living in the major towns (Castlebar, Ballina and Westport) is relatively low, while higher proportions of older people live in the most isolated rural areas in the east and west of the county (see Map 1.2 – Annex 1).

About 23% of Mayo's population is aged 14 or under, similar to the national figure of 24%. In the rural part of the county, this figure increases to nearly 25%. The younger population is highest in the south and north-east of the county (see Map 1.1).

The percentage of the population involved in farming or agricultural activities (24%) reflects the rural-based character of the economy. Around 10% of the population are employers/managers or higher professionals (lower than the national average of 12%) and 8% of the population is unskilled (higher than the national average of 6%). The percentage of the rural population with a third level qualification is almost 11% (national average 13%).

The lowest levels of unemployment in Mayo are found either in or close to urban centres. This is particularly evident in the south of the county. In more remote areas, such as Belmullet, Bangor and Keel, unemployment levels are higher (it should be noted that unemployment data relates to 1996, as unemployment rates nationally have dropped significantly in the intervening period).

1.4 Spatial Structure

Castlebar, the county town, had a population of nearly 6,600 in 1996. Ballina is marginally larger, with a population of nearly 6,900. Westport is the third largest town, with a population of approximately 4,300. Claremorris, Swinford, Ballinrobe, Ballyhaunis and Crossmolina are the only other towns with a population over 1,000.

Table 1.2: Hierarchy of Settlements in Mayo

A.	B.	C.	D.	
Castlebar	Ballina Westport*	Claremorris Swinford* Ballinrobe* Ballyhaunis* Belmullet*	Crossmolina Foxford Kiltimagh Killala Charlestown Knock Newport Keel-Dooagh	Bangor Erris Ballycastle Ballindine Louisburgh Cong Shrule Balla Achill Sound Kilkelly

Note: Towns are categorised from A to D. Category A denotes county towns, Category B denotes towns of population > 5,000, Category C denotes towns of population 1,500-4,999 and Category D denotes towns of population < 1,500. The higher the category, the broader the array of services/functions that becomes available. The hierarchy is broadly based on the population of towns as per the 1996 Census. Adjustments are made where a settlement (marked *) is seen to serve more functions than its population might suggest, however.

Table 1.2 above gives a broad indicative hierarchy of settlements in Co. Mayo, based on the various town sizes and their functions. Castlebar is the administrative and commercial centre in the county and provides the widest range of facilities (eg local government, retail, medical, educational), with Ballina and Westport also important centres for retail and recreational services. Centres such as Claremorris, Swinford, Ballinrobe, Ballyhaunis and Belmullet are smaller, with limited services, but regularly used for “day to day” retail requirements.

Table 1.3: Spatial Context of Co. Mayo

	County Mayo	STATE
Area (km ²)	5,586	70,273
Kilometres of National Primary Roads		
- per 100 km ²	2.4	3.73
- per 100 residents	0.12	0.07
Kilometres of National Secondary Roads		
- per 100 km ²	4.79	3.81
-per 100 residents	.24	0.07

Source: Derived from CSO/National Roads Authority

There are a number of national primary routes in Mayo, such as the N5 (Westport-Longford), N26 and N17. National secondary routes serving the county include the N59 from Ballina to Westport (via Bangor and Newport) and the N60 (Castlebar to Ballyhaunis). Mayo has 2.4 km of national primary roads per 100 km², below the national average of 3.7 km, however there is nearly 5.0 km of secondary roads per 100 km² in Mayo, compared to the state figure of almost 4.0 km per 100 km².

1.5 Transportation Overview

There are 36,200 private cars in the county, compared to 43,800 in Kerry, a similar size pilot county. Car ownership in Mayo is slightly below the national average (32.4 cars per 100 residents compared to 35.0 per 100 residents nationally). However, the population holding a full driving licence (59,000) is very high compared to the national average.

There are 73 privately licensed bus routes, and 20 Bus Éireann routes. There are also 138 school transport vehicles, operating 409 school transport routes for the Department of Education.

Table 1.4 Baseline Transport Statistics

	County Mayo	County Kerry*	STATE
Number of cars (as at 31-12-1999)	36,176	43,763	1,269,245
Number of current driving licenses	58,876	58,059	1,536,761
Number of cars (per 100 residents)	32.44	34.71	34.97
% of the population with a full drivers licence	52.80%	46.0%	42.3%
Number of Bus Éireann routes (expressway and local)	20	26	-
Number of privately licensed bus routes	73	17	-
Number of DoEd school transport routes (primary & post-primary)	409	282	-
Number of privately-owned public service vehicles ⁺	586	686	-
Number of DoEd school transport (contracted and Bus Éireann)	138	152	-
Average distance (miles) travelled to			
- <i>work</i> ,	5.0	4.8	5.6
- <i>school</i>	3.6	3.7	3.0

* A similar county for rural transport audit.

⁺ Taxis, hackneys and buses combined.

Source: Various

2. Audit of Existing Services

2.1 Scheduled Services

2.1.1 Description of Bus and Rail Services

There are 20 scheduled Bus Éireann services operating in Co. Mayo, six Expressway and 14 local services. The Expressway services mainly focus on the provision of transport from Ballina or Westport (via Castlebar) to major urban centres such as Dublin, Galway, Cork and Belfast. The Ballina-Dublin route, with five daily services, serves Charlestown, Swinford and Foxford. Towns along the N60 are served by the Westport-Dublin route, which operates three times on week-days. Frequent daily services are also offered on the Ballina-Cork route (via Galway).

Most of the 14 local services link the county's main towns to the rural hinterlands, and stop on request on all points along the route. The majority of local services operate from Ballina or Westport to more peripheral areas in the west of the county such as Blacksod, Kiladoon and Dooagh. However, there are also a number of local daily services linking the main urban centres, Westport-Castlebar, Ballina-Castlebar and Ballina-Sligo.

There are seven Bus Éireann/community group rural transport schemes in operation in Mayo, eg Kiladoon-Westport, Ballindine/Claremorris. Generally, local community groups initiate the schemes, Bus Éireann obtains the route licences, and the services are contracted to local private operators. The schemes offer transport one day per week, usually Friday. These services stop on request and are typically used by older people to do weekly shopping, collect pensions etc.

There are 73 private licensed bus routes in Mayo, operated by 13 different operators. However, one operator holds around half of the route licenses. Approximately 21% of the routes (15) are college services to Athlone, Sligo, Galway and Letterkenny. Many of the other routes are "bingo/disco" runs.

There are three daily train services from Westport to Dublin, which pass through Castlebar, Claremorris and Ballyhaunis. Passengers may also get a train from Ballina and Foxford, and connect with the Westport-Dublin route at Manulla Junction.

All Bus Éireann and Iarnród Éireann services accept the Free Travel Pass. In addition, there are six private bus operators and two ferry operators (listed in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs' database) who accept the Free Travel Pass and provide services in Mayo. Nearly 21% of the Mayo population (23,000) is eligible for the Free Travel Pass, above the national average of 16%. Over one-fifth of the Free Travel Pass holders qualify for invalidity or disability reasons.

Table 2.3: Free Travel Pass Holders in Co. Mayo

	County Mayo	County Kerry	STATE
Number of free travel pass holders	23,030	23,052	586,363
Number of free travel pass holders (per 100 residents)	20.65	18.28	16.15
Number of free travel pass holders qualifying through receipt of invalidity pension or disability allowances (% of total)	4,733 (20.55%)	4,689 (20.3%)	124,845 (21.3%)

* A similar pilot county for rural transport audit.

Source: Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs

2.1.2 Comparison with Other Pilot Counties

Compared to other pilot counties, Mayo is reasonably well served by scheduled bus and rail services (see Maps 2.1 and 2.2). Map 2.1 shows all scheduled transport services (bus, rail) serving rural parts of the county. Map 2.2 shows scheduled morning and evening services that facilitate access to work in the main towns, i.e. the service must arrive in the destination before the start of the working day, and return in the evening after work.¹

Some 66% of the population live in DEDs that are served by some form of scheduled service, compared to 63% in Kerry, 62% in Westmeath and 44% in Laois. This reflects the size of the county and the fact that it is served by a relatively extensive local bus network. The proportion of the population with access to services that can facilitate transport for work/training opportunities, however, is 18%, lower than for Laois and Kerry but similar to Westmeath.

¹ This means that not all morning and evening services are necessarily included in Map 2.2

Table 2.1: % of Population in DEDs with Public Transport Services¹

	Laois	Kerry	Mayo	Westmeath
Any scheduled service	44%	63%	66%	62%
Daily working service ²	35%	26%	17%	18%

1. Refers to DEDs where services stop. Includes Bus Éireann, Iarnród Éireann and private services.
2. See text for description

Source: Derived from CSO Census of Population, Service Timetables

Maps 2.3-2.5 attempt to quantify the extent to which the needs of particular target groups are been met by existing scheduled services. Service accessibility is still an issue for key target groups (eg older people, the unemployed). In Mayo, scheduled services to education/training facilities are less available to 15-24 year olds outside the Ballina-Castlebar corridor, for example. Likewise, many older people and unemployed outside this corridor and across Mayo (eg South Mayo) do not have access to a scheduled daytime service to the major towns.

2.1.3 Other Scheduled Services

There are 138 school transport vehicles in Mayo, operating over 400 licensed school bus routes for the Department of Education. Nearly 70% of school transport routes are contracted to private operators. The average number of school transport routes per vehicle is 3.0, compared to almost 2 routes per vehicle in Kerry.

There are nine inhabited offshore islands in Mayo, and there are limited ferry services to some. These services are normally restricted during the winter. Clare Island (population 136), off the south west coast of the county, is the best served. There are 2 ferry operators serving the island from Roonagh Quay, and both these services accept the Free Travel Pass. Accessing ferry services can be particularly difficult for older people and people with disabilities, as often there is a lack of appropriate lighting, handrails and ramps at piers.

Table 2.2: School Transport Routes in Co. Mayo

	County Mayo	County Kerry*	STATE
Number of DoEd school transport routes (primary & post-primary)	409	282	6,000
Number of DoEd school transport vehicles (contracted and Bus Éireann)	138	152	2,300
Average distance (miles) travelled to school	3.6	3.7	3.0

* A similar pilot county for rural transport audit.

Source: Department of Education

2.2 Non-scheduled Services

There are 586 privately-owned public service vehicles in Mayo, including 133 taxis (five wheelchair accessible), 259 hackneys and 194 private licensed buses. This is less than for Kerry (similar sized pilot county), though Kerry has very well developed coach tour capacity.

Mayo has approximately seven taxis/hackneys per km², considerably lower than the national average (19). However, the number of taxis/hackneys per 100 residents (0.35) is slightly above that of Kerry, and comparable to the national average. Average fleet size for the bus operators is 2.3 vehicles.

Table 2.4: Privately-owned Public Service Vehicles in Co. Mayo

	County Mayo	County Kerry*	State
Number of hackneys and taxis:	392	411	13,076
- per 100 km ²	7.01	8.55	18.61
- per 100 residents	0.35	0.33	0.36
Number of private licensed bus operators	85	98	-
Number of private licensed buses:	194	275	-
- per 100 km ²	3.47	5.72	-
- per 100 residents	0.17	0.22	-
Average fleet size of private licensed bus operators	2.3	2.8	-
Number of privately-owned public service vehicles [†]	586	686	-

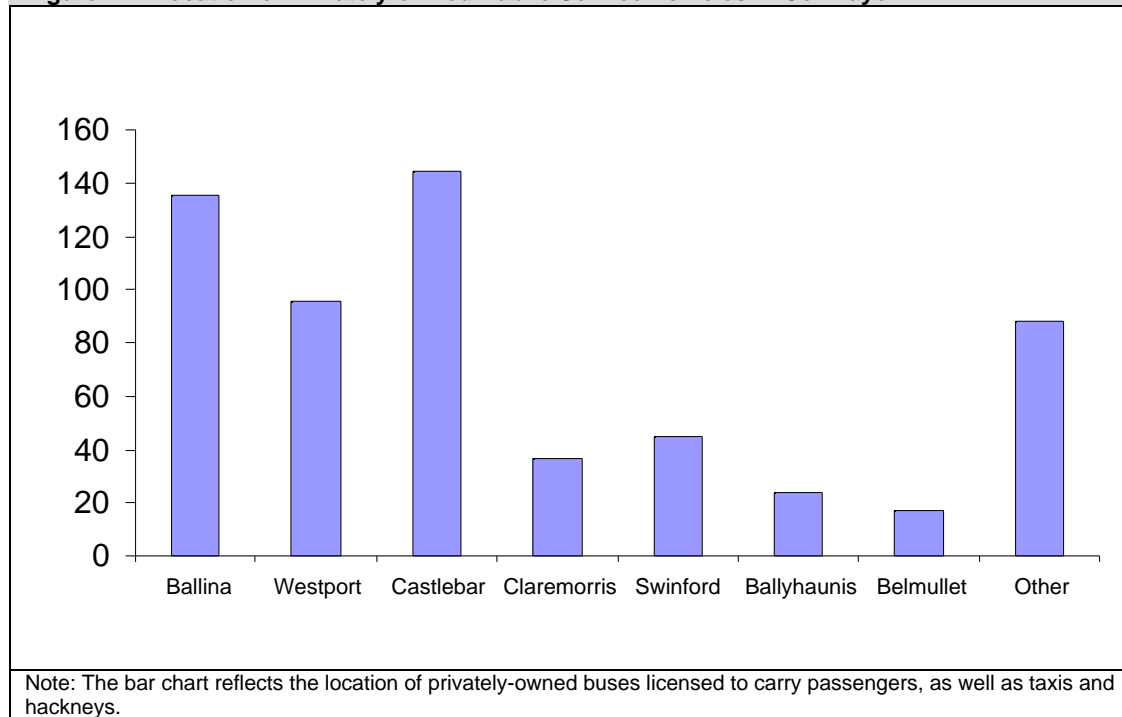
* A similar pilot county for rural transport audit.

† Taxis, hackneys and buses combined.

Source: Departments of the Environment and Local Government/Public Enterprise

Approximately 64% of all public service vehicles are located in the three urban centres of Ballina, Castlebar and Westport, which account for less than 20% of the total population. Of the 133 taxis registered by the Urban District Councils, 49 are based in Ballina and 84 in Castlebar. There are no taxis registered by Westport UDC, although over a quarter of the county's hackney fleet is based in the town and its environs. There are 37 and 45 public vehicles registered in Claremorris and Swinford respectively. Some 15% (88) of all vehicles are located in smaller settlements throughout the county.

Figure 2.1: Location of Privately-owned Public Service Vehicles in Co. Mayo



Non-scheduled Health Board services involve taxis transporting people to/from hospitals, clinics etc. This is provided to people who do not have their own transport and cannot afford to pay for transport to the hospitals/clinics. People wishing to avail of this service are means tested by the Health Board. The Western Health Board, in a recent draft strategy document², has made a number of suggestions on better transport access to local clinics and hospitals for people living in rural areas (eg TRANS-POST) and for demand-led, flexible transport schemes.

2.3 Air Services

Mayo is home to Ireland's largest regional airport, Knock International Airport. The airport has a total passenger throughput of about 200,000, and operates a number of scheduled services to Dublin and the UK. It is therefore an important entry point for tourists visiting the area. Local transport links to the airport are poor, however, and there is no scheduled bus service from Knock to any of the county's key centres.

² Western Health Board, *A Step Ahead – Draft Strategy for Acute Hospitals in the Western Health Board, 2000-2006*

3. Needs Assessment³

3.1 Key Findings – Private Car Availability

3.1.1 Number of Cars per Household

One of the first indicators of transport availability is household car ownership. In the survey of rural residents in Mayo, 11% of the rural population live in households with no car (slightly above the average for all pilot counties), while over half live in households with two or more vehicles (similar to the average for all pilot counties).

Table 3.1: Number of Cars per Household in Co. Mayo

	Mayo		Average of Four Counties	
	Number	%	Number	%
0	34	11%	121	9%
1	119	38%	482	37%
2	131	41%	517	40%
3+	33	10%	172	13%
TOTAL	316	100%	1,291	100%

Source: Local Transport Survey

The proportion living in households without a car is consistent across all age groups. There are a number of target groups where the proportion living in non-car households is higher, however. These include:

- older people, where 28% live in households with no car;
- people with illness and people with disability⁴, where 34% live in households with no car;
- lower income groups (using medical card holders as a proxy), where 33% live in households with no car.

³ A total of 2,040 survey forms were mailed out to individuals in rural Mayo DEDs. The sample was selected randomly from the electoral register database. The analysis is based upon 326 completed forms - a response rate of 16.0%. In some cases, this response rate was too small to carry out detailed cross-tabulations, so results for the four pilot counties combined are included. The sample response was adjusted to remove age and sex bias and to produce a weighted dataset that was similar in profile to rural Mayo.

Table 3.2: % Proportion of Sub-groups Living in Households with No Car

	Mayo (%)	Average of Four Counties (%)
Age Group		
18-24	3	4
25-44	7	4
45-64	7	6
65+	28	27
Gender		
Male	9	8
Female	13	11
Disability		
Able-bodied	8	6
People with illness/people with disability	34	30
Free Travel Pass?		
Yes	33	31
No	3	4
Medical Card?		
Yes	33	27
No	3	3
AVERAGE	11	9

Source: Local Transport Survey

3.1.2 Car Availability

Car ownership can mask the real determinant of the need to use alternative means of transport, ie actual car availability. In many households, for example where there is one car, this vehicle might be used by the principal income earner for the work journey and therefore be unavailable to other members of the household during the main part of the day. 17% of the population in Mayo report that they “rarely” or “never” have a car available for their personal use, which is similar to the figure in other counties.

Table 3.3: Availability of a Car for Use as Driver or Passenger in Co. Mayo

	Mayo		Average of 4 Counties	
	Number	%	Number	%
Always	203	69%	851	70%
Often	39	13%	145	12%
Rarely	25	8%	105	9%
Never	27	9%	110	9%
TOTAL	293	100%	1,211	100%

Source: Local Transport Survey

Car availability is highest for the 25-44 age group. Younger people and more older people have the lowest levels of car availability with 43% and 26% respectively,

having little or no access to private transport. In Mayo, men and women have similar levels of car availability, although the combined four counties data indicates that women have slightly lower levels of access than men. 28% of people with illness and people with disability do not have access to a car, compared to 16% of able-bodied. Overall around 18% of the rural population aged 18 and above have little or no access to private transport.

Table 3.4: % Proportion Within Sub-groups Who Rarely or Never Have a Car Available		
	Mayo (%)	Average of Four Counties (%)
Age Group		
18-24	43	41
25-44	7	8
45-64	13	10
65+	26	27
Gender		
Male	15	17
Female	15	20
Disability		
Able-bodied	16	15
People with illness/people with disability	28	32
Free Travel Pass?		
Yes	26	32
No	15	14
Medical Card?		
Yes	22	34
No	14	12
AVERAGE	18	18

Source: Local Transport Survey

3.2 Overall Travel Patterns

People with higher levels of access to household cars make more journeys than those with lower levels of access. People with a car rarely/never available make between 11-12 weekday daytime trips, compared to the 11-17 trips of all respondents.

Table 3.5: Number of Weekly Trips per head in Co. Mayo		
	Mayo	Average of Four Counties
All respondents	16.79	16.96
Car available rarely/never	12.76	11.71

Source: Local Transport Survey

The size of the gap in trip making differs by sub-group. Young people in the pilot counties seem to adapt to not having access to a car better than other target groups,

as the size of the trip-making gap is smaller (21.3 trips v. 16.9 trips)⁵. For other sub-groups, especially older people, and people with illness or with a disability, lack of access to a car means that individuals are able to make only half, or less than half, the number of trips that those with access to a car are making.

Table 3.6: Impact of Car Availability on Trip Making of Key Target Groups (All Pilot Counties)

Target Group	Weekly Trips Made per Head	
	Car Available Always/Often	Car Available Rarely/Never
Age 18-24	21.26	16.90
Age 65+	12.46	4.61
People with illness/people with disability	15.27	6.07
Medical card holders	15.58	7.00
Free travel pass holders	13.89	5.44

Source: Local Transport Survey

3.3 Types of Journey⁶

Work and education/training journeys are the most important trips for younger people in the pilot counties, followed by sports and social activities. For older people, people with illness and people with a disability, and lower income groups, shopping trips are highly important, as is visiting friends/relatives. Church-going is also important to older people and to lower income groups.

Table 3.7: % Relative Importance of Journey Purposes for Key Target Groups (All Pilot Counties)

Journey Purpose	Young (18-24)	Older People (65+)	People with Illness/ People with Disabilities	Medical Card Holders	Free Travel Pass Holders	TOTAL
Work	24%	9%	15%	12%	9%	25%
Training/Education	14%	0%	4%	7%	2%	5%
Food Shopping	9%	26%	17%	19%	23%	14%
Non-food shopping	7%	8%	10%	7%	8%	6%
Personal business	5%	9%	6%	7%	8%	6%
Doctor's appointment	0%	4%	3%	3%	4%	1%
Hospital appointment	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%
Attending day care centre	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%
Children to crèche/school	1%	1%	6%	6%	2%	9%
Visiting someone in hospital	1%	3%	2%	2%	3%	1%
Visiting friends/relatives	12%	10%	11%	10%	10%	9%
Social activities	13%	6%	8%	8%	7%	9%
Sport and recreation	10%	6%	6%	6%	7%	8%
Going to church	4%	17%	8%	10%	15%	7%
Other	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Local Transport Survey

⁵ Results for all pilot counties are used because the individual county sample sizes do not allow cross-tabulation to this level of detail.

⁶ Results for all pilot counties are used because the individual county sample sizes do not allow cross-tabulation to

The county town is the most important destination for most journey types. The exceptions to this are food shopping, where all other settlement types are of importance (especially medium-sized towns), and church-going, which is concentrated on smaller towns and villages.

Table 3.8: Destination for Different Journey Types (All Pilot Counties)

Journey Purpose	Settlement Type				
	County Town	Large Town	Medium Town	Small Town	Other
Work	47%	14%	13%	4%	22%
Food shopping	10%	19%	42%	10%	19%
Shop (not specified)	50%	17%	23%	3%	7%
Leisure	73%	13%	-	13%	1%
Visiting friends/relatives	70%	6%	8%	-	16%
Sport	66%	-	-	-	34%
Education/training	48%	19%	11%	6%	16%
Hospital	100%	-	-	-	-
Going to church	-	-	-	23%	77%

Source: Local Transport Survey

3.4 Travel Needs and Attitudes

Typically around 30-40% of the key target groups in rural Mayo identified trips they would like to make but are unable to due to lack of suitable transport. This is similar to other pilot counties.

Table 3.9: Incidence of Unmet Demand for Trips in Co. Mayo by Key Target Group

Target Group	% Incidence of Unmet Demand for Trips	
	Mayo	Average of Four Counties
18-24	21	35
65+	38	37
People with illness/people with disability	37	38
Medical card holders	40	40
Free travel pass holders	32	36

Note: Unmet demand for trips defined as the existence of trips that could not be made due to a lack of suitable transport.

Source: Local Transport Survey

The most strongly favoured type of new transport service in rural Mayo (30% of respondents) is a pre-booked, direct, door-to-door service, ie a service that is closest in nature to a hackney/taxi service. A direct service with no pre-booking and a nearby stop is also a popular choice, with 26% of respondents selecting this option.

Table 3.10: Likelihood of Using New Services in Co. Mayo

Service Description	% Stating They Would 'Very Likely' Use New Service	
	Mayo	Average of Four Counties
A. Pre-booked/Door-to-door/Direct	30	30
B. Pre-booked/Nearby stop/Direct	17	15
C. No pre-booking/Nearby stop/Direct	26	26
D. No pre-booking/nearby stop/interchange required	13	13

Source: Local Transport Survey

For a quarter of the rural population across the pilot counties, the cost of the service would greatly affect their willingness to use it, while for the remainder it would not⁷. Attitudes to cost vary little across the target groups, although people with illness or with a disability, and lower income groups appear to be slightly more sensitive to cost.

Table 3.11: Price Sensitivity

Target Group	Extent to Which Fares Would Determine Willingness to Use a New Service (Average of Four Counties)
18-24	27%
65+	26%
People with illness/people with disability	33%
Medical card holders	32%
Free travel pass holders	25%
AVERAGE	25%

Source: Local Transport Survey

3.5 Results of Previous Studies

3.5.1 Louisburgh Community Project/South Mayo Development Company

A study was undertaken in Louisburgh in an effort to quantify the transport needs of the local people. The results of this, and other studies throughout the country, were collated to identify the scale of the problem and presented in the ADM report⁸.

Of the households surveyed, 16% said they had difficulty/no transport, which is comparable to the average percentage of people who never have a car available shown in Table 3.4. 56% of the households felt that the existing public transport was

⁷ Results for all pilot counties are used because the individual county sample sizes do not allow cross-tabulation to this level of detail.

inadequate. A strong interest in a transport service was demonstrated, and subsequent to the study, two pilot initiatives were introduced.

3.5.2 Mayo Accessible Transport Project

In 1998, Area Development Management Ltd (ADM) received funding from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to initiate a project, which would research the demand for, and the provision of, accessible transport services in two pilot counties, Meath and Mayo. South West Mayo Development Company undertook this study in Mayo. Overall, findings in the accessible transport report showed that for people with mobility problems, accessing public transport is extremely difficult, or in some cases not possible at all. This was also evident in the findings of this study. Almost 60% of the respondents indicated that lack of transport had been an obstacle in trying to enter the labour force, access training etc.⁹ Also 77% of those in disability associations rely on family/friends for lifts, whereas the corresponding figure for those without disability is 30%. Table 3.9 shows 37% of people with illness or with a disability indicated that there are trips they would like to make but were unable to due to lack of transport.

Main recommendations were:

- increased flexibility in the use of the travel pass;
- improved co-ordination of existing transport services;
- subsidised door-to-door transport provision;
- improved accessibility on public transport service.

The recommendations of this report are similar to those suggested at the rural transport workshop in Mayo, which are detailed in Section 3.6.

3.6 Workshops/Consultations

A consultative workshop was held in the county, organised through the CDB. It was attended by CDB members, community and voluntary organisations, public and private transport operators, and by local authority officials. Key points emerging were:

- there are two distinct transport issues, transport for particular target groups to essential services, and transport from rural areas into the urban centres for work purposes;
- target groups identified were people with disabilities, older people, islanders, students;
- the main existing local transport providers identified were private cars/lifts, taxi/hackney and some community/Bus Éireann initiatives;
- future services should be integrated and co-ordinated, with accurate information on the different transport options. Lack of information on the services available is a problem in some areas;
- there could be better utilisation of existing vehicles;
- there has been an over-reliance on the community sector in transport provision in the past. Their role should be recognised, and they should continue to have a role, particularly in relation to the assessment of local needs. There should also be a co-ordinating body at county level;
- the introduction of the National Car Test has implications for rural residents, in that the practice in rural areas of maintaining an “old banger”, as well as the normal household car, is becoming less feasible. This particularly affects spouses of the main income earner in households, who would normally use such transport to get around;
- it was felt that planning for rural transport services cannot be made in isolation from other transport services;
- there is also some interest in the potential role that rail can play in facilitating rural transport in Mayo.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Key Findings

- Mayo is a very rural county, and its rural population contains a number of key target groups (ie groups where the availability of a private car for transport is limited) that have a greater need for rural transport services, eg older people, people with disabilities, unemployed, lower income groups, young people. The main types of journey needs include work, shopping and social activities.
- The county is geographically large, with a variable terrain. The Atlantic coast area is quite mountainous, whilst the north west consists entirely of blanket bog. Population densities are low, and its rural population is very scattered. This means that there are parts of the county that are very isolated, particularly in the north and west, and the availability of rural transport services is an issue for rural dwellers (particularly those in the key target groups).
- Scheduled transport services in Mayo consist of links to/from the main towns of Ballina and Westport/Castlebar to Dublin and Galway/Cork. The majority of the local services operate from Ballina or Westport to more peripheral areas in the north and west of the county. Areas in and proximate to the central Ballina-Castlebar-Westport corridor are better served by scheduled services. Because of the peninsular nature of the county, it does not benefit from cross-country transport routes passing through the county but terminating in other areas, and is similar to Kerry in this respect. Many people in the key target groups throughout the county, however, have needs that would currently be met by non-scheduled services. Non-scheduled capacity is concentrated in the Ballina, Castlebar and Westport areas.
- Where transport services do exist, there is a general lack of accessible vehicles and accessible infrastructure, prohibiting usage by people with disabilities.
- The key target groups for improved rural transport services in Mayo make less trips on average than those who have a private car available for transport. These groups would make other trips, however, were it not for a lack of suitable transport.
- The preferred mode of transport for these target groups is a pre-booked, door-to-door, direct service (ie equivalent to current taxi/hackney operations). A direct

service with no pre-booking and a nearby stop is the next preference, followed by a pre-booked, nearby stop, direct service.

4.2 Unmet Needs in Co. Mayo

Table 4.1 gives an estimate of the number of people in rural Mayo who have unmet rural transport needs. To arrive at these estimates, a number of steps were taken:

- the Mayo population in each of the key target groups – young people, older people, people with illness or with a disability, and lower income groups – was identified, based on the results of the 1996 Census of Population and the county rural transport survey conducted as part of this audit;
- the proportion of these target groups who rarely/never have a car available was then estimated using the results from the survey. This figure is used as a proxy for people with unmet needs within the target groups;
- two-thirds of those in the target groups who live in DEDs with a suitable work-type journey or daytime journey opportunity are then removed from the estimate on the basis that their needs are in some way met;
- the survey is also used to remove double-counting (eg older people who are also people with illness or with a disability and/or have a medical card).

Table 4.1: Target Groups with Unmet Needs in Co. Mayo

Priority Group	Type of Service	Population	Car Rarely/Never	In DEDs with a Suitable Service Already	People with Unmet Needs
Young people	Daily morning	13,488	2,563 (19%)	569	1,994
Older people	Daytime	17,440	4,709 (27%)	2,263	2,446
People with illness/people with disability	Daytime	4,459	1,338 (32%)	655*	683
Low income	Daytime	15,389	2,616 (34%)	1,280	1,336
Daytime with double-counting removed		23,734	6,804 (30%)	3,289	3,515

* It should be noted that the ability of people with illness or with a disability to avail of transport services may be less than for the other target groups (eg due to lack of wheelchair access). This figure may therefore be conservative.

Source: Derived from CSO Census of Population/Local Transport Survey

It is estimated that there are 5,500 people living in rural Mayo who have unmet rural transport needs (based on the 1996 Census). The need is particularly acute among older people (2,448 people), followed by the young people (1,994), low income groups (1,336) and people with illness or with a disability (683).

Annex 1 GIS Maps