

## Southwest Secures £100,000 for Rural Transport Projects

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Two sub-national transport bodies (STBs) in the Southwest of England have announced a combined funding pot of £100,000 to support innovative rural transport schemes.

The Western Gateway STB and Peninsula Transport STB are offering grants of up to £50,000 each to organisations, charities, businesses, and community groups. The aim is to

encourage projects that improve transport options in rural areas, making remote and hard-to-reach places more accessible and liveable for residents.

The Western Gateway region includes major urban centres such as Bristol and Bath, alongside numerous rural towns, villages, and coastal communities. The Peninsula Transport region covers the counties of Cornwall, Devon, and Somerset, areas known for their beautiful but often isolated rural landscapes.

Rural transport remains a challenge for many in these regions due to factors such as sparse populations, limited public transport routes, and environmental considerations. To address these issues, applicants are encouraged to propose schemes that tackle one or more of the six key challenges identified by the transport bodies. These include improving the operational sustainability of rural transport services, advancing net-zero carbon targets, enhancing the affordability and equity of rural mobility, and addressing social isolation.

Councillors Andy Hadley and Sarah Warren, who serve on the Western Gateway board, highlighted the importance of funding such schemes. “Our region contains many rural towns, villages and coastal communities, plus even more isolated hamlets and dwellings,” they said. “By providing funding for rural pilot schemes, we can help to improve access to and from our rural places, increasing opportunities for rural residents, boosting the economy and protecting our local and global environment.”

Last year’s funding round supported several successful projects. In Dorset, a weekend shuttle bus service was introduced in West Bay, helping residents and visitors access key local amenities and transport links. Meanwhile, Gloucestershire saw the launch of e-bike hire schemes and demand-responsive transport services, providing flexible travel options in rural areas where conventional bus routes may not be viable.

The current funding round opened for applications today and will close on Sunday, 5 October 2025. The STBs encourage interested parties to submit proposals promptly to take advantage of this opportunity to improve rural transport.

Improving rural connectivity is considered essential not only for local economies but also for social inclusion and environmental sustainability. With many rural residents facing challenges in accessing work, education, healthcare, and social activities, schemes that enhance transport options can contribute to a better quality of life.

Both Western Gateway and Peninsula Transport STBs are committed to supporting innovative solutions that can be scaled up or replicated across the Southwest region. This funding is part of wider efforts to address rural transport issues in a way that meets the needs of communities while aligning with the United Kingdom's broader environmental and social goals.