

# RURAL AND PERIPHERAL URBAN AREAS, LAND OF INNOVATION IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

## A major challenge and essential initiatives

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Mobility is a prerequisite for social inclusion, but it can also become a necessity which may turn out to be untenable (with households with no car, problems of economic, environmental and social vulnerability, ageing members, etc.).

Faced with declining energy resources and the fight against climate change, and in order to better meet local needs, many ground-breaking initiatives are developing, even in areas with a low density of population. They are starting to host fruitful and unprecedented innovations in the field. But solutions are struggling to gain ground and become more widespread. It is important to devote attention, energy and resources to this aspect.

This document aims to demonstrate that action can be taken to promote a system of mobility that is more compatible with the requirements of energy change and ecological transition, while still meeting people's needs. It proposes three specific ways to ensure sustainable mobility in sparsely populated areas:

- 1) Allowing the bicycle to rediscover a coherent and organized role in mobility solutions in sparsely populated areas. This means establishing systematic planning of "smart" cycle networks which are safe and effective by moderating traffic speeds in peri-urban zones and by developing paths in rural areas. The goal is to develop the use of bicycles, at the lowest possible cost, in those territories where its low usage rates are primarily due to a deficit of infrastructures and services;
- 2) For longer trips, car-sharing is the future of sustainable mobility in sparsely populated areas where traditional means of public transport are too expensive to implement. With a reservoir of demand of between 2 and 3 million households, this is a promising market, under certain conditions: daily car-pooling has to be freed from regulations, which act as a deterrent for drivers financially, and car-sharing must be approached in a genuine spirit of public policy;
- 3) Rethinking mobility policies in sparsely populated areas: to adapt to and meet the challenges of mobility, public authorities in sparsely populated areas must rethink how their role is put into practice and how their budgets are allocated. This means using techniques to coordinate between public authorities, rethinking regional promotional efforts and contracts both with new suppliers of mobility services and with those participating in everyday life (such as municipal councils, social centres, associations, employers, garages, etc.), and devoting a significant part of the available transport budget to finding new mobility solutions.

## SUMMARY

Mobility in areas with low population density is becoming a major issue. The gap is widening between densely populated urban areas and the rest of the country, where more than one in three French citizens live. Faced with a declining number of increasingly remote everyday services and employment areas, poorly served by public transport, sparsely populated zones do not have access to an extremely rapid rhythm of change in their opportunities for mobility.

This fact raises important social questions.