Is there no alternative to using cars in rural areas?

Public transport (bus, tramway, etc.) and ecomobility (cycling, walking) may be growingly used in cities, many consider that it is impossible to find alternatives to cars in rural areas, notably because of the low population density. Willingly or not, car appears as the unique option. Is it inevitable?

Car is by far the most used mean of transport in French rural areas, covering 93 % of trips there (compared to 87 % on average in France, 80 % in big cities, and 64 % in the Parisian region). The obvious reason is the easiness to use it, despite the heavy economic and environmental costs.

Yet, due to the growing consideration for environmental and socio-economic aspects, a reduction of the strong dependency to cars and the implementation of other solutions are considered. Initiated by local authorities, individuals, and now businesses, various options are experimented. They relate to several complementary approaches:

- Carsharing
- Improving local soft or public transport modes
- Substituting the trips
- Space planning to favour alternative transport modes

The guide Construire une offre locale de transport (in French) published in 2009 for local planners and decision-makers is an example amongst others of such initiatives.