Social Impacts and Social Equity in Transport

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Campaign for Better Transport

- Environmental campaigning charity
- Aims to influence transport policy so as to improve people’s lives while reducing environmental impact
- Runs public campaigns (rail fares and buses)
- Carries out detailed research and promotes improvements in everyday transport
- Pilots and promotes good practice and new ideas
Current transport issues

- Cuts in local transport spending
- Rail investment and fares increases
- Roads and traffic
- Planning reforms

-> what are the social impacts of these?
-> links to wider social impacts?
Local transport is facing significant financial pressures

- Cuts in general local authority funding
- Changes in concessionary fares regime
- Cuts in Bus Service Operators Grant
- Integrated Transport Block Grant cut and changed
- Increased need as other services close/centralise
Results

• Cuts in bus services: over 1000 have gone, 77% of councils say more may follow, at least one company is planning big fares increases
• Travel planning, cycling and other spending has been slashed
• Local authority knowledge and capability has been cut
Save our Buses

- Highlighting benefits of buses
- Bringing together NGOs, unions and others
- Helping local campaigners
- And tracking what’s happening on the ground so that buses become a national not just local issue
But why do buses matter?

- Welfare to work: people out of work need buses to get access to jobs and training, young people need access to education and college.
- Economy: buses bring people to shops and support local economies.
- Social isolation: buses bring people together, get older people out and give young people access to leisure.

But we have found little recent research to quantify these effects and make the case to local and central government.
Railways – a “rich man’s toy”? 

• Rail fares set to rise by RPI +3% per year for next three years
• Peak fares to “manage demand”
• But does this matter? What will be the social effects…
  - With changes in housing costs/benefits?
  - With childcare costs?
  - On lower-paid workers?
Roads and traffic

- Benefits measured in time savings, valued by different uses
- Are disbenefits valued correctly/at all?
- Distributional impacts of e.g. noise, air pollution?
- Road safety distributional and equity issues (e.g. 80 mph)
- Traffic reduction: good for equity or is it the middle classes “pulling the ladder up behind them”?
Planning – NIMBYs versus housing and jobs?

• Localism bill and National Planning Policy Framework justified in increasing low cost housing and reducing barriers to development
• Does planning protect rich neighbourhoods
• What are the social impacts of the transport patterns created by green belts, dense development etc? Who benefits?
Some key issues

• “Car dependence” – is this a useful concept? How is it distributed? How does it relate to transport poverty?
• Localism: what will be the impact on transport poverty and the ability to study it? Will local decision makers be able to access evidence?
• Transport appraisal: does it consider social equity and impacts
Conclusions

• Current transport policies and trends will have huge social impacts and raise huge questions about social equity
• We need to find ways of assessing and gathering evidence about these impacts
• The challenge is to make the evidence available to and easily comprehensible to decision makers and the wider public
For more information

Campaign for Better Transport

www.bettertransport.org.uk