Social Equity and Social Impacts of Transport

Anne Power
Aims of the programme:

• Link transport studies and social sciences
• Understand social challenges and potential social benefits of transport system
• Integrate wider policies relating to transport with transport thinking e.g. neighbourhood problems
• i.e. show why social / urban issues matter to transport as well as vice versa
Aims of this workshop:

• Learn about current transport research and policy in relation to equity
• Explore transport behaviour and developments in transport in relation to other social activity
• Discuss how to assess social aspects of transport systems and transport behaviour
Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods, The Built Environment and Transport:

• Physical mobility is as critical to urban systems as buildings are
• Transport organisation and accessibility are the life blood of modern communities
• Motorised transport is deeply embedded and dominates human activity
• The car dominates our environment and social relations
Communities can be ‘locked out’ of modern transport systems through:

• Location
• Lack of a car or functioning public transport links
• Intensity of traffic
• Low density development
• Smaller, more isolated households
• Lack of cash
• Imbalance between costs of different modes
• Ownership and design of 20th century Council estates
• Privatisation of bus services and impacts (mainly outside London)
Urban problems are intensified by current transport priorities:

- Cars v buses
- Cost of trains
- Children and elderly ‘enclosed’ by unfriendly streets
- Loss of mixed uses/shift to superstores etc
- Walking and cycling become more difficult
- Poorer inner areas become through routes to suburbs (for cars!)
Fear of wider environment obstruct social and economic equality:

• Children can’t play out
• Not allowed to go to clubs
• Fear of travel to secondary schools
• Parents won’t work far away
• Elderly won’t go out
• Youth gather on streets - not allowed to travel
• Families and elderly fear ‘youth gangs’ on streets
• Youth don’t access wider opportunities
But low income families and elderly rely heavily on local neighbourhoods:

- Walking and safe cycling extremely important
- ‘Social survival’ depends on safe public/social spaces
- Many poorer areas lack open space, buses, shops
- Local environments generate fear
- Problems become inter-locking
  - Poorer public transport = more traffic
  - Job access in poorer areas is harder
  - Density of people not households determines bus service
- Frequent local bus service only work if
  - every 10 minutes
  - not more than 500 yards to stop
  - reliable
  - safe
Communities work with a more rounded approach to transport:

- Integrated public transport
- Transport planning with land-use planning
- Understanding urban density and mixed use
- Environmental limits and social/public spaces
- Both favour public transport and traffic taming
- Low cost/low tech solutions
- High speed/high tech transport
- Both extremely useful in transport thinking
- Transport is changing fast
  - ‘crucial social/collective good’
- Families in low income areas are the ‘canary in the mine’