Key issues

- Trends in ‘changing places of work’ suggest that rather than focusing solely on the ‘workplace’ as a ‘site’ for work, it is important to think more broadly about an ‘activity space for work’, binding together paid work and non-paid work activities. Transport has to link these paid work and non-paid work activities.
- Moving people off benefits into paid work continues to be a major policy objective and is a key strategy in poverty reduction.
- Spatial mobility is an important component in the ‘employability mix’ – alongside skills, health, self-efficacy and a range of other factors.
- Having a car enhances individuals’ abilities to access work through greater mobility, since cars provide greater flexibility in time and space compared with public transport.
- Social networks play an important role in facilitating mobility and in helping people to access work, to sustain work and to progress in work. But they can operate to reinforce patterns of advantage and disadvantage.
- There is increasing interest in the extent to which ‘mobility’ and ‘immobility’ are learned behaviours – with important implications for access to and participation in employment and training.

Policy Priorities Emerging from Workshop 1

- The Big Society implies greater links between paid and unpaid work, with more people involved in both. What is the role for transport in facilitating such involvement? Does the Big Society imply less mobility and more localised patterns of activity?
- The Work Programme is founded on greater individualisation and implies tailoring to local circumstances. How can transport operators best develop packages of support to Work Programme providers to ensure that transport considerations are taken into account?
- There is increasing emphasis on taking ‘workers to the work’ (rather than taking ‘work to the workers’). How and where can spatial mobility be enhanced through increasing awareness and use of existing transport provision? Are there places where taking ‘workers to the work’ is not feasible?
- In some areas, notably peripheral rural areas, the transport infrastructure plays a role in exacerbating labour and skill shortages, which in turn constrain firm growth and attempts to raise productivity. Is it possible to break out of this ‘low skill equilibrium’? Is there a role for transport in mitigating the negative implications for local economic development?
- The expansion and diffusion of information and communications technologies (ICT) has ongoing implications for the nature and location of work activities. To what extent can digital services minimise the need for travel? Where are they not a satisfactory substitute?

This workshop series is designed to bring together academics, policy-makers and public and private sector delivery agencies across a wide range of disciplines and policy sectors and to explore social impact and equity issues through active dialogue and supported evidence-based analysis. The project is led by Dr Karen Lucas of the Transport Studies Unit, University of Oxford and Professor Anne Power who is Director of Housing and Communities at the London School of Economics.
1. Introduction

This Policy Briefing Note concerns the 1st Workshop in a series aiming to promote interdisciplinary collaboration and capacity building; to better equip researchers, policymakers and practitioners across the different social science and transport disciplines to address the social challenges of providing transport and access, and to maximise the social benefits of the transport system within the UK context, now and in the future. This 1st Workshop is part of a series of themed events designed to address various theoretical, policy and practical aspects of transport, social equity and social impacts of transport.

The 1st Workshop explored Employment, Education and Training Perspectives on Transport and Social Exclusion. It brought together non-transport professionals from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, but all with interests in labour market and skills issues, alongside transport professionals. The idea was to bring together people with different perspectives, knowledge and experiences of the subject, capable of advising on policy issues and participating in future research in this area.

2. Background to social impact and equity

Policy Briefing Note 1 from the Two-Day Framing Event sets out the background to the Workshop Series’ concerns with social impact and social equity. In summary, the key points are:

- People on low incomes are more likely to experience ‘transport poverty’. Those most affected tend to be found in areas suffering from high levels of multiple deprivation, often suffering high levels of unemployment, benefit dependency, financial insecurity, poor skills and low educational attainment.
- The transport system overwhelmingly benefits car drivers. Public transport is predominantly designed to facilitate commuting to key urban centres; those in rural areas are much less well served. The cost of public transport fares is also high relative to poorer people’s income.
- Transport poverty results in significantly lower than average mobility and so reduced access to these life-chance opportunities – including access to employment. It can ultimately undermine the financial and social capital of the individuals and communities that are affected.
- In 2003, the Social Exclusion Unit pioneered a cross-government initiative to provide better evidence of the social consequences of transport poverty. It concluded that lack of transport can be a significant causal factor in the social exclusion of certain population groups and negatively affects their employment and educational opportunities.
- The Coalition Government has an interest in ensuring equity and fairness and in enhancing participation in employment. Yet there is concern that cuts in spending within a general climate of austerity are likely to impact on transport and with the poorest and most vulnerable people in society likely to be particularly vulnerable to adverse consequences of reduced expenditure.

• Many policy-makers feel that it is time to reinvigorate the transport poverty agenda and to bring the social consequences of transport policy decisions and spending to the fore.

3. **The 1st Workshop**

The 1st Workshop was held at Scarman House, University of Warwick, on 2nd December 2010. Workshop participants came from a wide range of academic disciplines and policy sectors.

3.1 **Key aims and objectives**

The Workshop was designed to explore:

- Challenges of the changing geography of employment and new ways of working;
- The limits to travel-to-work;
- Immobility as a barrier to employment and access to jobs for workless people;
- Inequalities in access to training and implications for skills development; and
- Policy initiatives – including practitioner perspectives.

3.2 **Speakers**

The speakers at the event were:

- Anne Green (Professorial Fellow, Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick) – The changing geographies of employment and new ways of working
- Alan Felstead (Professor, Cardiff School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University) – Rapid change or slow evolution? Changing places of work
- Martin Rivas Perez (PhD student at the Institute of Transport Studies, University of Leeds) – Dynamics of access: exclusions and resiliencies in the search for work
- Ron McQuaid (Professor and Director of the Employment Research Institute at Edinburgh Napier University) – A model of travel-to-work limits of parents
- Ian Shuttleworth (Senior Lecturer at the School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology at Queens University Belfast) – Making mobility: individuals, perceptions and places
- Maria Pilar Machancoses (Regeneration and Planning Manager at Centro) – From policy to delivery: the role of transport in access to employment
- Terence Hogarth and David Owen (Principal Research Fellows, Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick) – Geographical accessibility to training and implications for skills and economic development: a case study of East Lindsey

3.3 **Workshop outputs**

A workshop report, this policy briefing note and slides of all the workshop presentations can be accessed on request.²

4. **Discussion of research and policy themes**

On the basis of the presentations and discussion sessions, 10 key themes were identified.

4.1 **The changing nature of paid work ... and non-paid work**

Medium-term shifts in employment structures include the decrease in jobs in agriculture and manufacturing and the growth in jobs in services, and the growth in higher level professional, associate professional and non-manual occupations. There has been an increase in personal service and some sales occupations. From

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a social equity and quality of jobs perspective, occupations at the lower end of the labour market are of significance because they are characterised by a high degree of churn. There is also growing emphasis on the role of voluntary work, whether or not alongside paid work, in the context of the ‘Big Society’.

4.2 The changing nature of the workplace
Trends in ‘changing places of work’ suggest that rather than focusing solely on the ‘workplace’ as a ‘site’ for work, it is important to think more broadly about an ‘activity space for work’. An ‘activity space’ binds together paid work and non-paid work activities. Transport has to fit these paid work and non-paid work activities together – and may itself serve as a ‘place of work’.

4.3 The changing nature of learning and access to training
As workplaces change, so there is a need to learn how to work, and how to upgrade skills in new ways. While e-learning provides opportunities to develop new skills, it is not a suitable substitute for all types of work-related training. Some people and some employers are constrained in terms of their access to training by where they are located and the nature of transport services.

4.4 The changing nature of welfare-to-work
Moving people off benefits and into work continues to be a key policy priority. Jobseekers often cite transport difficulties (including costs) amongst their ‘top 3’ barriers to work. The rationale of the new ‘Work Programme’ is to tailor support to customer needs. There is an important role for transport operators to develop packages of support to Work Programme providers, so ensuring that transport information and assistance is available to jobseekers.

4.5 The role of employers
The role of employers is not taken into account sufficiently in debates about transport and employment. Transport difficulties can lead employers to favour local workers for some roles. But there is also a role for employers to provide transport to work for their employees.

4.6 Local labour market dynamics and labour market intermediaries
An awareness of local labour market dynamics is important in understanding social and spatial inequalities. Labour market intermediaries play a crucial role here. In stringent economic circumstances there is increasing reliance on agencies to offer the flexibility employers want. The associated churn in workers results in reliance on private transport for travel to work.

4.7 The role of information and communications technologies
Information and communications technologies are an enabler in facilitating new ways of working. They also underlie the Coalition Government’s agenda to expand digital services – including Jobcentre Plus services. But ‘access to the Internet’ does not necessarily equate with ‘access to information’. The onus is on transport providers and employment services to ensure information provided is understandable.

4.8 The role of the car
The car plays an important role in opening up opportunities to travel to work and to train. People dependent on public transport face restricted work search areas. Even in the most deprived areas the majority of journeys to work are by car. In rural areas a car is often essential for getting to work.

4.9 The importance of social networks
Social networks can help facilitate mobility. They can also play a crucial role in getting a job, keeping a job and progressing in work. The ‘bridging capital’ of
weak ties is important here. Social networks can help individuals and households to survive out of work by providing support. They are a powerful means of reinforcing advantage and disadvantage. The policy challenge is to lubricate positive features of social networks and to mitigate damaging impacts of such networks.

4.10 Links between ‘everyday mobilities’ and ‘longer-term mobilities’

Spatial mobility is an important component of employability. There is a tendency to concentrate on the ‘here and now’ of how to get from residence ‘i’ to workplace ‘j’. How are ‘everyday mobilities’ connected with ‘longer-term mobilities’? Do people learn to become immobile? How can negative connotations of immobility for access to employment be mitigated?

5. Methodologies, gaps in knowledge and future priorities

5.1 Methodologies

There is value in use of quantitative and qualitative methodologies in investigating issues relating to transport and access to employment, education and training. There is scope for greater linking of these methodologies. Visual research methods offer exciting opportunities for capturing changing ‘activity spaces for work’.

There is merit in longitudinal approaches for examining change over time.

5.2 Gaps in knowledge

Three key gaps identified are:

- A tendency to focus on the ‘average’ experience – this means that that there is a lack of knowledge of how complexity, variability and diversity in characteristics and circumstances exacerbate existing patterns of inequality.
- Methodologically there is a relative absence of longitudinal approaches – yet analysis of large-scale longitudinal datasets can offer in understanding a range of related issues (e.g. mobility and changes in employment).
- New ways of working and the role of information and communications technologies in facilitating new work patterns, activity spaces and access to jobs and learning are relatively unexplored.

5.3 Future priorities

Five future priorities relate to:

- **Social networks** – How do social networks operate? How does their operation change over time? How can their quality and efficiency be improved to facilitate mobility and more positive employment and training outcomes?
- **Understanding immobility** – Is immobility learned? Is mobility necessarily a good thing? Are immobile communities resilient? What do they mean for participation in employment? Is there a conflict between spending more time travelling and the Big Society?
- **Activity spaces of work and non-work** – How do the ‘activity spaces’ of work and non-work intersect? What does this mean for travel and transport?
- **Promoting work: ‘work to workers’ or ‘workers to work’?** – There is growing policy emphasis on moving ‘workers to work’ through processes of migration and commuting. Where are jobs available? Does current transport provision enable workers to access those jobs? How far is it reasonable to expect people to travel?
- **Longitudinal perspectives** – How can longitudinal perspectives add policy insights into ‘coping strategies’ in the short-term (especially in the context of austerity) and ‘learning (im)mobility’ over a lifetime?
For further information about the topics covered in this Workshop contact Anne Green, Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick Anne.Green@warwick.ac.uk. For details of the Workshop series and wider project contact Dr Karen Lucas, Transport Studies Unit, University of Oxford karen.lucas@ouce.ox.ac.uk.