



transform scotland briefing

socially just transport

Transport policies have major social implications, yet social justice perspectives on transport are too often neglected. This is despite a raft of evidence that those on lower incomes are adversely affected by our unsustainable transport system. Not having a car is rarely a lifestyle decision; indeed, household car accessibility has been deemed to be “probably the best surrogate for current income”.² Transport policies that prioritise reliance on the use of cars will therefore adversely affect low income groups.

1. Introduction

Policies that boost the attractiveness of individual motorised travel, at the expense of public and active transport alternatives, hold no benefits for the 30% of Scotland's households that have no access to a car;³ especially households on low incomes who have even lower shares of car access.⁴ The share of households without access to a car is also particularly high in urban areas (50% in Glasgow, 40% in Edinburgh). Even in the Highlands, where social exclusion on economic grounds can be exacerbated by genuine geographic isolation, one household in five has no access to a car.⁵

Government policies, which prioritise roads and the use of private motorised transport have certainly had some responsibility for an increase in the cost of bus and rail, compared to a decrease in the cost of car use. In the past 30 years, the cost of motoring in the UK declined by 17% compared to a 54% increase in the cost of coach and bus fares and a 50% increase in the cost of rail fares.⁶

Existing policies also aggravate the social exclusion of people who are unable to travel by private car on grounds of ill health, disabilities and/or age (older people and the young).⁷ Disability, low income levels and low car ownership are, in fact, quite closely correlated.⁸

Transport inequality is also a gender issue: women undertake more journeys by public transport⁹ and are less likely to hold a driving licence than men.¹⁰ Women also have specific needs with regard to safety that are not adequately addressed at present.¹¹

People on low incomes rely disproportionately on bus use and walking.¹² Over 70% of all public transport trips in Scotland are undertaken by bus or coach, covering almost half of the total distance travelled,¹³ but public subsidies and grants are estimated to contribute less than 30% to bus companies' revenues - the lowest proportion across Europe.¹⁴

Transport spending priorities in the Scottish Parliament have done little to change this situation. Current spending on trunks roads and motorways in Scotland, amounts to over £1 billion per year, while spending on active travel comes to only £20 million - under 2% of the transport budget.¹⁵

2. Less Well Connected ...

People on low incomes tend to have diminished access to quality goods and services, reduced social mobility and lower social status. Transport plays a far greater role in this than decision-makers have previously been prepared to acknowledge. Access to transport affects our employment decisions, our food choices and other consumption patterns, as well as the composition of our social networks and the likelihood of health-promoting leisure pursuits.¹⁶

Access to services

Services will only be of value to people if the effort required to enjoy them remains within reasonable limits. Many people on low incomes do not live within walking distance of places that can satisfy most of their needs at an acceptable cost.¹⁷

Residents of peripheral council housing estates often have to travel further for everyday purposes, yet their mobility is limited by lack of car access and the tendency for there to be fewer bus and train services than in more central parts of towns.¹⁸ The dismantling of local small-scale facilities in favour of centralised, larger outlets (from post offices and banks to food retailers and community centres) has worsened the social exclusion of people with limited mobility.

For people living in economically deprived areas access to essential services, such as healthcare, is a serious concern. Journey times tend to be highest for those accessing health facilities in deprived areas, particularly when the service requires travel on public transport.¹⁹ Evidence suggest that around 30% of people with no access to a car found it difficult to travel to hospital, with 7% of people with no access to a car refusing, missing or not seeking medical treatment because of transport problems.²⁰

Access to jobs

For people on low incomes, public transport is an important part of access to work: 63% of people on a gross weekly income between £100-£149 are reliant on local bus services for the journey to work.²¹



Transport is also a serious consideration for the unemployed. A Social Exclusion Unit report found that 12% of jobseekers have been unable to attend an interview due to transport problems, 13% of jobseekers did not apply for a job due to transport problems; this figure rose to 25% for people aged between 16-25.

The primary reason transport is a barrier is due to cost, with 25% of jobseekers finding the cost of travel to interview a barrier for finding work. For lone parents the cost of travel can be particularly difficult; 14% of out of work lone parents said the cost of traveling to work was unaffordable.²²

Social Exclusion by Price

High ticket prices for public transport - when compared with the comparatively low cost of car travel - result in a far greater share of income being spent on transport by people on lower incomes; this is a significant factor in socially excluding the poorer sections of society.²³

While fare levels have been found to be the most important factor influencing bus use by the Scottish public,²⁴ as well as existing concession schemes that have been shown to generate additional journeys amongst the economically disadvantaged sections of the population, availability of concessions across Scotland varies considerably.²⁵

While there are national concessions for the disabled and elderly for bus travel, there is no national scheme for concessions on other modes. Transport for London provide half price bus fares for the unemployed and those on low incomes;²⁶ however, in Scotland there is no national concession scheme for those on low incomes.

Active Travel

The economically disadvantaged are known to rely far more on walking than other sections of the population,²⁷ yet little is done to make such journeys safer and more enjoyable. These factors, and a relative lack of adequate cycling infrastructure and training, discourage a

substantial section of society from undertaking trips that could improve their quality of life.²⁸ However, it would be misguided to improve general mobility by making it even cheaper to go by car, especially as the poorer sections of society are those most likely to benefit from increased active travel. Policies should seek to improve quality of life with the provision of local services, which cut the overall need for regular long-distance travel.

3. ... and Less Well Protected

Low-income groups are also discriminated against through their greater exposure to the detrimental side effects of car dependent travel.

Pollution, Accidents, Crime

Those on low incomes and their families are more likely, to live next to, and spend more time walking alongside busy roads;²⁹ they suffer greater exposure to air and noise pollution, as well as a higher risk of getting killed or seriously injured in car crashes.

Community Severance

Community severance is a further negative aspect of current transport strategies, which impacts lower income groups disproportionately. The construction of urban motorways and other arterial roads through deprived residential areas, subjects their residents to higher rates of traffic-related environmental hazards and undesirable land use patterns. Instead of urban revitalisation and increased business activities, such areas experience a fall in social cohesion and lose wealthier residents to more attractive parts of town.

The constant upgrading and extension of arterial road networks has also changed the character of our cities by encouraging urban sprawl. The more comfortable and affordable it becomes to commute between rural properties and inner-city work places, the more likely it is for the districts in between to deteriorate into mere transit zones.

"[c]hildren in the lowest socio-economic group are over four times more likely to be killed as pedestrians than their counterparts in the highest socio-economic group"³⁰





4. Tackling Transport Injustices: Principles and Objectives

Adequate public transport - as defined in a report for the UK Government, by Transport Research and Consultancy, London Metropolitan University³² - should satisfy people's needs and deliver social justice in terms of:

- affordability (the extent to which an individual or household has to make financial sacrifices in other areas to cover the expense of travel)
- availability (route options, timing and frequency of services; location and design of stopping points)
- accessibility (the ease with which all categories of passengers can use public transport), and
- acceptability (other factors that determine the quality of services, e.g. cleanliness of vehicles, driving style and facilities in waiting areas).

Without a radical agenda that helps reverse trends where the poorest in society are forced to pay the lion's share of motorised transport's environmental and health costs, while remaining excluded by their relative lack of mobility, people with low incomes will continue to subsidise our addiction to the private car.³³



5. Recommendations

1. Promote social justice as a core concern of nation-wide transport planning

- Transport policy should seek to meet the access needs of individuals and communities, rather than trying to accommodate demands for ever-increasing, and unsustainable, levels of mobility.
- Transport policy must contain specific objectives to reduce the unequal distribution of health impacts caused by motorised transport. This should include targets for reduced traffic volumes, noise and pollution - in addition to targets for the promotion of cycling and walking.
- Transport delivery plans should be subject to a social inclusion audit. The Scottish Government should ensure that adequate levels of funding are allocated to transport modes disproportionately used by low-income sections of the population (principally buses and walking) and pay for this by drastically scaling back its environmentally unsustainable and socially inequitable trunk roads programme.³⁴

2. Make bus travel more competitive with car use

- Ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act: make fully physically accessible public transport vehicles and infrastructure the norm; and enforce parking restrictions at bus stops.
- Provide minimum availability standards for bus services, especially at evenings and weekends, supplemented where appropriate, by community transport schemes (dial-a-bus schemes, subsidised taxis) and demand-responsive transport services.
- Develop systems such as on-bus taxi booking services³⁵ to enable women and other vulnerable passengers to complete their journeys in safety.
- Consider introducing a flexible national travel pass that entitles low income groups to free, or discounted, public transport.

3. Make walking and cycling more attractive

- Prioritise the establishment of Home Zones, 20mph zones and other traffic-calming and speed-reducing schemes in order to lower the levels of pedestrian casualties in residential areas.
- Create safe and attractive cycling and walking paths, especially along routes children use to get to school.

4. Make the polluter pay

Policies that hold car users accountable for the pollution they create tend to be socially progressive as members of poorer households are less likely to own or drive cars:

- Introduce road user charging schemes in all of Scotland's cities: this will reduce the harmful side effects of heavy traffic suffered by many residents.
- Press the UK Government to transfer Vehicle Excise Duty on to fuel duty and promote Pay-As-You-Drive insurance policies; this would encourage less car use and be a more accurate, more equitable, method of charging for road use.³⁶

5. Reduce the need to travel

Stronger planning policies are required in order to halt and reverse long-term trends towards urban sprawl:

- Consider selective business rate reductions for smaller facilities in, and close to, residential areas in order to retain key local services.
- Inhibit the development of out-of-town retail parks by implementing more rigorous maximum parking standards; optimise access to any new developments by sustainable travel modes.
- Ensure that urban regeneration initiatives improve access to jobs, healthy food, diverse leisure facilities and other essential services without any need for private car use.

"...the cost of motoring in the UK declined by 17% compared to a 54% increase in the cost of coach and bus fares and a 50% increase in the cost of rail fares."



6. References

- ¹ Scottish Executive (2000) *Integrated Transport Bill* – paragraph 9, quoted from Scottish Consumer Council (2002) *A New Route? Views on Local Bus Services in Scotland*. Glasgow, SCC – p. 10.
- ² Townsend, P., Phillimore, P. and Beattie, A. (1988) *Health and Deprivation: Inequality in the North*, London, Croom Helm, – p.37. According to a study by the Scottish Executive, 44% of those who do not drive gave financial reasons as a main reason, followed by access to a car and ill health. Scottish Executive (1999), *Why People Don't Drive Cars. Development Department Research Programme Research Findings no 75*. Edinburgh, Scottish Executive Central Research Unit <www.scotland.gov.uk/cru/resfinds/drf75-00.htm>.
- ³ Scottish Government (2010a) *Scottish Household Survey Transport: Local Area Analysis 2007/08* <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Transport-Travel/SHSLAA>> – table 4.
- ⁴ 62% of households in the lowest income bracket (up to £10,000 net income per head) have no access to a car. Scottish Government (2009a) *Statistical Bulletin: Household Transport in 2008* <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/11/0611040/47>> – p.6, fig. 3.
- ⁵ Scottish (2010a) op cit. – table 4.
- ⁶ These figures are in real terms. The cost of motoring includes the cost of car purchase. Figures taken from written responses to parliamentary questions, from the UK Transport Minister, on Friday 5 February 2010 available at <<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100205/text/100205w0001.htm#0020537000025>>
- ⁷ People aged 65 and over are expected to make up 19.2% of UK population in 2021. - DETR (2001) *Older People: Their Transport Needs and Requirements* - <www.dft.gov.uk> For the purposes of this briefing, the term 'social exclusion' is to be understood as suggested in Hine, Julian and Mitchell, Fiona (2001) *The Role of Transport in Social Exclusion in Urban Scotland*, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive Central Research Unit (Development Department Research Programme Research Findings no. 110) – p. 11.
- ⁸ According to the Scottish Household Survey (2007/08), 33% of households include at least one person who is suffering from "a long-standing limiting illness, health problem or disability", with this figure rising to between 37% and 49% for those households with net annual incomes below £20,000. from Scottish Government (2009b) *Scotland's People Annual Report: Results Scottish Household Survey 2007/2008* <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/09/01114213/23>> – p. 123, fig. 10.7.
- ⁹ Scottish Government (2009a) op cit. p. 10, 35, table 21.
- ¹⁰ Scottish Executive (2001) *Women in Transport: Moving Forward* – For percentages of full driving licence holders in Scotland see Scottish Government (2009b) op cit. – p. 81, table 8.3.
- ¹¹ Cf. Peta Sissons (1993) *Women's Safety, Women and Public Transport Briefing Paper 2*, Swindon, Crime Concern; Scottish Executive (2000) *Women in Transport: Moving Forward*. Edinburgh, Scottish Executive Central Research Unit.
- ¹² Scottish Consumer Council (2002), op cit. p. 10; Scottish Government (2008) *Scottish Household Survey: Annual Report - Results from 2007* <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/08/07100738/22>> – p.80, table 8.9.
- ¹³ Local bus journeys make up 63% of trips, while non-local bus or coach travel are of similar scale to rail travel (10% and 11% respectively). Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (2003), *The Bus and Coach Industry in Scotland*. London, CPT – p. 4.
- ¹⁴ For example, in Austria the equivalent share was 70%. - Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (2004) *On the move*, Edinburgh, CPT, – Table 21; Cf. Commission for Integrated Transport (2001) *European Best Practice in Delivering Integrated Transport* <<http://cfit.independent.gov.uk/pubs/2001/index.htm>>.
- ¹⁵ Scottish Government (2009c) *Scottish Draft Budget 2010-11* <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/09/17093831/0>>.
- ¹⁶ The link between inadequate transport links and increasing isolation in the case of low income households has long been acknowledged by the UK Cabinet Office's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU). – Cf. Social Exclusion Unit (1998) *Bringing Britain Together*, London, – Section 1.27 ('Access to Services'). In *Making the Connections* (2002/3) SEU confirm more specifically that people without cars suffer in relation to employment and education. 38% of jobseekers interviewed for the project said that transport was 'a barrier to being employed'. 6% of 16-24 year olds had turned down training or further education and 10% of people living in low income areas had turned down at least one job in the 12 months to May 2002 'because of transport problems'. Amongst the young, the latter rate was as high as 25%. 14% of unemployed lone parents claimed they could not afford the cost of transport to work. Social Exclusion Unit (2003), *Making the Connections: Transport and Social Exclusion* – p1. para 1-3. Similar findings are reported in Transport, the Environment and Social Exclusion, authors Cartmel and Furlong confirm that '[p]oor or costly transport frequently restricted young people's employment opportunities' in rural Scotland; Cartmel, F. and Furlong, F. (2000) *Youth Unemployment in Rural Areas*, YPS for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. For a summary of key findings see <www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/220.asp>.
- ¹⁷ Social Exclusion Unit (1998), op cit. – Section 1.27 ('Access to Services'). The closure of 'unprofitable' local amenities forms a 'vicious circle' with increased car use: higher mobility (on the part of car users and many people along convenient public transport services) results in reduced local accessibility. - Cf. Gray, David with Farrington, John (2000) *How Much of a Problem is Rural Transport in Scotland?* Aberdeen, Robert Gordon University (Centre for Transport Policy, Policy Paper Series, Paper 1) – p. 12.
- ¹⁸ See, for example, Hine & Mitchell (2001) op cit. – pp. 53, 60. Hine and Mitchell confirm a strong correlation between car ownership and home ownership with reference to case studies conducted in Leith, Castlemilk and Coatbridge). Government data on transport modes in relation to household incomes at <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Transport-Travel/TablesPublications/NTS0708>>, op cit. – Tables 17-19.
- ¹⁹ Hine, Julian (2003) *Transport issues faced by residents in deprived areas in urban Scotland*, in Scottish Executive, (2002), *Social Justice ...a Scotland where everyone matters* - Annual Report 2002 <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2002/11/15766/13341>> – p.90.
- ²⁰ Social Exclusion Unit (2003) *Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion* <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/social_exclusion_task_force/assets/publications_1997_to_2006/making_transport_2003.pdf>.
- ²¹ Hine, Julian (2003) op cit. – p.89.
- ²² Social Exclusion Unit (2003) op cit.
- ²³ The Social Exclusion Unit stated in 1998 that poor public transport provision and low car ownership has caused 'the lowest income group [to] make the greatest use of taxis or minicabs - 1.3 per cent of all journeys taken compared with national average of 0.9 per cent'. - in Social Exclusion Unit (1998), op cit (figures based on DETR, *National Transport Survey* 1996, 1997).
- ²⁴ Scottish Consumer Council (2002) op cit. – p. 15.
- ²⁵ Cf. Hine & Mitchell (2001) op cit. – p. 129.
- ²⁶ further information available from Transport for London website <<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tickets/faresandtickets/5568.aspx>>.
- ²⁷ Office of National Statistics (2010) *National Travel Survey - Scottish results 2007/08* <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Transport-Travel/TablesPublications/NTS0708>> – Table 17 and 18.
- ²⁸ Scottish Executive (2003) *Scotland's People: Results from the 2001/2002 Scottish Household Survey*, (Volume 7: Annual Report) – Table 7-31 ('Percentage finding services very or fairly convenient by access to motor vehicle') all vital services listed where more likely to be accessible to households with cars compared to households without. <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/08/17928/24692#731>>.
- ²⁹ The higher share of walking within the overall mobility patterns of low-income citizens is supported by Office of National Statistics (2010) op cit. <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Transport-Travel/NTS200708>> – tables 17,18,19.
- ³⁰ White, D., Raeside, R. and Barker, D. (2000), *Road Accidents and Children Living in Disadvantaged Areas*, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive, 1997-99 (Development Department Research Programme Research Findings No. 81). Cf. Abdalla, I., Raeside, R., Barker, D.J. and McQuigan, D.R. (1997) *An Investigation into the Relationships between Area Social Characteristics and Road Accident Casualties*, Accident Analysis and Prevention, Vol 29, No. 5.
- ³¹ TRaC (2000), *Social Exclusion and the Provision and Availability of Public Transport*, London, DETR, – p. 33.
- ³² In the context of this topic it is important to remember that for low-income groups transport-related injustices compound environmental and health problems. Health aspects are covered more specifically in the Transform Scotland briefing *Healthy Transport* - <www.transformscotland.org.uk/GetFile.aspx?ItemID=264>. Cf. Transport 2000 (2002), *Transport and Social Exclusion. A Briefing paper*, London; Bullard, Robert D. and Johnson, Glenn S. (1997) 'Just Transportation' in *Just Transport. Dismantling Race and Class Barriers to Mobility*, Gabriola Island, B.C., Canada, New Society Publishers, – p. 7-21; Holmes, Henry (1997) 'Just and Sustainable Communities' in Bullard, Robert D. and Johnson, Glenn S. (1997), op cit – p. 22-32.
- ³³ Social Exclusion Unit (2003), op cit – Chapter 5. The Scottish Government should not replicate the pattern of expenditure identified by the SEU in its analysis of the UK Department for Transport's *10 Year Plan* (2000), which allocated nearly 40% of transport spending to the richest 20% of households in England and Wales, while just over 10% went to benefit the poorest quintile. Cf. Social Exclusion Unit (2003), op cit – (Section 3.2).
- ³⁴ Cf. Walder, A. (1999) *Differentiated forms of service in Germany*.
- ³⁵ Cf. Fergusson, Malcolm and Skinner, Ian (1998) *Transport Taxation and Equity*. London: ippr.; Todd Alexander Litman (2002), *Implementing Pay-As-You-Drive Vehicle Insurance. Policy Options* - July 2002 (ippr) <www.ippr.org.uk/uploadedFiles/events/ToddLitman.pdf>.

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