



**To:** City Transport, Place Directorate

**From:** Adrian Davis

**Date:** 12/03/2014

**Subject:** Essential Evidence on a page: No 117 Can society address social inequalities borne by pedestrians & cycle users?

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Top line: Many societies have become organised on the basis of high use of private motor transport. Policy approaches in transport planning, law and enforcement appear central to mitigating inequalities in safety and accessibility for pedestrians and cycle users.

Dangers faced by pedestrians and cycle users have not only created an impression of undesirable conditions, but have promoted claims of injustice and inequality. High death and injury rates coupled with poor infrastructure and fear of the behaviour of other road users point to a plausible concern that pedestrians and cyclists suffer inequalities. But what factors are relevant in judging inequality and how these should be treated against potentially competing claims? In order to address social inequality, researchers have sought to provide a basis on which to make the case for change in transport policy, planning and law.<sup>1</sup>

The researchers examined the relevance to equality of a range of factors, including measurement of road casualties, questions of responsibility to increase walking and cycling as means of contributing to pollution and carbon reduction, matters of fault and responsibility for road safety, and the economic impacts of improving conditions for walking and cycling. They argued that there is a case for treating walking and cycling as a subject relevant to consideration of what it is for society to show equal concern for its members. They asked whether framing walking and cycling as a particular concern for a just society will be effective in making the case for measures to improve conditions. A standpoint that pedestrians and cycle users suffer inequalities might, enable walking and cycling to be understood not only as potential means of gaining certain benefits, but as a part of a more fundamental moral concern. This could assist in strengthening arguments for walking and cycling in on-going debates on law, policy and planning.

Barriers to walking and cycling can involve infrastructure problems as well as behaviour such as pavement parking and inappropriate driving speed. The researchers note that there would be substantial implications of a policy approach which sought to mitigate these problems so that (door to door) networks can be travelled on foot or bicycle without disproportionate risk. This might involve restrictions for motor vehicles, through measures such as pricing or outright limitations on road use or speed. This could be expected to meet with charges either that it violates car occupants' entitlement to accessibility, or if pricing is used, that it is unfair due to inequalities in wealth. This charge relating to accessibility could be justified, but only if it made driving impossible, and then only under certain circumstances, for instance where occupants are unable to walk or cycle, or where distances make walking or cycling unfeasible. Similarly, equal concern could support claims that pricing measures are unfair, but only if preventing motor travel for people with no other ability to (safely) access opportunities and activities. The application of equal concern could have the effect of constraining planning likely to increase distances travelled, such as planning for services or retail developments located away from residential areas. One reason would be that increasing travel distances would tend to be at odds with the societal responsibility to support accessibility by walking or cycling.

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<sup>1</sup> Mullen, C., Tight, M., Whiteing, A., Jopson, A. 2014 Knowing their place on the roads: What would equality mean for walking and cycling? *Transportation Research Part A*, 61: 238-248.