



To: Place Directorate
From: Adrian Davis
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Subject: Essential Evidence on a page: No 156 Transport & Social Exclusion – Where are we now?

Top line: If properly designed and delivered, public transport can provide part of a solution to social exclusion, but it is most likely that other forms of more flexible (and often informal) transport services will be needed to complement mainstream services.

The late 1990s and early 2000s witnessed a growing interest amongst UK academics and policy makers in the issue of transport disadvantage and, more innovatively, how this might relate to growing concerns about the social exclusion of low income groups and communities. Studies (predominantly in UK) began to make more explicit the links policy between poverty, transport disadvantage, access to key services and economic and social exclusion. The 2002–2003 Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) study of transport and social exclusion is widely recognised as having an important influence on this policy stance.¹ The most important contribution of the study is generally considered to be the way it has helped to identify the inter-relationships between transport disadvantage and key areas of social policy concern, such as unemployment, health inequalities, poor educational attainment and run-down neighbourhoods and estates. It also introduced a systematic process of accessibility planning within local transport, land use and service sector planning to identify and address the transport problems of socially excluded populations.²

Transport surveys demonstrate that it is most usually the poorest and most socially disadvantaged within society who also experience transport disadvantage. Almost every National Travel Survey identifies significant inequalities in the travel patterns and access to transport of lower income populations in comparison to their higher income counterparts. Yet having transport (whether private or public) available is not always a factor in social exclusion and that it is only where the price of transport exceeds its affordability that social exclusion occurs. On this basis, researchers recommend that policy maker can improve social inclusion by either; reducing the price of transport, and/or increasing social contact through virtual mobility, and/or increasing proximate facilities/contacts through land-use planning or pro-neighbourhood policies, and/or increasing incomes.³

Follow up research to the SEU report has identified that public transport improvements in deprived areas have delivered significant improvements in bus patronage and travel uptake, as well as having knock-on benefits in terms of the take-up of new employment, educational opportunities and health care visits. However, one size does not fit all and so many more examples are needed of what does and does not work in practice, within different geographical and social contexts and for different groups of people. Furthermore, transport and social exclusion can never survive as a solely transport-focused agenda. Accessibility planning of public transport which is necessary to meet the travel needs of socially excluded people must be highly integrated with socially responsible land use, housing, health, education and welfare policies and programmes.

¹ Social Exclusion Unit, 2003 *Making the Connections: Final report on Transport and Social Exclusion*. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, London.

² Lucas, K. 2012 Transport and social exclusion: where are we now? *Transport Policy*, 20: 105-113.**

³ Preston, J., Raje, F., 2007. Accessibility, mobility and transport-related social exclusion. *Journal of Transport Geography* 15 (3), 151–160.

** This summary is largely indebted to the work of Karen Lucas.