Campaign for Better Transport

Transport and Poverty: A Literature Review

This paper is a literature review on the relationship between transport and poverty and was funded by the Webb Memorial Trust. The paper summarises the main research in this area since the publication of the Social Exclusion Unit's major report on transport and social exclusion in 2003. A separate paper details policy recommendations arising from this research. This is part of a programme of work by Campaign for Better Transport on transport and poverty. Other work will include research on access to transport for job seekers and on the impacts of cuts in bus services.

Summary of main findings

The report shows that transport problems do contribute to poverty and social exclusion, in a variety of ways. In particular, combinations of poor transport provision and car-based land use planning can contribute to social isolation and poverty. This is not just an issue for those without cars; those with access to cars find that they are forced to use cars more than they want to.

Accessibility
Improving transport services, making them more affordable or more physically accessible, or providing transport services where none previously existed, can help address social exclusion. In addition accessibility planning could help promote the integration of transport, land-use planning and decisions about the location of employment and education, health, social service and retail amenities.

Among authorities which have implemented accessibility planning, those that recognised the need and had the skills to involve other stakeholders and sectors in the accessibility planning process have been proving the most effective.

However, there appears to have been a loss of momentum in the implementation of accessibility planning. The Department for Transport (DfT) needs to say whether or not it considers accessibility planning valuable and if it does, to provide guidance on accessibility planning across relevant government departments.

Bus services
Spending cuts have limited the capacity of transport authorities and others to introduce new services to address the needs of deprived groups and have affected existing services on which groups depend, thus further exposing them to poverty or other forms of social exclusion.

Low income families are more dependent than others on bus travel; buses account for a larger proportion of their income and the cheaper fare deals which involve paying larger lump sums are often unavailable to them. Bus fare increases restrict the ability of households to meet the transport costs of their children for important out of school activities and transport costs can be a barrier to employment for low income families.

Low income households and car use
It is difficult to measure transport poverty and there is an absence of any officially accepted definition or measure. Any definition needs to recognise that transport poverty is not simply a question of the affordability

of motoring costs. Definitions that use the percentage of household spending on transport costs are not meaningful, particularly given that higher income households spend a greater share of income on transport than lower income households.

Increases in the cost of fuel would particularly affect low income households in rural areas but the impacts could be mitigated by, for example, improving rural public transport.

Impact of traffic on low income communities
Children in low income groups have much higher rates of casualties from road traffic collisions due to greater exposure to higher levels of traffic. This could be addressed through changes to the physical environment, better traffic management and through a range of government bodies attaching a higher priority to road safety.

Elevated levels of pollution are concentrated amongst socially deprived neighbourhoods and have serious health impacts.

Heavy traffic has a negative effect on the social interaction of a community with lower levels of social capital likely as a result.

Introduction and overview

The economic and environmental aspects of transport policy have been subject to much research and focus by policy makers. Less attention has been paid to the impacts and effects that transport policy has on society or on different groups within it. However, a growing interest in transport and social exclusion in the 1990s and early 2000s culminated in the publication by the previous Government's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) of *Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion* in 2003. Since then there has been a change of government and the SEU has been abolished but, as the recession has continued and poverty has increased, concern about social exclusion, whether transport related or otherwise, is likely to increase.

This review surveys some significant reports on transport and poverty or social exclusion including the SEU report in 2003 and subsequent research. It examines the conclusions and the outcome of the SEU report and considers what, if any, progress has since been made as a result of the report's main recommendations to address transport and social exclusion. Finally, it considers recent evidence (mainly from 2009-2012) on a number of aspects of transport and poverty: the impact to socially necessary bus services of government expenditure cuts; the limited and unequal access to education, employment and other vital services that results from reduced transport options; the connections between taxation, spending and inequality; and the current effects of air pollution, road casualties and travel behaviour on lower income groups.

The review considers the SEU final report on transport in some detail. It then draws mainly on six sources:
1. Reports analysing the findings and impacts of the SEU report
2. Reports discussed by public policy practitioners
3. Campaign for Better Transport publications and the evidence cited there
4. Recommendations made by academics and practitioners in the field
5. Bibliographies in existing reports
6. Internet searches

A useful starting point is *Transport and Social Exclusion: Where are we now?* (Lucas K, 2012). Lucas, a leading academic and policy adviser in this field, offers definitions of social exclusion and transport related social exclusion, and provides an overview of the effectiveness of policies and programmes to address the social exclusion effects of transport.

Though she says that there are numerous definitions, and no consensus, about what constitutes social exclusion, Lucas quotes other authorities for a description of what is covered by the term. It means more than just poverty:

> '…the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole.'(*Levitas et al.,2007*)

Social exclusion can and often does include poverty, but the term is much wider. It is possible to be socially excluded and not be at an economic disadvantage.

Likewise it is possible to suffer transport-related social exclusion and not lack access to transport. Lucas quotes the following definition of transport-related social exclusion.

> 'The process by which people are prevented from participating in the economic, political and social life of the community because of reduced accessibility to opportunities, services and social networks, due in whole or in part to insufficient mobility in a society and environment built around the assumption of high mobility.'

The subject of this review is transport and poverty, not social exclusion (though the two overlap). The definition quoted above is not wholly satisfactory from this point of view. As will be shown, the connections between transport and poverty can involve more than just a 'lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities' and they do not necessarily involve in whole or in part 'insufficient mobility in a society and environment built around the assumption of high mobility'. Indeed they often arise as a result of high mobility and not because of its absence.

Also, mobility is not necessarily a good measure for transport. For a long time an important distinction has been drawn in transport literature between mobility and access. Mobility is a means to an end rather than an end in itself – the purpose of travel is generally to get access to places or people. This is why the SEU report focused on accessibility.

The Social Exclusion Unit report

The SEU report overcomes certain weaknesses in the definition quoted by offering a definition that is more practical for policy makers. In the first place it stated at the outset that:

> 'The key idea at the centre of this report is accessibility: can people get to key services at reasonable cost, in reasonable time and with reasonable ease? Accessibility depends on several things: does transport exist between the people and the service? Do people know about the transport, trust its reliability and feel safe using it? Are people physically and financially able to access transport? Are the services and activities within a reasonable distance? **Solving accessibility problems may be about transport but also about locating and delivering key activities in ways that help people reach them**.' (our emphasis)

Secondly, as the SEU was aware, transport and high levels of mobility – usually from other people's travel – impact disproportionately on lower income areas and individuals through such factors as pedestrian casualties, air pollution, noise and the severance of residential areas and communities by busy roads. This occurs because residents of more heavily trafficked roads are drawn disproportionately from lower-income groups.

The report documented seven transport related, social exclusion problems. Five relate to access:

- Access to work: two out of five jobseekers say lack of transport is a barrier to getting a job. The cost of transport can be a problem getting to interviews and transport problems can be a deterrent to making job applications

- Access to learning: nearly half of 16-18 year olds experience difficulty with the cost of transport to education
- Access to healthcare: around 20 per cent of people (31 per cent of those without a car) have difficulty reaching their local hospital. Over 1.4 million people had missed appointments and turned down or not sought medical help because of transport problems in the previous year. Half of older people in London experience difficulty in travelling to hospital or the dentist
- Access to food shops: people without cars are more likely to find it difficult to access reasonably priced food and 16 per cent of people without cars find getting to a supermarket difficult
- Access to social, cultural and sporting activities: 18 per cent of people without cars (compared to 8 per cent of car owners) experience transport difficulties in seeing friends and family and 9 per cent and 7 per cent find it difficult getting to leisure centres and libraries

The sixth problem identified was the impact of traffic on deprived communities: pedestrian casualties, air and noise pollution, and busy roads cutting through communities (community severance) all disproportionately affect deprived communities and people facing social exclusion. Children from social class V, for example, are five times more likely to be killed in a road crash than children in social class I. The fear of traffic on busy roads also restricts access to facilities by inhibiting walking.

The final impact was the effect on individuals, frustrating attempts to break out of a cycle of exclusion, on deprived communities and on the implementation of Government objectives essential to combating poverty and exclusion, such as reducing health inequalities, crime and antisocial behaviour.

Transport related social exclusion is explained, at least in part, by an increase in the need to travel indicated by a growth of 42 per cent in average journey lengths since the 1970s as local amenities have been replaced by more centralised units. This is linked to the rise in car ownership and use but, for a variety of reasons, a third of households do not have access to a car. Low-income households rely on walking to meet their travel needs, making the quality of the walking environment of particular importance. They rely also on bus services, on taxis and on lifts from friends and family. However, car ownership may be essential for the lowest income group, particularly in rural areas. For those households in the lowest income quintile which do have a car, motoring costs can account for almost a quarter of their weekly expenditure.

Key barriers to access identified by the report included:
- The availability, physical accessibility and cost of transport
- The inaccessible location of services and activities
- Fear of crime, antisocial behaviour or road accidents
- Limited travel horizons (willingness to travel longer distance) of people on low incomes

The strategy proposed by the SEU for tackling transport related social exclusion and poverty had two elements. The first was a package of policy changes to improve public transport and land-use planning, make streets safer and provide specialist support to help people access services. But the main element was a new process of accessibility planning which local transport authorities have since been required to carry out as part of the production of their Local Transport Plans.

Accessibility planning consists of an accessibility audit to identify groups or areas disadvantaged by deficiencies of access to jobs or services, a resources audit to identify the resources available and an action plan to develop solutions to make good those deficiencies. Authorities were required to carry out an audit to identify disadvantaged groups with difficulties in accessing jobs, services and amenities and develop an action plan to address those difficulties. In addition to transport authorities, such plans could involve relevant agencies such as land-use planners, and local health, social and education services. In other words, the plans might involve a mixture of, on the one hand, enabling people to reach jobs, services and amenities and, on the other, placing jobs, services and amenities where they could more easily be reached.

It should be emphasised therefore that improving transport services, making them more affordable or more physically accessible for example, or providing transport services where none previously existed, is only part of the solution proposed in the SEU's report. The solution is as likely to lie in the integration of transport, land-use planning and the decisions made about the provision of employment and services by a wide range of education, health, social service and private sector agencies.

How effective has accessibility planning been?

The SEU report on transport and social exclusion has been widely influential, in other countries as much as in this. Though the SEU itself was merged with the then Prime Minister's Strategy Unit in 2006, since that year local transport authorities have been required to implement the main recommendation of its report and carry out accessibility planning as part of the production of statutory five-yearly Local Transport Plans.

A three year study by the Centre for Research in Social Policy to evaluate the performance of accessibility planning, commissioned by the DfT in 2009 and scheduled for completion by March 2012, has not yet reported or at any rate not yet been published. According to Lucas its unpublished interim report found major differences of approach between local transport authorities in nine case studies (Lucas, 2012). Some authorities aimed specifically to improve access for socially excluded groups, others to improve access for all. Some focused on the provision of transport services while others included key service providers. Authorities who understood the need and had the skills to involve other stakeholders and sectors in the accessibility planning process have been proving the most effective.

Lucas also cites research documenting the benefits of increased access to employment, education and healthcare deriving from public transport improvements in deprived areas but acknowledges that such improvements have been overtaken or overshadowed by the new conditions of economic austerity. The Coalition Government's objectives in the area of transport and social exclusion, if any, have yet to become clear. It is clear, however, that spending cuts have not only affected the capacity of transport authorities and others to introduce new services to address the needs of deprived groups but have also affected existing services on which groups depend, thus further exposing them to poverty or other forms of social exclusion (see the reports by Lucas 2009, pteg 2010, Campaign for Better Transport 2011, and the House of Commons Transport Select Committee 2011 discussed below).

As we have noted, land use planning is important as a means of promoting accessibility and reducing social exclusion. The Government has reformed the planning system and replaced previous planning guidance with a new National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG, 2012). The implications of this for the accessibility of development have yet to become clear. If new development is approved in locations isolated from existing urban areas and from the public transport network and which are therefore accessible only by car, it will place socially excluded groups at additional disadvantage. This should therefore be the subject of research when sufficient local plans have been adopted and planning decisions have been made within the new planning framework.

A further report by Lucas and others reinforced some of the messages of the SEU report (Lucas et al 2009). It described a study of four new Government funded public transport services, three were bus or minibus services and the fourth a project to give people financial support and advice to meet their travel needs. The study found that these services were of crucial importance to the social inclusion of individuals and the vitality of low-income neighbourhoods and that withdrawing them would have the opposite, very damaging effect.

The Passenger Transport Executive Group (pteg), which represents the Passenger Transport Executives of the six largest urban areas outside London, including Greater Manchester, Merseyside and the West Midlands, published *Transport and Social Inclusion: Have we made the connections in our cities* in 2010.

This set out to take stock of progress in using transport to promote social inclusion in the seven years since the publication of the SEU report. It found that although PTEs had been successful in introducing a range of measures to address social exclusion, noting among other things improvements in the physical accessibility of the public transport network, there had been a loss of momentum in the implementation of accessibility planning. A renewed sense of direction and leadership was needed from the DfT on taking forward the social exclusion agenda. In particular the DfT needed to say whether it considered accessibility planning valuable or not and if it is, to provide guidance on accessibility planning across the relevant government departments.

Recent evidence of transport related social exclusion

The social exclusion agenda may now be less prominent than it once was but the evidence of the connection between transport, poverty and social exclusion continues to grow. The rest of this review surveys evidence of that connection mainly in reports published within the last three years. In a portent of conclusions that would also be reached by other studies, the pteg report cited above found that cuts in bus services and increases in fares were undermining social inclusion objectives. Buses are important to several vulnerable groups.

Buses Matter, published by Campaign for Better Transport in January 2011, detailed the importance of buses to young people, older people, people on low incomes, people with disabilities and people seeking work. From a large amount of evidence marshalled in this report, the following may be cited:
- People in the lowest income quintile make three times more journeys by bus than people in the highest income quintile
- Disabled people are more likely to mention transport as a local concern than non-disabled people, 60 per cent of disabled people have no car in the household and they use buses around 20 per cent more frequently than non-disabled people

Older people are particularly dependent on reliable, accessible and affordable transport to meet every day needs and relieve potential isolation and exclusion. In a wide ranging review, the Centre for Social Justice has considered among other things the transport needs of older people (Centre for Social Justice, 2010). Using the 2009 National Transport Survey, it found that 60 per cent of journeys of those aged 70 and above are for shopping and personal business compared to a quarter for those aged between 17 and 29. But 39 per cent of those aged 70 and above have difficulty walking to a bus. People in rural areas are at particular risk of isolation. Nearly a quarter of older people live in rural areas but 40 per cent of rural households are more than two and a half miles from a supermarket and 45 per cent more than five miles from a hospital. People in rural areas spend between 20 and 30 per cent more on transport than those in urban areas. Clearly the potential for transport related deprivation is considerable.

The availability of bus services is of great importance to many older people. The free bus pass has been widely taken up and had a positive impact particularly on lower income, older people. Around 95 per cent of people in urban areas live within 13 minutes of a regular bus service but in rural areas this is true of only 50 per cent. The use of taxis and minicabs is highest among the lowest income quintile, perhaps not surprisingly because of the lower rate of car ownership, but both the cost of taxis and the reluctance of some firms to make short journeys can make it difficult for older people to travel by this means.

In 2002 the Commission for Integrated Transport made recommendations to Government aimed at improving bus services, increasing bus patronage and mode share, improving bus accessibility for those facing social exclusion and reducing emissions from buses (Commission for Integrated Transport, 2002). The main recommendation was that the Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG), or fuel duty rebate, be replaced with an Incentive Per Passenger (IPP) thus changing one of the main government subsidies to the bus industry from one based on the amount of fuel used to the number of passengers carried. Other important recommendations were that concessionary travel should be extended to a wider range of socially excluded

groups while being reduced for older people, and that there should be additional bus and demand-responsive services in rural areas. Seven years later, contributing to DfT consideration of BSOG reform, the Commission for Integrated Transport predicted a decline in bus services and again recommended that BSOG be replaced by IPP with the proviso that those facing a loss of bus services, should have their transport needs met by a range of alternatives (Commission for Integrated Transport, 2009).

In *Buses Matter* Campaign for Better Transport explains the dangers posed to bus services that are socially necessary but not commercially viable by several factors:

- An overall 28 per cent cut in local authority transport revenue funding
- The removal of ring fencing for local transport funding such as the rural bus subsidy grant
- A 20 per cent drop in BSOG from 2012 combined with a cut of £50–100 million in the annual public expenditure on statutory concessionary journeys

This loss of revenue will result, *Buses Matter* notes, in higher fares and reduced services.

The cuts in bus services have occurred as predicted. A survey of local transport authorities by Campaign for Better Transport later in 2011 using Freedom of Information requests showed £36 million cuts in local authority bus budgets, resulting in the loss of over 1000 bus services with a larger number expected to follow (Campaign for Better Transport, 2011 i). The bus cuts would have the greatest impact on vulnerable groups, hamper Government attempts to get more people into work and affect the viability of recent policy announcements regarding job seekers needing to take jobs up to 90 minutes away[1].

Similar concerns were expressed by the House of Commons Transport Select Committee. Some of the conclusions of its report *Bus Services after the Spending Review*, October 2011, were that the combination of the reduction in local authority revenue expenditure, changes to the DfT's concessionary fares reimbursement and the reduction in BSOG have created 'the greatest financial challenge for the English bus industry for a generation'. In some parts of the country the funding changes will 'have a disproportionately adverse impact on the provision of local bus services and the level of bus fares' and that these changes, introduced with inadequate or no consultation, will most affect 'some of the most vulnerable people in society, including the elderly'.

There is a lack of evidence about the impact of bus service cuts on disadvantaged groups. However, a report from Age UK is expected and Campaign for Better Transport is jointly doing research with pteg on the impact of bus service cuts on people in urban areas. Campaign for Better Transport, with Citizens Advice, is also gathering evidence on why bus services are important to people and the transport problems faced by those without employment. This research starts to build up a picture of the impact of cuts but there is a need for comprehensive research in this area by the DfT.

As stated above, the results of a detailed evaluation of accessibility planning are awaited. However, accessibility planning ought to identify the gaps in bus service provision with respect to employment and key services and amenities. This could then inform decisions about where service cuts might be made and where a finite amount of funding should be directed to maintain essential services.

Pteg has carried out research on the effect of bus fare increases on low income families (pteg, 2010 i). It showed that bus fares had almost doubled in real terms in the period 1985/86-2008/09 in the areas covered by the Passenger Transport Executives which are some of the most deprived in the country. This impact is disproportionate for a number of reasons including that: low income families are more dependent than others on bus travel; buses account for a larger proportion of their income; and the cheaper fare deals which involve paying larger lump sums are often unavailable to them. The report found that bus fare increases restricted the ability of households to meet the transport costs of their children for important out of school activities and

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[1] See "David Cameron's job search reforms 'are unrealistic'", The Telegraph, 9 May 2012.

re-stated one of the conclusions of the SEU that transport costs can be a barrier to employment for low income families.

The pteg report quoted the 2010 update of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Minimum Income Standard (*A minimum income standard for Britain in 2010)* which found that the minimum income required for an acceptable standard of living had risen steeply compared to general inflation 'because of significant rises in the price of certain commodities that are heavily represented in a minimum budget, such as food and public transport.' The Joseph Rowntree Foundation also stated that 'bus fares and council tax have risen by about two-thirds since 2000, a period when RPI (Retail Prices Index) has risen by less than a third, and the CPI (Consumer Prices Index) by less than a quarter.'

Transport poverty and transport costs

Sustrans Cymru, with other voluntary sector organisations, has considered the issue of transport poverty in Wales (Sustrans, 2012). It states that for several decades transport and land use policies have been based on an assumption of near-universal car access and that car ownership has come to be seen as essential in accessing services, amenities and employment. Figures compiled for the report show that half of all people in Wales could be struggling to afford the costs of running a car and might therefore be held to be in transport poverty. In any case a quarter of all households, including half of all single parent households and two-thirds of single pensioners, do not have access to a car. The report calls on politicians to tackle the growing problem of transport poverty by investing in alternatives to car ownership and car travel including public transport, walking and cycling routes and car clubs. Sustrans now intends to conduct similar research for England.

The Sustrans report uses the need for households to spend more than 10 per cent of their income on the costs of running a car, whether or not they actually own one, as an indicator of transport poverty. However, the report acknowledges the difficulty of measuring transport poverty and the absence of any officially accepted definition or measure. It recognises that transport poverty is a bigger matter than just the affordability of motoring costs. This touches on a contentious area that involves discussions, frequently reflected in the media and elsewhere, on the rate of fuel duty and the relative costs of public transport and motoring.

The RAC Foundation, for example, has cautioned against increasing the rate of fuel duty in a press release, *21 million in transport poverty,* issued in February 2012 in advance of the March budget. Making a comparison with the official definition of fuel poverty (where a household spends more than 10 per cent of its income keeping warm), the RAC argues that 21 million households in the UK, or four fifths of the total of 26 million, are in transport poverty because they spend on average more than 10 per cent of their income on transport. The claim is implausible and devalues the debate on genuine transport hardship. Much of this transport is not essential, as the RAC Foundation implies, but includes, for instance, air and other holiday travel. Moreover, the average 14 per cent of income spent on transport is boosted by the expenditure of the highest income groups; there is a steady progression in the proportion of income spent on transport from the lowest income quintile (9 per cent) to the highest (15.5 per cent). Transport poverty is obviously not greatest in the highest income group.

The impact of increases in fuel duty was considered by the Institute for Fiscal Studies several years ago in *The Petrol Tax Debate* (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2000). The effect of a fuel tax increase on the cost of living is smaller on low than high income households but greatest on those of middle incomes. If only car owning households are taken into account the impact is greatest on low income households. The impact is greater for all households and car-owning households in rural than urban areas. The report concludes that analysis suggests:

'an increase in fuel duty does impose a higher burden on poor car-owning households and on rural dwellers. But this does not mean that a fuel tax should not be used to try to protect the environment if it is decided that this is the most appropriate way to do so. It is the overall progressivity of the whole tax and benefit system that we are concerned about. The adverse effect on the cost of living of subsections of the population that we are concerned about could be compensated for, for example, by improving rural public transport.'

However, as we have seen rural public transport, or at least rural bus services, have been subject both to cuts and to fare increases.

In the nine years from 2001/02 to 2009/10 figures from the Office of National Statistics show that the proportion of households in the lowest income quintile which reported expenditure on petrol and diesel varied between about 40 and 47 per cent. Clearly the remainder, between 53 and 60 per cent, did not have access to a car or van. Even in the four higher income quintiles in 2009/10, the most recent year for which figures are available, the percentage of households reporting no expenditure on petrol or diesel, and therefore probably not owning a car or van, ranged from 47 to 23. The higher income households are less likely to have difficulty affording the costs of motoring but could face transport related social exclusion attributable to disability or age. 37 per cent of households of all income groups report no expenditure on petrol or diesel. (ONS, 2011).

This has obvious social exclusion implications and there are obvious environmental reasons to encourage a shift from car to public transport travel. In the longer term, however, motoring costs have declined as public transport has become more expensive. A report, *Transport Price Indices*, 2009, prepared for the RAC Foundation, found that over the previous ten years the cost of motoring had increased by 25 per cent while the cost of public transport fares had risen by 57 per cent. Against a background of a 41 per cent rise for the decade in the Retail Price Index, motoring had become cheaper in real terms while public transport had become more expensive.

Car use is essential for some low income households. The position taken by the RAC Foundation points to a conflict that arises between the environmental goal of reducing fuel use and carbon emissions and the need to reduce the poverty and social exclusion which can be exacerbated by higher fuel costs. Car dependence is a concept that brings these two together. First put forward in a report for the RAC Foundation itself in 1995 (ESRC Transport Studies Unit, 1995), the concept of car dependence suggests that with society promoting development around car use, some people are placed at a disadvantage by being tied into car use. Those with cars have to drive more than they would like to, some can ill-afford the costs of car ownership and use, and those without access to a car are disadvantaged. Car dependence reflects a number of factors including: the pattern and density of land use development; the accessibility of employment, services and amenities; the availability, cost and attractiveness of public transport; the quality of provision for walking and cycling; and the wealth of inhabitants. Campaign for Better Transport has researched and published Car Dependency Scorecards in three successive years 2009, 2010 and 2011 for respectively the English regions, English cities and European and UK cities (Campaign for Better Transport, 2009, 2010 and 2011) revealing pronounced differences in car dependency, and therefore in the factors that produce it, but also revealing its susceptibility to change.

The impact of traffic and transport on socially excluded or vulnerable groups

The 2003 Social Exclusion report addressed the impact of traffic on deprived areas and the people who live there. This has a number of aspects including the higher rate of road casualties, higher levels of air and noise pollution and the general effect of busy roads and high traffic volumes on local communities. This area has been revisited in recent research.

The DfT commissioned research to investigate why children and younger people from deprived areas are at greater risk of being killed or injured on the roads than those in more affluent areas (PACTS, 2011). This found that the greater number of casualties is attributable to: living in developments close to busy roads and fast traffic; having to walk more partly because of reduced car access; and having fewer alternatives to the street, such as parks or gardens, in which to socialise or play. Dangerous and unlawful driver behaviour including fast driving, dangerous parking and low use of seat belts or child restraints, was an important factor that combined with inadequate levels of law enforcement. Heavily trafficked roads and parking problems might occur in more affluent areas but children there had more alternatives to the street in which to play.

A number of means of reducing the road injuries in deprived areas emerged from the research. In the first place the physical environment might be managed by:
- Avoiding further intensification of housing (though other evidence points to the need for high density development, properly designed)
- Providing for public transport access and on-site, but off street, parking
- Giving greater priority to the needs of pedestrians through, for example, 20 mph limits and pedestrian crossings
- Reducing the domination of motor traffic
- Providing safe access to safe open space

Secondly there is a need for better traffic management and enforcement to reduce traffic volume, control its speed and enforce parking, seat belt and other driving laws. Third, the need for road safety and casualty reduction should be recognised in the agendas of organisations responsible for health, policing and other emergency services, children's services, community development and safety, housing and neighbourhood management and others. There should be more joined-up working with these sectors at an operational level.

Poor air quality has risen up the political agenda, though not necessarily reaching ruling administrations, and has further to go. The subject has recently been considered for the second time in the last three years by the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee (EAC). The Committee was in no doubt about the connection between poor air quality and transport. The introduction of its second report on air quality *Air Quality: A follow up report,* 2011, stated that: 'Transport caused the most exposure to harmful air pollutants, and air quality targets would never be met without a significant shift in transport policy.'

The second EAC air quality report rehearsed the findings of the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution (COMEAP), the Government advisory body, which had just published the report *Mortality Effects of Long-Term Exposure to Particulate Air Pollution in the UK, 2010.* The EAC Committee repeated COMEAP's conclusion that: 'In 2008, 4,000 people died in London from air pollution and 30,000 died across the whole of the UK.' Furthermore it reported preliminary findings from research in the Netherlands indicating that 'pollution levels increased with higher degrees of urbanization, higher numbers of non-western immigrants and lower house prices'. Meanwhile, citing Goodman et al, *Characterising socio-economic inequalities in exposure to air pollution: A comparison of socio-economic markers and scales of measurement*, 2011, the EAC said that 'preliminary results for England indicated that poor air quality is associated with areas of low income, low employment and low educational attainment, with differences in exposure to air pollution between different ethnic groups. Several other studies have also shown that elevated levels of pollution are concentrated amongst socially deprived neighbourhoods.'

In the report cited above COMEAP also advised the Government, that in addition to causing premature deaths, low air quality was responsible for exacerbating existing asthma conditions and could be implicated in causing new cases of asthma in those living on busy roads where emissions of particulates are often highest and low income households tend to predominate.

The damaging effect of heavy traffic on the social interaction of a community has been documented in several pieces of research and recorded most recently in Hart J, *Driven to Excess: Impacts of motor vehicle traffic on residential quality of life in Bristol, UK, 2009.* This found that residents of a heavily trafficked street,

(who, again, tend to have lower incomes than those living elsewhere) had less than a quarter of the number of friends and half the number of acquaintances as residents of a street with only light traffic. They also had more confined local territory, fewer social meeting spots and were less likely to have friends living on the other side of the street. In sum, it found that high levels of motor traffic are responsible for a 'considerable deterioration in residential community'.

This is likely to mean that those affected will have lower levels of social capital. Low levels of social capital are associated with lower health, economic and educational outcomes (OECD, 2001).

Conclusion

This review has touched on many areas where there are connections between transport and poverty. The report *Fairness in a car dependent society, 2011,* published by the Sustainable Development Commission, provides a useful overview of some of the issues that have economic implications but are not covered here.

That report describes in detail how increased personal travel and car use have been achieved at the expense of some of the poorest and most vulnerable in society looking in particular at seven groups: low income households, children, older people, disabled people, black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, rural communities and future generations. The report provides the evidence for a large number of findings including, for example:

- The richest 10 per cent receive four times as much public transport expenditure as the poorest 10 per cent largely because they benefit most from spending on the roads and railways
- Children of the lowest socioeconomic group are 28 times more likely to be killed on the roads than those of the top group and children generally are less free to travel independently largely because of fear of traffic
- Black people have among the lowest car ownership rates but in London, for example, and are 30 per cent more likely to be injured on the road than white groups
- 16 per cent of the UK population is over 65 but over 35 per cent of pedestrian casualties are over 70. Fear of traffic and problems with the reliability of public transport are significant obstacles to older people's independent travel
- The public transport network presents substantial difficulties for people with disabilities: 55 per cent of trains, 41 per cent of bus stations and 39 per cent of buses still do not reach current accessibility standards

The broad conclusion of the report is that current UK travel patterns have created inequality and that this inequality is two-fold: 'In general the people experiencing the worst access opportunities also suffer the worst effects of other people's travel. They are both 'less-travelled' and more 'travelled upon'.'

The same conclusion may be drawn from this literature review. A number of recommendations follow and these are set out in a separate document. But the fundamental recommendation made in *Fairness in a car dependent society,* which also follows from the literature review and underlies our own recommendations, is that a new approach to transport policy and to the development of transport policy is badly needed.

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It should be noted that workshop summaries and papers are available from a set of workshops on transport and social exclusion, led by Karen Lucas, and held as part of the research project on Social Impacts and Social Equity Issues in Transport research (listed in References above). The workshop notes and papers are not referred to, but many of the points made in the workshops are covered in this review.

Campaign for Better Transport's vision is a country where communities have affordable transport that improves quality of life and protects the environment. Achieving our vision requires substantial changes to UK transport policy which we aim to achieve by providing well-researched, practical solutions that gain support from both decision-makers and the public.