9TH CONFERENCE ON COMPETITION AND OWNERSHIP IN LAND TRANSPORT

DESIGNING PUBLIC TRANSPORT TO FOSTER PATRONAGE AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

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CONTEXT

Typical public policy goals for transport systems have, for some years, included economic, environmental and social outcome dimensions, with more recent interest in a quadruple bottom line 'governance' goal. Thus strategic policy goals for an urban transport system (for example), might appear something like the following:

1. economic – reduce the costs of traffic congestion; perhaps encourage a more dynamic urban economy, a policy goal frequently adopted in North America; ensure publicly supported transport systems/services are provided cost-effectively;
2. environmental – ensure vehicle emissions are consistent with air quality goals (e.g. particulate emissions) and vehicle greenhouse gas emissions are consistent with Kyoto targets;
3. social – improve the safety of the transport system and ensure that a decent basic mobility level is available to all (sometimes called an equity goal), particularly those groups of people who have few mobility choices and are therefore at risk of social exclusion;
4. governance – ensure that key stakeholders have the opportunity and capacity to contribute to transport policy/program development and that government structures are in place to facilitate and incorporate their input into a coordinated approach.

Economic, environmental and safety outcomes of transport systems/services have generally been amenable to various forms of quantitative analysis for some years. Thus, for example, mass transit proposals can be assessed for their prospective impacts on traffic congestion, air quality, climate change and road safety outcomes. The same cannot be said of outcomes in the area of social inclusion or, indeed, of the governance goal. These are not fully understood, let alone defined in measurable terms.

A value perspective on the need for basic levels of mobility to be available to all (a part of the social goal) does not take one far in terms of defining more clearly just what levels of mobility are required in particular circumstances. What are the benefits to individuals and society of good mobility? Should there be some basic minimum irrespective of location or should remote regional areas be treated differently to regional cities and to the outer urban fringes? How can you determine what a basic level of mobility ought to be for different groups? Does it differ according to the circumstances of the person (e.g. age, disability, income etc.)? What measures can be put in place to achieve the social equity goal, outlined above? Similarly, what are the desired levels of input into transport planning and development from citizens and non-government organisations? How is planning best integrated between the levels of government and non-government voices? What process should be in place to feed this information back into program and policy development? How can benchmarks be established?

It was questions such as these, and a lack of apparent answers, that prompted the present authors to undertake some initial investigations into the roles that access/mobility play in community and individual welfare and to explore the role that public transport, in particular, might perform in promoting social inclusion and participation. Those investigations have

shown that public transport policy may be partly driven by seeking to provide improved travel opportunities for groups who are regarded as 'transport disadvantaged' but that is about as far as it goes. There appears to be no systematic framework within which such initiatives can be considered and evaluated in terms of their ultimate contribution to community or individual wellbeing. Equally, approaches to pursuing the governance goal have been found to be in their infancy and lacking any clear directional guidance to policy makers or practitioners.

The concept of social exclusion/inclusion is explored, outlining how this has been used in a transport context. The paper finds that social exclusion has not generally moved beyond the concept of transport disadvantage and improving mobility and accessibility. It argues that a fuller understanding should incorporate impacts in areas of social capital and community strengthening, and in the developing conversations in relation to wellbeing and happiness. These issues are illustrated through case studies of the transport needs of socially excluded groups.

The paper then considers how social governance concepts might be applied within the transport sector, targeting social exclusion and drawing on place-based approaches to service integration. It illustrates this with examples of governance failure in use of community transport for particular disadvantaged or socially excluded groups. Ironically, this highlights a risk that community transport may even promote or reinforce social exclusion.

The analysis suggests that placing social inclusion and social governance goals more firmly on the policy agenda is likely to provide multiple benefits to groups with mobility disadvantage, as well as to other travellers, public transport providers and government It should also progress environmental and economic goals, such as through contributions to reducing congestion and improving service delivery efficiencies.

TRANSPORT AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Social exclusion, in the social policy literature, is a broad descriptor relating to the consequences of the existence of barriers which make it difficult or impossible for people to participate fully in society. The concept is presently in use in many policy contexts as a means of understanding equity issues.

Considerable work around the concept of social exclusion has taken place in the United Kingdom. The term was originally used to broaden understanding about poverty, particularly unemployment. Under this concept, the inability of people to be fully participating members of society is viewed more broadly than only in terms of a shortage of money, to include other forms of disadvantage. Thus, people may be socially excluded due to disability, age, unemployment, lack of transport, race, etc. The logic of this approach is that the way of "including" people with these disadvantages is not only, or even necessarily, to give them more money but also to develop social policies which specifically address their sources of disadvantage.

The Blair Government established the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) in 1997, with transport being one of its early areas of concentration, with the primary focus being on issues of

accessibility. In the SEU's transport study, links were drawn between the exclusion of people who do not have access to a car, and their needs for education, employment, access to health and other services and to food shops, as well as to sporting, leisure and cultural activities.

Findings from the SEU's transport study have been organized into five groups of barriers which need to be addressed in order to improve accessibility to key services that are central to social inclusion and where there is a transport connection (Figure 1). These are:

1. The availability and physical accessibility of transport
2. The cost of transport
3. Services located in inaccessible places
4. Safety and security – fear of crime
5. Travel horizons – people on low incomes were found to be less willing to travel to access work than those on higher incomes.

1. Improving physical accessibility and availability

2. Making travel more affordable

Measures that can help tackle accessibility problems

5. Widening travel horizons

3. Reducing the need to travel

4. Safer streets and stations

Figure 1 An Accessibility Planning Framework (drawing on SEU 2003, p.6)

The SEU argued that to remove these barriers and reduce social exclusion through transport improvements, there is a need to understand how people access key activities and link this with planning to improve such accessibility (accessibility planning), as well as undertaking key strategic policy initiatives, such as:

- reviewing the regulations governing provision of bus services (especially relevant to the UK context where de-regulation of service provision has taken place outside London);
- integration of transport planning into planning for services provision (e.g. education);
- a range of initiatives to make transport more accessible, such as reducing cost and addressing the fear of crime associated with public transport;
- the formation of partnerships between transport providers, local authorities and local service providers, such as education and health, and work on transport solutions.

Following the work of the SEU, a few other studies have explored the association between social exclusion and transport. Hine and Mitchell (2003) cover much of the same ground as the SEU. They still largely define social exclusion in a transport context in terms of a loss of ability of people to connect with services such as 'health facilities, local job markets and leisure activities' (2003, p.6). They note that expressing accessibility in exclusion terms has the advantage of clarifying the multiplicity of issues which result in transport disadvantage, such as poor social planning and policy at society and institutional levels. They recommend a number of transport-related approaches to tackling social exclusion, such as targeting of subsidies and concessions and provision for public transport in new housing developments.

Both studies recommend various forms of coordination as a means of addressing social exclusion. The SEU suggests transport planning should be integrated with service planning and partnerships should be formed on the supply side, between transport providers, local authorities and local service providers, to improve delivery efficiencies and effectiveness. Hine and Mitchell propose coordination between public transport services and, seemingly separately, coordination between various community transport operations.

A number of other studies have also come from the UK, largely targeting accessibility around specific groups of people. For example, Cartmel and Furlong (2000) found rural youth are more likely to suffer social exclusion than urban youth, due to an inability to access basic activities such as health services, education and employment.

In short, accessibility has been an integrating framework for some UK work on social exclusion/inclusion. There is no attempt to go beyond this, however, and establish how such access improvements might increase the wellbeing of those involved. Improved accessibility effectively becomes the outcome to be achieved.

Bradshaw (2003) notes that the language of social exclusion is largely absent in discourse from the United States and it is understood that the same conclusion applies to Canada.[1]. Although not operating from a social exclusion theoretical framework and language, however, our investigations show that there is a widespread interest in mobility issues faced by particular transport disadvantaged groups in North America (e.g. seniors and people with a disability) (Burkhardt, Koffman & Murray 2003). As with the UK, the conversation is largely around the need for transport disadvantaged people to access jobs, health care and recreation. Service co-ordination is strong focus in US research, mainly within the community transport sector (paratransit) and, less frequently, between community transport and public transport.

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[1] Personal communication from Michael Roschlau, CEO and President of the Canadian Urban Transit Association.

The concept of social exclusion has been slow to be adopted in Australia. While there has been discussion amongst some Australian academics (for example Jones & Smyth 1999), there has been little integration of this concept into social policy on any sizeable scale. However, pockets of interest in social exclusion appear to be widening, particularly in association with other social policy changes, such as placed-based policy (discussed further below). These include the place-based initiatives of the Beattie government in Queensland, which commenced in 1998, and the establishment of the Social Exclusion Unit by the South Australian State Government in 2002. The Department for Victorian Communities, established in 2002, while placing social policies more firmly on the state government's agenda, uses the language of 'addressing disadvantage' and 'fairness', rather than the language of social exclusion (Victorian Government, 2005). However, the philosophies behind the work of the Department for Victorian Communities appear to cover similar ground to that subsumed in the concept of social exclusion.

There has been little application of social exclusion concepts within the transport field in Australia, until very recently. However, the concept of transport disadvantage has been recognised in some transport planning initiatives (as in the US). Groups who are often seen as transport disadvantaged, in the sense that they have poor access to transport, often tend to coincide with those groups seen as at risk of being socially excluded: young and older persons, people with a disability, low income groups, Indigenous people, refugees/new migrants and rurally remote people. Alsnith and Hensher (2003) and Harris (2005) have researched transport issues for seniors and Currie et. al (2005) have worked on accessibility to transport for youth in rural and regional Australia. By implication, measures to reduce transport disadvantage are highly likely to improve social inclusion, although the links have not been drawn out.

A wider understanding of social exclusion

To a large degree, work on transport and social exclusion has been a conversation about accessibility in a narrow sense, about the need for people to obtain goods and services and get to work, school, recreation, etc. While this issue is of considerable importance, in itself, there does not appear to have been any attempt to go further and examine:

1. possible links between improved accessibility and the development of social capital and community strengthening, which provides an additional means of fostering social inclusion; and,

2. the links between improved accessibility, social inclusion and wellbeing.

While accessibility to transport facilitates the procurement of a service, by doing this, it may also facilitate the development of social networks, or connections amongst individuals. This leads to the development of social capital, or the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness between people (Putman 2000). The building of social capital binds networks of people who cooperate to resolve collective problems, promoting personal and business interactions and widening awareness of others and flows of useful information (Putman 2000). Good levels of interaction between people promotes a sense of belonging and strengthens communities. This

in turn builds capability and capacity in the community, such as leadership skills, participation in community organisations, volunteering pride, a sense of safety and wellbeing, as well improvement in factors such as 'school retention, employment, transport, family stability and crime prevention' (Department for Victorian Communities, internet).

Figure 2 depicts the mainstream thinking of how improved accessibility might lead to (for example) employment of a previously unemployed person, with the associated benefit of improved social inclusion. It also suggests an indirect path to social inclusion, by which improved accessibility leads to growth in social capital/community strengthening. In turn, the enhanced social networks thereby created may themselves assist the person to achieve employment and inclusion.

The provision of transport may be the means to directly link an unemployed person with employment. Alternatively, transport accessibility may enable people to form associations or relationships and engage with other people and groups. This, in turn, may lead to increased job prospects, as most employment is obtained through personal contacts. This can be understood in terms of the development of social capital, which, in itself, leads to improved health, wellbeing, and happiness. The act of being on public transport, in itself, may directly improve social capital, as travel offers opportunities to engage with other travellers. The establishment of personal networks (through the transport link) may in turn lead to employment opportunities.
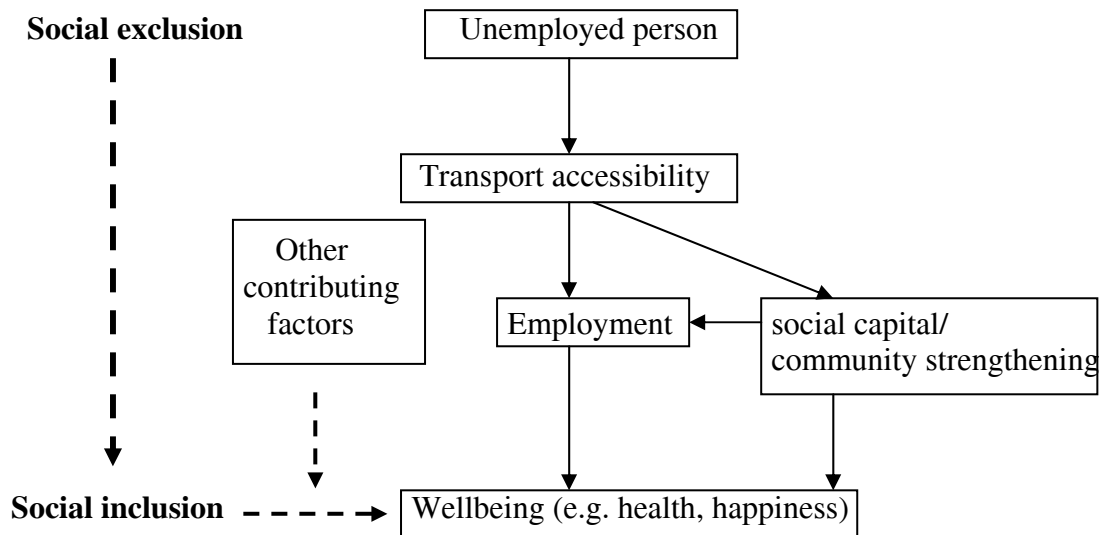
Figure 2. The roles of accessibility in leading to social inclusion

The second 'shortcoming' of the present approach is that reducing social exclusion is effectively seen as the end-point goal of a policy process. The current authors believe that reducing social exclusion per se is not the ultimate policy goal, which should instead be couched in terms of enhancing individual/community wellbeing, an approach more consistent with a welfare economics analytical framework.

Figure 2 thus suggests a link between improvement in transport, social inclusion and notions of wellbeing and happiness (see Ryan & Deci 2001, Layard 2005). Both these concepts are currently attracting considerable interest in the psychology literature. Although the conversations are from difference disciplines, as with the sociologically based notions of social capital, the literature on wellbeing and happiness is recognising the 'fundamental importance of warm, trusting, and supportive interpersonal relationships for wellbeing' (Ryan & Deci 2001, p.154).

Figure 2 also indicates that there are, of course, many factors that contribute to health, happiness and wellbeing. Extra income is associated with increases in happiness – but only to a certain point when diminishing returns may set in (Layard 2005), Also included are the attainment of strong attachment relationships, age-appropriate cognitive, interpersonal and coping skills, and exposure to environments which empower a person (Cowen 1991).

Warrnambool case-study

Our identification of the two areas where we have argued that the links between transport and social exclusion need to be taken further arose partly from our study into the needs of groups of people at risk of social exclusion in Warrnambool, a regional centre of about 35,000 people on the coast in south-west Victoria, Australia (Stanley & Stanley 2004).

In contrast to the SEU's transport study, the Warrnambool study did not attempt to define the parameters of social exclusion in terms of accessibility to specific services: education, employment, access to health and other services and to food shops, as well as to sporting, leisure and cultural activities. Instead, it set out to explore travel needs of transport disadvantaged groups as they, and people representing their interests, saw them, as well as gathering some comparative information on those without such disadvantage. The study clearly showed the importance of accessibility to services for groups at risk of social exclusion, in line with the work of the SEU and others, but it brought home strongly how the value of access improvements for socially excluded groups may be substantially greater than for groups who are already included.

A shopping survey, where car use clearly dominated travel mode choice, together with a small household survey, showed the strong attachment to the car in the region and the high level of mobility it provides. Car use frequently involves travelling accompanied, indicating an important social benefit from such travel in terms of developing social capital. Car users tended to make more trips than those who were more transport disadvantaged, even though transport disadvantaged groups tended to engage in slightly more activities per trip. This was suggestive of a higher degree of inclusion of car users, associated with their higher level of mobility in a community where travel alternatives are quite limited.

Route bus users were interviewed. Four out of five day-time bus travellers saw they had no other travel alternative, two out of three having no car available and some others not possessing a drivers' licence. Some bus users often travelled alone and used the travel experience itself as an important part of social inclusion, rather than as a means of gaining access to a service or place. Conversations frequently occurred between bus passengers and

between passengers and drivers, many of whom were well known to each other. The two-hour route bus ticket was found to encourage quick trips, which discouraged social inclusion in some cases.

Examples:

An elderly lady, with restricted mobility (shopping trolley used as a walking frame) made a circular bus trip, getting on and off at her home, simply to get out and talk to other passengers. The trip itself was her means for social inclusion and for "creating social capital".

Three generations of a family travelled together daily on a bus to see each other and engage with the bus driver and other passengers.

Many young people were found to have considerable difficulties associated with transport, particularly in relation to access to educational programs, work and entertainment. Rural youth living on farms, where the family had a low income, faced the greatest transport disadvantage. These youth were unable to access public transport and this meant that some were unable to seek holiday work and had few opportunities for recreational pursuits over the school holidays. Youth services officers expressed considerable concern about the wellbeing of this rurally isolated group, which has a relatively high suicide rate. This strongly suggests the existence of a clear link between social exclusion and wellbeing for those involved, with the consequences of exclusion being very substantial in terms of life opportunities for some.

The local university campus is located outside the urban area, about five kilometres from the town centre. Local activities are primarily based in the town. University residential students without a car tended to face difficulties getting involved in recreational and other pursuits, such as part-time employment. Car ride sharing was common but was seen by some as an imposition. Female international students faced particular problems, being least likely to ask others for lifts. With the university's growth strategy being partly based on attracting overseas students, this access issue is of concern, both to the individuals involved and to the university. A possible consequence of failing to deliver improved access opportunities is loss of overseas students, because of the limited opportunities for social inclusion.

The role of access/mobility in promoting social inclusion, particularly social networks, could be clearly seen in seniors in Warrnambool. Car use is high in the seniors group and those with car availability typically have good accessibility. However, the strong car culture among many seniors is associated with neglect of planning for personal mobility requirements in later years, when car use is less of an option or simply not possible. This resulted in a sudden diminution of mobility for many and expressions of loneliness amongst this group, when driving ceased. They appeared to be unable to easily transfer to other forms of transport. This trend was found even for some people who were resident in an aged village, which owned a community transport vehicle.

Many Warrnambool people with a disability had not been part of the car culture and had organized their mobility requirements around using alternatives. These alternatives included public transport, community transport, walking (seemingly more than any other group), friends'/families' vehicles and taxis, with consequentially good levels of accessibility for most, supported by locational choices that tended to minimise the need for travel. These people have built their social capital and those living in urban areas, in particular, appeared to have relatively high social inclusion and wellbeing

Those on low incomes frequently found mobility difficult. Family groups often undertook car sharing, with one person (usually the mother) taking a very heavy load of driving other people to school, employment, health appointments. Those in geographically isolated areas, together with young single mothers, were at high risk of social exclusion. A combination of scarce child care opportunities and low frequency public transport, together with the costs of both, restricted the opportunities for income and socially inclusive activities.

The regional Indigenous community has its own buses that are well utilized. The need for such vehicles is indicative of transport disadvantage faced by many in this community, who feel uncomfortable using route buses, due to the perception of racism from other passengers. Such racism this tends to reinforce social exclusion and diminishes the cohesion of the Warrnambool community.

The importance of public transport, beyond a simple accessibility function to groups of people at risk of social exclusion was continually emphasised, in terms of the building of connectedness, networks and social capital. Other factors, such as community strengthening, were not assessed in this case-study.

Thus, working from a broad 'needs based' approach to social exclusion in the Warrnambool case-study enabled a greater understanding of the interface between transport, social exclusion and the consequences of such exclusion. Accessibility to recreation, services and employment, was difficult for some people. Multiple disadvantage, or multiple sources of risk of exclusion, compounded both accessibility difficulties and associated social network opportunities and thus potentially had a major adverse impact on a person's wellbeing and happiness. The study has emphasised the order of magnitude difference that may exist between improving accessibility for those who are already socially included and those who are socially excluded. There is simply no comparison between a transport initiative that saves a few minutes travelling time for someone who already has a well developed social network and wide life opportunities and an initiative that opens up networks of opportunity for someone who is socially excluded. The same finding has emerged from two similar studies undertaken by the present authors in an outer Melbourne suburb.

A consequence of this finding, for transport policy and planning, is that the benefits in terms of individual and community wellbeing from enhancing access/mobility of socially excluded groups are likely to be substantially greater than those arising from initiatives that create prima facie similar transport gains for those who are already socially included. An urgent research need, therefore, becomes the detailed analysis and, if possible, quantification of the benefits in question to those who are socially excluded. This benefit scale argument is implicitly accepted by those who fund community transport programs for some particular

transport disadvantaged groups, such as disabled or seniors, where the cost per passenger trip may be several times the cost per trip of conventional public transport (Trimble 2005). We argue later in this report that there may be more cost-effective solutions to provision of some of this 'specialised' transport.

In the absence of detailed understanding and measurement of the wellbeing benefits from improved access/mobility to socially excluded groups, transport policy should ensure that travel opportunities are available to such groups for the times at which most activities take place. Transport service planners should accept lower utilisation rates on such services in the knowledge that the value of the travel in question is likely to be substantially higher than for a similar volume of travel by socially included people.

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

As well as people with certain characteristics being at risk of social exclusion, socially excluded groups of people are frequently clustered in specific locations: place-based social exclusion. These are typically areas with cheaper housing, which often have poor infrastructure and low employment opportunities. Thus, many residents of disadvantaged areas may experience difficulty in participating fully in activities which are essential for their wellbeing. Transport initiatives are likely to be particularly relevant in such place-based cases of exclusion.

A focus on accessibility and social exclusion quickly draws attention to the tensions between functionally arranged government services and the place-based locations for most of their delivery. This issue was highlighted in the Warrnambool case study, both within the transport sector and between transport and other sectors. This section focuses on problems of a lack of co-ordination between various parts of the transport sector, suggesting that this lack of co-ordination may be a long term threat to service availability to socially excluded groups. Footnote 2 provides an illustration of the lack of co-ordination between transport and other sectors, in this case education[2].

Community transport (or paratransit in the US) describes a largely ad hoc set of transport services usually provided for specific groups of people with particular needs or accessibility difficulties. This may include buses attached to elderly citizen residential centres, Day Centres and Local Councils for use of particular community service groups. The size of this transport system in Australia is now quite large and growing and has been identified for a considerable boost in funding in the recent Victorian social policy statement (Victorian Government 2005). The Warrnambool study identified that a community transport service was attached to a wide range of services, including schools, the Warrnambool Council (local government), Red

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[2] The Victorian government introduced a new secondary school education pathway which, post-school, led to an apprenticeship and trade education. The program involved attendance at secondary school, Trade College and at a work place. However, the scheme in rural areas around Warrnambool was said to lose 50% of the children who commenced, largely because the program failed to consider, and make provision for, how the children were going to travel between these education sites.

Cross, a Retirement Centre, a centre for people with a disability, the Indigenous health service and health services in small local towns.

Provision of community transport is usually a result of an initiative by a non-transport sector, which recognises that transport is a basic requirement to enjoy the services provided by that sector. It can be seen as a response to policy failure on the part of the transport sector in meeting the transport needs of some groups of people who are at risk of social exclusion.

Community transport in Victoria (and in may other places) meets the accessibility needs of some people, for some of the time. However, as noted by Carlisle (2003), it faces difficulties: For example:

1. Restricted hours of operation: most services do not operate in the evenings or at weekends, although private hire of vehicles is sometimes allowed at such times.
2. In some services, medical appointments take priority over social contact.
3. Poor utilisation rates for some vehicles and transport services: for example, a sample of vehicles operated within the community transport sector in the broader Warrnambool region showed an average usage rate of 16,100 kilometres/year, with over 40% doing fewer than 10,000 kilometres/year. Difficulties in obtaining volunteer drivers is one reason for poor resource use. By way of comparison, the average usage rate of a school bus in the area is almost 26,000 kilometres/year and there is scope to increase this utilization rate.
4. Investing in vehicles rather than transport: Carlisle argues that many clubs and activity centres have invested in vehicles and are then left to deal with all the operational issues (e.g. accreditation, insurance, driver training, etc). This money could be better invested in organizing suitable transport to the locations needed by looking at the range of vehicles already available in the area.
5. Poor information provision: information on transport options is usually lacking, restricting use of available options. Few community transport providers promote their services.

The biggest concern, from the present authors' perspective, is that community transport entails a very narrow approach to dealing with social exclusion. It is typically quite 'exclusive', as eligibility and other requirements need to be met to obtain the service, such as within specified hours and sometimes only for particular purposes (such as medical appointments). While the service intent may be to increase social inclusion, the irony is that restrictive eligibility conditions can tend to have the opposite effect, restricting engagement opportunities to within the group.

The pattern of promoting exclusivity by providing specific transport services for people with a specific disability is going against the trend in many other sectors, which are seeking to integrate people more into mainstream society. For example, large institutions (children's homes and institutions for people with intellectual disability), were closed down in the 1980s and early 1990s in Victoria. Children with a disability are being integrated into the school system through a system of teacher aides and disability legislation requires buildings to be provided with wheelchair access. Social networking, the development of social capital and community capacity building are diminished where diversity is segmented.

The organisation of community transport is beginning to change in Australia and elsewhere, with various forms of service coordination and cooperation taking place within the sector. This is largely driven by the recognition of inefficient resource use and by the associated realisation that co-ordination between agencies providing services, or even integration, offers the possibility of either cutting costs, improving service levels or both. Burkhardt and colleagues (2003) show that such changes can deliver significant benefits in all these areas. However, there is a risk that the boundary of social inclusion is simply moving outwards with such initiatives, encompassing more people with similar characteristics and continuing to exclude others.

Some community transport systems are moving towards an incorporated organisation that has community transport as its core business. This is likely to further harden the boundary between community transport and regular public transport systems and may institutionalise duplicate systems. This could threaten the viability of both systems. By removing passengers or inhibiting patronage growth on regular public transport, it undermines the viability of those services, and vice-versa. The study in Warrnambool, for example, found that consideration was being given to new residential developments on the edge of Warrnambool being serviced by a community bus, rather than extending the existing route bus service. This would be a risk to the future viability of the route bus service, where over 80% of passengers are concession travellers, (prima facie evidence they face a risk of social exclusion). Such developments could be said to reinforce social exclusion, by reducing the network options available for socially excluded people.

Risks to route services, and their customers, from the growing demand for, and high costs of, demand responsive paratransit services in the US has been noted by Trimble (2005). Her analysis found that these services catered for 3% of trips provided by Washington State Transit Agencies but required 14.5% of the budgets. She notes the following (Trimble 2005, p. 2):

Nationwide, ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) paratransit budgets are increasingly eating into total transit budgets – which constrains funding for cheaper and more efficient fixed route services…To manage demand on paratransit services, a popular and reasonable approach has been to encourage and train paratransit riders to utilize fixed route services, when appropriate.

This brief overview of developments in the community transport sector suggests that service duplication between community transport and regular public transport is a glaring example of Tactical level failure in dealing with accessibility aspects of social exclusion. Even though the community transport sector's origins are primarily founded in providing mobility/ accessibility for transport disadvantaged, socially excluded groups and individuals, the duplication in services that such services sometimes creates needs to be seen as a potential threat to social inclusion in two ways: by restrictive approaches to who can use a service and by increasing demands for scarce funds for public transport service provision in the broadest sense.

A more co-ordinated approach to community transport and regular public transport service provision is essential, within the context of place-based policy, if the opportunities for those

clients needing transport services are to be maximised. Regular public transport services need to become more flexible, to cater for the specific mobility issues facing many socially excluded people. Community transport needs to focus its resources more directly on those with the greatest mobility difficulties, who are least able to switch to regular public transport. Incentives should be available to encourage such a switch. The outcome will be more efficient, comprehensive and effective services to socially excluded groups and individuals.

An improved Tactical level approach to planning and delivering transport services for socially excluded groups should involve those groups, or representatives thereof, in needs identification and in developing possible solutions to those needs. This is an integral part of understanding the relevant needs and in capacity building, which forms an important element in social inclusion and thus wellbeing. This is in line with the governance goal outlined in the Context section of this paper.

SOCIAL GOVERNANCE AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

This paper has defined governance in relation to transport matters as the process of ensuring that key stakeholders have the opportunity and capacity to contribute to transport policy/program development and that government structures are in place to facilitate and incorporate their input into a coordinated approach. The focus of the paper is on the role of transport, particularly public transport, in reducing social exclusion. This section briefly considers how social governance processes might contribute to reducing social exclusion.

Social governance (and related subjects such as community engagement/participation, associational governance) is a rapidly emerging field in social policy, with few established theoretical models to guide practice. The concept is commonly understood within a place-based context. Processes which involve citizens and the community are increasingly being talked about and experimented with, under such banners as 'capacity building', 'citizen participation' and 'community strengthening'. The method, and extent, of community participation varies greatly between programs, from consultation to far more active engagement. Fine, Pancharatnam & Thomson (2000), in their review of a number of social governance case studies, found that more effective outcomes were typically achieved in those projects that included active community involvement.

As with social exclusion, the concept of social governance (inclusive processes), as it might apply to transport, has been little explored and neither has the linkage(s) between such processes and the outcome goal of social inclusion. Ironically, the UK Local Transport Plans, which are intended to target social exclusion, appear to ignore engagement processes in their derivation. These plans are more about accessibility planning than about inclusion in the broader sense, a matter said to be addressed in 2005 plans.

The current authors used various engagement techniques, targeting socially excluded groups and others, in the identification of transport needs in the Warrnambool case study and proposed on-going processes for engagement at the Tactical level. In particular, that study recommended the establishment of a multi-stakeholder Warrnambool Regional Accessibility

Council. The main roles of the Council would be to identify transport/accessibility needs and to facilitate partnerships towards meeting these needs, with associated changes in State responsibility and funding channels that support the new approach . The Council was proposed to include representatives of government, public transport and taxi operators, community sector organisations and members of the community, with local government playing a driving facilitative role.

Such co-ordinated demand and supply side initiatives should help to improve the effectiveness of the way needs are identified and the efficiency with which existing transport resources are used. The Victorian Government has subsequently established the proposed Regional Accessibility Planning Council as a demonstration model.

POLICY CHALLENGES IN USING THE SOCIAL GOVERNANCE MODEL

The introduction of governance process principles, with a particular objective of reducing social exclusion, provides many challenges, in what is still a little understood form of public management. Many of these challenges will be faced in the transport sector as it moves towards various forms of governance models, some of which are identified by the US Transportation Research Board (TRB 2004), as illustrated below. The particular focus in these examples is achieving increased social inclusion.

Coalition-Building

If social exclusion is a policy objective, then governance processes should seek to include representatives of excluded groups, such as peak non-government agencies and regional/local service delivery agencies and their constituencies, in needs identification and program development and implementation processes (the level of involvement depending on the issues being targeted). Coalition building around transportation issues has been shown to be an effective means of improving transportation services delivery to transport disadvantaged groups. Typical coalition partners include transport agencies, human service agencies, local government, non-government organisations etc. TRB (2004, p. 2) suggests that, in this context, a broad-base coalition has the best chance of success.

Experience suggests that, the more local the engagement being sought, the more difficult it is to achieve engagement of a cross-section of interests, because the process is time consuming, resource intensive and demanding of participants, who may initially see little direct pay-off. A long term perspective is needed, with governmental partners committed to a workable coalition.

Leadership

The US (TRB 2004) report identifies the critical importance of strong leadership, both at local and state levels. Successful outcomes frequently depend on a champion who has vision, dedication, perseverance and is willing to work hard. The importance of engagement,

leadership and personal drive was identified as important to program success in an evaluation undertaken by one of the authors in relation to the integration of children's services (Hydon, Stanley, Van Dyke and Webb 2005).

UK research raises a concern about how leadership may be generated within a community when community involvement is introduced, often not due to a concern of the community, but rather as a result of work is initiated or 'manufactured' by the government (Hodgson 2004).

Sustainability

Sustaining a coalition over the long term was found to be a challenge in the TRB report, a finding that mirrors one of the findings of Hydon et. al (2005) in relation to children's services. An important issue in relation to sustainability in the latter study related to the problem of cost-shifting from government to community. While most not-for-profit groups operate with considerable goodwill, the expectation of voluntary input from the not-for-profit groups and the community, while other partnership members are paid (such as government representatives) is a source of tension. Time pressures associated with an additional 'voluntary' work load may slow progress in the program, while the inequity could create an unwillingness to remain involved.

Building trust

Trust between partners and concerns about control over client services and funds, was viewed as a major challenge in the 22 case-studies reviewed in the TRB report, an issue strongly reflected in other studies. Issues of trust, accountability and the willingness to devolve power and decision-making are of prime importance to successful engagement, as discussed in the keynote paper by Stanley, Betts and Lucas to this conference (Stanley, Betts and Lucas 2005) and as found by Hydon, Stanley, et. al.(2005). Various mechanisms to encourage trust are discussed in the Stanley, Betts and Lucas (2005).

At times government, while (in theory) involving civil society, in practice finds it difficult to relinquish authority, often 'seeking to control from a distance' (Hodgson, 2004). Such behaviour will discourage trust. These problems can be compounded by a governmental failure to integrate policy and operations between head and regional departmental offices. This shows a lack of leadership and undermines both coalition building and trust.

The kind of behaviours likely to encourage trust in a governance process that is targeted at reducing social exclusion are: involving stakeholders from the start; investing effort in developing relationships with these stakeholders; maintaining on-going and open communications; and, ensuring effective participation.

Effective participation

For the goal of social inclusion to be achieved, it is of great importance to ensure that community participation is more than tokenism. Once a community opinion has been

obtained about policy/program matters, there needs to be integration between the strategic (broad policy goals), tactical (system design) and operational (service delivery) levels, to make this input effective through to policy and program development, implementation and monitoring.

The failure in such integration can be seen in the Victorian Government's Neighbourhood Renewal Program and the smaller Breaking Cycles, Building Futures project, which finished at the end of 2004. Both these programs have central goals around community engagement and participation, yet lacked structures to capture community opinions beyond the operational level. A similar fault can be seen in the Victorian government's Transport Connections program which, in essence, places project workers in local communities to facilitate local transport. While this program may produce some valuable local initiatives, the failure to integrate the program with the tactical and strategic levels, is likely to result in small, localised and unsustainable initiatives. There is a real risk that such a scheme will frustrate the community, rather than encouraging social inclusion.

It is difficult to measure the extent to which the outcomes sought from integration are achieved and whether they are a result of the integration or other factors (Fine, Pancharatnam & Thomson, 2000). The literature commonly reports that judgement is still open about the 'success' of the integrated governance model in general (eg. Geddes 2003). Notwithstanding such concerns, given the value commitment to pursue a social inclusion goal and the expectation that engagement is an important element in this process, it is important that all avenues to achieve a successful process are taken, in line with these values.

Function versus place

Governmental service delivery organisation is still primarily functionally based, with policy making logic still largely based around markets and prices and the dominant public sector paradigm, which features contracting and risk management (Wiseman 2005). The influence of integrated governance is small and largely experimental in nature. The interface between this model and the place-based, integrated governance model with participatory decision-making with the community is, as yet, difficult and awkward. These tensions can undermine governmental commitment to place-based delivery and engagement of socially excluded groups.

CONCLUSION

There are strong inter-connections between the four policy goals outlined at the beginning of this paper. Addressing the goal of social inclusion through improved transport systems will positively impact on public transport patronage, with likely spin-off benefits in terms of reduced traffic congestion, lower road accident rates and improved environmental outcomes. Improved public management, through coordinated approaches to needs identification and program planning and delivery, including community engagement, is also likely to improve both the social goal of inclusion, as well as increase patronage and deliver economic efficiencies within the transport sector in service delivery (e.g. as between community transport and regular public transport).

To achieve such goals there has to be more comprehensive understanding of the access needs of people at risk of social exclusion and how this links to well-being, including the building of social capital and community strengthening outcomes. This paper has argued that the individual benefits of reduced social exclusion to the people involved are likely to be many times greater in ultimate value than those derived from transport initiatives that focus on people who are already included. This conclusion should drive a search for clearer identification of the benefits of reduced exclusion, to place social inclusion more equally alongside more readily measurable economic and environmental policy outcomes. It should also drive a search for improved methods of achieving engagement of socially excluded groups and individuals, to maximise the potential effectiveness of program outcomes directed to such groups and in recognition of the democratic rights that underpin such engagement.

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