

SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND TRANSPORT

Submission No.7 to the Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission

Discussion of issues relevant to the Commission's inquiries

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Sean Creighton
Norbury resident
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sean.creighton1947@btinternet.com

The author was Secretary of the Public Utilities Access Forum 1991-2000, of the Consumer Environment Forum (1997-9), of the Water Saving Trust Steering Group (1997-8), and member of the Oftel Consumer Panel (1999-2001).

He has spent his working, community and politically active life on issues relating to poverty, antipoverty, poor housing and homelessness, housing provision, regeneration, environment, community development and organisation, planning and community/police consultative issues, community engagement and participation, as well as being a historian of aspects of these including Black British History. He has been a Councillor, a member of regeneration boards, an administrator (inc. Committee Secretary) and organiser (e.g. events), a policy researcher and information sharer. He co-ordinates the Croydon Radical and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor networks, reports on developments and events on his two blog sites and in Croydon Citizen. He monitors and shares information in advance on what is under discussion in Council committees on one of his blog sites. He is currently organising several history and cultural events in Croydon.

Key Issues

1. Poor transport contributes to social exclusion by reducing people from taking part in a range of activities, including work, education, health care, childcare, shopping, volunteering, caring, sport, exercise and leisure, and seeing friends and family.
2. This social exclusion may be linked to:
 - the personal circumstances of individuals and families, such issues as age, disability and low income.
 - to poor public transport and lack to affordable private transport.
3. In an area like Croydon the transport contribution to social exclusion can often be concentrated in some neighbourhoods .
Those seeking jobs may be particularly adversely affected because there od inadequate transport links between where they live and where they work.
4. There are some aspects of the relationship between transport and social exclusion which only become obvious when people are asked what their specific needs are.
 - Elderly people may well live on a bus route which will take them to a shopping area, but are unable to carry their own shopping.
 - Life conditions such as claustrophobia prevent many people using trains and Underground/Metros, because of the fear of being enclosed especially in tunnels.
 - Having more than one child can make using public transport difficult.
 - Fear for personal safety when using public transport - particularly single females and young boys/teenagers traveling alone.
 - Given higher use is made of buses by socially excluded groups they are forced to have longer journey times because of the delays caused by passengers getting on buses because of the move to one-person operation.
5. The transport problems which are most important in preventing people from getting to where they need to get to will vary from locality to locality, and according to individual needs.
 - Croydon has a low level of car ownership, and many people have mobility difficulties.
6. The following are some of the transport problems:
 - Fares or running costs can be too expensive
 - Routes do not go to where people need to go
 - Services do not start early enough in the morning or stop too early at night
 - Services are too infrequent
 - Stations or stops are too far away
 - Lack of available and affordable door-to-door services (e.g. taxis, taxi-buses, dial a ride)
 - Poor interchange between different modes, or between different operators
 - Safety issues due to bus design or driving or the layout of train stations
 - Services are located too far away

Transport, Social Exclusion and Sustainability

7. Transport policy must be driven by the principles of sustainability, and address the tensions between economic development, social justice and environmental benefit. In pursuit of environmental benefit transport policy could increase social exclusion.

- Many car journeys have to be made because public transport routes do not go to where people need to go to work, leisure, and services.
- In some cases timetabling does not allow for shift workers to use public transport early in the morning or late at night.
- Low income and disadvantaged households which are dependent on cars could be penalised by fiscal measures designed to reduce the majority of owners from using their cars.
- Old cars tend to be those which are likely to emit higher levels of pollution. Penalties against dirty emission cars can penalise low income car owners who cannot afford up-to date cars with improved emission standards, or afford to maintain their vehicles to prevent polluting emissions.

Adverse Effects of Vehicles on Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods

8. Many disadvantaged neighbourhoods are areas through which large quantities of traffic flow, creating dangers to the residents:

- pollution and poor air quality adversely affecting health
- increased safety hazards involved in crossing roads
- increased noise pollution
- conflicts between pedestrians and children playing on the one hand and drivers on the other

All these factors reduce the quality of life of these neighbourhoods.

9. Local opinion surveys on quality of life and the environment put air quality as a major concern of people. They hate the lower quality of air in towns and cities, and it is one of the major reasons why there is a move away from them. This option is less open to those living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Taking Services to Neighbourhoods

10. Improving transport is one element in tackling neighbourhood social exclusion in terms of access to services that are not provided locally. Part of the process of regenerating these neighbourhoods is to bring services back into the areas. This can be done through encouraging businesses and financial services to operate in the neighbourhood again. It is also about supporting community and voluntary organisations providing services whether in a building like a multi-purpose community centre or social action centre building, or through specialist activity such as playschemes.

Community Transport Services

11. Community transport services can be an effective way of meeting the special needs of users who have problems using public transport and who do not have their own vehicles.

Neighbourhood Renewal and Transport

12. The transport aspects of social exclusion should be an integral part of the community development and participation processes used to develop community and neighbourhood strategies and empowering communities. It is an issue that allows the special needs of communities of interest (e.g. elderly, people with disabilities) to be linked to the general needs of communities of place.

Planning and Transport

13. The planning system should be changed:

- to become a tool for achieving the sustainable development of communities
- to increase community participation in the decision-making process should be strengthened
- to support the achievement of community and neighbourhood strategies

14. Transport policy and action should be an integral part of this reform.

Refocusing Transport Policy

15. Transport policy needs to be refocused:

- to meet the needs of the socially excluded, and especially women, children, members of low income households, the elderly, and those with disabilities
- to improve the frequency, affordability, cleanliness and safety of public transport serving neighbourhoods
- to reduce the adverse effects of high levels of through traffic and associated pollution
- so that it contributes to sustainability (economic development, social justice, and environmental benefit)
- to provide special service provision where general services cannot meet specialist needs
- to be linked in with a reformed planning system, and with community and neighbourhood strategies.