

Youth and transport: the emergence of *youth transport strategies*.

There is a growing literature on the relationship between youth and transport and the concept of *youth transport strategies* has begun to take its place in transport policy thinking.

One strand of this literature has grown out of the transport and social exclusion/social inclusion debate: within this debate, it is recognized that conventional transport planning has not paid sufficient attention to the needs of youth in its organization of provision. At best, transport has been planned for youth and not planned with youth: participatory planning has focused on adults as the units of participation and rarely dipped below the line of majority (official adulthood). The recognition that there is a need to repair this *transport provision* and *planning participation deficit* has led to the growth of youth transport strategies.

Apart from considerations of social exclusion, there are a number of other policy drives which have resulted in a focus on *youth transport strategies* as an important policy tool. Concerns about the environment and the limitations of urban congestion have led to a policy climate in which there is concern to move people out of private motor vehicles and on to public transport or non motorized modes such as walking or cycling. The policy pressure is toward demand management of the motorized mode and this requires major changes in travel behaviour. Changes in travel behaviour require policy interventions at more than one level: one level of intervention is the education and involvement of the traveling public in the design and organization of transport systems. Youth is an appropriate focus for any change policy as new travel behaviours are more easily learnt and interiorized: involving youth in programs and policies on non-motorised or public transport based travel is key.

Another policy drive which has gained momentum is that of health. Concern about the obesity 'epidemic' and in particular youth obesity have led to a focus on the need to increase the level of the physical activity of youth. Increasing physical activity in the context of youth's travel and increasing the access of youth to physical activity location through transport both enter this new social equation. Gymnasiums, stadiums, nature parks and trails, accessing all these places of safe physical activity may require transport. Youth transport strategies have to be multi-faceted.

The new information communication technologies can greatly assist in integrating youth into a better tuned use of and participation in the transport environment. Real time information on transport services can be specifically designed to meet the needs of youth: special services to enable transport to and from youth events can be organized through volunteer fleets of drivers or through the flexible use of public transport vehicles and can be better and more securely organized through the new information communication technology.

Public transport operators can develop an area of their web site expressly to service youth and to enable the participation of youth. This can be used both as a location for the

coordination of youth transport services – it can carry information on special transport arrangements for special events – and it can be used as a location for participation and feed back exercises. The low transaction costs of setting up a site as compared with conventional survey methodologies are worth considering here.

Within youth transport strategies, issues of safety, security and seasonality require explicit consideration. Travel modes which are safe and secure in one season may not be safe and secure in another where extreme weather conditions are experienced. In the literature, these issues seem to have had the most minor of consideration but are likely to be very important in the designing of youth transport strategies in extreme weather locations.

In designing a youth transport strategy, it is helpful to collect together all existing base line data on the provision and planning of youth transport (such as school board travel data) and to conduct a survey which enables youth itself to identify its needs. The ability of youth to identify its needs will increase with its inclusion and integration into transport planning provision but at the very outset of the strategy, and even though youth's ability to completely specify its own needs initially may not be fully formed, it is imperative to directly involve youth in the design of the youth transport strategy.

Youth transport strategies are already explicitly discussed in Australia and in the United Kingdom: the links given below:

Australia:

- <http://www.ruralityouthtrans.com/> Rural and regional youth transport project, Australia
- <http://www.dsf.org.au/transport/> Transport for young people, Australia
- <http://www.youthaffairs.tas.gov.au/transport.htm> - Tasmanian Youth Transport Strategy
- http://www.maa.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/young_driv_sem5.pdf Western Australia Youth Road Safety Strategy

United Kingdom:

- <http://www.youngtransnet.org.uk/> Transnet Youth Pages
- <http://www.youngtransnet.org.uk/portal/birmingham.asp> Birmingham, participatory transport surveys by youth
- http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/25167/40320.html?*session*id*key*session*id*val* UK youth parliament on youth transport
- <http://www.transport4u.org.uk/> example of UK youth transport scheme
- <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/travelwise/travelwise-safer-routes.shtml> safe routes to school, London
- <http://www.londonshealth.gov.uk/transprt.htm> involving young people in transport planning, London health commission

These selected links provide access to other useful links and demonstrations of youth transport strategies. They provide a range of instruments that can be used from

discussions of the use of excess capacity in school buses for the travel and transport of youth to work to the development of 'walking buses'. Itemising the policy options already experimented with elsewhere and gridding them against suitability for use by any locality considering a youth transport strategy may be an important first step.

Other resources:

- [Information on walking buses](#)
- [Recent publications on walking buses](#)

MS Grieco, Professor of Transport and Society, Napier University and Visiting Full Professor, IAD, Cornell/ Feb/2005 mg294@cornell.edu