

FR9.40.15 Metromobility and Spatial Justice II: The Challenges of Equity Planning and Governance

Selecting the Route: Balancing Development and Equity in Bus Rapid Transit Decision-Making

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Implicit in the development of new transportation infrastructure is the potential to increase land value, encourage new development and re-shape urban space. However, along with the promise of growth, transportation investments also offer the potential to increase social equity and accessibility to those that are transit-dependent. In recent years, bus rapid transit (BRT) systems have emerged as a lower cost option, thought to provide similar development benefits as rail, albeit with less investment and added flexibility. While BRT systems may be less costly than rail, they still represent a major public outlay and can reinforce existing spatial patterns of segregation, especially when there is a focus on attracting “choice-riders” to public transit. This leads to the question: in planning for BRT infrastructure, how is the desire for increased growth balanced against improving access for disadvantaged communities? This paper uses case studies of BRT systems in three Canadian cities (Markham, Ontario; Ottawa, Ontario; and Winnipeg, Manitoba), drawing on key informant interviews with planners, transportation engineers and political actors, and spatial analysis of BRT infrastructure. Analysis focused on both proposed and constructed routes to give insight into the planning and prioritization process. Preliminary findings show that route selection was strongly influenced by very early planning efforts despite changes in the urban structure. Importantly, the prioritization of routes rarely included assessment of equity issues. Rather, political agendas and the potential for new development around station sites often determined the prioritization of route options, raising concerns about the planning processes for these projects.

Equity, Urban Transport, and the Future of City-making

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This paper proposes an alternative framework for evaluating the equity implications of innovations in urban transportation drawn from comparative case study research of 8 locales— Los Angeles, Mexico City, New York City, Paris, San Francisco, Seoul, Stockholm, and Vienna. The case study sites are all central cities of major urban regions around the world, each of which has adopted new transportation policies ranging from congestion charging, bus system reform and ridesourcing to amplification of non-motorized mobility through bike lanes, pedestrianization, and the recapture of street space. Dominant approaches to evaluating equity implications of such transport changes tend to focus on whether and how a given transportation policy will redistribute individual user costs vs. benefits or offset private sector-driven inequalities such as uneven access to individual motorized transport. In contrast, we situate considerations of equity in a city’s changing land use patterns and their implications for rising property values as well as displacement of the poor as much as in pure mobility metrics. We do so by assessing the extent to which urban transportation changes may increase (or reduce) patterns of accessibility for certain demographics, asking whether these changes are direct – that is, a consequence of transport mode shifts per se – or indirect, that is, a consequence of the growing tendency to privilege and remake cities as sites for living, working, and leisure for the purpose of increased global economic

competitiveness – priorities which themselves may help explain transport policy shifts in the first place. The paper concludes with a reflection on the extent to which the introduction of innovative transportation policies is changing the ways in which cities are built, managed, and governed. In so doing, it draws attention to the ways that changing transportation conditions may pose new dilemmas or opportunities for proponents of metropolitan equity and justice.

Gentrification or Empowerment? Identifying Effects of Light Rail Transit on Enhancing Socioeconomic Equity

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Researchers have argued that fixed-guideway transit systems (e.g. light rail) can increase mobility capital and contribute to improved social inclusion and job equity. Nevertheless, not much attention has been paid to measuring socioeconomic equity in public transit, especially fixed-guideway transit systems like a light rail transit (LRT) system.

This study aims to measure the impacts of LRT systems on socioeconomic equity. This study updates and advances an early study by Sanchez (1999), both in terms of data and methodological approaches by using longitudinal data from the U.S. Census Bureau between 2000 and 2010 and applying a time-series regression and a difference-of-mean test. This study assumes that if there is a high degree of labor participation and housing affordability, existing residents will benefit from the increased job opportunities, potentially resulting in better community empowerment. On the contrary, if, after a new transit station is built, the surrounding area has a high degree of labor participation but a low degree of housing affordability, gentrification may have occurred. This study selects all eight LRT lines in the U.S. that began operating between 2000 and 2010 and defines census tracts with and without access to a LRT station by using propensity score analysis. Ultimately, the results of this study can provide planners and policy makers with a better understanding of the effects of LRT systems on housing affordability and labor participation.