



How can all New Zealanders get fair access to transport?

New Zealanders are highly car dependent. Car ownership here is among the highest in the world at 93.5% of households. However, some people do not have access to cars due to factors like age, income, disability, or disinterest in driving.

Most New Zealanders rely on cars to access essential goods and services because large distances to destinations make it difficult to use other transport modes, such as bussing or cycling.

Policies that allow people to easily shift their mode of transport will reduce New Zealanders' dependence on cars to fully participate in society.

In this report, three policies for shifting New Zealanders' transport modes were evaluated for their effects on society and on where people live.

HOW DO WE DETERMINE IF ACCESS TO TRANSPORT IS FAIR?

Most approaches to transport equity focus on analysing the benefits and burdens of peoples' social and spatial distribution. Usually, each impact of a proposed transport policy or intervention is separately analysed. But it's also important to understand existing inequalities and what causes them, including the social and cultural context in which people either make travel 'choices' or are denied choice.

Equal opportunity for everyone to participate in transport mode decision making is also needed to ensure a just and fair approach to mobility, and one that is in line with Te Tiriti obligations..

Transport policies that are fair are likely to be more acceptable to the public, particularly when people believe the policy will protect future generations and the environment, and everyone is equally affected.

CONSIDERING SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Despite the general awareness of their importance, the social impacts of transport haven't been considered as much as environmental impacts. The range and timing of interconnected social impacts of transport policies also make it difficult for them to be measured, and for outcomes to be linked to specific policies.

Critical and challenging issues here are:

- defining equity goals
- determining who gains and who loses from transport policies
- understanding the impacts of improving places and transport.

WHO SUFFERS MOST FROM TRANSPORT INEQUITIES?

Those who are worst-off in society suffer the worst effects of the transport system, while those who are well-off benefit most. The former includes those on low incomes, Māori and Pasifika, women, youth, older adults, disabled people, members of ethnic minorities, and those living in high-deprivation rural or peripheral areas. These groups are often locked out of the benefits of transport interventions designed to meet the needs of more privileged social groups.

Policies that focus on more transport choices should not restrict people who already have few options. Similarly, if these policies expand the options of those who are already most mobile, access to transport options will become less fair.

Over-consumption of travel needs to be tackled at a societal level, and policies should improve the situation of the most disadvantaged first.

SHIFTING TRANSPORT MODES TO PROMOTE WELLBEING

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, in conjunction with urban authorities, is proposing a series of measures aimed at changing the way people travel in six high-growth urban areas.

These mode shift policies must consider how transport supports the wellbeing and quality of life of all New Zealanders and aim to ensure positive social outcomes. Mode shift needs to break our dependence on cars and related negative health and social outcomes.

CHOOSING A FAIR POLICY

At a broad level, policies that reduce car dependence benefit those who are the most transport disadvantaged. However, some mode shift policies are better for addressing transport inequities than others.

Policies that shape the form of urban areas can do the most to reduce car dependence, enhance access to opportunities and reduce transport-related harm, such as accidents.

- In transport disadvantaged areas, policies should make public and active transport more attractive to users, including fare policies.
- In areas where people travel by car despite alternative options or travel more than needed to fulfil basic needs, transport choices should focus on reducing travel overall or changing the way people travel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The authors encourage policymakers to use the report in raising awareness and understanding of the range of transport equity outcomes that mode shift policies may have.

This, along with addressing fair access to transport mode opportunities, will help the Ministry of Transport to achieve its transport outcomes for all.

Addressing inequities in the transport system requires an understanding of existing inequities. Currently this understanding is patchy.

FURTHER RESEARCH

More studies are needed that:

- consider how equity impacts on transport interventions
- address the long-term impacts of transport on health and wellbeing, and especially mental health
- help us understand the travel patterns of Māori and Pasifika
- help us understand car dependence
- address the needs and experiences of different groups, which helps us to understand accessibility
- measure exposures to risk such as safety, noise, pollution, and cost of transport
- give us a better understanding of disadvantaged transport groups in New Zealand, which will encourage greater engagement with people regarding policy design.



RR 666 – Social impact assessment of mode shift, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency research report. Available at www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/research/reports/666