

Accessibility



Definitions

The ease of reaching destinations. The degree of ease with which it is possible to reach a certain location from other locations.

One meaning of accessibility specifically concerns people with reduced mobility, disabled people, elderly people, families with young children, and the young children themselves: all of whom should have easy access to urban transport services and the right of access to facilities and services.

Context and Policies

Accessibility planning aims to ensure that destinations remain within easy reach and seeks to maintain the viability of diverse and plentiful transport choices, particularly non-motorised transport, public transport and paratransit.

Accessibility-based planning expands the range of transport problems and potential solutions that can be considered:

- Problems include any cost, barrier or risk that prevents people from reaching desired opportunities.
- Solutions can include traffic improvements, mobility improvements, mobility substitutes, (such as telecommuting and delivery services), and more accessible land use.

Accessibility is evaluated based on the time, money, discomfort and risk required to reach destinations (or "opportunities"). Individuals often think of it as convenience, that is, the ease with which they can reach what they want.

Although accessibility is a well-recognized concept in the disciplines of geography and urban economics, it is a new concept for many transportation practitioners.

In recent years transportation professionals have started exploring the implications of basing transport planning on access rather than traffic or mobility.

Improving urban accessibility for the disabled

If international targets on poverty reduction are to be reached then efforts must be made to reduce the isolation of disabled people. Improving their mobility and physical access to livelihood opportunities needs to be a priority.

Disability and poverty are closely linked in many developing countries: for example, people with disabilities can suffer from poorer schooling and low levels of employment often as a result of a lack of access made worse by mobility issues.

Issues

Accessibility is difficult to measure because it is affected by the quality of various transport modes and land use factors (for example, employment accessibility must take into account the number of suitable jobs residents can reach within a reasonable commute time, by travel options that are adequately comfortable, affordable and safe)

Actions

Undertaking 'accessibility audits' identifies barriers to accessibility. Audits can be carried out through GIS-based mapping of socio-demographic information, data on deprivation and car availability in relation to public transport routes and the location of services; complemented by consultation with local communities and liaison with frontline professionals and providers of services.

Accessibility resource appraisals identify the best value-for-money solutions for tackling accessibility barriers.

Accessibility Plans set out how to improve access to employment, learning, health care, food shops and other services of local importance, particularly for disadvantaged groups and areas.

Accessibility targets are defined in the accessibility plans, these are often the distance or time to access services by different modes of transport including walking, cycling and public transport.

In the United Kingdom, the Department for Transport has mandated that each local authority produce an Accessibility Plan that is incorporated in their Local Transport Plan.

Key Documents

- **Access Issues for Small Buses and Combis in the Mexico City Metropolitan Area**, 2002, Thomas Rickert, Access Exchange International, DFID (UK)
- **Brazil Accessible: The Brazilian Urban Accessibility Program of the Ministry of Cities**, 2006, Renato Boareto, Director of Urban Mobility, National Secretariat for Transport and Urban Mobility, Ministry of Cities, Brazil

- **Enhancing the mobility of disabled people: guidelines for practitioners**, 2004, Christo Venter, Joanne Sentinella, Tom Rickert, David Maunder and Anand Venkatesh, Overseas Road Note 21, TRL Limited (UK)
- **Evaluating Urban Transportation Quality: II - Measuring Transportation Activity**, 2007, Todd Alexander Litman, Hofstra University (USA)
- **Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion**, 2003, Social Exclusion Unit, London (UK)

Key Presentations

- **Accessibility and Social Inclusion in India**, 2006, Lalita Sen, Professor - Texas Southern University, USA

Useful Links

- **Accessibility planning, Department of Transport** (UK)