Transport & Older People

Integrating Transport Planning and User Needs

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The Investigation
This study brings together transport and public health research to demonstrate how older people’s involvement can help improve current transport planning tools.

Objectives
• To investigate how accessibility problems affect older people’s independence
• To determine the extent to which currently available modelling tools reflect older people’s accessibility needs
• To pilot techniques that could provide a more robust measure of accessibility for older people

Research Plan
Focus groups will be held in areas less well served by public transport. These will identify factors relevant to accessibility for older people but not included in current transport planning software. Methodologies will then be applied to better reflect actual accessibility for older people in transport planning.

Potential Benefits
This project aims to get people involved in designing public transport and walking facilities that better meet their needs. Greater involvement and better planning should reduce unnecessary barriers to travel and promote greater social interaction and a more active lifestyle.

The Impact on Health
Costly or inaccessible public transport can be a significant barrier to social participation and contribute to the loss of independence for older people and potential social isolation. This can adversely affect physical and mental health leading to problems such as depression (Cattan, 2005). Older people report that public transport improvements would improve their quality of life.

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“Sometimes my nephew takes me out in the car at the weekend but apart from that … I never get out because there is no transport”

“When you find yourself old and disabled and not able to do the things you used to do, you get lonely”

“I … cannot get out of the house unaided … Now it just feels like solitary confinement”