

## **EQUITY IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT: AN INTRACTABLE POLICY PROBLEM OR A SET OF METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Equity inclusion in transport policy and planning remains a complex and, often, it is considered an intractable problem. Indeed, addressing equity in transport decision making will require a multi-dimensional perspective in a dynamic socio-technical and political environments, where territorial and time variables play a role.

Although all transport actions (programs, plans and projects) have equity impacts, the *ex ante* equity assessment of transport investments is rarely done in practice. As such, the distribution of transport impacts (benefits and costs) is often perceived as unfair across the population/territory (vertical and spatial equity issues), specially when transport investments exclude several groups (non-drivers, people with disabilities, lower-income, non-motorized users such as cyclists and pedestrians, etc.). On the other hand, policy makers claim for horizontal equity in public policies and, therefore, road transport users shall pay for the costs of infrastructures' provision/use (this includes external costs such as congestion and pollution). Therefore, transport planning problems involve the consideration of multi-faceted equity objectives.

This paper aims to contribute to embed equity into future transport policies and investments. The research is anchored in the following preposition - *any future guidance to include equity in transport decision-making will depend on the possibility of innovation and cross-fertilization of theory and practice across multiple disciplines and policy sectors*. The method comprises the following inter-related steps:

- a) Integration of methodological insights to transport equity analysis through integration of other theories and practices that resulted from a comprehensive review of key research policy streams such as: i) socio-technical transition and innovation decision making and ii) health policies. The former is considered due to the importance of integrated transport governance models and the dynamics of change (co-evolution of institutions and infrastructures, technology and society and inter-linkages) as the appropriate foundation for

equity, whereas the health care industry provides a rich database for addressing both equity issues and quality of access (to health services).

b) Assessment of key challenges to policy and equity evaluation that result from the consideration of step a) in setting a fare policy. This will be demonstrated through a case study developed for Haifa metropolitan area which evaluated equity impacts of bus public transport fare changes.

To the best of our knowledge, this research is novel in being the first attempt to integrate the above streams for advancing the equity problem in transport. The literature review on transport policy and equity evaluation reveals that there is no agreed upon methodological framework to account for and to measure equity in transport. Since no harmonized conceptual framework exists yet in Europe, further developments are requirement before equity considerations can be fully incorporated into the decision making process. As such, expected results from this multidisciplinary fertilization will contribute to outline an improved roadmap for equity evaluation in transport.

The work presented in this paper is conducted by the coordinators of working-group 3 of the COST action TEA -“Transport Equity Analysis: assessment and integration of equity criteria in transport planning”.