

Agenda Transport Poverty

Rob van der Bijl (Favas.net)

Hugo van der Steenhoven (Hugocycling)

Amsterdam/Utrecht, Netherlands, January 2019

Mobility is an important condition for people to be able to maintain themselves in the modern city and society. No one gets far without mobility. There is therefore a serious risk of so-called transport poverty if people do not have sufficient and appropriate means of transport, or if people can't handle these resources well enough. Transport poverty means, in short, that due to limited mobility options, people can't fully participate in social life.

Based on our research commissioned by the four main Dutch cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht) ^{*}, important topics have been distinguished for an Agenda Transport Poverty. Our advice to authorities and administrations worldwide is summarized in the following list of subjects for this agenda, that in our view should be guiding for new policies. In other words, what issues should be worked on to tackle or at least prevent transport poverty?

Reducing car-dependency

The first issue is the strong car-dependence. This poses great risks to becoming a victim of transport poverty. At the same time, the stimulation and facilitation of car-use may theoretically be a solution, but in the current era it is far from undisputed. Moreover, experiences in the US show that supporting car ownership and usage does not offer a reliable solution in the longer term, because low-income households have great difficulty in financing the necessary (and partly unexpected) costs of maintenance and repairs, often the car can no longer be used within a year. There is a clear parallel here with the much cheaper bike: for this too, the costs of repairs are not easy to bear for households with small budgets. Challenge therefore seems to be primarily the reduction of car dependency in combination with the provision of alternative forms of mobility.

Improving accessibility and usability of public transport

Public transport (PT) could contribute in part to reducing car dependency, but this requires sufficient performance of PT, and particularly affordability. Unfortunately PT is too expensive for many. Its affordability is therefore a point on the agenda. Up to now, in many cities measures have been devised in different ways, and ad hoc, such as offering a discount or introducing fare-free travel for children, pupils and the elderly. However, it's a great challenge to accomplish a systematic and fair offer for public transport of those at high risk of transport poverty. One of the issues here is the extent to which public transport policy makers themselves are responsible for more reasonable rates and the degree to which in which the problem lies in general poverty.

Finally, the legibility of PT is an important issue. With the introduction of smart cards PT in many cases became more expensive, but also more difficult to understand and to use for those who are at risk of transport poverty.

Improving the bicycle system

The third big issue that deserves a place on the agenda is cycling, or more accurately, the 'bicycle system'. This system offers many possibilities for combating and preventing transport poverty. But for sure it is a 'system'. A successful bicycle policy presupposes that different challenges are tackled

simultaneously and in harmony with one another. How can problems such as bicycle theft and insecurity be resolved and the yields of bicycles increased? 'Soft' policy that focuses on the process of allowing the bicycle to become part of daily life is required.

Increasing safety

Transport poverty is strongly related to the degree and perception of both traffic (un)safety, as well as crime-related (un)safety and social (un)safety. The challenge is to tackle this comprehensive safety issue in all cities and their neighbourhoods.

Reducing socio-cultural segregation

Socio-cultural isolation and segregation cause immobility to a large extent. After all transport poverty is closely related to social segregation. This relation including poverty in general must be taken into account when tackling transport poverty.

*)

In Dutch only: Rob van der Bijl (Favas.net), Hugo van der Steenhoven (Hugocycling), Gesprekken over gebrekkige mobiliteit. Vervoersarmoede in de grote stad ontrafelen. Amsterdam/Utrecht, januari 2019.

English summaries at <http://favas.net/projects/transport-poverty/>

FAVAS'NET

Favas.net

Dr.ir. Rob van der Bijl – Urban planner

PO Box 14532 – 1013 LC Amsterdam, Netherlands

+316 5108 3910

rajvdb@xs4all.nl

www.favas.net

@robvanderbijl



Hugocycling

Hugo van der Steenhoven – Consultant sustainable mobility

Willem Arntszkade 75 – 3515 AM Utrecht, Netherlands

+316 5107 4257

hugo@hugocycling.nl

hugocycling.nl

@hugovdsteen