

TRANSPORT AND SUSTAINABILITY • Volume 10

Transport, Travel and Later Life



Edited by
Charles Musselwhite

TRANSPORT, TRAVEL
AND LATER LIFE

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TRANSPORT AND SUSTAINABILITY
VOLUME 10

TRANSPORT, TRAVEL AND LATER LIFE

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

For all those who inspire me I've had the pleasure to work with and especially for my daily inspirers William, Art and Claire and also my mum and dad.

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PREFACE

Ageing societies are almost a universal phenomenon due to a combination of falling fertility rates and substantial increases in life expectancy. Not only are there increasing numbers of older people but we are creating a fitter, more aspirational group of people ageing than ever before. An ageing population who may still be working, have caring responsibilities (for other older people, for children or grandchildren, for example) and social and recreational networks that span over wide geographical distances. Coupled to this, we have a growing hypermobile society, one designed around the car where services, shops and family and friend connections are more dispersed than ever meaning older people more dependent on vehicles than ever before (see Chapters 2 and 4). The result is a large increase in older drivers and a large increase in mileage driven by older drivers. Unsurprisingly, much evidence suggests being mobile in old age is linked to quality of life and in particular, giving-up driving has repeatedly been shown to related to lead to a decrease in wellbeing, an increase in depression and related health problems, feelings of stress, isolation and increased mortality.

We need to ask are older drivers safe? The stereotype of older driver is one that is dangerous, has poor reactions, poor eyesight, drives over cautiously and slowly and can't cope with demands of modern busy traffic. There are calls for older drivers to be tested regularly or at least have training to help them improve. But research suggests that in countries with more stringent testing, older people have no fewer collisions than in countries with more relaxed rules (see Chapters 2 and 9). While training and education might improve knowledge and attitudes toward driving and improve some specific sets of driving skills, no research has yet be found that suggests it makes any difference to road collisions for older drivers (see Chapters 2, 8 and 9). There is a need to take a step back. Are older drivers actually really that unsafe at all? Statistics suggest those killed or seriously injured do increase in number (especially per mile driven) but studies into fragility and frailty suggest this may be an explanation for increases; older people are more likely to be a casualty of their collision because of their susceptibility to injury (see Kit Mitchell's excellent analysis in Chapter 2).

There is a need to help older people think about alternative transport at an earlier stage in their life. For example, those who are successful at giving-up driving (i.e. those with little to no pain after giving-up driving) are those who have planned to give-up driving and begin to use alternative transport before it becomes a necessity to do so. Providing suitable alternative transport is also crucial to this, taking into account a proper analysis of the needs of older people (Chapters 3 and 4). Chapters 5, 6 and 7 show what can be done in terms of transport provision but also in terms of the public realm to keep people connected without using a car.

And what about the future? We are constantly reminded about increased automation in transport, not less the driverless car. Naturally, this will suit older people unable to drive but wanting the freedom and independence the car can give. But what about our journey to getting to the driverless car? Can changes in society, virtual reality (Chapter 10), the sharing economy, improvements in real time personalised information, better more comfortable and accessible mobility (Chapter 11) mean driverless cars may not ever actually be needed?

Hope you enjoy the read and let's make transport and mobility great for us all as we age.

Dr Charles Musselwhite
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