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TGRG Page ☆

New TGRG Executive

A number of changes to the TGRG Executive have taken place following the Annual General Meeting of the TGRG in Belfast on 3 January 2002. In my first TGRG page as Secretary of the Group, it is my pleasure to begin by recognising the outstanding contribution made to the Group over the last three years by its outgoing Chair, Professor Brian Graham. In a time when the teaching and practice of Transport Geography in the UK faced a number of challenges as a result of ongoing institutional restructuring and changing student preferences, Professor Graham's leadership brought renewed focus and energy to the activities of the TGRG. With a renewed emphasis on collaboration and policy-oriented research and publication, the Group's visibility within both the RGS-IBG and the wider transport community in the UK is at an all time high. This gives an excellent position from which to further develop the Group's work and contribution to geography and public policy. The Group is also delighted that Brian has agreed to remain a member of the TGRG Executive, adopting the role of Treasurer.

The Group's new Chair is Dr. Jon Shaw, who as Secretary has previously played a key role in re-orienting the TGRG's activities by communicating its work to a wider audience. As Chair, Jon will no doubt marshall his and others' innovative policy research to continue to enhance the TGRG's contribution to public debate, so that the voices of transport geographers are heard in a time when the debate over transport problems and potential solutions will require robust evidence and analysis more than ever.

Recent events

In recent years, members of the TGRG have been pleased to establish and develop valued contacts with colleagues overseas. In March 2002, Jon Shaw travelled to Los Angeles to chair three sessions on *Trends in the Geography of Mobility*, a joint TGRG–*Transport Specialty Group* (TSG) theme within the *Association of American Geographers*' (AAG) annual meeting which ran from 19 to 23 March. This built on the success of the previous TSG/TGRG sessions in New York in 2001, to the extent that a third joint meeting will be held during the 2003 AAG conference in New Orleans. The TGRG would like to thank Shih-Lung Shaw, the outgoing TSG Chair, for his work in developing our trans-Atlantic links, and his successor, Benjamin Zhan, for his commitment to their ongoing development.

As well as the TSG, the TGRG has also been developing close links with our sister transport research group in Germany, the *Arbeitskreis Verkehr* of the *Deutsche Gessellschaft für Geographie*. Following Jon Shaw's visit to the AK Verkehr's annual meeting in Erfurt, Thuringia, in the Spring of 2001, we were pleased to welcome Professor Matthias Gather as the special guest of the TGRG at the *Prospects for Transport in the New Parliament* conference in London in September 2001. On that occasion, Matthias' insightful review of the progress made in developing German transport networks in the 1990s stimulated a most useful exchange of views between British and German colleagues on a range of issues. Discussions ranged from the impacts of the different levels of public investment in transport in both countries, to how the contrasting objectives and methodologies in transport appraisal systems lead public authorities to different policy conclusions faced with similar problems.

In April 2002, it was my pleasure to rejoin our German colleagues in Munich for their 2002 annual meeting, which focused on the problems of mobility and accessibility in major conurbations. During an intensive three days, further valuable comparative discussion on UK and German approaches to transport policy, and its links to the economy, environment, society and space, was possible. Excellent field visits, to a number of location's on the city's commuter rail network and to the network's principal rolling stock maintenance facility, provided interesting insights into the operation of Europe's most successful urban transport systems. I would therefore like to thank the conference organisers, Professor Andreas Kagermeier of the University of Paderborn, and Thomas Mager of S-Bahn München, for providing another welcome opportunity for international dialogue on transport geography.

☆ Transport Geography Research Group of the Royal Geographical Research Group (with the Institute of British Geographers).

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Forthcoming events

The TGRG's development of international links is also timely given the recent decision of the RGS-IBG to reform the structure of its annual conference. From 2003, the traditional meeting in the first week of January will move to early September, with the first conference being held at the refurbished headquarters of the RGS-IBG in central London. It is the intention that the opportunity of the conference's return to London for the first time in many years can be used to maximise the international interest in British geography, and to promote the discipline outside the academy. The TGRG intends to play a full role in promoting these objectives, and the Group's sessions at the 2003 conference will be focused on comparative international work, and the role of transport geographers in influencing public policy.

In 2004, the RGS-IBG conference will be condensed into a single day, taking place as part of the International Geographical Union's (IGU) 30th International Congress, which runs from 15 to 20 August in Glasgow. Planning for this event is also well under way, and the TGRG intends to use the opportunity of the Glasgow conference to further develop its international and cross-disciplinary focus. The Group therefore welcomes suggestions for potential involvement in the conference from colleagues overseas interested in coming to Glasgow. Any enquiries should be addressed to me at the address below.

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