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TGRG page[1]

The Transport Geography Research Group, which now has almost 150 members, continues to act as a focus for British transport geography. The year began at the RGS/IBG annual conference, held at the University of Exeter in January 1997. Dr Richard Gibb and Dr Clive Charlton (both of the University of Plymouth) convened an all-day session on 'Transport Deregulation and Privatisation', which comprised a variety of papers from TGRG members and outside speakers. As Dr Gibb observed in his opening statement, the session reflected the transformation of the content of transport geography from its former essentially empiricist nature towards a current emphasis on the application of policies which, in turn, reflect wider ideological priorities. The papers in the session explored the effects of neo-liberal concepts of deregulation and privatisation on an array of transport modes. While recognising that increased competition is often beneficial to consumers and suppliers of transport, a number of contributors also voiced serious concerns about the efficacy of policies which relied on market forces alone. For a variety of social and economic reasons, including the need to protect service provision and quality and also ensure the prolongation of consumer benefits accruing from enhanced competition, several speakers argued in favour of re-regulation of transport industries. Analyses of rail, road and air competition in the United Kingdom and Europe all pointed towards the general conclusion that fully deregulated transport industries are not in the wider public interest because there is little evidence — irrespective of mode — to suggest that market forces alone can produce efficient, integrated transport systems. A selection of revised and refereed papers from the session will appear in a forthcoming special issue of the *Journal of Transport Geography*.

Despite the relevance and policy orientation of much contemporary transport geography conspicuously displayed both by this session and the continuing success of the *Journal*, the TGRG Chair, Ms José Smith (University of Salford), warned against any complacency in her address to the Annual General Meeting of the Group. While transport geography has never been stronger in terms of publications, Ms Smith expressed deep concern about the declining number of transport geography courses taught in UK universities. The challenge for the future, she argued, lies in formulating ideas and strategies to stem this decline. At the AGM, Dr Julian Hine (Napier University) retired as Honorary Treasurer to be succeeded by Dr Steven Cassidy (University of Nottingham). Dr Hine left the TGRG with a healthy financial balance and we are very grateful for his careful stewardship of its resources. The results of the prize for the best papers delivered at the Postgraduate Seminar held at the RGS in September 1996, were also announced at the AGM. A subscription to the *Journal of Transport Geography* and a £30 book token were awarded to Paul Dandy (Napier University), while Melanie Rudolph (Loughborough University) received a book token for £15 for her highly commended paper. The Group is grateful to Dr Brian Hoyle (University of Southampton) and Dr Richard Knowles (University of Salford) for acting as assessors, to David Clarke of Elsevier for providing the *Journal* subscription and presenting the prize, and to Dr Brian Turton (University of Keele) for so capably organising the seminar. Dr Turton also arranged for the printing of the papers delivered at the seminar and some remaining copies are available from him.

Following the success of the two postgraduate seminars held in 1995 and 1996, it was decided not to organise a further meeting in 1997 as the pool of potential contributors has now become somewhat depleted. Instead, the TGRG is focusing on three developments, all aimed at widening the Group's sphere of influence. First, the substantially rewritten second edition of the notably successful *Modern Transport Geography*, edited by Brian Hoyle and Richard Knowles, is in the final stages of completion and will be published by John Wiley during 1998. Secondly, an all-day session on 'Mobility, Leisure and Lifestyle' is being held at the RGS/IBG Annual Conference, organised by Kingston University at the University of Surrey, Guildford, in January 1997. This will be jointly convened by Dr Julian Hine (Napier University) and Professor Brian Graham (University of Ulster). The topic was chosen, not only to mesh with the general themes of the Conference, but also to appeal to speakers from outside the realm of transport geography. This latter strategy has been successful and the session has attracted a wide range of papers. These will address issues including: mobility impairment; mobility and social justice; lifestyle and travel

[1]TGRG: Transport Geography Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers.

behaviour; mobility and leisure. The final strand of the TGRG's current activities concerns a joint meeting being arranged with the Transport Speciality Group of the Association of American Geographers. Dealing with urban transport issues, this will form part of the AAG Conference being held in Boston between 25–29 March 1998. The TGRG believes that the dynamics of transport geography can be substantially enhanced by improved communication and interaction between its North American and British practitioners. It is anticipated that around ten TGRG members will attend and most will contribute papers to this session, together with a similar number submitted by North American transport geographers.

TGRG Calendar of Meetings, 1998

Month	Venue	Meeting	Contact
January	Kingston (at Guildford)	Mobility, Leisure and Lifestyle	B. Graham (Ulster) J. Hine (Napier)
		TGRG Committee/ AGM	B. Graham (Ulster)
March	Boston	AAG Joint meeting	J. Smith (Salford)

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