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Report on Third Postgraduate Seminar September 1998

The Third TGRG postgraduate seminar was held on Wednesday 16th September at the Royal Geographical Society — Institute of British Geographers headquarters in London. Although seven research workers responded to the original invitation to contribute a paper to the seminar other academic commitments prevented several potential contributors from actually being present on the 16th. However, it is hoped that the published account of the seminar, to be available in spring 1999, will incorporate papers from those postgraduates who originally intended to contribute to the seminar as well as those who were present.

As in previous years the papers offered covered a wide range of transport topics but the three contributions to the seminar all dealt with aspects of personal travel. The first paper, by Chris Price, who is in the early stages of his research at the Institute of Marine Studies at the University of Plymouth, focused upon issues of personal security for those travelling by public transport. His case study of the services on the London and Southend rail route discussed measures taken by the rail management to strengthen security for passengers at stations and on the trains. In this age of privatised railways where concern for the passenger, or rather 'consumer', is of prime importance, safety provisions have to be considered alongside the ever-present need to achieve operating efficacies by reducing staffing levels to a minimum.

The second paper was presented by Ruth Bradshaw, a Ph.D student in the Transport Studies Group at the University of Westminster. Her research centres upon the action being taken by local authorities to secure a reduction in the use of the car for journeys to school and to encourage the use of other modes for these trips. These initiatives are being taken in an effort to reduced road congestion and also to meet environmental objectives as part of Local Agenda 21 strategies. All local authorities in the United Kingdom have been invited to supply information on the initiatives they are adopting to encourage this modal shift away from cars and on the motivation for their action. It appears that initiatives can be assigned to four main types: those encouraging a shift to public transport; those trying to secure a shift to walking and cycling; those aimed at increasing an awareness of transport issues and those designed to incorporate elements of the first three categories. Criteria are being developed to measure the effectiveness of the various approaches being adopted to secure changes in the use of car transport for journeys to school.

Rachel Goodman, of the Division of Geography at Staffordshire University, presented a paper on the role of walking within the overall pattern of commuting. A review of the extent to which mobility management plans consider walking as a viable means of commuting was followed by a discussion of why walking has to date been neglected in such plans. The methodology used to establish whether people consider walking to be viable form of personal transport was then explained. The preliminary findings of the research, using case studies from districts within Staffordshire, were then presented and the paper concluded with a discussion of whether walking could be incorporated more effectively into mobility management plans in the future.

The TGRG was pleased to welcome two former contributors to the seminars, Paul Dandy and Iain Docherty, as chairs for the event and expresses its appreciation once again to the Royal Geographical Society — Institute of British Geographers for acting as a host for the seminar.

Brian Turton, Seminar Convenor
Unviversity of Keele

New Transport Geography text

Modern Transport Geography, edited by Dr Brian Hoyle of the University of Southampton and Dr Richard Knowles of the University of Salford, was published by Wiley in November 1998. The text, which is available in both hardback and paperback editions, has been prepared by an international team of transport geographers on behalf of the TGRG. It is hoped that the book will become a standard text for undergraduate courses in transport geography.

Changes to the TGRG Committee

A new committee was elected at the AGM of the Group held at the University of Leicester in January. Professor Brian Graham of the University of Ulster took over as Chairman from Miss José Smith while Dr Julian Hine, Napier University, has replaced Professor Graham as Secretary. Both will serve until 2002.

*Transport Geography Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers.