Book review

The Transport System and Transport Policy: An Introduction

B. van Wee, J.A. Annema and D. Banister (eds). Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK, 2013, ISBN 978-1-7819-5204-7, £30-00, 424 pp.

This book is an English translation of a Dutch original published in 2002. Primarily for students, it offers itself as an introduction to the large field of transport studies, with suitably generalised examples. It is also available on the internet (http://books.google.co.uk/books/about/The_Transport_System_and_Transport_Polic.html?id=_UwJWfgoOeEC&redir_esc=y). After two introductory chapters, the book is divided into three parts as follows: the first part is in five chapters and deals with the transport system; the second part, in four chapters, deals with the impacts of transport; and the final part deals with policy and research in four chapters.

Chapter 3 provides some interesting comparable transport statistics for the UK and The Netherlands, which, among other things, show that Dutch men travel twice as far as English men per year. These statistics are coupled with a useful discussion of influences on travel behaviour from the points of view of psychology, geography and economics. Chapter 4 discusses freight by first providing, in contrast to the previous chapter, a more comprehensive summary of aggregate European data on freight transport. There is a good discussion of the costs of freight transport including inventory costs and the effects of volatility in the end-user market, and the chapter points forward to emerging 'supply networks', rather than supply chains, as the way of the future.

Chapter 5 provides an excellent summary of empirical evidence on the links between land use and transport, and notes that contentions in the nature of the link are likely to result from methodological differences in analysis. The issue of causality is well treated and, on the whole, the chapter, and the link between land use and economics, is solidly and clearly argued.

It is good to see in Chapter 6 the issue of effort being given its proper place set with time and money as a 'friction factor' constraining transport

demand. Schafer's graph of long-term trends towards higher speed transport, and the associated discussion about the 'human condition' that might be driving this, is particularly illuminating. The first part is rounded off by a very good primer in traffic flow theory in Chapter 7.

Part 2 discusses the impacts of transport and Chapter 8 provides a substantial review of these effects from a technological perspective. These impacts are revisited in Chapter 10 from a broader perspective. Chapter 9 introduces the modelling of accessibility and Chapter 11 provides an excellent and succinct introductory discussion of safety.

The final part begins in Chapter 12 with a good critique of cost-benefit appraisal and the issues of equity and 'tragic choices' (satisfying the many to the detriment of the few), which need to be made from a political perspective. These appraisal issues are once again revisited in Chapter 14. Chapter 13 considers future forecasting and Chapter 15 modelling, which touches on some of the same ideas that were introduced in Chapter 9 on accessibility modelling.

Overall, the book provides an excellent introduction to transport studies, either for a student of the subject or someone who has worked in the field for some time but could benefit from an up-to-date discourse on its current state. The ordering sometimes feels awkward, and this is both at the level of the book's overall structure and the structure within chapters. As an example of the latter, the chapter on traffic flow theory introduces shockwave theory some dozen pages after introducing capacity drops and hysteresis based on traffic observations. Some chapters treat similar material but in different ways. This provides valuable additional perspective, and the cross-referencing is excellent, but it does beg the question as to whether a different ordering of material might produce a more efficient resource.

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