

TRANSIT LIFE

urban studies/transportation

How Commuting Is Transforming Our Cities

DAVID BISSELL

We spend much of our lives in transit to and from work. Although we might dismiss our daily commute as a wearying slog, we rarely stop to think about the significance of these daily journeys. In *Transit Life*, David Bissell explores how everyday life in cities is increasingly defined by commuting. Examining the overlooked events and encounters of the commute, Bissell shows that the material experiences of our daily journeys are transforming life in our cities. The commute is a time where some of the most pressing tensions of contemporary life play out, striking at the heart of such issues as our work-life balance, our relationships with others, our sense of place, and our understanding of who we are.

Drawing on in-depth fieldwork with commuters, journalists, transit advocates, policymakers, and others in Sydney, Australia, *Transit Life* takes a holistic perspective to change how we think about commuting. Rather than arguing that transport infrastructure investment alone can solve our commuting problems, Bissell explores the more subtle but powerful forms of social change that commuting creates. He examines the complex politics of urban mobility through multiple dimensions, including the competencies that commuters develop over time; commuting dispositions and the social life of the commute; the multiple temporalities of commuting; the experience of commuting spaces, from footpath to on-ramp, both physical and digital; the voices of commuting, from private rants to drive-time radio; and the interplay of materialities, ideas, advocates, and organizations in commuting infrastructures.

DAVID BISSELL is Associate Professor in the School of Geography at the University of Melbourne.

URBAN AND INDUSTRIAL ENVIRONMENTS SERIES

"I read *Transit Life*, fittingly, while commuting in and out of a new city for the first time. The book is a guide to these taken-for-granted journeys, the infrastructures that make them possible, and the people that live them. It crackles and pops with insights of stories and encounters that will help us see commuting anew. It places practical reflection on the brushes, glances, gestures, and skills we experience and develop in our routes and routines in and out of cities. Accessible, perceptive, passionate, and often revelatory; it is a book about life on the move like no other."

—PETER ADEY, Professor of Human Geography, Royal Holloway University of London; author of *Mobility*, 2nd edition

"Like John Urry's *Mobilities* a decade ago, *Transit Life* convinces the reader that transport is fascinating and at the core of debates in the social sciences and humanities."

—ROBYN DOWLING, Professor of Urbanism, The University of Sydney

"David Bissell's *Transit Life* offers a deep dive into the experiences of daily commuters and the rhythmic patterns of movement that make up our cities. Immersing himself in the troubled traffic that courses through Sydney, Australia, Bissell finds vibrant, diverse, intense human feelings about the commute, far richer and more surprising than statistics can provide. Despite its endless frustrations and disappointments, commuting emerges as a skilled practice that also brings moments of connection, camaraderie, and occasional enjoyment. He shows how commuting subtly transforms us and how we transform the places through which we pass. *Transit Life* exemplifies a new kind of mobility thinking, commuting us toward more rewarding forms of social inquiry."

—MIMI SELLER, Director, Center for Mobilities Research and Policy; Professor of Sociology, Drexel University; author of *Aluminum Dreams*

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