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“IF YOU DON’T HAVE A RIDE, YOU DON’T ATTEND”: TRANSPORTATION INEQUALITY IN RURAL SASKATCHEWAN THROUGH THE LENSES OF CAPABILITIES AND MOBILITY INJUSTICE

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Transportation is a deeply structuring principle of Canadian rural places and people’s lives, shaping their social, cultural, political, and economic possibilities. From a capabilities lens, access to reliable, affordable, and adequate transportation structures the existence of and people’s access to employment, education, healthcare, recreation, the arts, food, safety, friends, family, and more. Drawing on case study methods including interviews, travel diaries, and statistical analysis of the census in a rural region of Saskatchewan, Canada, we demonstrate how the presence or absence of transportation contributes to the capabilities of rural residents, to social inequality in rural places, and to broader mobility (in)justice. Findings from this community suggest that, amidst a stark

absence of other transportation options, and the need to travel ever longer distances to accomplish their everyday lives, rural residents rely heavily on their own personal vehicles or on the personal vehicles of close family and friends to access the necessary goods and services of a quality life. Rural residents who do not have access to transportation experience exclusion from these goods and services and the things that these goods and services allow them to do and be. While realization of the capacity to be an employee, a student, an athlete, a good parent, and healthy is dependent upon mobility, the dependence on individual transportation is so hegemonic that mobility injustices are invisibilized to those with transportation privilege. The presence or absence of transportation becomes foundational to people's capacity of what they can do and who they can be, as well as rural places' capacity for sustaining meaningful lives. Transportation justice therefore must be at the forefront if rural places are to maintain or rebuild their social, cultural, political, and economic infrastructure, and if rural residents are to have equitable access to these things which make a good rural life.

Palavras-chave: rural transportation; capabilities; mobility injustice; rural exclusion; social inequalities.