

## Transportation in the Urban Environment

F. C. Turner

Assistant Federal Highway Administrator and Chief Engineer  
Bureau of Public Roads, U. S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D. C.



It is hardly necessary for me to discuss at any length the place of transportation in the urban environment. Travel and transportation are the blood cells on which the American economy flourishes—rural and urban alike. And in our age transportation in the urban area, of either people or goods, means movement over the streets and highways. In the smaller cities all travel is by highway, mostly in private vehicles but some by bus, which also is a highway vehicle. In even the largest cities where public transportation assumes its greatest portion of the load, 85 percent of the movement is by private vehicle. Motor vehicle travel, for nearly a generation growing at a rate almost exactly equal to the growth of the economy,

has over the past few years been growing even faster. Perhaps as a result of the growing importance of the service industries in our economy, it has now become an expanding factor of our expanding economy. It is a part of our way of life.

None of this is new, but it probably is worth reminding ourselves of such facts of life every now and then lest we take transportation too much for granted. What is new is our ability to measure present transportation needs, to project them into the future, and to appraise how transportation not only serves but helps shape our exploding metropolitan areas.

What we call comprehensive transportation studies had their rudimentary beginning nearly twenty years ago when the first home-interview travel habit study was launched in Little Rock, Arkansas. From that early beginning the transportation planning process has grown into a scientific operation. It is now possible to reconstruct the pattern of travel in an area from a knowledge of the land use and measurable economic and social factors through the development and application of mathematical models. Models of travel generation and distribution, once established, permit the estimate of traffic usage of any proposed system of freeways or arterial streets, or of the individual links of a system. More important, however, they make it possible to study the effect of any number of alternate proposals for transportation development or the effect of any proposed land use, to aid in choosing the most effective and most acceptable overall plan, with transportation and land use desirably interrelated.

As this process developed its application spread widely until now most of the larger metropolitan areas have studies under way. Some are well into their continuing phases. Each study has built on the experience of its predecessors, and it is this exchange of experience and new knowledge that has produced the high sophistication of the process.

For a number of years leading State and Federal highway administrators and local officials have been urging the more universal use of this powerful planning tool, emphasizing the need and benefit of coordinated land use and transportation planning. These efforts led early last year to the launching of the Action Program for Urban Transportation Planning by the Ameri-

can Municipal Association, the American Association of State Highway Officials, and the National Association of Counties.

This is a unique and challenging program, designed to reach every urban area in the country, with emphasis first placed on cities in the range of 50,000 to 250,000 population. Assisted by the Bureau of Public Roads and the Housing and Home Finance Agency, whose funds are available for transportation planning, a series of regional meetings involving over 1,000 State and local officials was held. At these meetings the program was explained, the availability of technical and financial aid spelled out, and the officials urged to go home and begin.

The greatest stimulus to the program came with the passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act in October of last year. This act set forth as a requirement that no Federal-aid highway projects may be approved in any urban area of more than 50,000 population after July 1, 1965, unless they are, to quote, "based on a continuing comprehensive transportation planning process carried on cooperatively by the States and local communities."

This has been referred to—I suppose properly—as a Federal requirement. But to us it is more of a recognition of the importance and value of a going voluntary program, merely requiring that all cities do what many were finding so essential to their own future. And it allowed ample time for those who were lagging to get on with it.

Without going into detail, I'd like to comment on a few of the words and phrases. First it is stated by the Congress that it is "in the national interest to encourage and promote the development of transportation systems embracing various modes of transport in a manner that will serve the States and local communities efficiently and effectively." Certainly that is reasonable enough.

To insure that this is being done the Secretary of Commerce—and that means the Bureau of Public Roads—must find that there is in being a "continuing transportation planning process." Not a plan, but a planning process—one that is a living thing that can constantly check whether travel and land use are developing as anticipated and planned for, or are departing from the forecasts. That can be done, as has been amply demonstrated.

Then the law requires that the process be carried on cooperatively by the States and local communities. There is no Federal domination or influence. It is not even necessary to use Federal funds. The States and local communities must cooperate. Each must have a voice. And what could be more fair than that?

So that's the Federal requirement. I cannot regard it as a burdensome one. It is only that the States and localities must do for themselves what is in their own best interest, and thereby promote the national interest as well.

Federal highway planning funds and HHFA 701 planning assistance funds are available through appropriate channels, and technical help from Washington also is to be had for the asking. We don't give either kind of help unless asked, but thus far there is no study in which some Federal aid has not been requested and supplied. You name the city and, like Kilroy, we were there. And we are happy and ready to be of help anywhere else.