



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE MONDAY
June 11, 1973

DOT 39-73
Phone: (202) 426-4321

A program to assess the community impact of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system has advanced to the operational stage following a year of preliminary planning and information gathering.

In a joint announcement today, Secretary of Transportation Claude S. Brinegar and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development James T. Lynn explained that the lessons learned from the BART Impact Assessment Program could well be applied to other metropolitan areas.

BART, the first regional rapid rail transit system to be developed in the United States in the past 50 years, covers a distance of more than 75 miles serving 34 stations in a three-county area in the San Francisco Bay Area.

"When BART was approved back in 1962," Secretary Brinegar said, "it was predicted that there would be a significant reduction in highway congestion as well as air pollution. Also, it was anticipated that the downtown area would be revitalized and that it would become easier for commuters -- especially the disadvantaged ones -- to get to and from jobs.

"Now, we will have a chance not only to document these and other effects but also to determine the long-range costs of a regional rapid rail system."

HUD Secretary Lynn pointed out that the program is not an evaluation of the BART system itself. "However," he added, "many Federal, state and local agencies, as well as urban planners, are anxious to see that the \$1.4 billion investment yields in terms of urban effects."

The BART Impact Program will seek to determine how the system and related changes affect land use, travel and other economic activity; why some expected impacts occur or do not occur; and how maximum benefits can be realized from BART.

In addition to the DOT and HUD involvement, the BART Impact Program is supported by the state of California and advised by a prominent committee established by the National Academy of Engineering.

Principle contractor is the Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

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