

Summary Case Assessment

The purpose of this section is to summarize the nature of the transit planning and decisionmaking process in the Denver region in light of the guidelines listed in the Introduction. The summary, therefore, is divided into two parts: (1) Assessment of the Institutional Context, and (2) Assessment of the Technical Planning Process.

1. ASSESSMENT OF THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

- **Forum for Decisionmaking.**—The responsibility for transit decisionmaking is firmly lodged in the Regional Transportation District (RTD), although some decisions must be executed through the Joint Regional Transportation Program (JRPP). Under the JRPP umbrella, transit policies can be coordinated with highway and land use planning and the staffs of the three participating agencies (RTD, Colorado Department of Highways, and the Denver Regional Council of Governments) have established successful working relationships. However, the nature of the decisionmaking procedure within JRPP encourages compromise among the three agencies, while their unequal political clout had led to competition over where decisionmaking should take place.
- **Accountability of Decisionmakers.**—RTD, which is directly responsible for the bulk of transportation decisionmaking in the Denver region, is accountable to the public through a board appointed by elected officials. To the extent that decisions are reached in the JRPP forum, accountability is reduced.
- **Public Involvement.**—The public has been influential throughout the goal-setting,

alignment selection, and initial system selection periods of transit planning in Denver, acting through RTD's citizen action committees and, in 1973, at the polls. RTD minimized the public role during the recent study of alternatives, although the chosen system met with widespread public approval.

2. ASSESSMENT OF THE TECHNICAL PLANNING PROCESS

- **Goals and Objectives.**—RTD established a comprehensive set of goals in a broadly participatory process and has used many of these goals in evaluating alternative systems.
- **Development and Evaluation of Alternatives.**—Denver's latest alternatives analysis makes several contributions to the state-of-the-art, most importantly in its stress on the need for coordinated government policies to shape land use to encourage use of transit. Questions raised about the quality and completeness of the technical information have identified additional, more specific lessons for future transit planners. The fact that Denver officials and residents had registered approval of a specific system before UMTA required a detailed analysis of alternatives points to the difficulty of directing equal attention to all options under such circumstances.
- **Financing and Implementation.**—RTD enjoys a steady source of local share financing and in 1974 had a \$17 million surplus. However, the system RTD selected to construct will require an 80 percent Federal share.