

CHAPTER 3

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT FOR TRANSIT DECISIONMAKING

The metropolitan cases examined in this study adopted a variety of institutional arrangements for urban mass transportation planning and decisionmaking. These arrangements have been shaped by the historical setting of each case, local politics and institutional factors, and Federal legislation and administrative requirements. Despite the variations that exist among the metropolitan cases, their common experience underscores a number of issues that have affected the planning and decisionmaking process.

During the past two decades a fundamental shift has occurred in the institutional character of the process. With the decline of the private transit industry, the role of the public sector has come to dominate the transit field. On the local level, there has been a vast increase in the number of public authorities in district planning, developing, and operating mass transit systems. On the Federal level, there has been a major increase in the level of Federal assistance to localities for mass transit.

The Federal policy, procedures, and regulations accompanying this assistance have emphasized a distinctly regional approach to urban transportation decisionmaking. The intent of current Federal policy is that planning should be done by -- and planning funds should go to -- a single Metropolitan Planning Organization, representative of all the political jurisdictions in the urban area. By executive branch requirement, all capital project and technical study grant requests are also subject to review by a single areawide agency. This chapter discusses the inadequacy of most regional planning organizations, as they are presently structured, to deal effectively with more localized needs and concerns.

Along with this regional orientation Federal policy also has sought to promote multimodal planning and a greater integration of transportation planning with other metropolitan policymaking and planning functions. Achieving a more closely integrated relationship between transportation and land-use planning has been one of the canons of policy for some time. Likewise, Federal policy has sought to achieve an integrated, multimodal approach to urban transportation planning in order to bring mass transit, highway, aviation, and other modal agencies into an integrated regional forum for decisionmaking.

One of the central issues discussed in this chapter is the inability of Federal policy to accomplish either of these latter

two objectives. Neither effective integration of highway and transit planning nor meaningful coordination between transit and land use decisionmaking has yet occurred except in a limited way.

Instead, partly due to their emphasis on regionwide planning and partly due to a combination of other reasons, Federal policy and programs have given rise to an institutional structure for transit decisionmaking that often lacks the political or statutory authority to develop and carry out responsive and effective programs. Most of the organizations that have been created or designated to assure multimodal and multifunction coordination do not have the statutory power to finance or administer the programs they plan. Thus, in spite of Federal requirements, transit decisionmaking responsibility remains fragmented among regional and local agencies of government. The resulting competition and confusion makes it difficult for the public to identify the public officials and institutions responsible for the process and hold them accountable for their actions.

This chapter describes these issues more extensively. Following a general review of the generic institutional structure and the evolution of the Federal role, the basic guidelines that shaped the assessment are defined and the experience of the metropolitan areas is reported.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR METROPOLITAN ASSESSMENT

The institutional context for transit planning and decisionmaking was assessed according to a number of broad guidelines. These guidelines were derived by examining the general characteristics and functions of the types of participating organizations in light of Federal legislative and administrative requirements and current planning theory.

Basic Elements of the Institutional Structure

The variety of institutions that participate in the decision-making process for mass transit include Federal, state, and local governments, as well as special purpose units of government and coordinating agencies. The participants in the metropolitan decisionmaking process interact through policymaking and technical coordination committees tied together by statutes or formal agreements.

Organizations. The principal organizations on the regional level are Metropolitan Planning Organizations and special purpose metropolitan transit authorities. The Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are set up to meet Federal requirements for linking the transit authorities (and special purpose organizations) with areawide comprehensive planning. Local and state

governments also play an important role in metropolitan transit decisionmaking.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Most MPOs are regional councils of government or metropolitan planning commissions. These organizations usually have responsibility for areawide comprehensive planning and for reviewing areawide applications for all Federal grants. In the past, most transportation planning was done by other agencies, and in some cases this practice has been continued. Recent Federal legislation has given these bodies increasing strength, and they may begin to play a more significant role in developing integrated regional multimodal work programs than they have in the past.

Metropolitan transit agencies. Created by state legislation, metropolitan transit authorities or special districts usually are empowered to plan, design, construct, and operate transit systems. The number of these special purpose authorities has increased with the widespread public acquisition of transit properties. Many of the responsibilities of transit operating authorities overlap to some degree with those of the Metropolitan Planning Organizations. However, the operating authorities are more involved with day-to-day problems and are often limited in their authority to plan and to finance the implementation of significant new capital facilities.

Local governments. The role that local municipal governments play in the transit planning and decisionmaking process varies. Traditionally, the large central cities whose leaders first promoted rapid transit systems have played a commanding role, but the growth of suburban areas has eroded the influence of the center city. Nevertheless, several major cities still control transit operations, while municipal powers over land use and traffic management also make local governments important participants in the process.

State governments. Traditionally state governments have played a key role in the urban transportation planning process through state highway departments. In recent years, a greater number of states have established departments of transportation (DOTs) with mandates for multimodal transportation policymaking and planning, and, in a few cases, transit operations. As the state role in providing financial assistance to localities increases, state DOTs will have more leverage over local and metropolitan areas.

Responsibilities. The following paragraphs briefly describe the key responsibilities of the different agencies involved in transit decisionmaking. Some functions typically are shared by several agencies; others usually are assigned to one organization. The pattern varies in every metropolitan case.

Comprehensive planning. This responsibility usually is shared by the areawide planning agency and local city, town, and county governments. While the powers that the areawide agency holds over the local governments may vary it usually is limited to coordinating local land use plans while actively pursuing plans for regional services (sewers, water, health, and other programs). There is some give and take over housing, schools, transportation, and other issues of both local and regional significance, although the importance of the regional role is becoming more widely recognized.

Long-range regional transportation planning. The areawide planning agency and/or another Federally designated body usually takes responsibility for formulating regional, multimodal transportation plans. Components for that plan often are developed by the state, transit authorities, and/or local units of government.

Transit system planning. Areawide transit planning usually has been the responsibility of special purpose transit agencies. When this is the case, transit plans become subelements of long-range regional comprehensive plans and transportation plans. In some regions, the transit planning function is performed by areawide planning organizations.

Transit programming. Transit programming -- setting priorities among projects, developing schedules, and budgeting -- is a pivotal activity. Like transit planning, it traditionally has been done by transit agencies, but in recent years areawide planning organizations have begun assuming this responsibility.

Highway programming. Responsibility for scheduling and budgeting urban highway projects traditionally has been lodged in state highway departments, although regional planning organizations have played a bigger role in recent years.

Transit financing. Decisionmaking responsibilities for transit financing are held by those agencies and units of government with authority for operating and for raising funds for transit projects. Power for taxing, bonding, and expenditure of Federal funds usually is held by transit authorities or special districts, the state, and local governments. Increasingly Metropolitan Planning Organizations are becoming involved in finance policy by virtue of their function as the regional channel for Federal transit funds.

Final design, implementation, operation, and maintenance. Once a project is planned and programmed, and financing has been arranged, the final design, construction, operation, and maintenance functions are the responsibility of transit authorities or of local government. Transit improvements requiring changes in traffic management and parking, for example, are the domain of local governments.

Urban development implementation and land use controls. Although UMTA does not require these functions to be part of transit decisionmaking, the relationship between transit and land use development is widely considered to be a critically important consideration. In most areas, local governments

possess the basic land use controls, but in some cases regional commissions are developing review powers over land use planning.

Federal Legislation and Administrative Regulations

The amount of Federal legislation that has some bearing on the institutional context for mass transit decisionmaking is considerable. Some of these policies and requirements have been discussed in earlier sections of the report. Others include the specific laws and programs relating to areawide comprehensive planning, housing, air pollution, relocation assistance, elderly and handicapped provisions, transportation research and development, and civil rights. In one form or another all these can directly or indirectly affect the procedures of the planning process.

The Federal legislation and requirements discussed in this section have a direct bearing on the institutional context for urban transportation planning and development process. Within the past two decades, Congress has taken steps to centralize local planning efforts within regional organizations. The Federal Government also has attempted to structure the institutions to maximize cooperation between transit and highway planning, and between these transportation functions and other area-wide planning functions. Finally, the Federal Government has developed more detailed requirements to enhance the accountability of the decisionmakers to the public and to strengthen community participation in transportation planning.

Forum for decisionmaking. Federal policy has encouraged a regional framework for transit planning in order both to improve coordination between planning functions and to give all affected jurisdictions a voice in making decisions whose impacts cross jurisdictional boundaries.

When transit money for capital costs first became available through the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, no requirements for organizational structure were specified in the law. The administering agency, which at that time was the Housing and Home Finance Agency, had to determine only two general facts about an applicant to approve the application: (1) did it have the legal, financial, and technical capacity to carry out the proposed project; and (2) would it exert satisfactory continuing control over the use of the facilities and equipment.

The Urban Mass Transportation Administration Planning Requirements Guide of February 1966 elaborated on the directives of the act. The guidelines list criteria for relating the transportation function to areawide comprehensive planning, as is described in the subsection on coordination among organizations. They also indicate that whenever possible transportation planning should be the responsibility of the same agency carrying on comprehensive planning for the urban area.

Section 701 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 put teeth into the regional planning concept by requiring that planning grant allowances "for the solution of metropolitan or regional problems" should be distributed only to "organizations composed of public officials. . . representative of all political jurisdictions within a metropolitan area or urban region. . . ."

Several Federal acts in recent years have recognized the need for coordinating the planning and development of burgeoning metropolitan and urban activities. The most important acts are the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962; the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Act of 1966, and the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973.

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 established a significant provision for coordinating highway planning and development with other metropolitan planning activities in urbanized areas of more than 50,000 population. Section 134 of the act required highway projects to be based on a "continuing, comprehensive transportation process. . . carried on cooperatively by state and local communities. . . ." This provision is often called the 3-C planning requirement. It resulted in the creation of new planning organizations to certify that regional transportation planning conformed to the 3-Cs.

The Urban Mass Transportation Act amendments in 1966 required technical studies for urban mass transportation projects to fit into "a unified or officially coordinated urban transportation system" which was, in turn, part of the comprehensive development plan of the urban area.

The UMTA planning requirements guide also mandated an area-wide approach. Legislation for Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development in late 1966 (Section 207) reinforced the concept of regionwide coordination by requiring an areawide planning agency to certify that regional transportation projects are consistent with an official comprehensive plan acceptable to state, regional, and local governments. Somewhat redundantly for transportation planning, the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1968 extended the requirement to all Federally assisted projects. , Guidelines for the clearinghouse-type grant review process were provided by the Office of Management and Budget's Circular A-95 three years later, in 1969.

Circular A-95 is to date the single most important statement of Federal policy regarding comprehensive planning for metropolitan areas. The A-95 process requirements specify important interrelationships for information exchange between planning organizations.

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973 expressed the intent of Congress to encourage better coordination of the various transportation services within each city. To implement that policy, in September 1975 the administrators of the Federal Highway Administration and UMTA issued joint regulations requesting governors to designate a single Metropolitan Planning Organization in each metropolitan area for receipt of available planning funds. ^{1/} Accompanying the letter were guidelines stating that:

- The agency should be a metropolitan organization responsible for continuous comprehensive planning (including transportation).
- The agency should have sufficient resources to coordinate the development and monitor the execution of a unified work program for all transportation planning activities, and to produce short- and long-range transportation service and capital improvement programs for the area.
- The agency should be the same organization performing the functions established in accordance with Circular A-95.

This joint communique was one of the steps planned by UMTA and FHWA to work cooperatively in establishing a coordinated approach to the new urban planning process. Most of the designated Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are now receiving funds. Ultimately, the agencies seek to achieve a unified, integrated multimodal transportation planning process.

Since the passage of the National Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1974, the importance of the MPOs has increased, as they may be the recipients of new Section 5 funds (for optional use to meet operating or capital costs) channeled by UMTA through the states.

Accountability of decisionmakers. UMTA's 1966 guidelines also outline who should be represented on the planning body. These requirements reflect the earlier provisions of Section 701 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965.

1/ Draft regulations were published in November 1973, and by the time of final publication most metropolitan areas had designated a Metropolitan Planning Organization. The final regulations appeared under the title "Planning Assistance and Standards: Urban Transportation Planning" in the Federal Register, Vol. 40, No. 181, September 17, 1975.

-- As explained, the UMTA guidelines specify that local units of general government should be represented on the planning body receiving funds. The guidelines require elected officials or their appointees to provide the representation. Recent provisions outlining the requirements for the designation of MPOs reinforce UMTA's commitment to seeing that local elected officials are adequately represented on the decisionmaking body.

Public involvement. The 1966 guidelines call for involving transit agencies or operators, state and local transportation and planning agencies, and major private interests in the planning process through technical or special advisory committees.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 provides for citizen and public agency review of all major Federally sponsored projects, including transit projects. The environmental impact statement and review process gives the public and governmental agencies the formal opportunity to comment upon all aspects of a project's effect on the environment.

Recent UMTA guidelines also call for community participation through official public hearings. Specific statutory requirements for public hearings are contained in the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, as amended in 1970. These provisions formally tie together the environmental assessment and public input aspects of the planning process.

None of the statutory requirements of administrative regulations spell out how to put citizen participation into practice. UMTA guidelines, including the recent proposed policy^{1/}, emphasize the importance of obtaining community input in the early stages, but there are no specific directives for doing so.

In summary, these Federal statutes and administrative guidelines have shaped the organizational structure of urban transportation planning. They either explicitly mandate the participation of specific actors and agencies or require a particular structure in which specific program responsibilities can be accomplished.

Guidelines for Metropolitan Evaluation

In evaluating the various metropolitan, local, and state institutional structures for transit decision-making, a number of general guidelines were applied. These guidelines, listed below, were derived from Federal eligibility requirements and a review of institutional characteristics that would promote continuous, cooperative, and coordinated planning and decisionmaking in an efficient and timely manner. These guidelines help illuminate the variations and problem areas among the cases.

1 / "Proposed Policy on Major Urban Mass Transportation Investments, Urban Mass Transportation Administration, Federal Register, vol. 40, No. 149, August 1, 1975.

The forum for decisionmaking should be clearly designated and should involve all relevant public agencies. The institutional structure has been examined to determine the extent to which responsibilities of each participating institution have been stated at all levels of planning and implementation. Inter-agency coordination should include other local, state, and regional agencies as appropriate to provide the necessary policy and technical information. Cooperation with comprehensive land use planning bodies is particularly important. The relationship of these agencies within the decisionmaking forum should be cooperative, not negatively competitive.

Decisionmakers should have ^{authority and} ^{input} ability. The participants operating in the forum should have properly designated decisionmaking authority, and the public should have formal channels for holding decisionmakers accountable for their actions. Under some circumstances, direct election of decisionmakers may provide a greater degree of accountability. planning agency boards filled by elected officials from local governments are more directly accountable bodies than those with boards composed of appointed local officials or private individuals.

The general public should be effectively involved. Citizens should participate in the transit planning process from its beginning and should have open lines of communication with final decisionmakers. A responsive process includes representatives of all interested and affected groups including the business and financial community, labor organizations, environmental groups, representatives of the handicapped and the elderly, and the citizens of impacted neighborhoods. The planning and design program should be structured in such a way that citizens can have an input into the formulation of goals and objectives and the evaluation of alternative transportation solutions. Direct communication with decisionmakers should be possible throughout the process, and the decisionmakers should not rely exclusively on public hearings to provide citizen input.

METROPOLITAN EXPERIENCE

This section examines the institutional structure for decisionmaking in the nine metropolitan cases. The evaluation is subdivided into categories corresponding to the guidelines discussed above.

Forum for Decisionmaking

During the last decade Federal policy has fostered a distinctly regional approach to urban transportation and decision-making. Recently this orientation has been coupled with an effort to achieve a more unified multimodal planning process that would be closely coordinated with areawide comprehensive

planning. However, the institutional devices that the nine metropolitan areas have adopted in response to them are distinguished by their compliance with the form rather than the substance of the law.

Although the forums for decisionmaking in most of these metropolitan areas are designated clearly in a formal or official sense, the real process of decisionmaking is characterized by a lack of clearly specified responsibilities for policymaking, planning, and implementation and a considerable amount of competition for these functions among regional, local, and state agencies. The institutional mechanisms devised by each metropolitan area reflect the interplay of these competing forces.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization forum. In four of the metropolitan cases, the principal forum for decisionmaking is provided by the traditional council of governments or regional planning commission. In Twin Cities, Atlanta, Seattle, and Los Angeles, local governments and modal agencies negotiate agreements on regional transportation policy inside the boardrooms of these agencies or within their subcommittees. The four agencies are the official Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in their respective regions.

Among the nine cases, these four forums, with the land use planning organization in nominal command, adhere most closely in structure to the Federal guidelines for MPOs. In theory, this type of institutional structure offers the possibility for integrating comprehensive areawide development policy and plans, including long-range regional transportation plans, with mass transit planning and project implementation.

As the following examples illustrate, however, the division of responsibilities is not always so neatly drawn, and competition exists over policymaking and priority-setting responsibilities. In addition, because most Metropolitan Planning Organizations do not have statutory authority to raise funds and implement projects, they often are at a disadvantage in relation to special purpose transit operating agencies.

Minneapolis - St. Paul. Minneapolis - St. Paul offers an example of a relatively clearly defined decisionmaking structure. In 1974, the state legislature acted to clarify the responsibilities of the two main actors in the transit field, the Metropolitan Council (the MPO and A-95 agency) and the Metropolitan Transit Commission. The Metropolitan Reorganization Act of 1974 directed the Metropolitan Council to prepare a comprehensive development guide for the area. The guide was to include policies for all forms of transportation and constitute a policy

evaluation framework for reviewing the plans and programs of the Metropolitan Transit Commission (as well as the other areawide commissions). In turn, the Commission was required to prepare a transportation development program that implements the Metropolitan Council's policy plan. This explicit relationship sets mass transit plans and priorities firmly within the context of overall metropolitan growth and land use policy and draws the distinction between "policy decisions" and "technical decisions."

However, full resolution of past conflicts between the two organizations will not occur until the present process of selecting a transportation development program is worked out. The Commission has developed several plans for automated fixed-guideway transit systems, while the Council has supported a regional bus system. The Commission argues that the choice involves a "technical decision" and therefore is the Commission's prerogative; the Council says it is a question of policy and therefore should be decided by the Council.

Atlanta= In Atlanta, the forum for transit planning also is distinguished by a relatively close integration of comprehensive regional planning and transportation planning. The Atlanta Regional Commission is the official MPO and A-95 review agency for the area. It is empowered to prepare a Development Guide to shape regional growth. Regional transportation policy and priorities are formulated within the ARC, although the process occurs through a complex structure of special committees whose members still enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy.

The process is spelled out in the Atlanta Region Transportation Planning Program. It allows the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), the Georgia State Department of Transportation, the mayor of Atlanta, and the representatives from ARC's member counties to reach policy decisions within ARC's Transportation Policy Subcommittee. The members of this subcommittee formulate the area's annual work program; and although the ARC board reviews the work program and sets priorities among its elements, neither the state DOT nor MARTA always adheres strictly to them.

Thus, the forum permits a relatively close integration of comprehensive areawide planning and urban transportation planning, but it is not likely to place ARC in a commanding policy-making position as long as MARTA and GDOT have their own powerful project implementation authorities. As an operating authority in the midst of developing a major rapid transit system, MARTA can exercise a powerful voice in the regional forum.

Seattle. In Seattle, the major participants in the transit planning process have not clearly defined their respective responsibilities. From the official point of view, the Puget Sound

Council of Governments (PSCOG), which is the designated MPO and A-95 review agency for the region, is responsible for areawide comprehensive planning, including transit planning. Despite its regional policymaking and planning authority and its role as a channel for Federal funds, PSCOG exercises little effective control over Metro, the primary transit operator.

Covering the metropolitan area of Seattle and empowered with voter approval to levy taxes, Metro has the potential to assume a broader range of functions than the special purpose transit districts found in other cities. Its enabling legislation gives it planning and development authority over solid waste, water supply, metropolitan planning, and parks and recreation, as well as transit, pending approval in referenda for each function. Although Metro has not received voter approval to carry out all these functions, its potential role in the metropolitan area is considerably more powerful than that of PSCOG.

In terms of mass transit, which Metro was empowered to operate in 1972, the two agencies are in sharp disagreement over which one is responsible for transit planning and policymaking in the area.

Los Angeles. Like Seattle, Los Angeles is a case in which the regional comprehensive planning organization provides a poorly integrated forum for regional policymaking. The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is the officially designated MPO. It has A-95 review powers, a state mandate to develop the Southern California component of the statewide transportation plan, and authority to review and approve state assistance funds for the region's transit operators.

Within the six-county region covered by SCAG, the major transit operator is the Southern California Rapid Transit District (SCRTD). Although SCAG's powers have grown over the past few years and it can influence the rapid transit planning activities of SCRTD, it has no direct power to shape SCRTD's policymaking and planning activities. As a single-purpose agency with an explicit mandate from the state legislature to design and implement a rapid transit system within Los Angeles County, SCRTD traditionally has acted independently. Prior to the November 1974 referendum, neither UMTA nor SCAG was able to get SCRTD to effectively coordinate its rapid transit activities with the county or any of the other counties in the region, and disagreements between SCAG, the Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles County, the city, and SCRTD made it impossible to reach a workable consensus on the nature of the rapid transit policy and plan.

Legislative initiatives now being taken in California may create a new structure for policymaking and priority setting for transit that would clarify and rationalize the fragmented forum in Los Angeles. Under the proposed Assembly Bill No. 1246, SCAG would retain responsibility for long-range regional transportation planning and coordination, but the primary forum for decisionmaking would be placed on the county level in a Los Angeles County Transportation Commission that would have responsibilities for policymaking, transit service coordination, short-range transportation planning, and the approval of a public mass transit system. The responsibilities of SCRTD would be clearly limited to operating the transit system.

Other kinds of forums. The other five cases provide examples of a range of types of decisionmaking forums. None of them are as directly linked to land use planning organizations (and MPOs) as the previously described case examples. San Francisco's Metropolitan Planning Commission, which is separate from the region's comprehensive planning agency, is a strong multimodal forum. Denver and Boston represent ad hoc solutions to the problem of establishing an integrated metropolitan planning organization. In both these cases, the idea of making the regional planning organization the umbrella for areawide transportation policymaking gave way in the face of competition between relatively independent agencies; and each of the public agencies, while preserving their fundamental autonomy, joined together in a forum in which they could achieve negotiated agreements. Washington is a case in which the metropolitan transit authority has provided the decisionmaking forum, while in Chicago the forum is in flux.

San Francisco. In the San Francisco area, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission represents a clearly designated regional forum for transportation decisionmaking which many critics nevertheless believe has not yet lived up to its potential. Created by the state legislature, MTC is mandated to prepare a regional transportation plan that should include highway and transit elements. MTC is the MPO for the region^{1/} and, as such, prepares the annual list of projects for which UMTA funds are solicited. It has policymaking and priority setting authorities and is empowered to allocate state transit funds to operators within each county of the region. Aside from the Bay Area Rapid Transit District, MTC's responsibilities cover four other major transit operators. Two of these operators, East Bay's A.C. Transit and San Francisco's Muni, are larger than BART.

1/ The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), not MTC, is the A-95 review agency with land use planning responsibilities for the region. By agreement, MTC acts as the transportation review agency for ABAG, although ABAG retains final review authority.

The MTC has come under criticism for not exercising its authority more forcefully. Although the Commission does have priority--setting and project approval powers, it is sometimes reluctant to curb the demands of the transit operators. Some observers speculate MTC's reluctance to exercise the power it does have stems from fear of legislative reprisals. In the eyes of these critics, MTC is too concerned with protecting the organization and too little concerned with setting any basic policy direction. Another interpretation of MTC's cautious stance may be in order, however, as the Commission only has had since 1970 to organize itself and establish credible control over the activities of transit operators like BARTD that have policymaking, implementation, and financial powers of their own.

It should be noted that the MTC is one of many regional special-purpose districts in the Bay area. Although the Association of Bay Area Governments is supposed to coordinate their activities, it is too weak to do so, and there are periodic movements to establish an effective regional government within the area.

Denver. Denver's forum for transportation decisionmaking is called the Joint Regional Transportation Planning Program (JRPP). Established in 1971, the JRPP is made up of the Regional Transportation District (RTD), the Colorado Department of Highways (CDH), and the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG). Although DRCOG is the A-95 agency for the area, the JRPP itself is the designated MPO. Within it, however, each agency retains independence. The JRPP board consists of the executives of the three agencies, and it approves funding requests and allocates funds among the three agencies. But the RTD has full responsibility for all aspects of transit decision-making, and the CDH holds sway in highway matters. DRCOG, responsible for preparing long-range regional transportation plans, takes a strong position vis-a-vis the other agencies on many issues. The situation makes it difficult for the agencies operating within JRPP to establish priorities among their programs.

Boston. In the Boston area the Massachusetts governor recently designated a Metropolitan Planning Organization which, like Denver's, is based on an association of statutory agencies joined together by a memorandum of understanding. Unlike the Denver's JRPP, however, the Secretary of the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC) of Massachusetts has a central role to play in the MPO. The MPO is composed of the five agencies that, under state law, have responsibilities for some aspects of the 3-c transportation planning process. Aside from the state EOTC, these are the Department of Public Works (DPW), the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), the Advisory Board to the MBTA, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

The MPO includes the requisite planning functions and is representative of local and state Officials. Transportation planning and implementation activities are covered by four of the agencies, and comprehensive land use planning and A-95 review functions are the responsibility of the MAPC. In addition, the membership of the MAPC and the Advisory Board of the IMBTA represent local cities and towns within the Boston area as well as the City of Boston and state officials.

The central role played by the Commonwealth Secretary of the EOTC sets this forum apart from the others described. As chairman of the Committee of Signatories, the Secretary can coordinate the activities of the members and play a pivotal role in negotiating priorities for the annual list of projects seeking Federal funds and for the allocation of both state and Federal funds. The EOTC's influence is enhanced by its close working relationship with the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS), which is the technical planning arm of the EOTC.

Washington, D.C. The Washington case is special due to the involvement of Congress and the jurisdictional peculiarities of the multistate national capital region. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority was created by interstate compact to plan and operate a regional transit system. At the time the Metro system was adopted in 1968, there were no A-95 requirements, and 3-C coordination was still largely focused on highways. The Transportation Planning Board (TPB), which is the 3-c agency and a part of the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments (COG), accepted the Adopted Regional System as given in its long-range plan. COG (with TPB) is now the regional A-95 and MPO body, but its reviews of WMATA's plans for changes in the Metro system tend to be rubber-stamp exercises. Most of the members of the Transportation Planning Board -- representatives from the region's jurisdictions -- also sit on the WMATA board, and almost all transit decisions are reached in that forum.

The opportunity will be presented for TPB to exercise its potential role when the current effort to update the long-range transportation plan moves further along and begins to deal with the question of extensions to the Metro system.

Chicago Chicago historically has had an array of transit planning and decisionmaking institutions with overlapping and competing responsibilities. This situation allowed the City of Chicago to retain paramount control over the decisionmaking process. A number of factors recently have altered this situation.

The creation of the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) introduced a new force on the scene which is increasing its power. IDOT has replaced the city as the dominant force on the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), the body that has temporary status as the region's MPO. The governor still has not made a final designation.

In addition to the establishment of IDOT, the Chicago Transit Authority has become dependent on state, county, and Federal subsidies and has consequently lost a measure of its autonomy. Finally, the creation of the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) has introduced a new force on the scene.

The Regional Transportation Authority was established by the state legislature in 1973 and approved in a referendum in March 1974. Charged with setting fares, determining schedules, contracting for the management of transit services in the region, and preparing the five-year transit development program, the RTA commands an array of transit funding mechanisms and has power of eminent domain. On matters of service and policy, the RTA is advised by the Metropolitan Area Transportation Council, whose members, appointed by local officials, can adopt resolutions and hold public hearings. The direction in which the Chicago area institutional structure is evolving suggests an increasingly powerful role for the state and the RTA.

Discussion. This review of the different institutional patterns for decisionmaking suggests several trends or issues that appear in one form or another in the metropolitan cases. One is the growing influence of state governments in the process; another is the adequacy of traditional councils of governments to effectively perform the additional responsibilities many of them have been asked to assume; and a third is rooted in the way decisionmaking powers generally are distributed among the state, regional, and local agencies that participate in the process.

The role that state governments are playing in the transit planning and decisionmaking process is becoming increasingly important. Although state highway departments traditionally have played a key role in the urban transportation planning process, the advent of more state departments of transportation with responsibility for mass transit indicates a strong trend toward a multimodal role. This role will be expanded as more states begin to provide more financial assistance to transit authorities facing increasing operating deficits and as state DOTs begin to intercede as policy mediators in the fragmented regional decisionmaking process. The Federal Highway Act of 1973 and the NMTA Act of 1974 have both enhanced the influence of state governors by way of MPO designation requirements and the stipulation concerning Section 5 funds for optional capital or operating assistance.

There is a need for involvement by the state-level executive branch, backed by strong legislative direction, to deal with several typical problems:

- In the absence of a paralleling involvement with transit, the major state role in highway programs often has led to biases in transportation planning that have worked against transit.
- Opportunities for localities to improve public transportation through traffic engineering and highway management measures often have been foreclosed by the state, when they should be creatively and energetically pursued.
- The creation of land use control powers necessary at the metropolitan level to carry out the land development objectives associated with transit requires state legislation.
- State action is needed to rationalize the tangle of special purpose independent transportation agencies and the various metropolitan planning functions.
- State legislation is generally required for transit matching monies -- even when they are to be collected only within metropolitan areas. States are becoming increasingly involved in providing financial assistance for transit improvements and operations.
- The National Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1974 delegates significant responsibility to states in allocating operating subsidies. This will place even greater pressures on states both to review the performance of local transit operations and to provide financial assistance for the local match.

The metropolitan cases in which the state role has begun to be felt most clearly are Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. California's CALTRANS is responsible for the preparation of a statewide transportation plan under Assembly Bill 69, and the state provides funds for both transit capital and operating assistance. The Illinois DOT has an increasing role in the Chicago metropolitan area. In Massachusetts, the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction provides an effective centralized forum for establishing and coordinating transportation policy. As head of the MPO, it can play a lead policy role in transit decisionmaking, while the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority functions more and more as a transit operating agency. In the Washington, D.C., area, the Maryland Department of Transportation is assisting suburban counties with their share of the capital costs of constructing the Metro system.

Another issue involves the controversy that developed in some areas over the official designation of Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Since the passage of the Highway Act of 1973 which required -governors to designate official Metropolitan Planning Organizations in areas receiving Federal transportation assistance, UMTA has generally favored the designation of the traditional A-95 review agencies and areawide comprehensive planning organizations. This approach has met with criticism from many local public officials and transit operators.

On one level the criticism stems from a common political and bureaucratic desire to protect institutional prerogatives. Some local officials are concerned that the law gives the state (and, by implication, the state highway departments) too much power over local decisionmaking issues. They fear highway interests will predominate if decisions are made in one multi-modal forum.

Other local officials have different concerns. For example, transit operators argue that they should have the responsibility for making transit decisions since they produce up to 70% of operating revenues. They feel their practical experience in the field qualifies them above regional planners to be able to represent their customers' best interests. On the other side, it is said that transit operating agencies are too narrowly concerned with transportation alone and tend to be unresponsive to the public. To the extent that they have independent sources of funding, they can operate with a degree of freedom that may override local interests or disregard coordination with other regional or local entities.

A different kind of criticism questions the ability of traditional regional planning agencies to effectively carry out transit decisionmaking responsibilities. Historically, these agencies have had to depend on the participating jurisdictions to implement decisions reached in the regional forum, because they seldom have direct statutory authority over the activities of local government. The MPO designation did not alter these fundamental weaknesses.

It also has been argued that regional planning agencies should become MPOs because they can provide the mechanism for integrating regional land use planning and transportation planning. This argument is difficult to connect with experience. The record suggests that truly effective coordination is not yet commonplace. Highway and transit modal agencies operate under separate policies and programs, and neither transit nor highway planners have established effective coordination between their activities and comprehensive land use planning. Although there was some sharing of data base and assumptions, in none of the metropolitan cases can the rapid transit plan developed by a regional agency be said to rest on strong commitments from local municipal authorities to implement complementary land use plans.

The question of cooperation between regional, local, and state agencies leads to the issue of the manner in which policy-making, priority setting, and other powers are distributed in the metropolitan areas. The major source of these conflicts lies in the fact that the separate responsibilities of each of the levels of government in the metropolitan areas are not clearly enough defined for any one agency to have decisive responsibility for resolving conflicts and establishing budgeting and programming priorities. There is a broad spectrum of responsibilities among the agencies ranging from regional comprehensive planning to detailed project engineering and construction of capital projects or the implementation of operational improvements. General agreement exists about the distribution of responsibility at the extremes of the spectrum but the area of priority setting and budgeting is the subject of much competition.

How this competition is resolved will depend on establishing a forum in which one lead institution has well defined and well supported responsibility for formulating policy and priorities. Such an institution could be a metropolitan planning agency, a special purpose agency, a local government body, or a state agency. No one institutional framework will be appropriate for every metropolitan area. Aside from enhancing the effectiveness of the decisionmaking process, defining the locus of these responsibilities more clearly will make that process more responsive and accountable.

Accountability and Authority of Decisionmakers

Historically, the question of how accountable and responsive transit operators were to the public was not a pressing concern. Most transit companies were privately owned, and though they were regulated by public utility commissions, they were concerned primarily with the requirements of the private market. In the 1960s, however, an increasing number of transit companies came under public ownership, and people began to pay more critical attention to the factors contributing to the accountability and responsiveness of these public entities. The formal powers of the transit agency, the method of selecting its governing board, its source of funds, and the extent to which it was subject to the control or oversight of other public institutions are all subjects critics have begun to examine more closely.

These concerns also have appeared in the nine metropolitan cases. Although each case has a different history and different traditions of leadership, a review of some of their common characteristics shows that the question of the accountability and responsiveness of their transit decisionmaking institutions is an increasingly important issue.

In general terms, the institutions for decisionmaking in the nine metropolitan cases have several characteristics that bear on the issue. First, they are usually regional entities with special mandates from state legislatures to perform transit planning and operating functions. Second, with the exceptions of San Francisco's BART and A.C. Transit, they are all governed by

either directly appointed boards or boards composed of local elected officials. Third, although they tend to need legislative and voter approval to secure financing for major public works projects such as rapid rail transit systems, once that financing is secured, they are able to operate with relatively unrestrained autonomy. Obviously these three characteristics are not reflected equally in each of the cases, but some aspects of one or the other do appear in all the metropolitan cases. .

In most of the metropolitan areas, the agency responsible for mass transit planning and operations is a special-purpose organization with an appointed board that tends to regard its mandate from a regional-perspective. Although variations exist, these organizations are generally public authorities or special districts, and, in all the cases, critics have raised questions about their representativeness and their ability to respond to changing times. In many cases, the agencies were established to carry out transit programs on which local consensus had already been reached. Under these circumstances, the agency's programs tend to gather such momentum that they are difficult to check or change. This problem is most serious when a transit agency has difficulty responding to special local concerns or requirements because it is focusing on its mandate to build a regional rapid transit system.

The following paragraphs discuss the transit decisionmaking institutions in the nine cases in terms of the measures they employ to gain accountability. The descriptions are grouped in categories by type of transit agency.

Public authorities. The two predominant types of special-purpose agencies found in the metropolitan cases are public authorities and special districts. In general, public authorities are nonprofit public corporations established by state legislatures. They have appointed boards and do not normally have independent powers of taxation. Atlanta's MARTA, Boston's MBTA, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority are examples of this type of special body. Chicago's RTA is a transit authority that does have taxing powers.

Atlanta . The Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transit Authority (MARTA) was created by the Georgia legislature in 1965 expressly to plan, design, construct, and operate a rapid transit system. The MARTA board is made up of 10 members appointed by local officials representing the City of Atlanta and the four suburban counties.

The question of fair representation on the MARTA board has been an issue since its creation. The business and civic leaders who were the driving force behind the creation of MARTA in the 1960s were not directly accountable to any particular constituency. When MARTA was established, the appropriate composition of the board became a point of contention between the City of

Atlanta and the suburban counties. The decision was made to diminish the influence of local politics on MARTA's board by excluding elected officials. Instead, the members are appointed by local county officials and the mayor of Atlanta.

The City of Atlanta and Fulton County, which encompasses the city, dominate the MARTA board with six members, but there is new pressure to increase the representation of suburban DeKalb County because it produces 40% of the sales tax revenues that support MARTA. Although Clayton and Gwinnett voted against the MARTA referendum in 1971, they retain voting representation on the board.

Washington, D.C. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit "Authority" (WMATA) is an interstate compact approved by Congress and created to cut through the institutional jungle of the Washington metropolitan region. The WMATA compact clearly spells out WMATA's powers to design and construct the regional Metro rail system.

Within WMATA, decisionmakers can be held accountable due both to the realities of the Metro financing situation and the composition of its board. The board is made up of two delegates from each of the three major political subdivisions of the national capital region. They are appointed from the membership of the District of Columbia City Council, Maryland's Washington Suburban Transit District, and the Northern Virginia Transportation District. The Maryland delegation can include two "qualified residents," but all the rest of the delegates to WMATA must be local officials accountable for their actions to their constituents.

WMATA's financing plan is a negotiated agreement among all the participating local governments. Board members must have backing from their jurisdictions before the financing plan can be changed. Financial aspects of WMATA decisionmaking, therefore, have tended to be kept in the public view.

Boston. Public checks on transit decisionmaking in Boston are now exercised more through the state executives than through the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). Since the reorganization of the transportation functions in the Boston region, the responsibility for transit decisionmaking has shifted more and more to the Secretary of Transportation and Construction. As the Secretary serves at the pleasure of the governor of the Commonwealth, this structure makes the governor ultimately accountable for major transit policy decisions. This shift of responsibility to one clearly designated elected official has increased the formal control that the public may have over the mass transit decisionmaking process.

• Chicago. In the Chicago region, the exact source of accountability is difficult to pin down. As noted earlier, the City of Chicago has sought to maintain a dominant role in the planning and decisionmaking process, but the influence of both the State of Illinois and the Regional Transportation Authority has grown. With regard to public authorities, the Regional Transit Authority has major powers that neither Atlanta nor WMATA possess.

The RTA was approved by the voters of six northern Illinois counties in 1974. The margin of the vote showed a majority of support for the authority in the City of Chicago rather than the suburban counties, and the question of suburban versus city representation on the RTA board became an issue. The resolution was to establish a nine-person board in which four members are chosen by the city, four are chosen by the suburbs, and the ninth member is selected by the other eight to serve as chairman. The current chairman of the RTA was chairman of the Chicago Transit Authority before assuming his new post.

The RTA possesses extensive powers. Aside from being authorized to contract for the management of transit services and set fares and schedules, it can levy a motor fuel tax and tax parking lot revenues. It also receives a portion of the state sales tax and is empowered to commit up to \$500 million in general obligation bonds. Although it is too early to evaluate the record of the RTA, it is clear that it has a unique set of powers that may make it a model for regional transit authorities.

Special districts. The second major institutional form that special-purpose agencies take is the special district. Like public authorities, special districts are created by state legislatures, but they usually have broader independent powers. Their governing boards usually are made up of representatives of local municipal and county governments, and often they have powers of taxation and eminent domain. Special districts must still go before the voters for approval of general purpose bonds.

The metropolitan cases offer two primary examples of the special district form: the Southern California Rapid Transit District and the Bay Area Rapid Transit District. The first is a Prime example of the problems of accountability and responsiveness that can arise in such cases, while the second represents the attempt to overcome some of these problems through the direct election of the BARTD board members.

Los Angeles. The Southern California Rapid Transit District was created by the California state legislature in 1974 with an explicit mandate to design and implement a mass rapid transit system with Los Angeles County. SCRTD is governed by a board appointed by local officials. The composition of the board is such that the City of Los Angeles, which is the jurisdiction most interested in obtaining mass transit service, is underrepresented in comparison to the County Board of Supervisors and the suburban jurisdictions within the county. The 11 member board has five members appointed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, four appointed by a special city selection committee representing 76 cities in the county, and only two appointed by the Mayor of Los Angeles.

The SCRTD board has been unable to produce a plan for rapid transit that responds to all the needs of its constituents. Predisposed to building a large-scale regional system, SCRTD has been caught between the needs of the city and the demand for equal treatment from outlying jurisdictions. As a result, SCRTD sought to develop a rapid rail system for the entire region instead of a more flexible plan with only one short segment of a rapid rail system in the city. The cost of the adopted system ultimately defeated it, and only recently have the City of Los Angeles, SCRTD, and SCAG begun to investigate an incremental approach to developing a plan. Both the city and the County Board of Supervisors have sought ways to make SCRTD more representative of the area.

San Francisco. The Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BARTD) was established in 1957 to plan, construct, and operate a regional rapid transit system. Unlike SCRTD, BARTD has secured approval of its bond issue and receives special earmarked local taxes provided by the state legislature. Originally, BARTD's 12-member board was appointed by local officials in Alameda, Contra Costa and San Francisco counties. But controversies over lack of responsiveness to local needs, cost overruns, and the management of the District led to a directly elected board whose members represent nine sub-BART districts. This is the first example of such a transit board for a regional rapid transit district. However, A.C. Transit has had a directly elected board for many years and has been considered by most observers to be a competently managed, responsive transit operator.

Denver. Denver's Rapid Transit District (RTD) bears mentioning because so far it has managed to be reasonably representative of the area. Although RTD's board can be said to have been predisposed to designing a particular type of system for the Denver area, the system won solid voter approval in the local referendum in 1973.

Denver's RTD, which bears the responsibility for the bulk of decisionmaking, has a board that is structured to reflect the will of elected officials. RTD's 21-person board is appointed by the officials of the participating jurisdictions. The mayor of Denver appoints 10 delegates and the suburban counties appoint a total of nine. Within each county the appointees are subject to confirmation by a majority of the municipalities in that county, a procedure that provides an additional degree of public responsiveness. The remaining two board members are appointed by the other 19 to represent the region at large. Due to the dominating number of Denver representatives, the RTD board is able to bear greatest allegiance to people who produce the bulk of the sales tax revenues that will be used to finance the RTD transit proposal.

Variations. Among the metropolitan cases, Seattle and Minneapolis-St. Paul offer variations on the common pattern that should be noted.

Seattle. In the case of Seattle, the transit institution is similar to a special district in its representativeness and authority, but unlike the other cases, Seattle's Metro has powers over programs other than transit. This makes it more like a general purpose government.

Minneapolis-St. Paul. Minneapolis-St. Paul provides a unique example of a transit operator, the Metropolitan Transit Commission, whose board members are directly appointed by the areawide comprehensive planning organization, the Metropolitan Council. The provisions for accountability, therefore, are found in both agencies.

Both MTC and the Council were created in 1967. The Metropolitan Council was created to establish a framework to coordinate regional development in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. Sixteen members of the Metropolitan Council are appointed by the governor on a nonpartisan basis, after consulting with members of the legislature from the candidate's Council district (a regional subdivision that corresponds to legislative districts rather than county lines). The chairman of the Metropolitan Council is appointed by the governor as the seventeenth voting member of the Council and must be experienced in the field of municipal and urban affairs.

Minnesota's recent Metropolitan Reorganization Act(1974) has designated the Metropolitan Council as the policymaking body with final approval power for transportation development in the metropolitan area. The Metropolitan Transit Commission covers the same seven-county area as the Council. It is empowered to plan, construct, equip, and operate a transit system in accordance with the Council's policy plans. The act directs the Metropolitan Council to appoint the members of the Metropolitan Transit Commission as terms of present members expire. The governor still appoints the chairman of the Commission.

Discussion. This review of the patterns of accountability found among transit agencies raises a number of issues. One issue concerns the effectiveness of the different approaches for providing formal public control over decisionmakers. A related, but more important, question examines how the decision-making forum can be made equally responsive to local needs as well as broad, regionwide concerns. A final issue points up the advantages of increasing the state legislature's role in overseeing community transit activities.

The main formal channel for accountability is the mechanism by which the transit decisionmakers are placed in (or removed from) office. UMTA regulations call for adequate representation of local elected officials on the agency that receives UMTA grants, and most boards of transit agencies and Metropolitan Planning Organizations alike are composed of local officials who are elected or appointed to office. The experience in the nine cities shows that elected officials -- mayors, commissioners -- and high-level appointed officials of local governments tend to be responsive because they owe their office to the public. Board members who bear primary responsibility for a functional area such as transit or highways or other special purpose agencies tend to look out for their subject area interest rather than more generalized expressions of the public will.

The experience of San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BARTD) offers a different model for board representation: direct election of board members. BARTD is the only example among the cases of a regional transit district with a directly elected board. Conversion to an elected board was effected in fall 1974 in an effort to make BARTD more responsive to the concerns of the public. However, because the board members are elected from large districts, each containing several political jurisdictions, there may not be a clear sense of common interest among the constituents of any one board member. A.C.'s board members have little public identity; no incumbent board member has ever been defeated. BART likely will continue to generate greater public interest than A.C., but seats may go to special interests that can afford to support candidates' campaigns. Unlike elections for general-purpose government office, such elections may not attract enough interest to ensure significant popular support. Thus, the effectiveness of using an elected board to improve accountability is not proven.

In BART's case, as in several others, an important accountability issue has been the dominating role played by the engineering contractor. To the extent that transit decisions are made by hired consultants and not the members of the board, the process cannot be responsive. Consultants are unlikely to place top priority in conserving public funds unless appropriate contract incentives are created. They are more likely to seek to continue to work in their field of specialization, and this self-interest may provide incentives to bias the results of planning studies in the direction of projects which will utilize their expertise.

Another means for gaining accountability is illustrated by the Boston case. There the public has the recourse for holding the Massachusetts governor responsible for the transit policy formulated by his appointee, the Secretary of the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction. The governor and the secretary are not only accountable, but they also bring visibility to the decisionmaking process, and to their role in it. However, the transfer of decisionmaking power to the state executive grew out of circumstances somewhat peculiar to the Boston region -- the location of the state capitol in the

city and its tradition of involvement in city affairs, the power vacuum created by the weak regional planning body, and other considerations. Although in every case there is room for stranger state leadership, the Boston model might not be appropriate in many regions.

Visibility is a key ingredient for creating an accountable decisionmaking process. Cases in which major decisions are reached in forums dominated by competing modal agencies offer particularly little recourse for the public. In Atlanta and Denver, for example, regional transportation policy tends to be decided in a process of negotiation between mode interests. In Atlanta, the Georgia Department of Highways and the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority have equal status with the representatives of local governments when they do business in the Transportation Policy Subcommittee of the Atlanta Regional Commission. Decisions tend to reflect the trade-offs between the two powerful agencies; yet, these trade-offs are rarely debated publicly by the board of the subcommittee's parent organization. The structure of Denver's Joint Regional Planning Program offers less accountability, because this agency does not include political representatives. It is strictly a forum for negotiation between, the state highway agency, the transit district, and the comprehensive planning body.

The question of fair representation on the boards of the decisionmaking agencies is another issue. There is a trend toward more representation for suburban jurisdictions vis-a-vis the center cities. In Atlanta, this issue involves a further dimension: the suburban jurisdiction (DeKalb County) that has requested more representation on the MARTA board provides a substantial portion of the sales tax revenues that support the agency. In San Francisco, the representation issue was resolved by applying the one man-one vote principle, on which basis BARTD has been divided into nine districts principally on the basis of population.

At the heart of the representation question is the issue of structuring decisionmaking bodies to represent both local interests and regional interests in a fair manner. To date, several factors have kept the process from responding adequately to the needs of regional subsections. One reason involves the structure of the transit agency boards. Each local elected official (or high level appointee) who sits on a board is responsible to his constituents for making certain that they get a fair share of any transit improvement plan. The pressures of competition tend to produce overextensive plans that serve everyone more or less equally, rather than smaller plans focused on parts of the region that may have specific transit problems. The Los Angeles case is a particularly good example of this problem. Atlanta's MARTA has attempted to avoid this kind of distortion by forbidding board members to hold local office, but in practice delegates have remained responsive to the local jurisdiction by which they were appointed.

The procedures for obtaining local financing have reinforced the regional perspective. In almost all the cases, the transit agency has had to secure the lion's share of its local funding from an areawide referendum. In San Francisco, Los Angeles, Denver, and Atlanta, among others, the approval of plans for regional rapid transit systems depended on the voters' approval of a mechanism for financing these plans.

Requiring voter approval of such mechanisms is an ultimate means of assuring accountability. At the same time, however, it may oblige transit planners to devise plans that satisfy local demands but are too large to be financially feasible. The need to get the suburban vote in order to raise the money for a rapid transit system may force the planner to make the system more extensive than it need be. Again, this is most clearly demonstrated in Los Angeles.

The most promising approach for removing the distortion is to make changes in the financing basis for transit improvements. The changes, discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, basically involve providing transit agencies with the means to finance systems without having to go to the voters. The formula grant program authorized by the National Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1974 is a step in this direction. In addition, UMTA's recently proposed investment policy would help accomplish this goal by requiring metropolitan areas to build (and obtain financing for) transit proposals in separate subsystem increments.

The examination of the metropolitan areas also underscored the need for more state legislative oversight of urban transit programs. California has taken the lead in this area, largely in response to the problem of finance, administration, and technological development at BART. Extensive staff work has been undertaken by the Legislative Analyst's office and the Assembly Committee on Transportation. Georgia has established the MARTA Overview Committee (MARTOC), a legislative committee to oversee, MARTA's program. The Minnesota Legislature has moved to resolve the controversy between the Metropolitan Council and Metropolitan Transit Commission.

Legislative oversight is an essential part of a responsible state transit program. Arguments in favor of a strong state role in transit have been explained. For these same reasons, highly competent state legislative review should be encouraged in areas where major Federally funded transit development programs are undertaken.

In summary, several actions might be taken to increase the extent to which transit decisionmaking organizations can be held accountable. Decisionmaking bodies should fill their boards with high-level officials representing local governments, not mode-oriented interests. Direct election of board members is a possible course, although not a panacea. Local financing mechanisms should be made available that remove the need to

overextend plans to gain regionwide financial backing. Increased state participation in financing and decisionmaking could provide an additional measure of accountability. Finally, establishing a procedure for legislative review at the state level could provide a range of benefits.

INVOLVEMENT OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Good citizen participation programs allow public participation in an effective way without unnecessary disruption or delay in the planning process. Experience proves that unless adequate public participation occurs, programs are likely to be stopped or to result in projects that later will be recognized as ill conceived.

The extent and effectiveness of public participation in transit decisionmaking has evolved over time. Elections -- the ultimate form of public participation, at least in the sense of numbers -- have been a recourse throughout the period of planning in the nine cases. During the past decade, public information programs aimed at civic organizations gradually came to be supplemented by citizen advisory groups. Recently, partly in response to Federal requirements, efforts have been made to bring citizens from all major constituencies into the planning process to help define goals and evaluate alternative solutions. Yet, although public officials increasingly regard public participation as an integral part of the planning and decisionmaking process, well structured participation programs have not yet become a common feature of that process in many areas.

Early programs: the sales-bitch approach. The experiences in Washington, D.C. and Atlanta provide excellent illustrations of earlier approaches to citizen involvement.

Washington, D.C., Prior to adoption of the regional Metro rail system in 1968, the program for involving the Washington, D.C. area public in the planning process relied on public information techniques followed by public hearings. The planners gave slide shows and made speeches at various clubs and organizations throughout the region. After the region's jurisdictions had approved a "proposed regional system," the plan was presented at a series of 11 public hearings, most of which were sparsely attended. Voters from only five communities (out of some eight jurisdictions) had the chance to register their will at the polls.

Even after the system was adopted and moved into final design, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's approach to public involvement remained defensive and reactive, and citizens had to resort to legal action to win the chance to review route and station area plans.

Atlanta. The failure of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority to bring the public into the decisionmaking process except in a perfunctory way was cited as a major reason

for the defeat of the transit issue in 1968. Shortly after it was established in 1966, MARTA began an informal public information effort that was, like Washington's, a campaign to sell rapid transit. The approach reached an audience composed mostly of businessmen and public figures -- not the general public. Public hearings, which were required by MARTA's enabling legislation, occurred at the end of the planning process, after preliminary engineering had been done and the plans already had been presented to local jurisdictions.

To gain support for its 1971 transit proposal, MARTA undertook a much wider-reaching public information campaign that was considered to have been an important factor in MARTA's success at the polls that year.

Later, more participatory programs. Denver, Twin Cities, San Francisco's BART extension studies, and, especially, the Boston Transportation Planning Review provide examples of more thoroughly participatory public involvement programs.

Denver. Denver citizens were involved in planning its regional transit system from the beginning, although the effectiveness of the public role diminished during the course of the process. Citizens and public organizations actively participated in formulating goals and objectives for both the regional transportation plan and the complementary land use plan that was being developed simultaneously. The Regional Transportation District organized citizen advisory councils (CACs) for this purpose, and they worked closely with the RTD consultants. However, after the 1973 referendum the CACs were reorganized, and they were provided little opportunity to contribute to the evaluation and selection of alternatives.

Twin Cities. The early phases of long-range planning conducted by the Twin Cities Metropolitan Transit Commission in cooperation with the Metropolitan Council, relied on a 41-member Advisory Committee on Transit (ACT), a volunteer group composed of representatives chosen by the commissioners themselves. The group heard presentations on all projects but due to poor attendance at meetings and other reasons they did not have significant influence on the Commission's decisions.

However, when the Metropolitan Reorganization Act of 1974 placed responsibility for long-range comprehensive transportation planning with the Metropolitan Council, it also contained a provision for public agency and citizen involvement that led to the establishment of a Transportation Advisory Board. Overall, the Transportation Advisory Board appears to have the potential for being a more effective channel for agency and community input inasmuch as it has been assigned its own staff coordinator and appears to have better access to the Metropolitan Council.

San Francisco. Corridor studies for proposed extensions to the BART system in San Francisco provided a well-structured approach to community participation, quite in contrast to the original BART planning process. (That process had been a sales campaign with limited interest group involvement in the planning, similar to the Washington, D.C., and Atlanta experiences described above.)

The extension studies, conducted over the past few years, employed a structure in which each study was governed by a "board of control" comprised of representatives from BART, from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, and -- after pressure was applied -- from affected local jurisdictions. Citizens' advisory committees were set up to advise each board, although they had bigger roles in some studies than in others. In the Northwest Extension BART study in San Francisco's Geary Street corridor, which was considered a model for citizen participation, a community advisory consultant was hired to assist the citizens' council. The citizens enumerated goals and evaluation criteria and used them to evaluate and select final options from among about 40 preliminary alternatives. The process was relatively open and fluid; the participants generated new options in the course of the evaluation.

Boston. The Boston Transportation Planning Review was a major experiment of nationwide significance in its approach to developing an open, participatory study process. It greatly expanded and refined the process of citizen and public agency participation in the transportation planning process. Numerous individuals, groups, and agencies that previously had had little interest or means for becoming involved in transportation decisionmaking were provided with a forum in which conflicting views could be debated and resolved, or at least thoroughly explored to identify commonality of interest and bases for compromise.

The Steering Group that developed the BTPR study design was a broadly based body representing cities and towns, state agencies, and private organizations throughout the Boston area. It continued in operation throughout the 18-month BTPR planning period in a policy advisory capacity as the BTPR "Working Committee," where it had a significant role in decisionmaking. Many of the same groups continue to be involved in Boston regional transportation planning through membership on the Joint Regional Transportation Committee.

Citizen reaction. One of the lessons learned from the experience of the nine case metropolitan areas with community involvement is the difficulty in stimulating interest among citizens during the early stages of systems planning. Typically, the public remains generally approving of system plans until final design

and construction begin. Then, long after the system selection decision has been made, communities or citizens launch efforts to make improvements -- and in some cases, significant changes. Experiences in San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta illustrate this situation well.

San Francisco. The Berkeley subway/elevated fight was the most prolonged and costly battle of the many that occurred during the BART-building years. It received national attention and involved expert witnesses from Canada and other U.S. metropolitan areas. After several ultimatums and extreme polarization between the community and BART, Berkeley overwhelmingly approved a bond issue (by an 82% margin) to finance the extra cost of several miles of subway. The fight cost BART heavily because of over two years' delay in construction, because of the loss of credibility of its engineers, and because of the polarizing effect it had in communities throughout the area.

Atlanta. Several transit station area plans in Atlanta have come under attack by local citizens whose homes or businesses would be displaced. The Decatur Street Station plan, for example, is tied up in three lawsuits.

Washington, D.C. Washington's adopted regional Metro system is being challenged at several points, and a formal study has already recommended one alignment shift (on the Greenbelt line). Another such study is underway (in Anacostia), and others are likely to follow in the wake of outspoken citizen opposition to portions of the system plan.

Discussion. There are several explanations for the tendency for public reaction to occur after plans have been approved. The most obvious reason is that people tend to discount all but the most immediate and most direct threats. Planning involves the intangible future, while the bulldozer at the door cannot be ignored. However, neither BART, MARTA, nor WMATA provided adequate channels for citizen review during the system design and planning process, so little opposition from the affected groups and individuals might be expected. Also, awareness of the potential undesirable side effects of transit construction was slow in coming. Throughout the period of system planning in Washington, the public believed generally that transit was a harmless alternative to destructive highways -- underground and out of sight. Likewise, Atlantans in 1968 did not oppose the transit system because it threatened disruption.

Merely providing better opportunity for public participation -- even after citizens have learned through experience, as in San Francisco, that transit systems can bring undesirable changes to neighborhoods -- does not guarantee that a broad range of citizens

will participate significantly in system planning. Experience in Washington, Atlanta, San Francisco, and Denver shows a marked increase in number of participants and level of participation once corridors have been defined and citizen groups are organized according to neighborhoods that will be affected. This fact points up a general inadequacy of the transit system planning process as it has been performed in many of the cases, which is its tendency to make system-level decisions before any attention is placed on corridor-level issues.

Even at the corridor level, however, structuring a good program for citizen participation does not assure that all interest groups will participate, or that those who do participate will never withdraw their support from the compromise transit program that is negotiated in the study process. Time brings change to the balance of interests in any community. Groups that may have kept out of the process -- due to other, more pressing concerns at the time, or due to culturally based reluctance to participate in a process involving on the whole an educated and articulate group of people -- may be motivated to take action -by subsequently occurring events.

Another issue brought to light by the metropolitan experience points to one of the pitfalls inherent in the concept of citizen participation. The purpose of encouraging citizen involvement is to be able to understand the range of public values and objectives that bear on the project being planned. The planning process can provide the forum for discerning the trade-offs between objectives that conflict and for reaching a consensus between decisionmakers and the public over how to balance these trade-offs. It is important, therefore, to avoid allowing the interests of any one group of citizens to dominate decisionmaking unfairly.

In summary, building community participation into transit planning consumes time, and if the process is poorly managed, it can waste time. On the other hand, it is a vitally important task. Community participation should be regarded as a procedure for collecting necessary data -- the values and opinions of the constituency the plan is being made to serve.