

Summary Case Assessment

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

1. ASSESSMENT OF THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

- **Forum for Decisionmaking.**—During the late 1960's, Forward Thrust made the basic policy decisions in mass transit planning for Seattle. Since 1970, Metro and the Puget Sound Council of Governments (PSCOG) have competed for major responsibilities in transit planning. However, the city of Seattle continues to exert a strong influence.
- **Accountability of Decisionmakers.**—In the late 1960's transit planning was dominated by a quasi-governmental elite of businessmen and civic leaders who, although they attempted to involve all public interests, were not directly accountable to the public. Today, the two dominant forces in transit planning—Metro and PSCOG—are composed of officials who are elected for local positions. They can be held accountable to the public for their actions as they affect each locality, but they are not accountable for regional decisions. Metro, whose board reflects the one-man, one-vote principle, is more representative of the region's interests than PSCOG, whose board gives equal representation to lightly populated rural towns as to the city of Seattle.
- **Public Involvement.**—The public has been involved in Seattle transit decisions throughout the 15-year period of recent history, at least in the sense that financing depended on voter approval. There has been less public involvement in the ongoing

ing planning process. While Forward Thrust conducted community meetings, many basic decisions had already been fixed by an elite leadership group of downtown interests. The 1972 planning process, following a broader citizen participation effort, achieved support for the idea of improving the rapidly deteriorating existing transit system. Although agencies have improved avenues for citizen involvement today, the confusion over planning responsibilities makes it difficult to know which channels for participation will be most effective.

2. ASSESSMENT OF THE TECHNICAL PROCESS

- **Goals and Objectives.**—Transit proposals in Seattle have been part of a comprehensive program of municipal improvements based on explicit goals for the city. The program's goals were based on very optimistic estimates of Seattle's growth, estimates that began to divorce goals from reality as layoffs at Boeing created a near-depression in the Seattle area.
- **Development and Evaluation of Alternatives.**—A rail rapid transit concept had been chosen as a matter of policy by downtown-oriented civic leaders in the early 1960's. Subsequent planning was carried out to prove the feasibility of CBD-oriented rail transit and show its superiority in relation to other alternatives. After defeat of the rail plans in 1968 and 1970, a bus scheme was sought and rail was not considered an alternative, since bonded indebtedness was to be avoided. Currently, a variety of technological alternatives are under consideration as part of a flexible, incremental planning approach.
- **Financing and Implementation.**—Transit planning was strongly influenced by the

nature of the available financing, which was dependent on UMTA support and voter approval. The early transit systems were made large in order to provide a maximum number of voters with a direct

interest in transit, a plan that backfired when voters rejected the expensive proposals. More recent proposals have stressed immediate short-term transit needs, with more success.

O