

GOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION  
IN TRANSPORTATION ACTIVITIES

(Panel Discussion—Part II)

## Need for Local Participation

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### HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATORS SHOULD SEEK LOCAL PARTICIPATION

We in the business of administering the highway programs have been accused on numerous occasions of forgetting for whom we work, namely, the people who buy gas and supply the funds—the public. The collective “we” pertains primarily to the State Highway Commission and the Bureau of Public Roads. We are the first to admit that we can do a better job in dealing with the public on highway transportation planning and construction. Certainly we can take steps to keep them informed regarding the various programs and soliciting their opinion. In essence, what is coming through louder and clearer is the need for local participation.

### GROUPS INCLUDED IN LOCAL PARTICIPATION

Let's take a hard look at this term “local participation” and what it implies. Just who are these local participants? I believe first on the list should be the official governing body of cities and counties: mayors, councils, commissioners. Next, there are the semi-official groups such as councils of government, planning commissions, and transportation planning committees. The list must also include unofficial groups such as the chambers of commerce, service clubs and other organized groups; and, finally and most importantly, the general public.

### FEDERAL REGULATIONS CONCERNING LOCAL PARTICIPATION

Federal laws and regulations have been quite specific in a number of instances regarding the requirements for local participation. Consider, for example, the following items:

- (1) The law states that federal-aid secondary systems shall be

selected by state highway departments and appropriate local road officials in cooperation with each other.

(2) Federal-aid secondary construction programs shall be established on the same basis.

(3) The 1962 Highway Act specifies, in cities over 50,000, a continuous comprehensive transportation planning process be carried on cooperatively by state and local officials.

(4) The law requires state highway department cooperation with local officials in administering FAS funds.

(5) The functional classification studies now in progress are carried on cooperatively between the highway department and local officials.

(6) The Demonstration Cities Act provides that federal projects in cities over 50,000 be reviewed by designated local planning agencies.

(7) The Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1968 and BOB Circular A-95 further extends the road review process to designated state and local agencies.

## LOCAL PARTICIPATION IS ESSENTIAL TO COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

The comprehensive transportation planning program in urban areas over 50,000 population is the program most pertinent to the discussion today. Here we see that local participation gets quite specific in that it involves both money and management. Although this program was set up in the 1962 Highway Act as a requirement for the approval of federal-aid projects, the local area is placed in a position of receiving the greatest benefit from the cooperative planning process—more than state and federal government. Theoretically the planning process could be carried out without local participation in a manner that satisfies established criteria for decision making. There are soft spots in this approach, for it lacks an essential quality—responsiveness to local needs and desires. To be responsive, the planning process must have as basic input the knowledge of what the area being planned for wants to become in the future: does the community want to renew commercial activity in the CBD or does it prefer decentralized commercial activity; does the community prefer high, medium, or low density residential development in a particular area; does the community want to continue to develop as it has in the past or does it desire a change? Since these are questions of vital concern to the community, they must necessarily be of vital concern to the planners. Knowledge of local goals and desires is absolutely necessary to project

the future urban growth and to plan compatible transportation facilities to serve this growth. This responsive planning can be accomplished only through a truly cooperative effort of local and state forces.

### THE PUBLIC ITSELF SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

We must constantly bear in mind that local involvement requires more than local government participation in the planning process. Just as it is important for state planning agencies to seek out and incorporate local government's views in the process, it is equally as important for local planning agencies to seek out and incorporate the general public's views in the process. This has been attempted by various means such as citizens' committees and attitudinal surveys. It is a most important part of the urban transportation planning process that will receive increasing attention in the future.

### PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN INCREASING LOCAL PARTICIPATION

The 1962 Highway Act outlined a fine program that can and should become a vital tool in guiding local development. Eight years have now elapsed since the initial law was passed and only one out of ten cities in Indiana has completed its transportation study. This appears to be an exceptionally long time. It is probable that leadership on the part of federal and state administrators has not been sufficient. The increased involvement of other federal governmental agencies and the desire of local authorities to cover the field to insure their share of any federal projects is realized has somewhat complicated the planning process and certainly has increased the cost. There has, however, been definite progress, even though the studies aren't finished. In particular, we see the formation of technical and administrative committees where all local agencies as well as state and federal agencies are represented. These provide an excellent forum for discussions of all aspects of the transportation field.

### PUBLIC HEARING PROCESS IS SUCCESSFUL

The Public Hearing process has been a part of the highway program for many years and has recently been expanded into a dual hearing process covering both location and design. One of the prime objectives of the process is to provide for local participation. It is directed toward obtaining citizen acceptance through early and active involvement and through participation of local communities in highway

location and design process. The Indiana Highway Commission does an excellent job in conducting public hearings and certainly they involve the local people early in the program.

## TWO DIFFICULT PROBLEMS—ACCESS CONTROL AND THE CHOICE OF EXISTING ROUTE IMPROVEMENTS OR NEW BY-PASS CONSTRUCTION

One of the most vexing problems that we and the highway department face today is the degree of access control that will be established on ABC projects, particularly in the edge of municipalities and cities. We have a definite responsibility to establish a degree of access control high enough to protect the capacity and safety of the highway and the public investment in that highway. At the same time we attempt to provide reasonable service to adjacent lands.

The local reaction to this question may be quite variable. We received 25 or 30 letters from individuals in West Lafayette area concerning the inadequate access control established in the design of the by-pass here. In another recent instance, the local planning people joined with the real estate developers and criticized the highway department for establishing access control on a proposed 4-lane improvement at the edge of their city. This problem is most difficult to solve when planning a highway improvement through a fully developed area. In relatively undeveloped areas it is possible to achieve a good balance between highway capacity and safety and land service. Related to the question of the degree of access control on initial construction is the continuing problem of administering additional access points or curb cuts.

Another controversial subject concerns the question of improving an existing route through a city or town or building a by-pass. There is rarely a simple, clear-cut answer. It obviously involves a number of variables, and certainly local opinion should be considered. At times that option may be influenced by prominent local businessmen who fear loss of business; it may also be influenced by excess volumes of truck and passenger car traffic that prevent local citizens from parking.

## LOCAL PARTICIPATION NEEDED IN NEW FIELD OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL CONCERN

Today, cooperative requirements have been established for the highway administrator in many fields of environmental and social concern. To name just a few: beautification, air and water pollution, recreation, fish and wild life programs, historic sites, air rights, joint

development, and relocation assistance. Therefore, local participation in many aspects of the transportation field are important to the highway program today and will become more so in the future.

## SUMMARY

In summary, with respect to Urban Transportation Studies where the local community is providing part of the financing, the members of the committees should inform themselves about the program and take an active part in the decisions. Concerning the location and design of highways, the local agencies certainly should involve themselves in establishing their own goals and priorities. State and Federal representatives have a responsibility to conduct adequate studies in cooperation with local authorities, explore acceptable alternates, and thoroughly explain the results to the local community and solicit their opinions. Through this process lies the greatest promise for achieving optimum results.