

Indianapolis New Department of Transportation

Part I Introduction

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For a number of years the civic and governmental leadership in the greater Indianapolis area recognized the fact that we were not meeting the transportation needs of the community because of two factors: (1) too much division of governmental responsibility and authority, (2) lack of adequate financing.

Beginning in 1961, various attempts were made to remedy these two basic problems through governmental reorganization. It was recognized that voluntary cooperation among various units of local government was not possible on a long range basis, not because the various governmental officials did not categorically wish to cooperate, but principally because of the fact that each unit of government was charged with certain statutory responsibilities which it could not relinquish. Thus, the first legislative proposal brought to the Indiana General Assembly was in the form of a new municipal corporation which would have the power to construct and/or reconstruct thoroughfares throughout the county and across the boundaries of the various governmental subdivisions.

The first bill failed to pass the Legislature in 1961, but in 1963, the Metropolitan Thoroughfare Authority (MTA) was established under this original concept. However, due to an unfortunate lawsuit, it was left without adequate financing, and, therefore, was unable to carry out its intended task.

In 1967, the General Assembly amended the original MTA act and gave the MTA additional powers, responsibilities and financial resources. Unfortunately, however, the 1967 act did not diminish the responsibilities of the county or the other cities and towns. Thus, we ended up with overlapping jurisdictions, disagreements with respect to responsibility and, in general, an unsatisfactory solution to our transportation problems.

In the fall of 1968, Mayor Richard G. Lugar of Indianapolis conceived the Unigov idea, which would expand the city's responsibilities to the county line (excluding the 18 other incorporated cities and towns within the county) and which would unify all of the functions of city government to six departments. The mayor's efforts were successful, the act was passed by the 1969 Indiana General Assembly, and the consolidated City of Indianapolis came into existence on January 1, 1970.

Under the Unigov act, all public works functions are divided among two departments, the Department of Transportation and the Department of Public Works. The Department of Transportation was given the responsibility for all functions relating to local streets, roads and highways, and the Department of Public Works acquired all functions relating to flood control, sewage and sanitation, air and stream pollution control, drainage and public buildings. In addition, the Department of Transportation was given jurisdiction over all official thoroughfares (Fig. 1) in Marion County (regardless of what city or town they pass through) in all transportation matters except maintenance, and it was given maintenance responsibility in all areas except the 18 other incorporated cities and towns.

Needless to say, when the Legislature performs a "shotgun wedding" on several units of local government with the resulting necessity for a total reorganization, such a reorganization does not occur without a considerable amount of planning. Thus, in May 1969, a Department of Transportation task force was formed to develop a new organization and its budget of some \$18,500,000. (Note: Courtesy of a recent decision of the Indiana Appellate Court, we now have an additional \$12,000,000 to spend on major improvements on thoroughfares.) This committee was chaired by two professional engineers, Fred Fehsenfeld, representing the asphalt industry, and Harvey A. Greene, representing the cement industry. Additional members of the task force included representatives of all the local governmental units affected by the consolidation and several men representing the business community. After some three months of concentrated effort, the task force completed its work and made its presentation to the city-county council, which approved the budget with only a few minor changes. And, to the credit of the task force, the actual implementation of the Department of Transportation under Unigov has resulted in very few changes in the organizational structure which it proposed. A copy of our present organization chart is shown in Fig. 2.

How are Unigov and the Department of Transportation working out? Our view may be somewhat subjective, but we are quite pleased

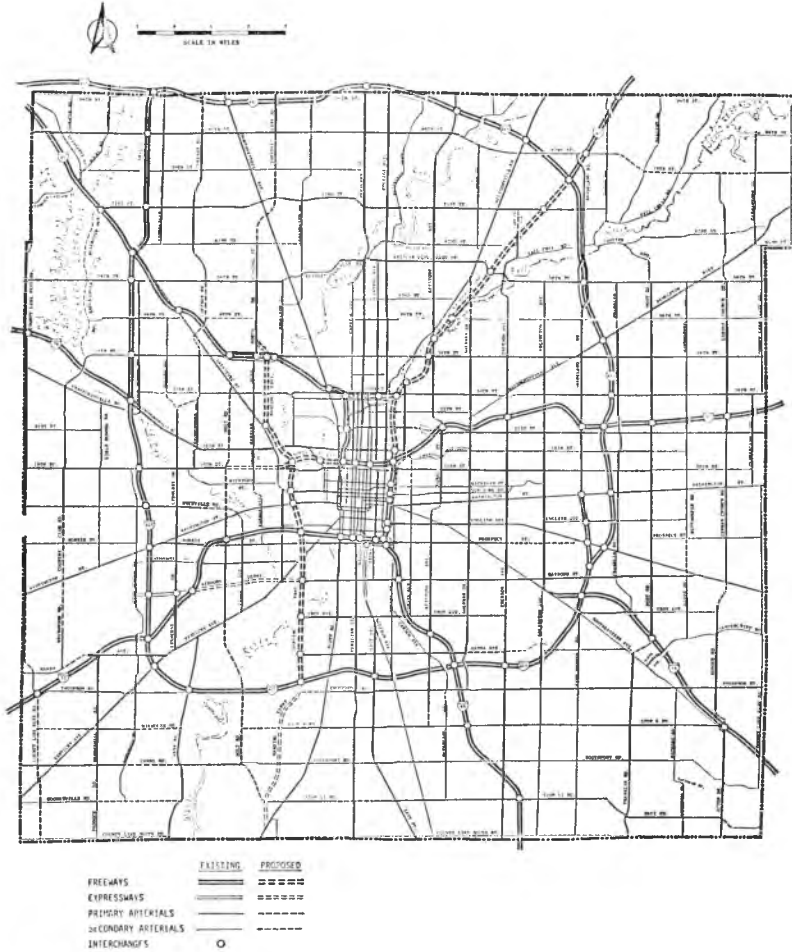


Fig. 1. Thoroughfare System for Marion County, Indiana.

with the results so far. Certainly, there are new problems with which not all of us have had to deal in the past, but all responsibility is now pinpointed in one organization. The taxpayers now have only one city department to go to with respect to a particular problem, and they are no longer passed from one office to the other with no satisfactory answer. In addition, it helps us to know where our responsibility lies and to know that we are not stepping on the toes of some other governmental unit. Our lives are not without their problems, but we now have the opportunity to be able to solve many of the major and minor transportation problems throughout all of Marion County.

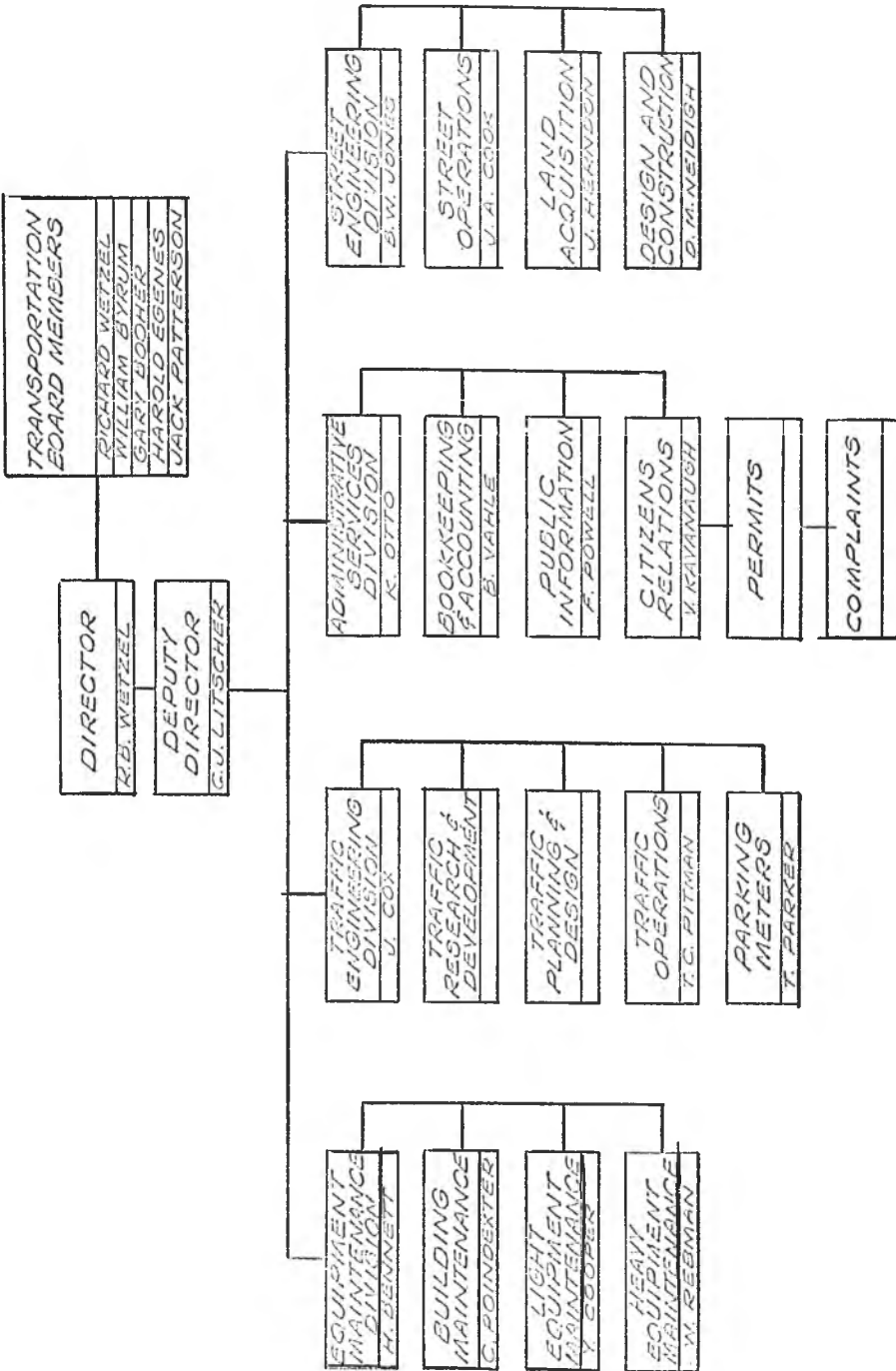


Fig. 2. Indianapolis Department of Transportation Organization Chart.

The remainder of this program will be devoted to discussing two programs which we believe will be of interest to you gentlemen as city engineers: namely the management of street improvement projects and a county-wide snow and ice control program.