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WHAT'S GOING ON IN TRANSPORTATION  
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## TRANSPORTATION IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING

The League's outlook on transportation has always been phrased to include "in the context of community planning," and that has never been more relevant. Locating growth and change where "compact" development can be served by existing infrastructure, particularly including planned rail transit stations, is the newly agreed upon policy of the region resulting from a long process of planning for growth carried out by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Although localities dispute how binding this consensus is on their development decisions, it provides a tool for citizens and public officials who are concerned about the shape of the region in the years to come.

During the same period transportation planners have been wrestling with the need to create a plan to reduce air pollution caused largely by automobiles. They have increasingly emphasized that development strategies as well as transportation strategies are essential to creating more economical, less polluting transportation; however, they continue to recognize that transportation facilities and levels of service do by themselves influence development policies.

### Forecasting Population, Employment, and Household Size

Vigorous among the debates is whether forecast population and employment will materialize. Regional officials in 1973 committed themselves to using a forecast of 1995 population of about 4.7 million based on a compilation of local government forecasts called "6.2 modified". This forecast underlies the proposal of such projects as I-66, the four-lane interstate highway in Arlington.

In September, 1976 regional governments agreed on a new forecast under a new process called "Cooperative Forecasting", at figures for population twelve per cent lower, 4.23 million. Households were projected to be eight per cent lower at 1.56 million. Some critics charge that the estimates are still too high - with the National Planning Association actually predicting a decline in area population. After one year, COG reports the 1976 population is estimated at 3,042,900, one per cent lower than the forecast predicted.

### Forecasting Transit Use

Who will be right? Those who argue that good service and well planned development will make transit popular or those doubters who declare that only the suburban fringe will grow and that there only additional roads for auto users will be needed? One claim is that households will be composed increasingly of adults who will make more use of public transit than households with small children. In addition, pressures to locate federal and private employment centers where transit is available may prevail. General pressures to reduce energy use and air pollution create conditions that will enhance transit use and compact development. Against these are the pressures that have produced random sprawl in the past, short term gains in land values, an investment in the use of autos and gasoline, and the desire of local governments to increase taxable resources.

Projections are for an increase in auto commuting in the suburban fringe assuming no strong push to reduce air pollution and energy use. Control of new indirect sources of air pollution such as shopping centers and parking lots will be entirely in the hands of local governments under the new amendments to the Clean Air Act. Only federally funded facilities, such as roads, will be subject to review under the act in the future. Pressures to make federal funding in other areas, such as housing and community development or water and sewer projects, subject

to overall goals of regional planning remain to be tested.

Original estimates by transit planners were that with the 100-mile Metro system first planned seventy per cent of jobs within the ten mile square center of the region would be accessible by transit and over fifty per cent of those around the Beltway. All central city residents would have access to jobs by transit, and nearly half of those residing outside the Beltway.

The present forecast assumes an increase in suburban employment to a third of the regional total, and a reversal of the decline in overall population and jobs in the older center of the region. Very low vacancy rates in Washington downtown office space are cited as an important clue. At an average of less than one per cent, they are far below vacancy rates in San Francisco (4.1%), Dallas (9.5%), Los Angeles (5.5%), Chicago (4%) and Atlanta (15%). Under the new forecasts, jobs were predicted at 2.34 million, four per cent below "6.2 modified".

#### MODAL SPLIT

Modal split equals estimates of how many trips are taken by different modes of transportation in relation to each other.

#### One-to-a-car- Commuting Trends

"Cordon counts" are made every spring of cars entering the regional core on 31 main routes during the morning rush hours. The counts are made on only one day, and are hence only rough measures. For the past five years they have averaged 1.4 persons per car. In the gas-short year of 1974 a slight increase of .03 was counted and may have been an actual change.

Federal facilities under the control of the General Services Administration have instituted carpool requirements although they continue to exempt employees of the highest pay and status. Fees are usually charged only where a building is leased, not owned, by the government, and they are charged by the private garage operator, not GSA. In leased buildings in Crystal City Arlington transportation official Irving McNayr has estimated that office rents subsidize federal employee parking at the rate of three million dollars annually, in addition to fees charged, following a common leasing arrangement.

Cordon counts do not reflect large increases in carpooling, giving rise to criticism of enforcement of carpooling requirements in federal installations. Carpool counts for very size pool however decreased between 1976 and 1977, at a higher rate than the slight decrease in total number of cars counted at the peak hour.

A Federal Employee Travel Survey conducted in 1976 by the National Capital Planning Commission reported on twenty-one facilities with no parking fee, eight with a fee. using unweighted averages, the report shows that in those with a fee car occupancy rates were 1.43; in those without a fee occupancy was 1.2. Sixty per cent of employees drive alone to work where there is no fee against forty-five per cent where a fee is charged for parking. The 26 surveyed installations were scattered widely throughout the region, none in downtown.

#### The Modal Split

In the "cordon counts" of April, 1977, public transit increased its share of riders by .3% to twenty-eight per cent of the total, with average bus occupancy of 38.5. A total of about 350,000 persons crossed the cordon line during the 6:30-9:30 peak period by auto or transit. In addition there were 655 bikes, 1161 motorcycles, 1044 trucks and 762 non-Metro buses, whose passengers were not counted.

Figures obtained in the cordon count reflect an overall gain of one per cent in the transit share of the modal split; however, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), which operates the service, recorded a decline in patronage after a fare increase and institution of bus-turnbacks at newly opened rail stations. These stations required transit users to pay additional fares and make additional transfers. The discrepancy may be due to the fact that the cordon count was taken before the new policies were instituted.

#### Forecasting the Modal Split.

An attempt to simulate four land use patterns for the future and predict auto and transit use and energy and air pollution results was reported in "Transportation Impacts of Alternative Land Use Concepts", December, 1975, by the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments. Two policies of development, locating development inside the Beltway or at transit stations, improved transit use substantially, reduced auto trips, air pollution and energy use. Growth concentrated inside the Beltway made considerably more impact than growth at transit stations, for all of these factors except reduction of energy use. Both had more impact than existing sprawl patterns or the least effective development, concentrating growth at the Beltway.

### FUNDING

#### Splitting the Subsidies

Competition among "modes" of travel for large government subsidies underlies some of the most protracted fights over transportation policy. The producers of transportation hardware—trains, trucks, cars, buses and vans,—are not far out of the line of vision behind citizens, professionals and public officials who advocate various mixes of travel means, called "modal splits". Subsidies for all modes has meant subsidies for competing hardware, with duplication and expense that shrinking tax incomes can no longer support.

As late starters in this funding competition, transit riders will be making new claims, particularly if current trends to escalate fares to pay at least two-thirds of operating costs of transit continue, and if costs continue to inflate. It has been asked whether duplicative transit service such as that proposed for the I-66 corridor, with a bus way and a rail line, will both be federally funded when neither alone will pay even operating costs out of fares.

Existing payments out of general revenues fund as much as fifty per cent or more of cost incurred by cities as a result of automobile travel, with another fifty per cent funded out of user taxes such as gasoline, and related taxes. These costs in addition to private outlays for fuel, repair, and vehicle purchases involve nearly one dollar in ten of total regional income. Bond sales on roads and parking in one local county were 10.9 million in a recent year, with a system of 1,000 miles (and 400 more maintained by the state). Public transit funding to build the rail system required a bond issue for far less, 2.1 million. With a regional road system of 9,000 miles, annual outlays are high for maintenance, traffic control, security, accident services, insurance oversight, and administration. Much of this funding comes through a complicated federal and state funding process which does not necessarily appear in local budgets, and when it does it is not presented as transportation cost and is

consequently, not wholly visible to area taxpayers.

Complex sources of funding also support the construction and operating costs of the transit system, although they are much more visible because of many requirements for hearings and local government systems that do not apply to road systems.

Inflation has boosted the costs of new construction of either roads or the rail system dramatically, Interstate road projects such as I-66, are at an advantage over transit because they are not subject to annual appropriation, they require only a ten per cent matching share from communities (compared with twenty to thirty per cent for transit), and they are financed with an automatic escalator clause which allows funding to increase to meet costs increased by inflation without project review.

#### Where Will the Money Come From to Build The Metrorail?

Funding of the construction of the rail transit system in the Washington area has had serious difficulties. Inflation made the original financial plan inadequate for completion of its originally adopted hundred-mile system. Negotiations among local governments and federal transportation officials led to an agreement to fund and complete a sixty mile portion of the original plan immediately and to subject the remainder to an "Alternative Analysis", a consultant study to be funded by the federal government. Additionally, the region was informed that funding for construction would be contingent on a general funding plan that covered operating costs as well.

The originally budgeted \$2.5 billion for the system was provided on a matching basis, two-thirds federal share from the Urban Mass Transit Administration. Maryland matched its share with bond sales and from the Consolidated Transportation Fund which is formed by the state from levies on aviation and motor fuel, tunnel fees, etc. Virginia localities raised most of their contribution from local bond sales, with some help from state highway funds, largely intended for parking and road improvements at stations. The District of Columbia has used money from various sources including Interstate highway projects.

Since other federal funds have been expended, D.C. Interstate transfers, as they are called, are being used to continue construction, and they now amount to over \$ 1 billion in total. Maryland and Virginia have not transferred Interstate entitlements although, for example, annual Interstate funding runs as high as \$650 million for Northern Virginia and \$350 million for the two Maryland counties in this region. For the I-66 four-lane proposal alone \$180 million or more is available, at the discretion of the governor.

Completion of the system will cost something over \$5 billion excluding debt service, with the final costs depending on exactly which alternative routes and stations are built, and when. Inflation continuously increases costs. Some funds will be available under federal programs from the Department of Transportation, but a ceiling of \$4.6 billion was named when the Alternative Analysis was agreed on. Since then additional construction cost cuts have been proposed for the Glenmont line, but funding has not been released pending further agreements on what is to be built and how operations are to be funded.

Construction funds can come from Interstate Fund transfers which require twenty per cent local matching shares, and from Urban Systems transfers which require thirty per cent local shares. Proposals have been made by the Cater Administration to make all local share requirements equal

at twenty per cent, so that Interstate road building would not have the present advantage of requiring only a ten per cent share. Other proposals to change transportation funding in Congress include funding both transit and roads from the Highway Trust Fund, creating a separate transit trust fund, and reforming the whole funding process to parallel the annual appropriation from general revenues required of other programs.

#### Paying Operating Costs

Federal operating subsidies are annually apportioned under Section 5 of the National Mass Transit Assistance Act of 1974, and continue to be used to offset costs by all local governments. Future annual entitlements are about \$9 million for D.C., \$4.5 million for Northern Virginia, and \$6.3 million for Maryland in this region, although they increase slightly each year. Total operating deficits for this fiscal year are \$62 million in addition to federal payments of nearly \$15 million. An additional debt service on bonds issued by WMATA for construction, and originally planned to be paid out of operating revenues is also due and is being funded out of operating assistance.

Farebox revenues this year paid forty-four per cent of Metrorail operations and fifty-six per cent Metrobus costs. Projected needs for 1984 are for subsidies and debt service of \$230.7 million in addition to \$19.1 million in state and Section 5 assistance. These figures assume no fare increases, level debt service payments for twenty-five years, certain state funding policies, and an inflation rate of seven per cent. Debt service for next year will be \$3.6 million.

As a percentage of local budgets for FY77, transit funding was highest for Alexandria (7.4%), and Arlington (6.4%); middling for D.C. (4%), Fairfax County (3.1%), and Falls Church (2.7%); and lowest for Montgomery County (2.5%), Prince Georges County (2.2%), and Fairfax City (2%), with a regional average of 3.5%.

#### Paying for Service Rendered

Under present regional agreements deficit payments are allocated on the basis of service rendered, and losses incurred for the service. The procedure makes local elected officials conservative in their demands for expensive service, since the deficits are allocated directly to the jurisdiction in which they are incurred. The immediacy of this connection has created a strong interest in the actual usefulness of service and has resulted in restructuring some routes, although the unavailability of good ridership information has made application of the agreement difficult. The first detailed ridership report by Theodore Lutz, the new manager of the transit service, was issued December 7, 1977 and promises to remedy some of the difficulties. Under the old transit commission political rate-making led to undercharges on expensive routes that precipitated the bankruptcy of the private service, although inflation-created wage obligations would have undoubtedly caused a crisis eventually.

The difficulty with the present approach is a certain lack of uniformity of service levels and complicated fare structures, since each jurisdiction can also decide what level of reimbursement to seek through fares.

#### Future Sources of Funds and Fare Policies

The legislative committee of WMATA has been attempting to formulate a proposal for funding transit costs for the future. Initially they attempted to agree on a single regional tax, but abandoned that effort in the face of the varying financial and governmental arrangements in the region.

They also hoped for an earmarked tax, but again face the opposition of elements, including the League, who have concluded that earmarking has distorted transportation funding in the case of roads, and threatens rational policy making. Even allocating farebox returns to pay costs is a form of earmarking, not everywhere used. To illustrate, property taxes are not earmarked for housing nor alcoholic beverage taxes earmarked for rehabilitation. The group is attempting to identify sources of revenue other than property taxes, and to propose a level of funding that would insure meeting all costs and make the present deficit sharing agreement unnecessary, opening the way for more uniform fare and service policies.

The level of funding to be sought is high, and is being justified as serving five objectives:

- . providing transit service to those without alternatives
- . attracting riders who normally use other modes
- . decreasing congestion for those who use automobiles
- . cleaner air by avoiding added pollutants
- . conservation of petroleum energy

If the new funding cannot cover all costs, it is suggested that it apply to Metrorail and debt service needs, with bus operations funded as they are now, with the greater input from local officials required under the deficit allocation formula.

To avoid the pitfalls of earmarking, the group proposes annual review of funding levels. It also recommends that taxing authority be legislated for the Northern Virginia Transit Commission (NVTC) and the Washington Suburban Transit Commission (USTC) which handle funding for regional transit, and that these and the D.C. government levy the necessary taxes.

If total collections were inadequate, formulas might allocate the costs and revenues approximately as is now done, or the formulas might allocate the costs which exceed revenues.

Taxes were evaluated on criteria including: potential to provide adequate funding, ability to fluctuate with inflation, collection ease and timing, acceptability to taxpayers, and impact on those who benefit from transit service. Specific taxes examined were: payroll, sales, motor fuel, state income sur-charge, value-added on property at rail stations, motor vehicle registration fee, fuel economy and tax on additional autos. The evaluation of these options is offered in a fifty-five page report to the WMATA board on September 7, 1977. Briefings on the possibilities are recommended for local officials as a first step toward arriving at a regionally acceptable proposal, with eventual public hearings in each jurisdiction also advised.

#### Ending Parking Subsidies

Another effort to end the imbalance in funding has been the proposal of the Transportation Planning Board for several years to end subsidies to parking by the federal government, and to encourage private employers to do the same. The General Services Administration runs 211 parking lots and garages with over 56,000 spaces, and another 5,000 spaces on Capitol Hill are free to the user, with no carpool requirements. Many proposals recommend using parking fees to fund transit, although such a move would require Congressional approval. If subsidies included in rents on leased facilities were also ended, the income would be considerable. GSA has pointed out however that the income from such a change would normally go to defray the costs of the parking installations, an earmarking that would require no special legislation. If the levies actually exceeded costs, to discourage

auto use even further and to reflect added community impacts, such added amounts might reasonably be used for transit.

As Arlington's McNayr pointed out, "It is not necessary to tax or otherwise penalize parking in order to achieve transit objectives. If motorists were only required to pay the economic costs of their parking spaces, significant incentives would be created to ride the bus and to be willing to pay higher bus fares. "Therefore it is considered more desirable and more accurate to speak in terms of "reducing parking subsidies. . . ." Along the same lines is the proposal to provide direct fare payments to parallel parking subsidies.

#### Transportation Control Strategies to Achieve Air Quality

Many strategies under consideration, and a few in the present legally enforceable plan, may affect transit use and increase revenues. Restriction of parking on residential streets, reciprocal agreements on traffic violators, increased parking taxes, and adding traffic free lanes for exclusive bus or bus and carpool use are being considered or being implemented. Other strategies under consideration would not directly affect transit, but might raise the cost of autos somewhat to reflect pollution consequences- a long shot would be instituting California type requirements for tailpipe cleanup delayed in the recent amendments to the Clean Air Act. More attention is being given to trying to institute inspection and maintenance programs to keep existing emission devices on autos more efficient, a program disproportionately expensive for the drivers of older cars, often already economically disadvantaged. It also involves start up administrative costs. Carpooling, biking, and transit support are also considered part of the strategies and might be effective with more support.

With a sixty-seven per cent drop in emissions required to achieve healthy air, and seventy per cent of that expected previously to be achieved by tailpipe cleanup, the regional setback is drastic. Vehicle miles travelled had been expected to be reduced twelve per cent to achieve the standard but estimates are that they have increased four to five per cent per year instead.

Also in the background are various lawsuits that might reduce the advantage now enjoyed by autos in transportation funding and planning. Because of the overriding role of automobiles in creating air pollution in the region they are generally structured toward limiting further pollution and improving alternatives such as transit.

#### ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

The analysis of alternative routes under study for the final forty miles of the rail transit system is scheduled to be further streamlined on Jan. 18, 1978 when the Policy Steering Committee chooses three areawide systems for final analysis. In February, they are slated to choose a single plan and to submit it to each local government and to the federal government for approval.

The consultant evaluation is using 22 factors for objective evaluation, mainly such dollar cost items as operations, capital, deficits, and local verses federal fund requirements. Non-dollar factors include transit trips utilized- bus, rail, commuter rail; energy requirements- auto and transit; and auto vehicle miles of travel.

Even if actual figures for population and ridership, or other factors prove to be in error, the consultant argues that the relative values of the various alternatives will be presented with considerable accuracy by the study.

The study is producing results using two possible levels of fares- one increasing at six per cent, the other at three per cent of half of projected inflation. A difference of 45,000 riders a week or 12.9 million trips



a year is related to the fare level. Other assumptions built into the analysis assume two to four minute headways at peak hour (6:30 to 9:30 a.m. and 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.), six minutes for base day (9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) and Saturday, ten minutes at other times, and no service between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. daily, nor on Sundays and holidays. Income from development at stations is being assumed in the analysis, and is identified as an important part of the plans by Federal administrators. Alternative parking at stations also is included, showing a difference of 6,000 riders a day in absolute results. Access to stations in the analysis is assumed to be 55 per cent walk, 30 per cent by bus, eleven per cent kiss and ride and four per cent park and ride.

#### Costs of No Transit Alternatives Understated

Although the alternatives study is directed at financial concerns in particular, it is more detailed by far on the subject of transit than of the non-transit alternatives. The Null alternative on the E Route in Prince Georges County is still among these under study. However, the study does not include for the null alternative many factors which are included for transit, and consequently its costs appear unrealistically low. No factors are included which are comparable to transit costs for driver wages, right of way cost, vehicle purchase cost, traffic management and safety and security costs, plus adjustments of yard and station costs if lines are drastically shortened.

#### CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

Citizen involvement in transportation planning and policy has been at a high level, with transit hearings not only on the alternatives study, but also on fare and route changes, and on environmental impact studies on unconstructed routes. Complaints of too few copies, too difficult a presentation and too short a time between availability of proposals and hearings continue to be heard. Less expensive formats, and newspaper notices further in advance of hearings would improve the process.

On the alternatives analysis, jurisdictions vary in their type of citizen participation. In Prince Georges County forums were held. In Montgomery nothing was done as no corridors are located in the county. In Arlington and Alexandria existing citizen committees were asked to review the proposals; in D.C. and Fairfax County special corridor committees were organized. Public libraries have copies of the reports and additional copies can be secured, along with hearing information, from Corridor Task Force offices as follows: D.C. 629-5701; Maryland 952-3400; Virginia: Fairfax County: 691-3311; Arlington: 558-2941; Alexandria: 750-6202; Falls Church: 532-0800.

The League has supported more influence in decision making by persons not professionally involved in transportation planning. At the regional level WMATA which builds and operates regional transit, NVTC which oversees planning and funding of Virginia transit, and the Transportation Planning Board which performs regional planning required for federal funds are primarily composed of elected officials and maintain a monthly meeting schedule with much important decision making. Elected officials continue to have difficulty achieving adequate familiarity with complex issues when their terms of service are brief. Differences are revealed in perspective however, as by the vote to return I-66 to regional plans and federal funding, with elected officials in the majority against it, while professionals had a majority in favor and tipped the balance.