

Urban Renewal and Urban Transportation: Contrasting Concepts and Methods

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•THE URBAN renewal program came into being as an effort to cause and control change, rather than to suffer it, in the declining areas of urban America. This paper examines two problem areas which exist both in urban renewal and in transportation planning and development in urban areas: first, public acceptance and support; and, second, effective planning.

Public acceptance and support have been and still remain a problem in urban renewal, and will increasingly become a problem in transportation, particularly in highway programs. I would like to indicate some of the things that have happened in urban renewal, because in the cities we have been challenged perhaps more strongly than any other public program. Moreover, we have had to struggle for support from the beginning, unlike the highway program and other public enterprises which involve the taking of land.

Since 1949 federal law and most state law statutes which authorized urban renewal projects have required a public hearing on every urban renewal plan. These public hearings have been held where they are most accessible to the people directly affected by the projects. They are legislative in character: they do not determine rights; their purpose is instead to inform and advise local decision makers of the sentiments of all parties affected by the proposed urban renewal plans. In turn, however, these public hearings have served urban renewal well by helping it to meet legal challenges and to win public acceptance.

Since 1954, one prerequisite to urban renewal, the workable program, has stressed meaningful citizen participation, and this emphasis continues to increase. Citizen participation and the involvement of citizen committees in renewal leads to planning with people, which is today a reality in many renewal programs. Involvement and participation of people in the planning process, which has so benefited urban renewal, can serve other programs equally well, as they confront the public relationship problems.

Urban renewal started out as a program of which any citizen might ask, "What right have you at City Hall, in the Renewal Agency, to come and take my land away from me, and then turn it over to some other private owner for reconstruction?" We've always had to explain the constitutionality of eliminating slums and blight conditions through the taking of property for clearance, and the return of that property to private ownership for development is only incidental and does not wipe out the public purpose of blight elimination. And because we have had this problem from the beginning, our experience may be of value in programs such as highway acquisition, where the purpose is clearer but where the full impact on urban homes and neighborhoods is only gradually coming to be felt.

One of the things that has grown out of our experience is the array of relocation requirements and aids which are beginning to apply to the highway program and other federally aided programs. First, of course, were the provisions requiring relocation housing to be offered to those displaced by urban renewal; next, relocation payments to displaced families, individuals, and businesses; finally, as an outgrowth of these,

attention to the personal and social problems of the people displaced. These measures are clearly coming in other programs and, ultimately, I believe, in all public acquisition programs. They are being extended now; federally, relocation payments are provided for by law in a number of programs already; locally, relocation services first established because of urban renewal are beginning to be applied to other city programs because they simply must be applied.

Whether administrators like it or not, citizens are beginning to play a role in the planning and shaping of these programs. Relocation aids are only one of the consequences. These and other services are rapidly developing, first in our urban centers where those affected are the poor and the disadvantaged. There will be tie-ins with social service agencies and poverty program activities, and, ultimately, all of these measures will extend to all programs in all areas.

Another aspect of this struggle to maintain public support by recognizing the effects of public action on private citizens is involved in the actual acquisition of land. The recent report of the Select Subcommittee on Real Property Acquisition of the House Committee on Public Works recommended a variety of aids to owners and tenants of property which is acquired. These are proposed to be applied to all federal and federally aided programs. In urban renewal three of these provisions have already been made applicable by Section 402 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965. All property acquisitions in urban renewal provide that negotiation must always precede the filing of condemnation proceedings; no man's property can be taken from him without paying 75 percent of the estimated value of the property; and no one can be dispossessed from his property without 90 days advance notice. These requirements have also been written into four or five other programs in the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

These developments will undoubtedly continue as the problem of public acceptance becomes more important.

Closely related to public acceptance is the question of effective planning. Therefore, I would like to indicate what we have experienced in the urban renewal program and related programs.

From the beginning of the urban renewal program there was federal financing for planning urban renewal projects. That was not left to local initiative, or local lack of initiative. Urban renewal was regarded widely as a planning program for the first four or five years of its existence, and with some justification. It seemed to be years before we got out of the planning stage. Also, from the beginning of the program there was a requirement that individual urban renewal projects must be found by the local governing body to conform to a general plan for the development of the community. This requirement actually led to the development, or in some cases reconsideration, of general community plans all across the nation. How good those plans were from today's perspective is, I believe, irrelevant. The fact is that the requirement did a great deal to encourage local planning programs throughout the country.

Next, the planning base for urban renewal was broadened and deepened. Federal assistance was provided for general neighborhood renewal plans for areas that had to be planned for urban renewal on a larger basis. Finally, Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954 provided federal aid on a two-thirds basis for general community planning in smaller communities. This, too, was an outgrowth of the urban renewal program and represented recognition of the fact that general planning had to be more valid, broader and deeper, and also that it must include the whole community, before it could be a meaningful base for renewal. Also, Section 701 provided federal grants for metropolitan and regional planning, as further broadening of the planning basis for program decisions. Aid for transportation planning was also added, within the context of metropolitan planning.

Metropolitan plans began to appear out of this aid process. It was as though this were the final goal, the end of the road. I think some of us were misguided enough to think that once you had a metropolitan plan the problem was solved, the direction was there, and it would be carried out. But this did not happen, and because it did not our latest effort to connect planning with decision making was developed. The new section 701(g) of our planning assistance program authorizes two-thirds federal grants

to organizations of public officials. These grants are intended to permit organizations representing the political jurisdictions in a metropolitan area or urban region not only to plan and develop programs but also to see to their implementation on a coordinated area-wide basis. These organizations may be assisted to undertake studies, collect data, develop regional plans and programs, and engage in other activities which contribute to the solution of metropolitan or regional problems. Since we expect most of the participating public officials to be elected officers of the included local governments, they should be able, as planning agencies seldom are, to translate the jointly developed plans and programs into action.

We suggest such organizations of public officials as ideal mechanisms for achieving the continuing comprehensive transportation planning process required in urban areas by federal highway legislation. They can serve to develop an effective planning framework within which we may successfully collaborate in meeting the challenge of change.