

WORKSHOP 1: THE GRANTOR'S ROLE

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THESE are the transit-oriented questions grantors felt they need answered:

1. What is the appropriate distribution of transportation resources among the various transport modes?
2. What is a rational and equitable basis for allocating (and distributing) transit resources among client groups: Need? Urban considerations? Rural considerations? Elderly role? Handicapped role? Other transport-disadvantaged?
3. What are the appropriate measures of performance for transit systems: i.e., what does a grantor use to judge good and bad performance among client transit systems?
4. What are the attitudinal and motivational factors that influence transit patronage and what is the proper (ethical) use of these factors?
5. How does one design a financial aid program that appropriately encourages (rewards) service and discourages (penalizes) inefficiency and resource waste?

Can research provide answers? What research projects are needed to provide the base for such answers?

Like most groups given such a monumental task, we spent a good amount of time thrashing around, trying to decide how best to address the problem from the grantors' viewpoint. Our plan was to see—through discussion—if we were understanding, first, each other and, then, the questions identified as the major concerns of the grantors. There were problems in communication because we represented a broad spectrum and had diverse backgrounds. The learning through exposure as we proceeded with our task was interesting and one of the most productive results of the session to me and, I am sure, to many others. We were all basically involved in the same arena, but with a great variety of perspectives. Once we settled down and understood one another, we found that our basic goals were similar but our methods varied. Even with these differences it was not long before we were developing a considerable listing of possible research projects.

We had the added difficulty, as a group, of keeping our focus on the grantors' perspective. Some of us had problems playing that role, and our final results indicate the problem.

As grantors we spent considerable time on how to measure the big question, "What are we getting for our money?" This same question is high on the lists of users, taxpayers, and legislators. Perhaps we cannot measure public transportation until goals and public policy are better established. The basic need for transportation is not even agreed on. And, although transportation is ubiquitous, we do not know much about the extent of its elements. The rural and private sectors are especially unknown.

The grantor (government) has a tremendous responsibility—one it is largely trying to ignore. The energy, environmental, and political tugs-of-war are directing much of their pressures on transportation without anyone first deciding if transportation is to be used to reinforce existing life styles or be used as a tool for social change. The federal government is still trying to decide if the states have a role in public transportation!

We also considered areas where government could help the transit properties improve their services. Three general areas were identified and discussed: (a) managerial and other training programs, (b) identification of the users' relative weighing of the SCARCE factors (safety, comfort, accessibility, reliability, cost comparative, and efficiency) when making a mode choice (possibly it should be investigated based on

market segmentation), and (c) information systems—for both users and managers.

Another area of discussion was the concept of classification/levels of service/evaluation criteria. There was general agreement that measures of transit service are needed, but concern was voiced over the value or practicality of the classification concept. With our time constraints we could not fight the battle there, but we agreed this was a major research need of immediate concern as many agencies, regions, and states are furiously working to complete transportation plans that should have this input. It is already too late for input in the first iteration.

Problems of the handicapped were also discussed—the equal but not separate issue. We decided the Urban Transportation Act, as it moves through the legislative process, will shape the future in this area and we should wait. There was concern over the emerging concept that access to a basic public transportation system was a civil right.

In our first listing of possible research topics we addressed these and other items. Because time was limited we concentrated our efforts on the eight areas of our major concerns. I am sure that with a different mix of individuals or more time we would have developed different proposals, and probably none of us is completely satisfied with our results. But compromise and incremental change are the name of the game. I only hope our compromises will lead to some incremental changes.

Following are the areas of recommended research in public transportation from the grantors' perspective as developed by Workshop 1:

- 1-1. Classification of Urban Areas
- 1-2. Development of Methodologies for Assessing and Evaluating Alternative Mobility Systems in Urban Areas
- 1-3. Identification of Rural Transit Needs and Methods of Meeting These Needs
- 1-4. Public Transit Operational and Managerial Training Needs
- 1-5. Motivational Research Needs Related to Modal Choice Decisions
- 1-6. Investigation of the Feasibility of Establishing a "Transportation Broker" Through a Case Study
- 1-7. Development of Appropriate Roles for Various Levels of Government
- 1-8. Identification of Potential for Private Sector to Satisfy Public Transportation Needs

A detailed description of each research project is given in Part IV of this book. The top-ranked projects selected by this workshop were

- 1-1. Classification of Urban Areas
- 1-2. Development of Methodologies for Assessing and Evaluating Alternative Mobility Systems in Urban Areas