Federal Expectations for Statewide Planning

John S. Hassell, Jr., Federal Highway Administration

This is a time of challenge for the transportation planning community. This conference provides a particularly timely opportunity for statewide transportation planners to set ways to meet that challenge. I believe we can best do it by focusing on statewide transportation issues and planning products. The underlying concern must be on planning that is responsive to the management decision process.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) views the role of statewide planning and programming as one of three levels of policy development and decision making; the other two levels are national and urban. We must look at urban transportation decisions, however, as an important part of the statewide planning process just as statewide planning is a part of national planning. Most multimodal system planning has occurred at the urban level.

There has been relatively little federal structure provided for statewide planning in rail, air, and transit, although we can point to the Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of 1976 or the Airport and Airways Development Act of 1970 as a basis for some activity with a national perspective. Most statewide activity has been related to highways, and multimodal statewide planning and programming have not received the same development support as urban planning.

You will recall that DOT proposed a broader role for statewide planning in the 1978 legislation. The proposal was for a process to focus on

1. Product—a program of projects based on a statewide multimodal planning process;
2. Issues—land use development, system performance, energy, and other social, economic, and environmental concerns; and
3. All modes.

These provisions were not included in the final legislation.

PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Given these facts, I see the federal expectation for statewide transportation planning as including those activities needed to support a state’s program of capital projects and operating assistance. To meet this expectation, good planning practice calls for three levels of planning activities to develop this product: (a) policy, (b) systems, and (c) program planning.

I view policy planning as the basis for statewide multimodal decisions. This has to be a primary function of statewide planning—resulting in a clear policy statement—along with setting goals and objectives for the agency’s mission. Arizona, for example, has an annual retreat where the mission of the state transportation agency is examined, redefined, and translated into goals and objectives. Wisconsin is developing a multimodal policy plan addressing critical issues. The next stage involves developing more focused policy for actions or decision making based on the policies. The Minnesota Department of Transportation has developed a Framework for Action to guide it in making project selection decisions for all modes.

In systems planning, the focus must become mode specific and begin to address modal trade-offs at the system level especially in the urban area. There are four areas of emphasis:

1. Modal shift opportunities such as rural high-density passenger corridors and expanded trailer on flat car,
2. Interface between modes so that parts of the system are properly linked and integrated,
3. New service for transportation-deficient population segments (e.g., rural public transit and ridesharing), and
4. Preservation of existing services through operating subsidies, regional rail reorganization (3R) activities, and transportation system management (TSM) measures at the state level.

Systems planning efforts to date have included studies of intercity bus systems in Michigan and Oregon; efforts in Maryland to update its aviation and rail plans and to develop a state port system plan; and modal plans in Iowa that cover airport, rail, public transportation, water, and highway modes.

Programming is the activity leading to the state’s 105-program of projects in the highway area and its multimodal equivalent for other modes with related information in support of a capital investment program, operations, maintenance, and administration.

PRODUCTS

The planning practices noted here must be able to deliver products that are responsive to management’s needs. There are five key products that should evolve from the statewide planning process and that should enable management to make the key programmatic decision necessary.

First is a policy plan that states goals, objectives, and organizational policies. Concerns such as the assignment of jurisdictional responsibilities are part of the policy plan. Further, a systematic method of keeping up to date on which level of government has what
responsibilities for the various levels of transportation systems should also be included. In some cases, the way in which state and local officials are assigned responsibility is neither as rational nor as stable as it might be. This has a major impact on the use of available funds. The extent of the system for which a high-sponsibility is neither as rational nor as stable as it systems should also be included. In some cases, the way in which state and local officials are assigned re-
ponsibilities for the various levels of transportation to look at funding questions, it makes sense to look at
jurisdictional problems at the same time. Then a more 

A financial plan that identifies both short- and long-
ranges funding sources and availability is the second key management product. The problem of providing the best transportation service for the least cost has always been cen-
tral to transportation management. This issue has become more critical because of changes in the histori-

cal relation between how funds are obtained and how they are expended.

Some states have approached the situation by recon-
sidering the perceived need for certain transportation improvements. This is reflected in the approaches used in Texas and California. They reevaluated the appropriateness of existing improvement standards in terms of the benefits that could be obtained. The result was a system-oriented planning approach. A higher level of total benefits in the whole highway system might be achieved by (a) balancing projected quality of service, measured by such factors as safety and mobility, throughout the transportation network; (b) ensuring that proposed projects closed gaps, thus providing system continuity; and (c) using design alternatives that would result in lower overall project cost.

A third product is a long-range physical development plan. Such a plan, based on adopted policy, goals, and objectives, gives guidance as to how the physical system should be developed to serve a future way of life—pre-
suming, of course, that the plan is fiscally realistic. These plans should provide management with alternative transportation improvement choices in the future and the necessary related funding programs to support them.

Trade-offs between modes are an important consid-
eration in certain cases. Generally, however, planning at the statewide level will have to avoid complex simu-
lations of competing modal system strategies to focus more on specific issues and corridors. Probably more impor-
tant is the interface between modes so that the various parts of the transportation system are properly linked and integrated. With a soundly conceived transportation plan, an improvement program can be developed by compa-
ring project mixes with the policy embodied in the plan. The plan then helps to focus efforts on those activ-
ities that will help bring the plan to fruition.

It is critical, then, that the process through which the plan is developed is key to the issues facing state transportation managers. An issue-oriented planning process will have more likelihood of being on line and of providing planning information for program decisions.

A fourth product is a short-range transportation im-
provement program. Priorities of projects reflected in a short-range program must result from the best ra-
tionale that maximizes benefits within cost, environ-
mental, community, and social constraints. The ability to address the setting of priorities and to make sound project decisions is important in post-Proposition 13 years and during these times of severe energy concerns.

Finally, an evaluation process must be found to en-
sure adequate control of statewide programs and to pro-
vide greater efficiency in the use of personnel and funds. In its broadest sense, this is a program of surveillance and evaluation and a means to provide top management with periodic progress reports and evaluations of how the agency's mission, goals, objectives, policies, and programs are being accomplished.

Critical to successful development of all these prod-
ucts is an active public involvement process throughout all stages of statewide planning. It is important for broad support of financial programs, physical develop-
ment plans and programs, issue analysis, and ultimate project development activity. The most successful pro-
grams we have seen key on early and continued public involvement, thus ensuring that the public has input to the analysis of issues and development of goals and objectives.

ISSUES

Four national issues that are likely to affect statewide transportation planning should be considered.

First is governmental efficiency and effectiveness. The current administration is greatly interested in how we are organized and in our productivity. Within DOT, some reorganization has taken place already. The staff of the Office of the Secretary was reduced and reorga-
nized, and a Research and Special Program Administra-
tion was established.

There is also the proposed merger of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration and the Federal Highway Administration into a Surface Transportation Administra-
tion. Congress leaned toward a closer relation between the two surface transportation programs of these agen-
cies with the passage of the Surface Transportation As-
sistance Act of 1978. We know that it is time to stop thinking of highways and transit as competitors and to work to coordinate these resources for better transpor-
tation.

Further government efficiency is a goal of the new Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. An important element is the establishment of job performance evaluation cri-
teria, such as improvements in efficiency and produc-
tivity, work quality, timeliness of performance, and success in meeting affirmative-action goals.

Government effectiveness is becoming increasingly important. Are the various federal programs accom-
plishing what they were intended to do? Are the highest-priority programs being funded at the appropriate level? These are key questions that are of growing concern.

Zero-based budgeting attempts to examine each pro-
gram's merits in relation to all other programs. Within the highway program, a new tool—the Highway Perfor-
mance Monitoring System—will facilitate the continual assessment of current highway programs, the possible need for modification of such programs, and the need for new programs.

The second issue is energy. We are headed for some extremely critical periods. Gasoline shortages are pos-
ible. Refineries will be concentrating on reducing the shortage of aviation fuel and producing stocks of winter heating oil. The crude oil for these fuels will result in reductions in automobile gasoline production, and the highway sector will surely feel the shortage. States, if they have not already, should begin developing contin-
gency plans to help cope with this situation.

Contingency planning is recognized as an important issue that requires action at the federal, state, and local levels. Such plans should include a wide variety of mea-
sures that can be implemented quickly during an energy emergency to mitigate its impact.

A third issue is financial. With the existing public
clamor over government waste and the reluctance to approve new taxes, transportation programs must be planned and managed much more effectively than in the past. Existing programs should be reexamined in the light of today’s environment to see if they are still relevant. New construction must be carefully balanced with the need to reconstruct and maintain the existing system. The methods of distributing revenues should be examined so that today’s managers have sufficient flexibility to respond to changing requirements.

Transportation programs will increasingly be competing with other programs for the public dollar. The public must be convinced that their transportation systems are managed properly before additional funding will be authorized.

The fourth issue is urban policy. President Carter’s urban policy and DOT’s five-point policy objectives are designed to help restore the vitality of major cities through careful management of transportation grants. In this regard, there is a need in the states and in local areas to concentrate on five specific objectives:

1. Ensure that proposed projects are fully a part of a comprehensive plan for the region. This must show, through analysis, the project’s overall favorable impact on the preservation of neighborhoods, particularly in the central city, and must ensure ample opportunity for joint implementation of urban development and transportation projects.
2. Increase efforts to conserve energy through ride- sharing and transit patronage. Every urban area must have an effective program, with priority consideration given to the types of facilities that give preference to high-occupancy use of vehicles. Energy impact analyses should be a part of the project planning efforts.
3. Provide equitable compensation for those persons adversely affected by urban highways. Urban transportation projects must be reviewed to ensure that they do not reduce existing housing stocks, particularly for elderly, minority, and low-income groups. Local communities advocating millions of dollars of transportation projects will have to be willing to provide programs that will salvage or replace housing eliminated by these projects and to create positive steps for job opportunities to mitigate adverse impacts.
4. Give serious consideration to no-build options supported by appropriate 3R and TSM proposals.
5. Analyze alternatives for all major highway and transit proposals. This will provide a comparison of the costs and effectiveness of each alternative.

The adequate consideration of urban issues by states is critical and a major part of the statewide planning function. It is as important a role for the state as is rural policy implementation.

The influence of all of these issues on the planning products is critical. Their impact is often dramatic, but the results of this analysis are what the decision maker wants and needs from the transportation planner.

Role of Planning in State Transportation Program

Jack Kistlinger, Colorado State Department of Highways, Denver

I have been requested to share with you my views on what the state transportation manager can and should expect from a transportation planning program. At one time I was a transportation planner; now I am the director of a state transportation agency. Therefore, I have experienced both the intellectual and technical challenge of transportation planning and more recently the real-world environment in which transportation decisions are made or shaped largely by the outraged citizen, the demanding local official, the unsympathetic state legislator, the governor, and the federal official who wants you to expedite the program while at the same time restraining you with added regulations.

My expectations of transportation planning are less grandiose now, however, than they were when I was a planner and less grandiose than those discussed at the first conference on transportation planning held at Williamsburg, Virginia, in February 1974. According to the report of that conference, transportation systems were expected to shape land use, population, and economic development and to encourage desirable community patterns (1). Comprehensive land use planning was expected to be established on a statewide level and to be fully coordinated with transportation planning.

Since then, political, economic, and institutional realities have forced us to reduce our expectations. Long-range planning has fallen into question; events are moving so rapidly that it is difficult to predict the future over the next 5 years or much less the next 25 or 30 years. The ability of public policy to influence land use decisions has generally been a failure. Increasingly, there is a realization that public investments, including those in transportation, influence land use decisions marginally, if at all, and even local subdivision and zoning powers as currently exercised have little impact. Land use decisions are shaped largely by the private marketplace. In this era of deregulation and reduced governmental intervention, this situation is not likely to change in the near future.

Multimodal system planning, the darling of transpor-