

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING: AN EXPERIMENT IN PROCESS CHANGE

Sid Davis, School of Business Administration, Atlanta University

Confronted with problems of getting parts of its transportation plan for the Atlanta area implemented, the Georgia Department of Transportation engaged in an experiment to introduce procedural changes within the planning process to make planning more sensitive to community needs and to increase the possibility of project implementation. Drawn into the effort were Atlanta University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Urban Systems Laboratory community values group, as consultants and observers. The department's initial proposal, basically a project location analysis, was changed during Atlanta University and Georgia Department of Transportation negotiations to a major subarea transportation study. This paper reviews the major events in the development and execution of the experiment and the lessons learned from the perspective of Atlanta University, one of the major participants.

•THE Georgia Department of Transportation was having difficulty in implementing important components of the Atlanta area transportation study plan, and, therefore, modified its planning process to meet the concerns of adversely affected community residents. At the same time it was to achieve what the department regarded as its basic mandate: the provision of improved transportation service.

The transportation facility that stimulated this concern for process modification was a proposed limited-access road that would penetrate residential areas that provided housing for many blacks. The department knew that it would have special problems in successfully carrying out location and design studies without careful handling. Before the experiment was concluded (aborted), Atlanta University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Urban Systems Laboratory and local planning organizations and interest groups had participated in the project. Each participating group had vastly different agendas:

1. The department was clearly interested in plan implementation and was seeking a more sophisticated way of reaching that goal;
2. The university, an educational institution with a predominantly black student body and staff, not only was physically located in the proposed corridor but also was concerned about its role vis-à-vis the community;
3. The M.I.T. group, which had done considerable research on community values in transportation planning, selected the experiment as a test case for the work it was doing on devising methods for improving transportation planning procedures; and
4. The citizens, for the most part, were attempting to find out what was going to happen and ways to protect themselves from adverse impact.

The interaction (conflict, confusion, hesitation, and learning) that took place between these major participants was, predictably, not dull.

In a conventional sense, the experiment was a failure in that its explicitly stated objectives were not achieved. Fortunately, however, it is possible to fail to achieve primary experimental objectives and, yet, have the results make useful, even significant, contributions to the understanding of the nature of the problem and provide additional avenues for exploration. It is within this context that the observations of one of the major participants in the experiment, Atlanta University, are presented, hopefully

to provide the basis for further sorting out and more precisely defining the lessons learned and their implications for other transportation planning efforts.

BACKGROUND

Atlanta, like most metropolitan communities, worked during a portion of the last decade on the development of a comprehensive areawide transportation plan that was, in part, the local area's response to emerging federal policy articulated in the Federal Highway Act of 1962 (1). This plan was subsequently modified and refined to include information generated as a result of the study process and the implementation of highway projects. In January 1971, the final report of the Atlanta area transportation study (2) prepared by the Georgia DOT was published. It proposed additions and changes to the region's existing freeway, arterial, and collector street systems and the development of a new transit program.

Included in the recommended plan were a number of transportation facility changes that would directly affect residents living on the Westside of Atlanta. One of them was a proposed Westside-Southwest connector described as an extension of I-85 terminating near the area's major regional airport facility. Although the size of the facility was not defined, it was to have the same general characteristics of the existing Interstate: a four-lane limited-access road with perhaps a median strip of sufficient size to accommodate future road lanes or lanes for public transit. In February 1971, a consultant was engaged to conduct a limited traffic service study for the proposed corridor (3).

Recently, Georgia DOT has encountered significant community opposition to proposals for freeway construction through relatively densely populated urban areas. These conflicts, of course, are not isolated to Atlanta and to Georgia, but have been and continue to be encountered in major urban areas throughout the United States.

SETTING THE STAGE

Georgia DOT recognized the potential difficulties (racial polarization and conflict) in attempting to undertake detailed planning for what was then called the Westside Freeway, especially in view of the almost unavoidable disruption of established black residential areas. Because of these concerns they drafted a special study proposal (4), which they felt was designed to promote a broader and more realistic philosophy of urban highway location and awareness and to improve citizen involvement and awareness. A pivotal role was assigned to an evaluation team that would do the final review and select specific routes amenable to in-depth study. The proposal also indicated the possibility of involving faculty and staff members of Atlanta University. They were particularly interested in the participation of the university's urban transportation and urban affairs project, which had become involved in related research and training activities through a federal grant program.

The nature of Atlanta University's response to the invitation of Georgia DOT to participate in the proposed freeway location study was to be significant in shaping the direction that the proposed study took in subsequent months. Staff members of the Atlanta University project understood that, although important transportation problems existed on the Westside of Atlanta, to be involved in a freeway location study when the community was only minimally aware that such a facility was planned could have significant adverse corridor impact and could easily place the project in direct conflict with a constituency that expected the University to support their interests and not those of Georgia DOT. To develop and clarify the university policy, a meeting was arranged between the Council of Presidents of the Atlanta University Center (five undergraduate schools and one graduate school) and representatives of Georgia DOT.

The position of Georgia DOT, in response to critical comments made by one of the presidents concerning transportation planning and minority interests, was that the department would proceed with the study even without the cooperation of the university but that such cooperation was desired. The council decided, after the debate, that the

Atlanta University Urban Transportation Project in conjunction with the Clark College Center for Studies in Public Policy should attempt to negotiate with Georgia DOT in developing services that would accomplish two preliminary university objectives: (a) to involve the schools so that they might stay well informed on the way being done and (b) to protect the interests of the residents of the area. President Vivian Henderson of Clark College was designated to act for the council in negotiating with the department.

The Atlanta University project and the Clark College policy center, when furnished with this mandate from the council, began serious negotiations with Georgia DOT. Their strategy was to find some way of broadening the proposed study from essentially a freeway corridor selection program and yet still retain the interest of the department. Fortunately there was surprisingly little disagreement between the department and university negotiators on this point, and a university alternative proposal, which later served as a basis for drawing up a formal scope of services, was prepared (5). The general agreement arrived at by the university and department representatives and elaborated on in the alternative proposal stated that

1. Meaningful citizen participation in the study program is necessary;
2. It would be possible for the study program to deal with alternative locations for a specific kind of facility and that alternative facilities themselves could also be reviewed; and
3. The program of study proposed by Georgia DOT would be open for discussion, review, and modification.

Although these were broadly stated points of agreement, the flexibility they provided enabled the university to establish a sound basis for legitimizing its involvement, especially in relationship to the community. The agreement provided the university with the opportunity to expose issues relating to the proposed freeway construction and transportation planning in general to directly affected interest groups. The university was initially to convene the study group that was to provide an organizational mechanism that would coordinate and integrate the various elements of the study implementation program that was to follow.

Involvement of M.I.T. Urban Systems Laboratory

Although the department generally agreed on a further definition of how the study should be organized and carried out, it was not until the introduction of one additional study participant that the university-Georgia DOT negotiations reached the point where a contract was drawn up and executed. The M.I.T. Urban Systems Laboratory in the spring of 1972 was looking for several sites to field test the work they had been doing on improving transportation planning processes (6). A draft document was developed that was intended to serve as a procedural guide to assist local areas in reaching what the systems laboratory regarded as process objectives: substantial and effective agreement on a course of action that is feasible, equitable, and desirable. Based on initial conversations with department officials, review of the Atlanta University proposal, and a subsequent conference with both university and department staff, the systems laboratory decided that the Atlanta Westside project seemed to offer an interesting opportunity for testing procedural guide concepts.

Their offer to come to Atlanta provided a measure of support for the approach to the study Atlanta University had proposed. It helped convince the department that embarking on an experiment in modifying transportation planning processes, although risky, could enhance its capacity to deal with some of the complex and sensitive problems associated with possible construction of the freeway and even lend luster to its image. This was not an unimportant consideration.

Evolution of Study Design Approach

The initial three-party arrangement among Georgia DOT, Atlanta University, and the Urban Systems Laboratory proved to be useful in refining the ground rules for conducting what was now called the Westside corridor access study. Although a number of tasks were outlined in the services drawn up by the university and the department, the most interesting was to assist the department in developing a study design that reflected not only the department's initial objective of freeway location analysis but objectives of other agencies and interest groups as well. The contract, rather than rigorously defining the content of the study design, indicated that comprehensive delineation of study design tasks would emerge from the team convened for that purpose and that these tasks would be assigned to appropriate members of that team. The objectives of this flexibility were to avoid the traditional client-consultant, product-oriented research, which would make the university responsible for producing the study design, and to keep the department central to the entire study design project in which the university would provide supportive assistance. This flexibility was new to the department as was the concept of carrying out a study design effort that would be a joint product of individuals and groups that had widely varying interests to advocate. The influence of the Boston Transportation Planning Review (BTPR) (7) experience is evident in the approach used. The BTPR used a similar technique to organize the elements of their subsequent study effort. A crucial difference between the Boston and Atlanta efforts; however, lay in the sponsorship of the study effort. In Boston, sponsorship was external to the existing Department of Public Works; the Atlanta Westside corridor study design was internalized within Georgia DOT. This enhanced the possibility that engaging in the study effort might have a favorable impact on the department's behavior vis-à-vis existing transportation planning processes.

The emergence of the study design concept as a central organizing tool marked another stage in what was originally a freeway location project. The study design would draw on the divergent interest groups in the planning process; expose proposed plans for their review; and develop general agreement on the specific objectives, content, structure, and management of the study itself.

Negotiated agreements on the approach to the pending study design did not necessarily mean that there were no problems. On the contrary, a number of times, the entire effort was in jeopardy. Resolution of these difficulties, however labored and agonizing, meant that the study design effort could proceed to the next step in its development.

CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION

Several of the problems faced during this negotiation/organization phase, which would bring the initial principal participants into substantial and effective agreement, to use the systems lab language, were in many respects similar to the difficulties that were to be encountered when efforts were made to prepare the study design document. These problems are discussed below.

Procedural Difficulties

There were procedural difficulties in signing a contract to formally bring the resources of Atlanta University center participants into the study design effort. It is not clear whether the protracted period (several months during which the department processed the university contract) was symptomatic of complex bureaucratic operating procedures, or whether it represented an ambivalence toward engaging in what was, in the department's view, a highly experimental venture. If it had not been for the involvement of the systems laboratory, the entire effort would have, at that point, either collapsed or been seriously impaired. Georgia DOT had made a commitment not just to a local university but also to another university-based group involving a major experiment in transportation planning process improvement. The department could not back away from com-

pleting the negotiations without running the risk of losing esteem. On November 9, 1972, the commissioner of Georgia DOT signed the contract with Clark College, which would act as primary consultant for the Atlanta University center participants. The university group had, in fact, already begun work some weeks earlier based on a verbal authorization from Georgia DOT.

Internal conflict notwithstanding, the formal commitment to carrying out the study design put the department in the position of supporting a major local experiment in transportation planning process improvement.

Lack of Recognition of Resource Commitment Needed

There was an initial lack of recognition, probably shared in varying degrees by all of the primary study design participants, of the resource commitment needed by the department if it were to successfully manage the study design effort. An early decision was made during contract negotiations that placed central responsibility for the study design effort not with consultants but with Georgia DOT itself. Recognition of what this responsibility meant built up steadily during the process of organizing and bringing other government agencies and citizen interest group participants into the study design effort. At least five full-time staff members were eventually committed to the study design. This staff base was buttressed in varying degrees by additional assistance provided by the Atlanta Regional Commission, the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, the city of Atlanta, and a representative of three small municipalities located adjacent to Atlanta that would be directly affected by the construction of a limited-access road facility.

The realization of the need for proper staffing grew slowly but steadily within the Georgia DOT. Initially management of the study design was made an adjunct activity of one of the department's section leaders; later, the responsibility was shifted to a full-time staff member under the direction of a section leader; and finally a section leader was reassigned to manage the study design. This adjustment took place over several months. Again the role of the Urban Systems Laboratory with support from Atlanta University was critical in pointing out to the Georgia DOT that the entire study effort would be jeopardized if adequate staffing were not forthcoming. It was almost as if a game of brinkmanship were being played. Each time game stakes were raised to extraordinarily high levels, the department managed to make the adjustments required for the project to continue. The independence of the Urban Systems Laboratory once again provided the necessary stimulus for change.

Study Design Approach as a Tool

The study design approach itself became a major tool used to penetrate community opposition to the proposed freeway. This, of course, was not an unexpected occurrence. Since extensive systems planning had already been done, which included the proposed facility and a subsequent study reinforcing the need for such a demand criterion for traffic using the road, a special effort was needed to prevent polarization on this issue. It was the consensus of the university-department-systems laboratory group that the use of the study design approach, which focused on dealing with the broadly defined transportation needs of the subarea and those of the users of the proposed freeway, would be the only feasible way to successfully involve various interest groups.

The results obtained from applying this technique for the most part met this initial objective of facilitating interest group participation and avoiding unyielding confrontation. Interest group interaction, although far from perfect, did provide wide exposure of the issues. This interaction also allowed citizens to voice concern for the adverse impact they believed would occur if the limited-access facility were built and to channel their concerns into useful articulation of transportation considerations and guidelines that they felt should be included in a study design document. The prevailing attitude of the citizens was that they did not want the freeway but that they were interested in im-

proved vehicular and transit access within their community. A record was compiled of the straightforward but often difficult to answer questions that were posed. Dealing with them successfully would represent a major achievement in any study effort. Some of the more interesting questions and comments follow:

1. Why is the study being done?
2. If citizens are represented in the process, who has been chosen and what were the criteria for selection?
3. What are environmental effects?
4. I want more citizen participation!
5. How are expected fuel shortages going to affect this question?
6. Do you have some statistics to justify the study?
7. How many blacks are employed in the Georgia DOT?
8. Will rapid transit be better for this corridor than a freeway?
9. Where are our elected officials?
10. Is this road another way to get housemaids to the suburbs?

This list could be easily tripled and not exhaust questions that challenged the study participants.

Transportation Systems Planning

Transportation systems planning is currently being carried out under the auspices of the Atlanta Regional Commission, the local areawide planning agency. Citizens raised significant issues about the relationship of the study design effort to the regional commission's ongoing update of systems planning. They also were concerned about the structure of decision-making processes and the study design's relationship to that process. The interest groups participating in the public meetings that were held to help prepare the study design document were explicit: They were not interested in participating in an exercise that did not have an acceptable relationship to the areawide planning agency or to the local political structure that would make decisions relating to study design recommendations. Citizens had a good grasp of the way decisions are made in the public arena because they knew that the study design and the entire evaluation of Westside transportation needs had to be explicitly connected to decision-making structures.

Preparation and Completion of Study Design

The schedule for preparation and completion of the study design called for a draft document to be available in April 1973, about 6 months after the initiation of the study design. A first draft was prepared for circulation. Unfortunately, completing the report, testing its acceptability with interest groups, making negotiated changes to the document, and then obtaining local government and planning agency endorsement were never accomplished. Because the study design was never formally completed, no further efforts were made toward carrying out technical studies relating to the freeway or additional corridor access. Rumor had it that no limited-access facility would be built. This may be why the study process was suspended. Implied in this view is the assumption that transport-access improvements within the corridor are not especially interesting to the department if possible construction of the freeway is not considered. The department has, however, taken the lead in attempting to develop and refine an approach to subarea transportation planning based on the Westside experience. A small group of citizens were also meeting, not under the auspices of the department but as part of a group concerned with transportation impact on low-income households. The department's contract with the university expired about a month and a half before the submission of the first draft of the study design report. The university worked approximately 2 weeks after the expiration of their contract with the understanding that

it would be extended. The extension was eventually processed but not until considerable time had elapsed. The university stopped its activities relating to the study at the request of Georgia DOT. The explanation provided for suspending Atlanta University's formal involvement was based on the procedural matter of contract; however, the contract question apparently caused significant problems within the department bureaucracy. Approximately the same time the university stopped its direct involvement in experiment, the field representative of the Urban Systems Laboratory concluded his activities and returned to Boston.

SUMMARY

The following summary observations relating to the Atlanta Westside experiment should provide a useful frame of reference for examining attempts to modify transportation planning processes in other communities. Perhaps these insights, especially those that relate to improving opportunities for citizen-interest group participation, can be helpful to others engaged in similar efforts.

Broadening citizen-interest group participation in the planning process creates a disequilibrium in the political-economic power relationships of established institutional structures currently responsible for developing and implementing plans. Goodwill or sense of public purpose on the part of these established institutions plays a minor, even insignificant, role in modifying institutional behavior to accommodate meaningful citizen-interest group participation. This occurs because such participation has the potential for reordering priorities and capital allocations in ways that are significantly different from prior practice. The Westside experiment was aborted for this reason—the outcome was potentially threatening to established practice.

We should not think, however, that interest group participation mechanisms do not exist. They in fact operate well and facilitate participatory access at almost every level of plan development and implementation. They operate, however, only for a constrained array of groups whose views on allocations coincide with the institution's and for groups that receive substantial benefit flows from this institutional decision making. Change of institutional behavior in this setting is a function of the power held by citizens and interest groups outside this closed equilibrium system. It was only the knowledge that some process modification was necessary to increase the probability of successful implementation of the department's highway plans that supplied their motivation to engage in the Atlanta Westside experiment at all.

Opening up and repair of the closed system is currently in progress. It is the result of direct citizen activism vis-à-vis local political processes, reduced funding bias on the federal level, legislative mandates that provide opportunities for legal redress, and improved process and procedural requirements that force consideration of alternative allocation of resources.

An important issue that emerged during the experiment dealt with the difficulties associated with introducing process modification within the context of the existing body of technical work and process mechanisms that were in operation. Citizen participants and the agencies involved had to agree on what was to be studied, the alternatives to be considered, the resources to be committed for the study effort, the role of citizens, and the decision-making sequence to be involved. In developing such understanding, existing procedures had to be reviewed to test their acceptability or to formulate new ones. The tool used to accomplish this was a study design that was, in essence, a negotiated agreement representing the participants' understanding of what was to be done. Although only a rough first draft of such a study design was ever produced, it served as a crucial organizing device that permitted energies to be focused on developing agreement rather than on highly generalized intraparticipant conflict.

To focus on the ability of the participants to successfully produce a study design masks some useful results of the effort itself. Citizens became more informed about transportation issues and the implications these issues had for their community, and shortcomings in the process were exposed.

The involvement of an independent participant such as the Urban Systems Laboratory

was useful in keeping the experiment moving. Their freedom to offer advice and ability to call crucial problems to the attention of appropriate bureaucratic levels without regard for the typical chain of command, to critically review the efforts of the study design team, and to provide back-up technical assistance was of significant value.

Citizens are able to demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the link between planning processes in which they are permitted to participate and political decision making. They are aware of the difference between the planning game for fun and the planning game for real and are beginning to show a very low tolerance for having no effective impact on decisions.

Process modification is not cheap in terms of money, time, human energy, or psychic comfort. It is these costs that are, in part, responsible for maintaining system equilibrium. Alternative costs, however, of not changing must be raised to such an extent that process modification is viewed as perhaps a bit more reasonable.

REFERENCES

1. U.S. Congress. Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962. Public Law 87-866, Oct. 23, 1962.
2. Alan M. Voorhees and Associates. Development and Evaluation of a Recommended Transportation System for the Atlanta Region. Atlanta, Jan. 1971.
3. Wilbur Smith and Associates. The Westside Freeway Traffic Impact Study. Atlanta, 1972.
4. State Highway Department of Georgia. Atlanta Area Transportation Study: Westside Freeway Implementation Proposal. Sept. 1971.
5. Atlanta University Urban Transportation Project. Proposal: Westside Freeway Implementation Program. April 1972.
6. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Community Values in Highway Location and Design. A Procedural Guide. Urban Systems Laboratory Rept. 71-4, 1972.
7. Boston Transportation Planning Review. Study Design for Balanced Transportation Development Program for the Boston Metropolitan Region. Nov. 1970.

DISCUSSION

John H. Suhrbier, Cambridge Systematics, Inc.

Davis has treated public participation as an experiment in process change. I would prefer to eliminate the word experiment. Public participation is sufficiently well understood and has proved to be both sufficiently necessary and effective that we can no longer afford to consider participation as an experiment but as an essential component of a planning and design process.

I also suggest that Davis really is talking about organizational change, not just process change; therefore, an alternative title for his paper might then be "Organizational Change Implications of Public Participation."

The overall message of the Atlanta Westside experience is that the introduction of meaningful, effective citizen participation is not just the addition to an existing planning process of a workshop, a prehearing information meeting, a newsletter, or a citizen advisory committee. It is much more: It has implications for the timing of study activities, the scope of technical studies performed, the kinds of alternatives investigated, the assignment of decision-making responsibilities, the skills and attitudes of the professionals participating in the study, and even the internal organization of the study team and the transportation agency itself.

In brief, the introduction of effective citizen participation implies the possibility of significant organizational change. In an organization as large and as complex as a state transportation agency, these changes are likely to be difficult; will require time (mea-

sured in months and even years); will be resisted; will undoubtedly result in a certain amount of internal tension, perhaps even the resignation of some key officials; and may result in upsetting the internal equilibrium of the organization. The problems within Georgia DOT that Davis has described unfortunately are not unique; similar difficulties have been encountered wherever a participatory planning process has replaced a previously existing, largely technically oriented process.

These difficulties, however, do not imply that we should give up on citizen participation but indicate the need for strong, systematic, well-designed organizational change strategies, including training and periodic evaluation of the changes as they are implemented. Determining that a particular change is desirable may be considerably easier than determining how to bring about that change.

Following is a discussion of a number of important points identified by Davis pertaining to the Atlanta experience.

CITIZEN INTEREST AND EFFECTIVENESS

The Atlanta experience demonstrated that private citizens can easily comprehend the important issues of choice and the intricacies of transportation planning. They are able to make important contributions to many phases of a study, including the identification of potential beneficial and adverse impacts and the development of alternative courses of action.

RESPONSIVENESS AND FLEXIBILITY

When a community participates, an agency cannot predetermine and adhere to a fixed schedule of technical activities. Although a time schedule and decisiveness are clearly needed, the detailed activities themselves must remain flexible and be periodically revised so that they are responsive to requests from citizens and other agencies. These requests may pertain to particular impacts to be investigated, alternatives to be considered, the opening of a neighborhood field office, or the development of a particular visual display.

INTERRELATION OF PROJECT AND SYSTEM STUDIES

An important development of the Atlanta work and of several other transportation studies was the transition of the Westside effort from a highway-link location study to a subarea transportation study recognizing (a) the interdependencies of the bus, rapid transit, and highway systems serving the area, (b) the existence of local area transportation problems and the provision for through travel, and (c) the relation of Westside transportation decisions to decisions being made in other areas of Atlanta.

The emergence of subarea or corridor studies as an intermediate level of planning helps to achieve citizen participation in system planning by combining longer range proposals with shorter time-frame actions and by considering all relevant components of an area's transportation system, not just an isolated link or terminal.

Subarea studies are also consistent with the view that system planning should be viewed as a framework in which project decisions can be made rather than as a phase of planning preceding project studies and should serve to coordinate ongoing project studies. This view implies that a decision not to build or improve a facility is just as useful as a decision to proceed with construction. As a particular study proceeds, more realistic and accurate estimates are made of cost, of traffic service provided, of the impacts on the various communities and groups, and of the costs necessary to compensate for negative impacts. These estimates may indicate costs and other effects that are substantially less desirable than those estimated when the initial decision to proceed was made. If, as a result, a particular project is seen as undesirable and is eliminated, this is not a catastrophe. It simply reflects a decision based

on more complete information. Thus, the Atlanta Westside study can be viewed as an opportunity to reexamine earlier system decisions so that they may be validated or revised.

TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

Davis states that citizens did not want the freeway but were interested in improved vehicular and transit access within their community and that it was agreed that the study should focus on the subarea's broadly defined transportation needs and those of the users of the proposed freeway. These statements imply that there is no single technical definition of transportation need that can be used to justify the construction of a new facility. People now question statements of need for new facilities based only on a transportation objective. Perception of needs is based on current levels of mobility; other needs, such as housing, jobs, and environmental quality; and the actual effects of building a facility.

The mandate of highway and transportation agencies is no longer simply to plan and construct capital-intensive transportation facilities. The concern now is with the use of a multimodal system to move passengers and freight and with the balancing of gains to some interests against losses to others. Emphasis is on improving operational efficiency, examining lower capital options, and providing transportation services to meet such specific needs as those of the elderly, low-income, or commodity transfer.

DECISION-MAKING RESPONSIBILITIES

According to Davis, Atlanta citizens expressed concern about structure of decision-making processes and how the study design was related to those processes. Atlanta has a complex institutional arrangement that was poorly understood by all parties concerned, and this confused the novice participant on how to gain access to and influence the decision-making process. [In contrast, those citizens experienced in fighting Georgia DOT had demonstrated a particularly insightful understanding of Atlanta's and Georgia's bureaucracies and frequently proved (much to the consternation of these bureaucracies) their ability to influence a decision.]

Citizen participation is facilitated by clarifying decision-making authority, by providing equal access to decision-makers, and by permitting an orderly process of appeal of transportation decisions. In contrast, four major institutions at three different levels of government have a direct interest and concern with transportation in Atlanta's Westside area. These are the Georgia DOT at the state level; the Atlanta Regional Commission and the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority at the metropolitan level; and the city of Atlanta at the local level. None of these four interests could be solely responsible for the kind of program envisioned in the Westside area, and indeed all of them had to participate cooperatively to achieve a meaningful coordinated program. Each level of government might be said to have had an effective veto power. Further, none of these four interests had a monopoly of qualified staff which, had it been the case, might have forced a distribution of authority for purely practical reasons.

CONCLUSIONS

1. There was an increase in concern on the part of both Georgia DOT and the citizens about the process through which transportation planning and decision making are performed. Interest was not limited just to the products that might emerge or to the particular technical techniques to be used. The overall process through which social, economic, and environmental considerations are brought into transportation decision making are equally important.

2. Effective citizen participation implies major organizational change. This change cannot be implemented instantaneously. Rather the accomplishment of change should

be viewed as a learning process that is most likely to be effective when some resistance to change is encountered. This implies that the change is indeed reaching individual attitudes and behavior.

DISCUSSION

Gerald P. Selby, Atlanta, Georgia

I will elaborate on the transportation planning process described by Davis from the viewpoint of a citizen who spent many hours from March to September 1973 struggling over the principals of public involvement in the Westside transportation evaluation project. The success or failure of the citizen's ad hoc committee is yet to be determined.

The citizen's ad hoc committee is a volunteer group of interested citizens; some reside in the Westside transportation evaluation corridor and others are from the greater Atlanta community. The group was formed in March 1973 to assist the participating agencies by providing direct citizen input into the Westside project study design.

We became involved because we felt that citizen input had, for the most part, been relegated for too long to the final stages of the transportation planning process instead of being considered an integral part of the total process.

Because of the lack of dialogue between the citizens and the policy makers in the implementing agencies in Atlanta, citizen participation evolved into a reactionary force characterized by opposition, confrontation, and controversy. This force led to the defeat of a major planned transportation facility and a corresponding waste of substantial planning efforts costing millions of dollars. Therefore, a difficult traffic congestion problem was not alleviated.

The goal of the ad hoc committee was to develop a citizen participation mechanism that could be initiated early in a planning process of any major consequence. Although our discussions centered around transportation issues, many members hoped that the product of our efforts could be used as a guide in future discussions of housing, land use, and health care. We thought that positive citizen participation would contribute to more harmonious development that was more economical and that could be more quickly realized than the negative process that Atlanta had been experiencing.

Three major issue areas were uncovered and addressed:

1. The initiation of a community goal development process,
2. The development of an education process, and
3. The development of a citizen participation mechanism.

The ad hoc committee proposed that, as a starting point, an executive committee made up of elected citizens representing the community, policy makers from participating agencies, and representatives of the region or business community assemble a goal formulation package of instructional and procedural material.

Further, it was suggested that a two-way educational program be prepared to include workshops, audio-visual presentation, handouts, and advertising.

Finally, citizen involvement can be achieved most effectively when a structure is created that will provide for citizen participation at all levels of planning. The executive committee was the mechanism that would deal with the transportation technicians on matters relating to the formulation and evaluation of transportation alternatives. At the same time, the executive committee would deal with formal policy boards on matters of implementation and policy decisions.

A formal presentation was made to the decision makers of the Atlanta Regional Commission. The results were less than encouraging. The ad hoc committee was thanked for its efforts. Objections were voiced against newly elected officials and the modifications of existing organizations. Six weeks later a formal rejection was made.

In spite of apparent failure, some good came out of the Westside experiment: Citizens are interested in and willing to plan their own fate, and mistrust of the power structure can be overcome. The ad hoc committee developed the necessary support with some staff members. This rapport enabled us to complete our proposal. Finally, this 7-month experiment demonstrated that citizens are interested in making a positive contribution to transportation planning.

AUTHOR'S CLOSURE

Suhrbier's observation that effective citizen participation in the planning process may imply major organizational change is good. It is also important to observe that the complexities of such organizational restructuring are profound when one considers that a state's department of transportation as well as other major planning participants must change. These include the area-wide comprehensive planning agency, a transit authority, and local governments. Such reorganization is not only internal but extends to relationships among these participants. Even under the best of circumstances, this kind of adjustment within and among groups is difficult and time-consuming.

An important issue raised by Suhrbier is why and how this restructuring takes place. I think that it is possible to point to the development and refinement of 3-C planning requirements as a technique that has helped to improve citizen access to the planning process. This has been had significant organizational impact. Similarly, the development of policy and procedures that require careful environmental assessment, consideration of community values, and evaluation of alternatives have improved citizen access to the process and have stimulated, at the same time, organizational restructuring. These changes have made the work by planning groups difficult; however, making the process more explicit and robust has permitted the citizen to enter the process in new, interesting, and useful ways. This includes a citizen's ability to seek legal redress when important aspects of the process have been neglected.