

STATE-REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS IN WISCONSIN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Bruce B. Wilson, Wisconsin Department of Transportation

This paper discusses institutional and process relationships between statewide and regional transportation planning in Wisconsin. The organization, administration, and programs of multicounty regional planning commissions are discussed in the context of their impact on planning programs of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, particularly preparation of a state transportation plan. The paper describes the factors considered by the department Division of Planning in deciding to implement formal state-regional partnerships in transportation planning throughout Wisconsin. The alternative of providing coordinative support to regional planning commissions is also discussed. The conclusion is that these formal partnerships are providing substantial benefits for both statewide and regional land use and all-mode transportation system planning. These benefits, however, have not come without some problems and delays, particularly in the department's relationships with newly organized regional planning commissions. Even the new commissions, however, are finding that, although their initial interests may be more issue than system oriented, they can play a constructive role in statewide highway, airport, and rail system planning.

•CURRENTLY, 8 multicounty regional planning commissions in Wisconsin serve 64 member counties. The oldest of these commissions, the Northwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning and Development Commission (RPDC), was created in 1959. The newest of these commissions, the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (RPC), was created in 1973. As shown in Figure 1, all but 8 of the state's 72 counties are now members of multicounty regional planning commissions. Of these eight, one has formed a single county regional planning commission, another has joined a bistate metropolitan council, two have withdrawn from regional planning commissions, and the remaining four have petitioned the governor to jointly create a ninth multicounty regional planning commission in the state. Thus, all counties in Wisconsin have been involved in some form of regional planning activity.

Although the Wisconsin Department of Transportation has historically worked with regional planning agencies both ad hoc and formally, the virtual blanketing of the state with regional planning commissions recently has required that the department develop a uniform approach for working with these commissions on transportation planning. Respective roles and responsibilities had to be defined or redefined in relation to statewide, substate, metropolitan, and local transportation planning programs. This paper describes this ongoing definition-redefinition process.

As given in Table 1, two of the eight established multicounty commissions are currently recognized as metropolitan planning agencies by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. DOT, and the state of Wisconsin. These agencies are the Southeastern Wisconsin RPC for the Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha urbanized areas and the East Central Wisconsin RPC for the Appleton and Oshkosh urban-

Figure 1. Wisconsin regional planning agencies.

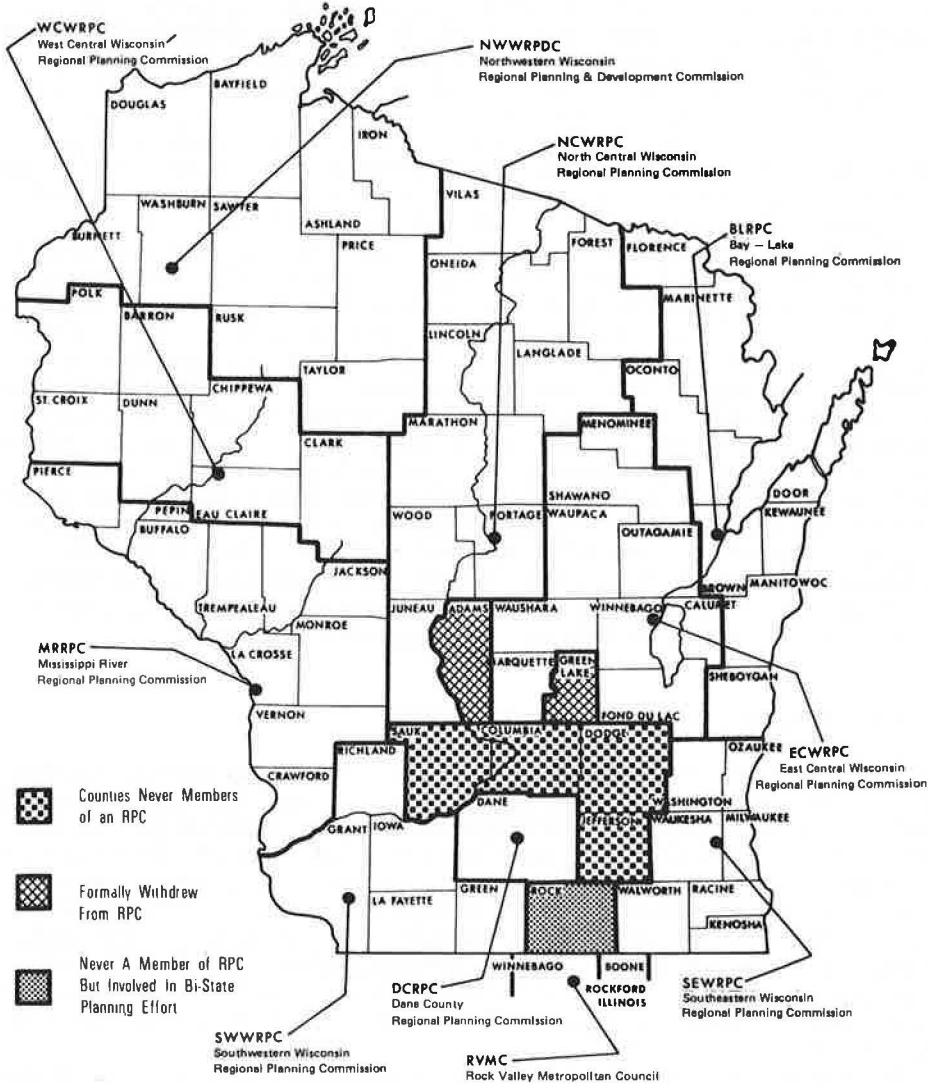


Table 1. Multicounty regional planning commissions in Wisconsin.

Commission	Year Organized	Number of Counties	Major Cities or Urbanized Areas	1970 Population ^a	Type of Agency	Year of Initial Regional Transport Plan	Year of State-RPC Contract for Continuing Planning
Northwestern Wisconsin RPDC	1959	10	Superior	155,000	Nonmetropolitan	1969	1974
Southeastern Wisconsin RPC	1960	7	Milwaukee, Racine, Kenosha	1,756,000	Metropolitan	1966	1969
Mississippi River RPC	1964	9	La Crosse	238,000	Nonmetropolitan	1970	
Southwestern Wisconsin RPC	1970	5		129,000	Nonmetropolitan		1974
West Central Wisconsin RPC	1971	7	Eau Claire	269,000	Nonmetropolitan		1974
East Central Wisconsin RPC	1972	9	Appleton, Oshkosh, Fond du Lac	458,000	Metropolitan		1973
Bay-Lake RPC	1972	8	Green Bay, Manitowoc, Sheboygan	441,000	Nonmetropolitan		1974
North Central Wisconsin RPC	1973	9	Wausau	315,000	Nonmetropolitan		

^aRounded.

ized areas. The department is a full partner in cooperative urban transportation planning with these two commissions and nine other areawide planning agencies. The cooperative urban transportation studies (four for urbanized areas and five for large urban areas) will be discussed in this paper only as they relate to multicounty regional planning.

The increasing presence of nonmetropolitan planning agencies in the state has generated a growing department interest in these agencies. It was inevitable that the department would, one day, seriously consider the possibility of complementing ongoing metropolitan planning assistance efforts with formal state-regional partnerships in nonmetropolitan areas. Efforts to explore and develop the concept of cooperative rural transportation planning were initiated in the late 1960s when the department provided ad hoc technical assistance to the Northwestern Wisconsin RPDC in the preparation of a regional highway plan. Since that time this commission has steadily increased its involvement in transportation development. In May 1973, the department was requested to assign a staff person to the commission to help the regional staff with regional transportation matters. This request triggered the inevitable serious consideration of a full-scale regional transportation planning assistance program in the Wisconsin DOT. The result is that the department is well on its way to implementing formal state-regional partnerships in transportation planning on a statewide basis, both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan, and that this policy is seen by the department and others to have substantial benefits for both statewide and regional land use and all-mode transportation planning.

It is hoped that this paper will offer useful evidence and analysis to the current debate on optimum strategies for statewide transportation planning. In this regard, appropriate reference is made, in the conclusions and recommendations, to the reported findings and recommendations on state and regional development from the Transportation Research Board Conference on Statewide Transportation Planning (1).

OVERVIEW OF REGIONAL PLANNING IN WISCONSIN

RPCs in Wisconsin are organized under authority granted by section 66.945 of the Wisconsin statutes. Subsection 9 of this statute states that, "... the regional planning commission shall have the function and duty of making and adopting a master plan for the physical development of the region." Of particular importance to statewide transportation system planning, the regional master plan may include "... the general location, character, and extent of main traffic arteries, bridges and viaducts; ... parkways; ... airports; waterways; ... routes for public transit; ...". The current RPC involvement in transportation planning ranges from permanently staffed, continuing transportation planning processes in the metropolitan RPCs to those recently formed RPCs not yet having addressed transportation issues. To date, three of the RPCs have prepared regional transportation plans (Table 1).

In 1966, the Southeastern Wisconsin RPC completed the first regional transportation plan in the state and is effectively carrying out the function of intercity transportation planning in its region. The regional transportation plan prepared and adopted by this commission and approved by the seven constituent county boards is the only multicounty regional transportation plan endorsed by the Wisconsin DOT to date. This regional plan served as input and, for the most part, was incorporated into the department's State Highway Plan, which was originally approved in 1966. The Southeastern Wisconsin RPC is currently reevaluating its land use-transportation plan and is also completing a regional airport system plan that is intended to be incorporated into the department's State Airport System Plan now under development.

In the case of regional transportation plans developed by the Northwestern Wisconsin RPDC and the Mississippi River RPC, the department acted in a strong technical advisory capacity. Particular emphasis was placed on interpretation and refinement of the previously prepared State Highway Plan with reference to regional development proposals.

For the most part, the nonmetropolitan, multicounty RPCs are only modestly staffed and funded. Their initial planning efforts have been aimed at gaining planning certifications to make local communities eligible for federal grants and at attaining

A-95 review agency status so that they can screen and comment on federal grant requests. These agencies have also become involved in some of the more current transportation issues, such as proposed highway jurisdiction adjustments, roadside sign control, and rail line and service preservation. Wisconsin DOT has provided technical assistance to the planning commissions in these matters.

As given in Table 1, organizational activity for new RPCs was basically nonexistent between 1964 and 1970. Between 1970 and 1973, no less than five new multicounty RPCs were organized, one metropolitan and four nonmetropolitan. The spurt of organizational activity during these latter years was brought about by several factors, including

1. Promotional activity of the Wisconsin Department of Local Affairs and Development (DLAD),
2. Pressure for increasing federal areawide planning requirements for capital grant programs,
3. Increase in state and federal financial support for regional planning programs and decrease in support for local planning assistance to individual units of government, and
4. Creation of state uniform administrative districts.

As the multicounty regional planning concept emerged between 1970 and 1973, some regional planning seemed to be forced into being. State agencies in Wisconsin could react in several ways:

1. Basically ignore the existence of RPCs whenever possible and continue to observe traditional relationships with local units of government;
2. Maintain a neutral position toward regional planning agencies and wait for cooperative state-regional planning opportunities to develop of their own accord; and
3. Assist Wisconsin DLAD in promoting the regional planning concept, actively seek opportunities for cooperative state-regional planning, and make adjustments in traditional relationships with local units of government.

Since the late 1960s Wisconsin DOT has moved from a position of moderate interest toward active promotion of the regional planning concept.

DEPARTMENT CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE COURSES OF ACTION

As Wisconsin DOT moved gradually to accept the regional planning concept, the department's Division of Planning staff (Figure 2) began to realize that some means of formal continuing cooperation with the existing and newly forming RPCs would be required. This need was realized because

1. Wisconsin DOT had had experience in planning coordination and cooperation with planning agencies at all levels;
2. Substantial Wisconsin DOT experience with various planning agencies indicated the inevitable efficiencies of working with permanent, areawide, comprehensive planning agencies as opposed to ad hoc groups of local officials and citizens;
3. Increasing attention and support was being given to RPCs by the U.S. HUD and Wisconsin DLAD; and
4. Wisconsin DOT would react positively to these new agencies because they were assuming A-95 review responsibilities and Wisconsin DOT has always maintained close communication with its A-95 agencies.

Wisconsin DOT directives for the Division of Planning Objectives for calendar year 1973 included the following:

Expand technical assistance to established and developing rural regional planning commissions and investigate possibilities for DOT financial and staff assistance. Aid in carrying out comprehensive

updates of completed 701 plans will be solicited from the regional planning commissions. Endorsement of additional local plans will be sought.

The other section of the division's 1973 objectives, which pertains directly to the subject of this paper, deals with preparation of the Wisconsin DOT State Transportation Plan (STP):

1. Produce a status report on the STP, probably entitled "Transportation in Wisconsin—A Status Report."
2. Continue other advance work leading to preparation of an STP. Activities scheduled for 1973 include:
 - a. Continuing work toward developing a methodology for multi-modal transportation planning.
 - b. Completing an Interim STP for preliminary review and reaction.
 - c. Completing preparation of an Interim Waterport Plan for Wisconsin.
 - d. Investigating preparation of a state-wide Rail System Plan. Such a plan might serve as a guide in reviewing proposed rail abandonments.
3. Complete the National Truck Commodity Study. Use the results of that study, plus rail waybill sample and U.S. Census of Transportation information, to investigate rail and highway commodity movements.

Examination of these 1973 objectives shows that the methodologies for developing an STP and for initiating a formal regional planning assistance program in Wisconsin were both in an exploratory stage in early 1973. Since that time, these two activities have developed and progressed, and Wisconsin DOT personnel have increasingly realized that these were not separate and distinct activities. Although conceived independently, they have in fact turned out to be naturally supportive of each other in many ways as discussed later in this paper.

Even before the request for Wisconsin DOT assistance was received from Northwestern Wisconsin RPDC in May 1973, the Division of Planning was attempting to structure specific alternatives for a regional planning assistance program for nonmetropolitan planning. A request from Wisconsin DLAD to Wisconsin DOT and other state agencies in early 1973 questioned how state-level functional planning activities should relate to RPCs. Two kinds of alternatives emerged from Wisconsin DOT answers to questions concerning (a) coordinative support for RPCs and (b) cooperative programs with RPCs.

The coordinative support alternative could be described as an application of Wisconsin DOT earlier involvement approach in 701 local planning programs to the new regional planning programs, i.e., acting in some close technical advisory capacity to every RPC (2). Central and district office personnel would be made available to

1. Assist the RPC in defining regional transportation problems and issues,
2. Assist the RPC in developing its work program,
3. Help to coordinate state transportation planning with regional planning,
4. Assist the RPC in refinement of statewide system planning for their region,
5. Serve as members of RPC technical advisory committees,
6. Provide available technical data and assistance in interpreting the data,
7. Review and comment on regional plan development at its various stages, and
8. Prepare a statement of department endorsement of the adopted regional transportation plan.

The cooperative program alternative could be described as an expansion of the department's cooperative urban transportation study programs out to regional planning boundaries. As we are all well aware, the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 required the establishment of cooperative state-local studies to encompass no less than Wisconsin urbanized areas as delineated by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. As in other states, the Wisconsin DOT and the designated metropolitan planning agency for each area jointly endorse, guide, direct, fund, and undertake continuing urban transportation studies. State-local planning agreements continue in effect, and the Wisconsin DOT and the metropolitan planning agency approve annual work programs. Depending on the area, these annual work programs provide for work to be performed by a com-

combination of Wisconsin DOT, metropolitan or local agency staff, and consultants. Completed and revised plans are subject to planning agency adoption, local unit approval, and Wisconsin DOT endorsement.

Because the original urban transportation study program for the Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha urbanized areas was conducted within a regional planning framework, the Southeastern Wisconsin RPC seven-county regional land use-transportation plan was recognized by Wisconsin DOT not only as the currently valid metropolitan transportation plan for the three urbanized areas but also as a substate regional plan for incorporation into the State Highway Plan being prepared at about the same time. A continuation of the current Wisconsin DOT-Southeastern Wisconsin RPC partnership and the development of similar partnerships with all other multicounty RPCs in the state, regardless of their degree of urban development, would be one means of implementing this alternative (i.e., cooperative program) approach.

Looking at these two alternatives in a more theoretical or abstract framework tends to highlight differences that may seem somewhat subtle when a comparison of real-life examples is attempted. Table 2 gives my attempt to assemble and list some theoretical differences in these two approaches. It is incomplete and somewhat arbitrary, but it illustrates some of the debate on state-regional relationships taking place in Wisconsin. One will quickly recognize that any real-life regional transportation planning assistance program will undoubtedly fall between the extremes given in Table 2. When the May 30, 1973, request from the Northwestern Wisconsin RPDC for the assignment of a Wisconsin DOT staff person to the regional planning staff was received, the department was not ready to make a decision on the matter. The Division of Planning was favorably inclined to honor this request because of the past precedent of staff loans and assignments to the metropolitan planning agencies. But, because such an assignment would set a precedent for meeting requests for assistance from other newly organized multicounty, nonmetropolitan RPCs and because the Division of Planning wanted to ensure full support of the Division of Highways in any department course taken, it was decided that the views of the various district highway offices would be sought.

D. F. Haist, deputy administrator of the Division of Planning, and A. L. Gausmann, director of the division's System Planning Bureau, visited each of the district highway engineers and their planning section staffs during the summer of 1973. Haist and Gausmann concluded that formal requests for Wisconsin DOT assistance would inevitably be forthcoming from each of the existing six nonmetropolitan RPCs. The need for increased transportation planning efforts at the regional level was strongly supported by the district offices. In-depth discussion of a staff loan option did reveal some problems, however. None of the districts felt that they could afford to assign the relatively high-level staff people that appeared to be required for preparation of a regional transportation plan. Furthermore, the transportation planning done by state highway personnel for the region might be suspect in terms of state-level bias and other-mode restrictions. Regional plans prepared in this manner simply might not be acceptable to citizens of the region. Similarly, the prospect of a district planning engineer performing an A-95 review of his or her own highway project while on loan to an RPC was something to be avoided.

The recommended alternative that emerged from these in-house Wisconsin DOT deliberations was a financial assistance program to support the RPCs' hiring of their own transportation planner and the related costs. Wisconsin DOT personnel might still be assigned to nonmetropolitan RPCs from time to time, but they would work, as in the metropolitan planning agencies, under the direction of the RPC transportation planner. Such an arrangement would permit beginning-level district personnel to supplement RPC staff and receive valuable training at the same time.

INITIAL WORK PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Based on Wisconsin DOT experience in the metropolitan planning assistance program, it was decided that financial assistance to the nonmetropolitan agencies would be based on review and approval of an annual work program. During the fall of 1973, Wisconsin

DLAD requested advance copies of 1974 comprehensive planning work programs from those RPCs receiving U.S. HUD funds channeled through the state. Representatives of various state agencies, including Wisconsin DOT, were invited by Wisconsin DLAD to participate in a joint review of these programs for the first time.

The draft program submitted by the Northwestern Wisconsin RPDC for federal and state comprehensive planning assistance funds provided the starting point for detailing the first nonmetropolitan transportation planning work program to be financed by Wisconsin DOT. General statements concerning transportation planning needs had to be converted to specific work elements, cost estimates, and proposed sources of U.S. DOT-Wisconsin DOT financing. Data for the final version of the Northwestern Wisconsin RPDC transportation work program are given in Table 3.

Similar work programs have now been developed in cooperation with the Southwestern Wisconsin RPC, the Bay-Lake RPC, and the West Central Wisconsin RPC. On February 8, 1974, T. J. Hart, administrator of the Division of Planning, officially informed the chairman of the Northwestern Wisconsin RPC of the intention of Wisconsin DOT to fund a transportation planner for the region. Wisconsin DOT technical assistance would continue to be provided. This action initiated the Wisconsin DOT regional planning assistance program for nonmetropolitan planning and has set the stage for development of state-regional partnerships throughout the state. It should be pointed out that the district highway offices are providing valuable assistance in the drafting of transportation planning work programs to meet regional needs. District planning engineers will also be members of technical coordinating committees being established for each of the RPC programs to ensure continuing RPC-district liaison. As given in Table 1, Wisconsin DOT now has agreements for continuing transportation planning with six of the eight multicounty RPCs in the state, and the other two RPCs have indicated interest.

REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION INPUT TO STATE TRANSPORTATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

On February 8, 1974, Wisconsin DOT decided to move away from the traditional coordinative support approach to RPCs and more toward cooperatively funded programs in all regions. This decision had immediate implications for the Wisconsin DOT STP effort.

Although the Wisconsin DOT Division of Planning had contemplated the preparation of an all-mode STP for some years, the requirement of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1970 for state action plans provided a strong impetus to accelerate STP development. A Federal Highway Administration publication (PPM 90-4) provided the official interpretation of this federal act and required Wisconsin and all other states to develop their own policies "... to assure that possible adverse economic, social, and environmental effects relating to any proposed highway project on any Federal-Aid System have been fully considered in developing such projects..." At the start, Wisconsin DOT chose to comply with the act not only in regard to highways but also through a voluntary broadening of its Action Plan approach to include procedures for planning all transportation facilities currently or potentially under its jurisdiction. This was particularly appropriate in light of the requirement for the Action Plan to provide for in-depth studies of alternative project solutions ranging from doing nothing to selecting other forms of transportation where they would better serve the public. Thus it was only natural that the Wisconsin DOT Action Plan called for development of an all-mode STP to meet the needs of the state and its rural, urban, and metropolitan communities. RPCs were at first concerned that the need for regional transportation planning was no longer to be recognized by Wisconsin DOT. This was definitely not the intent, however. The Wisconsin Action Plan specifically called for the RPCs to cosponsor public involvement activities for the state transportation planning process and to give their comment, counsel, and reactions during the development of alternative all-mode state plans (3).

On April 27, 1974, the Wisconsin DOT transportation planning council (TPC), consisting of the three highway commissioners and the administrators of the Divisions of Aeronautics and Planning, briefed the recently reactivated Wisconsin Council of Regional Planning Organizations (CORPO) on the state transportation planning process.

Figure 2. Organization of Wisconsin DOT Division of Planning.

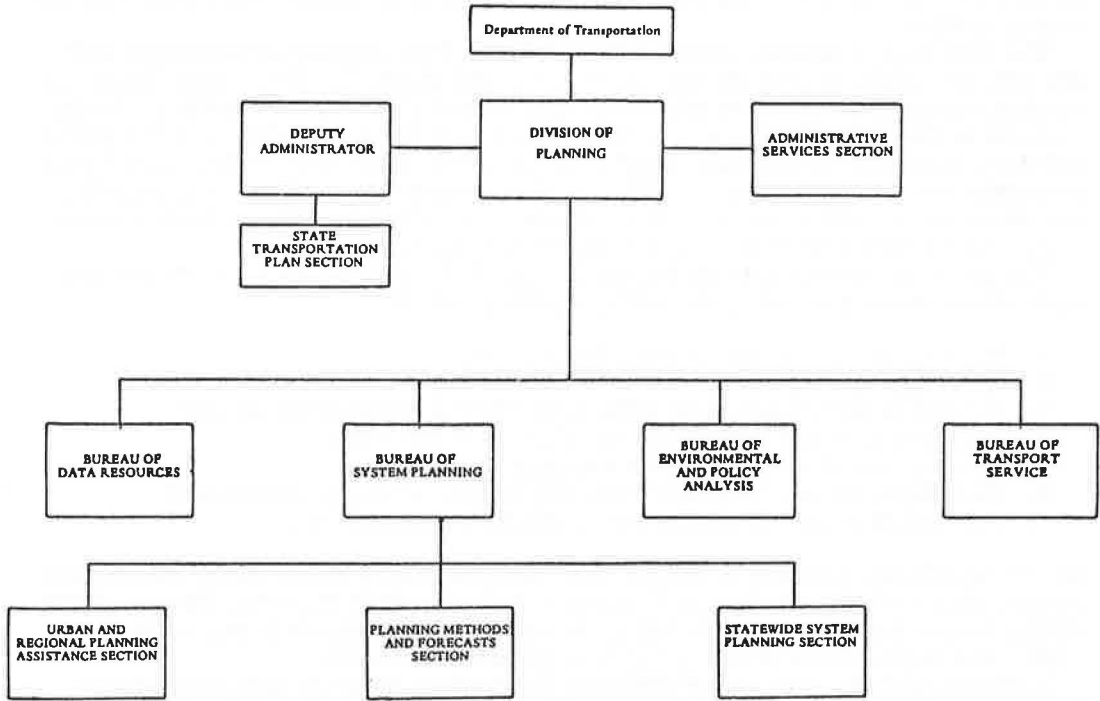


Table 2. Characteristics of two regional transportation planning assistance alternatives.

Coordinative Support	Cooperative Programs
<p>State DOT assumes strong leadership role in transportation planning, and many issues are defined as matters of statewide significance; the need to resolve interregional conflicts is stressed; coordination with regional planning is sought as benefits to the state become apparent.</p> <p>State DOT directly undertakes a centralized planning program; state goals and objectives are recognized and accepted by RPCs for preparing regional refinement of statewide transportation plans; state DOT relies basically on other state agencies to provide land use and socioeconomic input.</p> <p>State retains primary responsibility for public involvement activity in transportation planning; uniform statewide approach is used.</p> <p>Highest and controlling goals, objectives, and priorities are set by the state; regional-local goals, objectives, and priorities must conform to those of the state.</p> <p>Regional planning and other related means of local input to state planning are seen as optional; generally, requests for coordination are generated locally; state DOT develops local liaison staff as required.</p>	<p>State DOT shares leadership role with RPCs for transportation planning on a substate basis; RPCs in turn must assume some of the responsibility for coordinating local input.</p> <p>Regional-local input is actively sought on transportation issue identification, planning, and development; independent regional transportation plans are prepared, district DOT boundaries become aligned with RPC boundaries.</p> <p>Continuing regional-local input to transportation planning is coordinated by the RPC, maximum response to changing local values. Goals, objectives, and priorities are set jointly by state and local units in regional planning framework.</p> <p>Regional planning is actively supported and state DOT-RPC formal partnerships are sought; state DOT financial assistance is required.</p>

Table 3. Northwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning and Development Commission transportation program data.

Element	Total Cost	Federal-State Highway Planning Funds	State All-Mode Planning Funds
Refinement of regional highway plan in two counties and recommendation of jurisdiction changes	1,903	1,903	0
Provision of staff support to RPC transportation advisory committee, which meets quarterly	1,903	952	951
Liaison and participation in study of transportation impact of new Apostle Islands National Lake Shore	1,903	951	952
Local planning assistance, transportation project initiation and review	951	476	475
Initiation of assessment of regional rail service with consultant assistance	6,768	0	6,768
Review of environmental impact statements and participation in public hearings	3,632	2,724	908
Program administration-overhead	4,120	1,689	2,431
Total costs	21,180	8,695	12,485
Wisconsin DOT share*	18,000	7,390	10,610

Note: All values are in dollars.

*85 percent.

On May 29, the TPC officially requested the RPCs to help arrange STP public involvement activities.

The first item of business in the STP process is TPC adoption of an interim STP that will essentially reflect existing statewide modal plans, modifications of them, and supplemental policy objectives while a comprehensive STP is in preparation. Public reaction to the modal plans and proposed general policies of the interim STP at public meetings is seen as an important input to development of new and refined plans during preparation of the comprehensive STP. Each of the multicounty RPCs was an active cosponsor for an area planning conference and supporting activities related to gaining public comment on a draft interim STP during the fall of 1974.

The proposed general policies for the interim STP relate to many issues that are matters of current concern to the RPCs, and they include

1. State-local highway jurisdictional exchanges,
2. Development of scenic routes and rustic roads,
3. Airport improvements compatible with existing and planned land use,
4. Improved intercity bus service to all areas of the state,
5. Development of a statewide bikeway plan,
6. Restoration of rail passenger service to areas formerly served, and
7. Prevention of further abandonments of rail freight service.

The transportation planning work programs being developed by the RPCs and financed by Wisconsin DOT are addressing themselves to issues such as these. Several of the RPCs, for instance, are already taking strong advocacy positions in regard to the retention and improvement of rail freight and passenger service.

A recent planning grant of \$90,000 from the Federal Railroad Administration to Wisconsin DOT has accelerated the timetable for preparation of a statewide rail plan. The RPCs are playing a role in the development of this plan. In particular, they have reviewed draft goal statements for the rail plan, recommended branch-line segments for detailed study, and provided assessments of regional economic development related to future rail service. District highway offices have cooperated with the RPCs in carrying out these assignments and have assisted in reviewing the accuracy of rail segmentation maps and listings and in documenting the current use of abandoned railroad rights-of-way. Several RPC representatives have been appointed to the State Rail Plan Advisory Committee. The initial Wisconsin DOT-RPC agreements helped to provide financial support for these RPC activities.

Wisconsin DOT sees this emerging state-regional partnership in rail system planning as being applicable to statewide planning for other modes as well. RPC representatives have for over a year served on a technical advisory committee established to provide input to the development of the State Airport System Plan. The newly initiated RPC work programs are also concerned with refining the State Highway Plan within their respective counties with respect not only to proper functional designation of roads but also to recommendation of the appropriate jurisdiction in accordance with land service and traffic criteria. In effect, the RPCs in cooperation with the district highway offices are serving as true middlemen in implementing the State Highway Plan. How all of this will eventually relate to the systematic preparation and update of statewide modal plans and a comprehensive STP is hard to predict in Wisconsin at this early stage of state-regional partnerships. One thing is certain, RPCs are helping to achieve public involvement and consideration of alternatives in state transportation planning in accordance with the objectives of the Wisconsin DOT Action Plan.

PROBLEMS IN IMPLEMENTING STATE-REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS IN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

So far, this paper has stressed the positive aspects of state-regional partnerships in transportation planning. No objective evaluation of this subject would be complete

without recognition of the problems and pitfalls involved. In no particular order of priority these problems involve

1. Lack of uniform response from RPCs to form state-regional partnerships,
2. Problems in recruiting RPC transportation planners, and
3. Lack of RPC interest in system planning.

Uniform Response

To date only six of the eight multicounty RPCs have responded fully to the Wisconsin DOT offer to form state-regional partnerships in transportation planning, and the other two RPCs have indicated interest and will respond inevitably. Start-up tasks will consume the initial attention of new RPCs, and thus there will probably always be a planning lag between the first and the last RPC to respond. To the degree that Wisconsin DOT might look for each RPC to perform identical tasks with the same degree of professionalism, such a uniform input to a statewide planning effort would simply not be forthcoming. Some RPCs will always be ahead of others in certain planning efforts. If their regions are urban, they will be ahead on urban public transit; if their regions are rural, they will be ahead on scenic routes and rustic roads. Each RPC will tend to input first those things most important to its region in any statewide planning effort. A statewide coordinating mechanism will certainly be required to pull the varying pieces together.

Recruiting of Regional Transportation Planners

My opinion is that we are experiencing a run on available starting, supervisory, and management types of transportation planners. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973 with its provisions for mandatory funding of metropolitan transportation planning staffs has seemed to cause at least a temporary drain on the supply of transportation planners for regional planning positions. A subjective review of a mid-1974 American Society of Planning Officials-Technical Abstracts Bulletin indicated a strong nationwide interest in the recruitment of transportation planners. The first round of advertising for a transportation planner for the Northwestern Wisconsin RPDC resulted in many responses but only one from a qualified applicant. It is thus possible that initial nonmetropolitan regional transportation planning programs in Wisconsin might have to get under way with some consultant help. Re-advertising of RPC staff positions in a broad range of planning and transportation publications is now attracting additional qualified candidates, and initial staffing of nonmetropolitan RPCs is under way.

Regional Planning Commission System Planning

Examination of the initial nonmetropolitan RPC transportation planning programs submitted for Wisconsin DOT financing indicates a strong inclination toward issue-oriented rather than systematic-comprehensive planning. Wisconsin DOT system planners will need to find a way to combine and meld statewide transportation system planning with regional planning that is at present largely unsystematic and issue oriented. It is likely that the metropolitan RPCs with their urban transportation planning experience may be more easily able to interface with state planners. On the other hand, the times are forcing state planners to also depart from traditional system planning concepts and be more responsive to individual issues. The outcome of this apparent dilemma is yet to be made clear.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The recent Wisconsin experience tends both to confirm and deny some of the major findings and recommendations on state and regional development from the TRB Conference on Statewide Transportation Planning (1). Following are my conclusions, based on the conference observations on public policy and regionalism and regional transportation processes.

1. Public support of regionalism on a multistate and substate district basis. Public support for regional planning has solidified in Wisconsin over the past 2 years, and the state has been virtually blanketed with multicounty RPCs. This is not unanimous as evidenced by the withdrawal of two counties from Wisconsin RPCs, but in most respects, regional planning is an activity that is maturing in Wisconsin and gaining increasing public support. Key state agencies in Wisconsin are also providing increasing support for regional planning. In addition to the activities of Wisconsin DOT described in this paper, the state's Department of Administration (DOA), in the development of a state land use policy, sees the RPCs as an important institutional mechanism for gaining public exposure and discussing policy alternatives. According to the Wisconsin DOA, RPCs will also be instrumental in further detailing land use policies; tailoring them to the unique objectives, needs, and priorities of the region; and working with local governments that will be the major policy-implementing agents. Both Wisconsin DOA and DLAD have been promoting the increased provision of RPC technical planning services to local units of government. Regional planning continues to be one of the highest priority programs of Wisconsin DLAD. State regional planning aids administered by DLAD now amount to \$339,000 annually.

One point that should be emphasized is that Wisconsin state agencies have not made eligibility for federal aid the primary rationale for promoting regional planning (even though some new RPCs initially thought this was the case). Rather, the idea emphasized that RPCs serve to meld and define the viewpoints of local units of government within the region on issues of areawide significance. As previously mentioned, state agencies are strongly encouraging RPCs to strengthen the local assistance portions of their work programs. In essence, to be effective partners in planning with state government, RPCs must retain close ties with constituent local units of government.

2. State general transportation policy frameworks consistent with state general comprehensive policy frameworks. Wisconsin DOT has had some problems in establishing a continuing, productive relationship with the statewide comprehensive planning process, even though the importance and value of this has been realized. One basic reason for this is the changing nature of statewide comprehensive planning depending on the agency, office, and leadership involved in managing this effort. The visible process today tends to be almost totally short term and issue oriented. The remnants of areawide comprehensive planning in Wisconsin are stored and nurtured in RPC offices; therefore, Wisconsin DOT has concluded simply that long-range land use and transportation system planning will not be closely coordinated on a statewide basis in the foreseeable future. The successful planning partnerships we have had and are continuing to have now with RPCs assume even greater importance as we strive to maintain some connection with comprehensive planning in our planning process.

3. U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requirement that all federal agencies provide all financial planning assistance and implement planning requirements through comprehensive statewide agencies. Wisconsin DOT should reconsider this recommendation in light of the state experience. If comprehensive statewide planning agencies have difficulties in effectively developing and managing long-range land use planning programs, they certainly will have no less difficulty in transportation. Functional state agencies such as state DOTs should retain a strong lead role in the administration of federal financial assistance for planning in cooperation with RPCs established in accordance with state statutes.

4. OMB proposal to Congress on provision of public highway funds in the form of incentive bonuses to states with a statewide planning agency discharging multimodal responsibilities (i.e., coordination of transportation with housing) at the multicounty

and substate district levels. This recommendation is similar to some recommendations of the Wisconsin Governor's Study Committee on Mass Transit, which called for the creation of a state planning agency that would be responsible for coordinating the functional planning of all state agencies to ensure conformance with statewide goals, policies, and standards. It also recommended that any public body that does not adopt a land use plan that is consistent with a duly adopted regional land use and transportation plan becomes ineligible for state transportation aids (4). Again, the Wisconsin approach is to place as much emphasis on coordinating land use and transportation planning at the regional level as is placed at the statewide level.

5. Inadequacy of intermodal and multimodal transportation processes despite the progress made over the past 10 years. Regional transportation planning has been basically a highway planning process because highway planning funds have been available in abundance and other-mode planning funds were not so available. Wisconsin DOT has stretched federal and state highway planning dollars to the ultimate in providing financial assistance to the metropolitan RPCs in the past. Fortunately, Urban Mass Transportation Administration funds are now generally available, and in due course we might expect the Federal Aviation and Railroad Administrations to join in the shared financing of continuing regional transportation planning. In addition, Wisconsin DOT planning assistance funds are now all-mode planning funds through changes in the Wisconsin DOT budgeting process. As adequate financing is provided, RPCs in Wisconsin are addressing other-mode planning concerns in increasing detail. The initial activity of the RPCs in state rail planning as discussed in this paper particularly supports this.

6. Increase in citizen participation in decisions made on fundamental state transportation policies through umbrella multijurisdictional organizations (UMJOs) responsible for providing citizens with factual information and for convening appropriate hearings about regional plans and programs. This finding is fully confirmed by the Wisconsin experience. The Wisconsin DOT Action Plan is geared to this kind of philosophy and approach as discussed previously in this paper. The success or failure of this approach is of course yet to be determined, but RPCs in Wisconsin are accepting the role of cosponsor of all public involvement activities related to preparation of the STP, and their efforts are helping to gain significant public input into the statewide planning process.

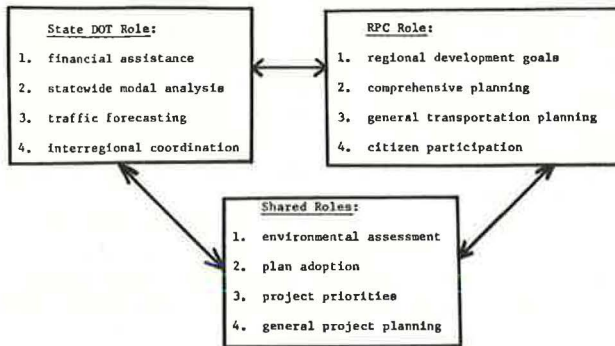
7. Encouragement of effective multimodal programs and linkages by much federal and state financial planning, program development, and program implementation assistance for public transit, rail rapid transit, existing railroad branch lines, experimental nongas private vehicles, and other types of transportation alternatives. Such financing for other-mode planning will help to achieve statewide and regional multimodal programs and linkages (comments in item 5 are also applicable).

8. Focus of substate transportation planning on land use, public works, public facilities, and services without priority attention given to recommendations intended to affect public and private sector transportation policies at every governmental level. RPCs will give priority attention to transportation policies when adequate funding is provided (comments in items 5 and 7 are also applicable).

9. Encouragement of every state DOT by the Transportation Research Board to develop and publish guidelines or procedures [e.g., (5)] that establish precisely how regional transportation processes are to be carried out by UMJOs and others. Although I have not yet reviewed the California guidelines (5), I can say that Wisconsin DOT has given some preliminary considerations to preparing a similar document principally because we want to standardize the new regional transportation planning assistance program to some degree and establish some uniformity in the planning product we are financing. We are somewhat hesitant to produce precise guidelines. Flexibility will be required to enable each region to better define and attack transportation issues of regional importance while assisting in statewide planning efforts. Final Wisconsin DOT guidelines (if any) will perhaps await more definitive thinking on the order of the first comprehensive STP. In the meantime, RPCs in Wisconsin are already beginning to decide how the STP should address itself to regional concerns.

In summary, the Wisconsin experience does not project precise roles for state DOTs

Figure 3. State-regional planning partnership.



and multicounty RPCs in cooperative transportation planning. It does, however, suggest some directions to consider. As shown in Figure 3, the state's role must include financial and technical assistance and coordination across RPC boundaries. The RPC must have the opportunity to speak for the citizens of the region and their collective goals. Coordination of transportation and comprehensive planning will occur principally at the regional level. Finally, since we have the capability of learning from the earlier, evolving urban transportation planning process, some probable shared roles can be suggested for state DOTs and RPCs in full-scale regional transportation planning. Advantage should be taken of the interdisciplinary staff capabilities of RPCs in such areas as environmental assessment and general project planning. Importantly, state and local improvement programs should reflect adopted regional plans and priorities.

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