

6 years and how cost effective the various projects are in supplying mobility needs. The process must move from a long-range system plan to a pragmatic bottom-up approach of fitting together the most cost-effective projects. The transportation program should involve three major components: (a) maintain the existing transportation system, (b) improve the existing system, and (c) expand the system. The planning process must reflect concern for financial constraints and acceptable levels of service. In many cases, additional financing needs to be found once the level of service at low financing has been shown to be unacceptable.

A current problem is that transit investment programs are not financially constrained. The planning process must guard against losing credibility if, for example, plans are too expensive to be implemented. Care must be taken not to overpromise. A system-level cost-effectiveness approach can estimate the costs and benefits of various projects. The planning process can then be used to advocate specific projects and to assist in finding the needed resources. The implications of proj-

ects, including low-cost TSM alternatives, should be assessed.

The MPO is a forum for achieving agreement on the transportation investments to be made in metropolitan areas. A balance must be reached between a plan that only allocates existing resources and an overall optimistic plan based on an unrealistic estimate of possible funding sources. A major concern must be increasing the efficiency of the transportation system, particularly the public transportation system. Excess capacity provided in the off-peak hours is a great waste.

If a consensus is not reached on all plan elements, contingency plans should suggest alternative solutions for allocating money, including their costs and benefits. A transportation planning and programming effort must demonstrate the benefits of proposals and suggest and implement alternatives that are both cost effective and feasible.

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## The Secretary of Transportation's Innovative Public Hearings

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On June 21, 1975, former Secretary of Transportation William T. Coleman, Jr., presided at a public hearing concerning an important transportation project, Interstate 66. This was the first time that a cabinet officer presided at a public hearing. Mr. Coleman subsequently held hearings on the Concorde, another segment of I-66, the St. Louis Airport, and air bags. This paper examines what this action means in terms of the hearing officer, the hearing participant, the public hearing technique, and the transportation planning process. Coleman's decision-making process consisted of examining the issues, writing a position paper, conducting staff briefings, holding a public hearing, receiving written evidence, reviewing testimony, making a decision, and writing an explanation. The written explanation of the decision became a unique document for reviewing the decision-making process. It provided both a tool for congressional and judicial review and a report card on the performance of the administration. The Coleman hearing was designed to restore public confidence in government following the Watergate debacle. In this it was successful; most of the participants interviewed were pleased to have direct access to the decision maker, to have a chance to influence the decision, and to counteract those vested interests that have easier access to decision makers. The Coleman hearing has set a precedent that is being followed by the new administration. It will have a significant impact on both the citizen participation process and transportation planning.

The public hearing concept changed on June 21, 1975, when a cabinet officer, former Secretary of Transportation William T. Coleman, Jr., held a public hearing. This hearing concerned the controversial Interstate 66 (I-66). Other hearings followed on Concorde, a second segment of I-66, the St. Louis Airport, and air bags.

The following question is addressed in this paper: What does this action really mean in terms of the hearing officer (in this case the Secretary of Transportation), the hearing participant, and the public hearing technique and the transportation planning process? Before addressing

this question, the main objectives of the transportation planning process need to be enumerated:

1. Determining mobility needs of individuals and their community and the requirements for transferring goods;
2. Developing a strategy to meet these needs;
3. Determining the socioeconomic impacts of the various strategies on the community, the region, and the society in general; and
4. Devising means of fulfilling sound transportation projects.

Citizen input is an effective way to achieve these objectives, and the most popular way to collect direct citizen input is by means of the public hearing.

### PUBLIC HEARINGS AND THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

Historically, transportation planning decisions were based on the mobility of people and goods. In the last 10 years, transportation planners attempted to assess other objectives, especially those of a social or economic nature (1). One of the most popular and effective means of determining and evaluating these objectives has been the citizen participation process, and the public hearing is the most popular of the techniques used. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) mandated public hearings in 1968.

These hearings were generally held at the conceptual planning stage when the facility design was firm. They

were conducted by state highway departments close to the time of a final decision on all aspects of the transportation project and only after an engineering recommendation was firm. These engineering decisions primarily used a cost/benefit formula that equated construction dollars to travel time saved. A hearing officer, generally a representative of the state highway department, presided over the hearing and reported the results to the decision maker, who rarely attended the hearing. Increasing protests to highway construction prompted the FHWA to set up the two-hearing (location and design) process in 1969 and to suggest that community values be considered in the decision-making process (2). The next few years were spent researching objective means to measure community values and ways to include them in the cost/benefit formula. Citizen participation was soon recognized as the best way to include community values in the planning process.

In response to controversy surrounding I-66, the final decision maker in transportation matters, the Secretary of Transportation, presided at a public hearing on the segment of I-66 that was intended to provide improved access to Dulles International Airport and that included right-of-way for extension of the Washington-area subway in Virginia. Thus, this route was truly multimodal in its impact; planning on the project proceeded inexorably. The groups of citizens who opposed it attracted national attention by publicizing their views on television, radio, and nationally circulated newspapers. Federal involvement in this project soon exceeded that in normal highway projects.

The cacaphony of protest peaked during the first year of the former secretary's tenure. Local government had little impact on the decision, and the emotional involvement of the opponents intensified. Citizens demanded preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). Proponents of I-66 asserted that the project was exempt from that process because the EIS was only mandated by the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the I-66 issue clearly predated this legislation. At this time, then-Secretary Coleman, announced that he would hold a public hearing to listen to all views and make a final decision on the future of I-66. For the first time in the transportation planning process, citizens were provided a public forum at which the final decision maker presided. Essentially, a local decision was transformed into a national one. To give a better picture of the kind of activity involved in public hearings, two hearings will be analyzed: the first hearing that was held on I-66 and the Concorde hearing.

### Hearing Officer

Former Secretary Coleman decided to put on public record everything said about major transportation issues. As part of the background for this paper, I interviewed Mr. Coleman on October 15, 1976. He stated that he believes that the individual who has primary responsibility for an issue should actually make the decisions himself. If a public hearing is necessary, that individual should personally conduct the hearing. According to Mr. Coleman, the secretarial hearing serves the following functions:

1. It makes all related material part of a public record,
2. It helps people understand why a decision is made,
3. It helps Congress review the action,
4. It helps courts review the action, and
5. It helps citizens evaluate whether the administration is acting fairly.

Mr. Coleman thinks that a secretarial hearing is necessary if the issue involved is complicated, is of major importance, and involves a number of competing forces. The Concorde situation, for example, involved numerous forces, especially environmental forces (noise and air pollution), as well as international and political factors.

Mr. Coleman believes that hearings should be structured to get to the issue; therefore, he first wrote a position paper indicating the problems several weeks before the hearing. At the hearing, the interaction between questioner and respondent was exceptionally important to Mr. Coleman. The live evidence increases understanding of the issue. Despite the extensive work done by the staff of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) on a transportation project prior to the hearing, the secretary can uncover certain new details from hearing testimony, particularly when testimony is presented by the individual who is affected by the issue.

Coleman's model for decision making might be set up as follows:

1. Examine the issue; decide whether it calls for a public hearing according to issue criteria (indicated earlier). If it does, then proceed.
2. Write a position paper and announce the structure of the public hearing.
3. Conduct staff briefings and study issue materials prior to the hearing.
4. Preside at the public hearing.
5. Receive written evidence into the docket.
6. Review the hearing testimony and the written docket.
7. Make the decision and write the explanation.

The steps in this model are reasonable and logical. The only possible problem flows from activity between steps 6 and 7. The criteria used to make the decision, especially the weights of the various factors, are not spelled out. It may not be possible to develop a formula to weigh each function involved; the final decision will be based on the decision maker's insight, sensitivity, and judgment. A written explanation—a decision document—is offered after the decision is made. Through the mechanism of the public hearing, former Secretary Coleman made clear who made the final decision. Decision making was centralized.

### Hearing Participants

The public hearing technique as practiced by former Secretary Coleman lets the citizen feel he has increased access to the top decision maker; this is why his hearings are described as innovative. This holds true both for the producer and for the consumer involved in the various issues. This may be more important for the consumers, since they have often felt less powerful and less able to reach a decision maker to make their views known. Consumers can now feel part of the process. For the first time foreign dignitaries participated in a U.S. public hearing. Representatives of the government of Canada, for example, presented their experiences on the seat belt issue and made recommendations as to its continuance in their country. The Concorde hearing attracted representatives of France and the United Kingdom.

Citizens seem to feel that a cabinet officer would be more objective in such hearings than an administrator of the FHWA would be, for example, in deciding the I-66 issue or than an administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration would be in deciding the air bag issue. Because of their titles, people appear to be-

lieve such administrators' decisions would be colored by the interests of the concerned agency.

Hearing participants think that, even if a decision is not to their liking, their views have been considered. The process thus seems open and democratic. Citizens believe that their views are important enough to be heard by the top decision maker. At the hearing, the consumer hears the views of the producers and the cabinet officer's questioning of the producer and of other consumers. Any other process would give the consumer more limited access to the top decision maker than the producer would have. The producer generally carries more weight because the producer is responsible for many activities important to a healthy economy, such as jobs.

#### THE PUBLIC HEARINGS

The first I-66 hearing on June 21, 1975, was limited to 4 h. The participants were elected officials and representatives of civic groups. A time limit was placed on all public statements so that all speakers could be heard, and only then—Secretary Coleman questioned speakers. The table below shows the composition of the persons who testified.

Category	In Favor	Opposed	Total
Congressmen	2	1	3
State officials	3	3	6
Local officials	10	7	17
Civic groups	16	14	30
Total	31	25	56

Although the proponents and opponents were fairly evenly represented, as was intended by the DOT committee that selected the participants, then—Secretary Coleman thought that the weight of evidence favored termination of planning for the route, and he decided against construction of the 24.86-km (9.6-mile) segment of I-66. However, the decision following a second hearing on I-66 called for a modified version of the original I-66 plan. When the issue was brought to the attention of the new Secretary of Transportation, Brock Adams, he let the Coleman decision stand.

The Concorde hearing on January 5, 1976, involved similar issues: Citizens wanted to maintain the status quo, their neighborhood, and their way of life against advanced technology. The Environmental Protection Agency, the Counsel on Environmental Quality, and the Federal Energy Administration opposed the Concorde for environmental and energy reasons. The U.S. Department of State and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration favored the Concorde for reasons of international cooperation, technological progress, and aviation policy.

The hearing was not as formally structured as that on I-66; proponents and opponents were more mixed and elected officials appeared at times convenient for them during the day-long sessions. The preponderance of testimony by civic groups, local officials, and congressmen opposed landing rights for the Concorde in the United States; in fact, as shown below, more than half of the speakers opposed the Concorde.

Category	In Favor	Opposed	Total
Representatives of Great Britain	4	0	4
Representatives of France	4	0	4
Congressmen	2	8	10
Civic groups	5	18	23
Experts	3	0	3
British groups	2	3	5
Local officials	3	7	10

Category	In Favor	Opposed	Total
U.S. officials	1	2	3
State officials	1	2	3
Business interests	3	0	3
Total	28	40	68

Most of the support for Concorde came from U.S. industry, representatives of the British and French governments, and civic boosters who anticipated economic growth as a result of the Concorde. While supporting groups presented only 25 percent of the testimony, former Secretary Coleman concluded that the Concorde should be allowed landing rights in the United States for a 16-month test period.

To return to Mr. Coleman's model of decision making, here again question is directed to the activity between steps 6 and 7, from reviewing the testimony to actually making the decision. Clearly, an examination of these two hearings shows that the numbers of people who testify for or against are not decisive, nor are grassroots sources a guarantee of secretarial favor. The exact basis for a decision might be difficult to isolate, but certainly the content, quality, and nature of the testimony presented and the influence of the speakers and their constituency, among other factors, play a proportionate role.

#### CONCLUSION

The Carter administration apparently endorses the public hearing concept with some enthusiasm. President Carter himself holds town meetings, as does Secretary of Transportation Brock Adams. Mr. Coleman apparently perceived a fundamental need to validate government and the decision-making process in the public forum and to this extent set the pattern for the new administration.

In terms of the transportation planning process, the public hearing makes the decision maker completely visible. The ambiguity surrounding the identity of the decision maker was a major complaint of the various groups and individuals I interviewed. If the transportation planning process were as responsive as it should be to consumer interests, these issues would not have reached the cabinet level. The consumer had great difficulty learning who the final decision maker was when an anonymous public hearing officer conducted the hearing; the citizen never found out whether his or her testimony was heard by the decision maker.

When experts—that is, transportation and community planners, transportation managers, highway and traffic engineers, social scientists involved in the work of transportation—look at Coleman's model of decision making and its emphasis on the public hearing, the most significant point for them is the issuance of the decision document. This is actually the first time such a comprehensive analysis of a transportation issue was made available to the public.

Mr. Coleman's public hearings transformed a local decision into a federal one. The transportation planning process will have to accommodate this transformation in its normal functioning. Generally all participants in the hearings felt they had increased access to decision makers. Their expectations, however, were raised for future controversial issues. This activity set a precedent; the Carter administration is actively attempting to involve citizens in decision making through the town meeting concept. The decision maker also can see the public hearing technique as a protection against negative reaction from citizens. By holding this open forum and by preparing a written explanation of the decision, the decision maker is able to quell any posthearing protest.



Now, where do we go from here? Just how important is direct citizen input before a top decision maker? Does this testimony matter, or has it all been collected, analyzed, and synthesized beforehand, accompanied by recommendations? Is the public hearing just a tool for giving the citizen a taste of power? Does it really matter?

The situation should be examined from two points of view—that of the transportation planning process itself and that of the input of the citizen. Certainly the transportation planning process has been transformed when the hearing officer is the top decision maker. The implications of this action will have to be studied over time. And what about the citizen, particularly the consumer—the individual who has had restricted access to decision makers? All of the citizens interviewed who had participated in the public hearing process had very positive feelings about it and felt that their views were heard and would be considered. Whether this is a good way of han-

dling citizen input in the decision-making process is difficult to determine at this point. Time will provide answers to some of the issues raised, especially that of the institutionalization of the secretarial public hearing.

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## Organization for Regional Community Participation: the Boston Approach

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Federal process requirements for community involvement in transportation planning have elicited many responses from state, regional, and local planning agencies. One of the most interesting responses has been in the Boston region, where an institutionalized regional participation approach has evolved over the past several years. This paper examines the current structure for citizen participation activities in Boston: (a) a Metropolitan Planning Organization formed as a joint body of six agencies; (b) a Joint Regional Transportation Committee, which serves as a citizens' advisory group to the MPO; and (c) the Central Transportation Planning Staff, a staff group under the policy direction of the MPO that is responsible for maintaining a coordinated, participatory process for system planning and project development in the Boston region. The paper highlights the special antecedents of these mechanisms, most notably the Boston Transportation Planning Review, which influenced participation procedures in the region. Finally, the paper discusses the strengths and weaknesses of this approach and identifies aspects that might be transferable to other locations.

Attempts to solicit citizen participation in transportation planning were often launched in response to facility-related controversies. Such efforts have usually involved easily defined geographic areas and clear positive and negative impacts. Even for individual projects, the effectiveness of various approaches to community participation is under debate; methods are unclear and poorly understood. Few well documented mechanisms exist for achieving successful and productive citizen involvement in regional transportation planning. Mechanisms are needed to use citizen expertise to respond to broad regional priorities and major transportation resource allocation decisions. Several reasons for organizing a regional process for community participation follow.

1. Legal and administrative reasons involve the requirements for citizen participation in developing

regional transportation plans, including the requirements specified by the federal urban transportation planning process, such as unified work programs, transportation system management plans, or transportation improvement programs for long-range, high-capital improvements.

2. Planning process reasons include the development of regional priorities and programs in order to bring about a greater understanding of trade-offs between regional and local concerns. The diminished importance of the complete system plan has meant an explicit recognition of the need for short-term planning. Citizen involvement allows citizens to make inputs to incremental investment decisions that, over the long run, may profoundly influence the shape and functional performances of the region.

3. Political reasons involve allowing citizens a frequent and meaningful voice in regional decisions on priorities, thereby reducing chances of future confrontations over individual project decisions. Such involvement could help avoid the holdups due to citizen opposition in the 1960s and provide an important bridge between regional planning and local project development.

Citizen involvement at the regional level ensures that individual projects are derived from a common framework for transportation. A structure for regional participation may, therefore, be an important prerequisite to successful community involvement activities on the project scale. Also, when the citizen involvement process is administered at the regional level, standard procedures for participation can be applied to each individual project.