forcing them to ask, "Where does this bus go?"

4. Thou shalt never provide technological solutions for sociological problems.
5. Thou shalt never force introductions between strangers.
6. Thou shalt not cause long waits for passengers.
7. Thou shalt bring the bus to passengers and passengers to their destinations.
8. Thou shalt be dependable, predictable, safe, and convenient.
9. Thou shalt satisfy stockholders as well as customers.
10. Thou shalt never be a "bus company."

A good foundation has been laid in Iowa through the dedication, commitment, and hard work of many people. A great deal of marketing work always needs to be done in the areas of special promotions, consistent media advertising, effective and planned public relations, realistic goals and objectives, useful monitoring and evaluation, development of a system image, and financing, not to mention the 10 objectives listed above. Good rural transportation will not happen by itself. It takes more than good plans, good programs, and good intentions. People make the difference.

Abridgment

Federal Regional Councils and the Uniform Cost-Accounting Project

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The General Accounting Office (GAO) has identified 114 federal programs that provide federal assistance for passenger transportation and has concluded that there are no statutory or regulatory instructions that specifically prohibit the coordination of transportation resources. It has, however, identified a number of hindrances to coordination (1). This paper focuses on the development of a common cost system that should increase coordination between agencies and providers of transportation.

FEDERAL REGIONAL COUNCIL SYSTEM

The Federal Regional Council (FRC) system is an interagency coordinating mechanism. The idea began in the late 1960s. In 1969, 10 standard regions were created.

Initially, regional councils consisted of the principal regional officials from 5 federal agencies. That number has been increased to 11 member agencies; others serve on an ad hoc basis as appropriate. The councils were given responsibility for interagency coordination and intergovernmental relations with the objective of improving the federal grant delivery system. The chairperson of a council is a regional official from one of the 11 member agencies and is appointed by the President to a 1-year term.

The councils as such have no budget, no grant authority, and no line authority over any of their members. Each agency assigns a staff person to work with a council.

Overall direction for the FRCs is vested in the undersecretaries group for regional operations. The Office of Management and Budget is responsible for oversight of FRC activities.

Some FRCs have assumed major responsibility for improving rural public transportation. The Region 4 FRC established a rural task force in 1972 to develop technical materials, exchange information between agencies and states, and assist with and review proposals for the Rural Highway Public Transportation Demonstration Program established under Section 147 of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973. Region 1 has also established a rural transportation task force, and it is planning a regional workshop for providers of services, sponsoring agencies, and client groups that will include information on institutional, operational, and financial aspects of rural transportation. The development of a uniform funding process and a simplified reporting system will be a major part of the workshop.

The development of a demonstration of a simplified cost-accounting system has also been the major effort of the FRC in Region 7. The Rural Transportation Committee in this region includes representatives from federal agencies, each of four states, and state associations of county officials. The committee has pursued two approaches: (a) developing strategies that would lead to better coordination and (b) developing the tools needed for better measurement of cost and effectiveness.

One important tool is cost accounting. It helps to eliminate biases and turf issues. Further cost information is essential to equitable contractual arrangements between public agencies and public and private providers of transportation services. There have been instances in which public agencies believed that private transportation firms charged exorbitant fees and that they—the agencies—could provide the service themselves at a lower cost. Generally, such a view could not be documented because of the lack of uniform cost information. Initiation of service by public agencies has in some cases decreased the revenues of the providers of private transportation. Thus, there is sometimes a barrier between public agencies and private providers. There are also problems in coordinating the vehicles, funds, and clients of different public agencies, primarily because of turf issues, insurance rates, interpretation of program guidelines, and lack of a common cost-accounting system for rural systems

that coordinate different funding sources.

COMMON COST-ACCOUNTING SYSTEM

Common cost definitions and categories, units of service, and performance measures are being developed. Common definitions are essential to ensure that agencies and providers are talking about the same thing. Cost categories include (a) administration, (b) operations, and (c) maintenance (consistent with the Urban Mass Transportation Administration Section 15 prescribed system of accounting). Costs reflect total real costs; i.e., costs include such items as depreciation schedules for capital acquisitions, donated resources, and volunteer time. These data should provide the foundation for sound decision making between grantor and grantee, between grantee and grantee, and between the grantee and the private sector.

The four basic units of service selected are (a) total vehicle distance traveled, (b) vehicle distance traveled in revenue service, (c) vehicle hours, and (d) one-way passenger trips. These units were selected on the basis of the ease with which records can be maintained and their usefulness in terms of contracting, reporting, and management analysis. As the system becomes more sophisticated, it may become necessary to go beyond these minimums.

Performance measures will relate units of service to costs—e.g., operating cost per vehicle hour.

TESTING THE COST SYSTEM

In 1978, the uniform cost-accounting system was tested on two rural transportation projects—one in Missouri and the other in Area 15 in Iowa.

PROPOSED FUTURE ACTIONS

Developing a common cost-accounting and reporting system for passenger transportation service is a first step. Many more measures are needed to maximize the potential for coordination. For example, credit cards and coupons are being used in an increasing number of systems. These have the advantage of minimizing data collect by the provider while allowing the agency to collect the information it desires. Computers also appear to be useful and efficient in tabulating and summarizing ridership, travel patterns, and costs. PRCs play a special role because they have the potential for coordinating the cost and reporting systems used by different agencies, providers, and states.

REFERENCE

1. Hindrances to Coordinating Transportation of People Participating in Federally Funded Grant Programs, Volume 1. General Accounting Office, Oct. 1977.

Data Recording and Evaluation: The Barnstable County Experience

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A mechanism for collecting data on rider and operating characteristics of regionwide public transportation services is described. The mechanism, a serially numbered rider identification pass, is being tested as part of an ongoing demonstration project in Barnstable County, Massachusetts. Service is provided on a prearranged demand-responsive basis by use of ten 12-passenger vehicles. Passengers acquire passes in advance and complete a questionnaire on their socioeconomic characteristics and physical disabilities. When passholders telephone to schedule a trip, the dispatcher records their pass number, pickup time, trip purpose, and origin and destination. Special attention has been given to minimizing the data to be collected by the bus driver: The driver records only on and off odometer readings for each trip. By using the passholder questionnaire and the daily driver log forms, socioeconomic and trip data are collected for all riders. These data may be used to (a) evaluate vehicle productivity and efficiency, (b) examine the impacts of local policy decisions, (c) assess the portion of a deficit to be paid by each town, (d) develop user charges and contractual agreements for use by social-service agencies, (e) identify those persons who are eligible for the services of a social-service agency, and (f) describe user characteristics. The uses of the pass in fare collection and marketing are discussed, and capital and operating costs of the pass are estimated.

Many persons living in rural and small urban areas do not have adequate transportation (1, 2, 3). These persons include the elderly, the handicapped, the young, those with low incomes, and other individuals who do not have access to a private automobile. This lack of transportation is significant because it contributes to the problems of social isolation, cultural deprivation, inadequate health care, and poverty.

In response to this need for public transportation in nonurbanized areas, major government actions have been taken (4, 5, 6). One federal action was the passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973. Section 147 of the act provided $25 million to finance the capital and operating costs of public transportation demonstration projects in rural and small urban areas. Another federal action was the setting aside of $500 million of Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) funds for assistance to transit in nonurbanized areas.

A number of factors will determine whether these federally funded projects will be successful and continue on a permanent basis. One is the amount of financial support committed by local governments. Another factor is the willingness of social-service agencies to participate in a coordinated regionwide