

Introductory Remarks

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The U.S. decennial census is a centerpiece national effort that provides critical data needed by transportation planners at the local, metropolitan, state, and national levels. Transportation planners have been vocal in advocating that the decennial census be maintained and in recommending changes and improvements to future censuses. It is this keen interest in preserving and improving on the census that has prompted the transportation community to reunite in the mission to understand the use of census data in transportation planning and to recommend strategies for Census 2000.

These proceedings document the second Conference on Decennial Census Data for Transportation Planning to be held since the 1990 census. This conference was held April 28 through May 1, 1996, at the National Academy of Science's Arnold and Mabel Beckman Center in Irvine, California; it is the fifth in a series of related conferences; earlier ones were in 1970 in Washington, D.C. (1); in 1973 in Albuquerque, New Mexico (2); in 1984 in Orlando, Florida (3); and in 1994 in Irvine, California (4). The short time between the 1994 and 1996 conferences was prompted by the uncertainty at the 1994 conference in terms of the plans by the Census Bureau for Census 2000. Various alternatives to the census long form, including continuous measurement, matrix sampling, and a reduced long form, were discussed at the 1994 conference.

The overall objectives of the current conference were to

1. Assess the uses of the 1990 census data, including case studies of applications by large metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), small MPOs, state departments of transportation, transit operators, and the private sector;
2. Review the current plans for Census 2000 and assess the impacts on the transportation program;
3. Review and assess data needs for the future and recommend methods and products to improve Census 2000;
4. Assess alternative data collection options if Census 2000 does not include items needed by transportation planners; and
5. Develop an action agenda for federal, state, and regional agencies.

The conference opening session included a presentation by Martha Farnsworth Riche, Director of the Bureau of the Census, on plans for Census 2000. Also included in the opening session were presentations related to use of and national experience with the 1990 census data and data needs and requirements.

For the case studies portion of the conference, more than two dozen case studies on the uses of census data in transportation planning were solicited and developed as a resource for conference participants. Many of these case studies are compiled in Volume 2 of these proceedings. The case study papers are summarized in the second section of Volume 1.

After the morning plenary session on Monday, April 29, conference participants selected one of five concurrent workshops to discuss three main topics:

- Uses of 1990 census data,
- Needs and improvements in data quality, and
- Alternatives to Census 2000.

Summaries are provided for these three main topic areas rather than individual reports for each of the five concurrent workshops.

The conference concluded on Wednesday, May 1, with a plenary session to discuss workshop summaries and conference recommendations. A conference summary and recommendations were prepared by Alan Pisarski in consultation with the steering committee for this conference and on the basis of the workshop and plenary session discussions.

Conference participants were generally concerned yet intrigued with the notion of continuous measurement as a parallel process to the traditional, yet improved, census long form. Important to note was a general endorsement of the recommendations and findings from the Bureau of Transportation Statistics study on continuous measurement and transportation planning (5). Participants were supportive of the Census Bureau goals for a Census 2000 that is "faster, less costly, and more accurate." They were mindful of the fiscal considerations for planning Census 2000 and the implications for transportation data collection budgets given the number of different alternatives suggested for the coming census.

The conference would not have been a success without the hard work and contributions of members of the conference steering committee, staff of the Transportation Research Board, colleagues at the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Bureau of the Census, case study authors, and conference attendees. Our thanks to all. A special thanks and remembrance go to our late friend and colleague J.J. McDonnell, to whom this conference is dedicated.

REFERENCES

1. *Special Report 121: Use of Census Data in Urban Transportation Planning*. TRB, National Research Council, Washington, D.C., 1971.
2. *Special Report 145: Census Data and Urban Transportation Planning*. TRB, National Research Council, Washington, D.C., 1974.
3. *Special Report 206: Proceedings of the National Conference on Decennial Census Data for Transportation Planning*. TRB, National Research Council, Washington, D.C., 1985.
4. *Conference Proceedings 4: Decennial Census Data for Transportation Planning*. TRB, National Research Council, Washington, D.C., 1995.
5. *Implications of Continuous Measurement for the Uses of Census Data in Transportation Planning*. Bureau of Transportation Statistics, U.S. Department of Transportation, April 1996.