

CURRENT RESEARCH RELATING TO RELOCATION OF FAMILIES AND BUSINESSES

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Papers dealing with the effects of displacement and relocation of people and businesses resulting from public works programs (1) were presented at the annual meetings of the Highway Research Board well before the 1962 Federal-Aid Highway Act that for the first time required relocation advisory assistance and provided funds for moving costs. At the 43rd Annual Meeting of the Highway Research Board in January 1964, a seminar on the sociological effects of highway transportation included a paper dealing with the potential family displacement and neighborhood effects of a planned urban freeway. In his introductory remarks at this seminar, Thiel called attention to the need for research into the nonuser benefits and costs of highways (2). Particular note was made of highway improvement effects on people in adjacent neighborhoods and on people displaced when rights-of-way are cleared. The questions Thiel posed are worth repeating here because research findings reported since have demonstrated their relevancy: For displaced people who are unable to find comparable housing, is it enough to compensate for fair market value plus a minimal moving allowance? What comfort can we take from the fact that residents displaced by highways typically improve their living conditions if this upgrading results because the displacees cannot find housing in the price range of their former homes? On the other hand, how serious is the change in residence associated with right-of-way acquisition in a dynamic society where so many people move so often? Should highway people be held responsible for social problems of low-income and minority group relocatees when these problems were serious even before displacement? Are some of these problems—like some of the benefits associated with highway improvements—perhaps only catalyzed by the highway development?

PRE-1964 RESEARCH

Prior to 1964, the attention of researchers centered primarily on urban renewal. This focus was possibly influenced by the fact that the urban renewal program was initiated 7 years before the Interstate Highway program, which marked the start of substantial highway displacements, and that federal assistance for urban renewal relocation was authorized 6 years before that for highway relocation. For example, in his 1964 report on housing changes of families displaced from the Boston West End Project, Hartman (3) compared his results with those of 33 housing replacement studies in other urban areas, only 2 of which involved families relocated as a result of highway activity.

A review of more than a dozen studies published during this early period and concerned entirely or in part with displacement aspects of highway right-of-way acquisition revealed that all but one were case studies of the effects of a specific urban highway project. Emphasis in these studies was given to a summary of property replacement experiences of homeowners and businesses. The investigators found that in the main, under the traditional "just compensation" concept, displaced owners were fairly treated. Most of the families and the businesses that relocated remained in the affected community. Most, in fact, stayed in the same or adjacent area. Further, displaced owners often took the opportunity of displacement to upgrade their residences or properties, hence improving both their own physical circumstances and the community tax base. Thus the benefits of highway displacement were established.

The studies did note, however, that just compensation for property taken did not cover all costs involved in relocation. Although many relocatees often upgraded their housing, they also often suffered decreased savings or took on larger mortgages and assumed the further burden of higher taxes and property upkeep. Thus, these studies established that relocatees through the forced relocation process were placed in the position of having to bear an unequal share of the economic costs of a public improvement program.

Highway studies as a group stressed economic and physical considerations involved in relocation. A few of the studies, however, brought in other considerations that soon became the focus of attention in later studies. Adkins and Eichman (4), for example, in a study of 100 displaced homeowners in Dallas found that the experience of displacement was not always a pleasant one. Although with few exceptions displacees met the necessary relocation adjustments quite well, some bitterness remained. Goldstein and Zimmer (5) investigated displacement effects of an inner-city segment of a freeway in Providence, Rhode Island, and found that displacement was especially hard on elderly people, particularly those having long residencies in a neighborhood and having low or fixed incomes. Nash and Voss (6) in evaluating potential impacts of the planned Inner Belt and connecting radials in Boston stated that, although many displaced families are happier once the period of adjustment is ended, moving costs and social costs such as disruption of neighborhood ties were particularly hard on low-income and minority groups. Saalberg (7), in a study of over 570 business firms displaced by the Boston Central Artery found that over 20 percent of the firms ceased operation, and these generally were the smaller ones.

RECENT RESEARCH

To determine the displacement problems connected with a planned highway, Kemp (8) analyzed data from a limited survey of attitudes of people toward the north leg of the proposed Inner Loop in Washington, D. C. Kemp's findings emphasized the socio-physical costs of highway displacements and are summarized as follows: Involuntary moves are upsetting; individuals with sentimental attachments to specific neighborhood features often crowd into adjacent, similar neighborhoods with losses to all; and major physical neighborhood changes occur that require major adjustments.

These findings are consistent with those reported earlier that centered on the socio-psychological effects of urban renewal displacements. Perhaps the most widely discussed research of this type was that of Fried (9) in his study of the impact of forced relocation on the lives of the working class in the Boston West End Project. Fried's finding was that forced relocation is a highly disruptive and disturbing experience and a crisis with potential danger to mental health for many people. Reactions are expressed in terms of grief, painful loss, continued longing and depression, sense of helplessness, and psychological or social distress. There is a marked relationship between class status and depth of grief. Grief reaction is strongest among the working class, particularly those having a strong pre-relocation commitment to a neighborhood.

In a companion study, Hartman (3) focused attention on changes in housing status, particularly with respect to location, housing type and tenure, living space, housing quality, and rent levels. Evidence was found that relocation does little to improve the displacee's previously overcrowded situation. Although aggregate improvement in housing quality generally takes place, notable differences in upgrading appear among subgroups. Relocation results in a higher share of household income going for housing; nonwhite families have special relocation difficulties. Hartman's tentative conclusion was that "the deleterious effects of the uprooting experience, the loss of familiar places and persons, and the difficulties of adjusting to and accepting new living environments may be far more serious issues than are changes in housing status" (3, p. 279).

Somewhat different were the findings of Thursz (10) in a 1966 study based on interviews with people who were relocated from the Southwest Redevelopment Project in Washington, D. C. Thursz found that many families recalled that they did not like moving, but, having moved, they were generally pleased with the sharp improvement in their physical environment. Although many families shared similar feelings of nostalgia

for the old southwest area, after 5 years, over half felt they "belonged" to the new neighborhood and the majority wanted to remain there.

A 1965 study by the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (11) highlighted the fact that great inconsistencies existed in the variable provisions for relocation assistance provided by federal, state, and local agencies. This was true even at the same levels of government. Singled out especially as inequitable situations were the displacement effects on the low-income, the elderly, and small business groups. A 1967 report by the U. S. Department of Transportation (12) to the Congress estimated that, for the 3-year period ahead, 77 percent of the highway displacements would occur in urban areas and the greater number of relocations would require mid- or low-cost housing.

Considerable research effort has gone into studies of the displacement of the elderly. Particularly noteworthy is the research conducted under the auspices of the Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Pennsylvania (13), and the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials.

Two of the most comprehensive studies of business displacements were done by Zimmer (14) in 1964 and Berry (15) in 1968. In his study of about 300 predominantly small businesses displaced by urban renewal and highway projects during the period from 1954 to 1959 in Providence, Zimmer concluded that the survival rate was lowest among small establishments, particularly food retailers dependent on the local, neighborhood market. Berry noted that his findings on displacements in the Hyde Park-Kenwood urban renewal project were consistent with other studies.

All show negative impacts to be greatest on smaller firms with elderly owner-managers, having or requiring small capitalization, in which business operations require few specialized skills, and the offerings are ubiquitous goods and services. Many of the firms liquidating are marginal, even sub-marginal, surviving by paying less-than-going rentals in the substandard properties generally cleared. But among the liquidations are individual businesses which might have been salvageable. .

Recent research continues to stress the social effects of displacement, not only the effects on those displaced but also the effects on the adjoining or traversed neighborhood. The effects of displacement on neighborhood cohesiveness and stability are brought into sharp focus in the controversies of inner-city freeway construction in a number of cities. Fellman and Rosenblatt (16) point to the need for some mechanism whereby social considerations such as those relating to relocations can be defined and incorporated into the early stages of highway planning. They stress that severe hardships would be suffered by Cambridge residents because of displacements and the overall adverse effects of the Inner Belt. They admit that their paper essentially is a position paper and state that comprehensive documentation has not yet been prepared to support their conclusions. But the thrust of the paper leaves little doubt as to the position taken by the authors on the question they formulate as to whether highways for the benefit of the suburban commuter are worth the costs to the disadvantaged.

The Watts experience, as reported by Hill (17) as both an "on-the-job" researcher and highway right-of-way agent, provides a different picture. The California approach is to combine a study of the problems of displacement and neighborhood effects with an action program to improve the relocation process and thus to attempt to maximize indirect benefits of a highway program and minimize direct and indirect adverse effects on people and the neighborhood.

Christensen and Jackson (18), in their report on the problems of relocation in Baltimore, conclude that the potential injury to the displacee is so great that the goal of relocation assistance must start as a planning consideration. Assistance in relocation is not enough: There must also be an effective, comprehensive program for developing replacement housing and business facilities into which displacees can move. In an extensive comparative study of possible social effects of alternative route locations proposed for the Baltimore freeway system, Grier and Robinson (19) found that population displacement can have profound effects on existing housing, educational, recreational, social, and health problems and on total population and subgroup shifts within the community.

Published research since 1963 and 1964 has tended to present findings and informed judgments more with respect to the costs than with respect to benefits of displacement and relocation. The research has directed attention to the sociopsychological impacts of relocation on households directly involved in displacement. The impacts on sub-groups of the population and business activities disadvantaged by lack of mobility, power, and fortunes have been explored in greater depth and understanding. Increasing attention also has been given to the disruptive effects of displacement on adjoining neighborhoods. A considerable number of studies appears to be generated in an effort to direct policy or influence decisions with respect to specific projects.

CURRENT RESEARCH

The following current research efforts are summarized because they are known and are considered to be important and relevant to the purposes of this Conference.

1. Kinnard and Messner (20) have completed an extensive analysis of 85 case studies of business relocations from urban renewal projects in 24 communities. A reversal of earlier studies that documented problems and difficulties experienced by displaced businesses in seeking new locations, the hypothesis of Kinnard and Messner's research is that much effective relocation is being carried out and that most affected businesses can be retained if eased past the disruptive impact of forced relocation. Hence, the study attempts to identify and analyze the ingredients of successful relocation of selected businesses and nonprofit establishments.

2. The Division of Psychiatry of the University Hospital, Boston University Medical Center, in cooperation with the Boston Redevelopment Authority, is carrying out 2 research projects relating to the sociopsychological aspects of the relocation process. In one project, the research will attempt to determine the effect of intensive, innovative mental health services on households to be relocated—households that have longstanding problems and are least able to cope with the crisis of relocation. Questions for which clinical answers are sought are as follows: Can the event of relocation be used as an opportunity for positive development of family and individuals? What are the effects of complete mental health services during the period of displacement and relocation on families with a variety of severe problems and on families with less severe problems that may or may not interfere directly with the relocation process? The objectives of the research are being achieved by providing intensive services to a sample of problem families displaced by expressway right-of-way acquisition and by urban renewal activity. The other project is a study of the effects that relocation and the normal relocation services provided have on households displaced from the Southwest Expressway and adjoining Inner Belt. Research is being carried out through pre-relocation and post-relocation interviews with members of about 400 households. The attempt is to compare the full set of attitudes and problems of the family and its members after relocation with those before relocation, and to factor out changes attributable to the crisis of highway displacement. These studies have as their prime objective the development of more precise techniques and services to improve the relocation process rather than the singling out or documentation of costs and adversities.

3. In Tennessee, Memphis State University has a study under way to identify, describe, and quantify, if possible, the effects of displacement of people and disruption of business activity as a consequence of land acquisition for an expressway through Memphis. Socioeconomic costs are being considered, as well as the effect of the highway on neighborhood boundaries. A study of the socioeconomic and environmental effects of right-of-way acquisition is currently under consideration at the Research Foundation, University of Toledo, Ohio.

4. The University of Oklahoma Research Institute is just completing a study in which a review was made of statutes and cases on a federal and state-by-state basis to learn what the present laws are regarding different types of add-ons to payment of compensation under the traditional market value concept and to measure the trend, if any.

5. The Economics and Requirements Division of the Bureau of Public Roads is developing a research program on displacement and relocation as part of an effort to

identify the full range of beneficial and adverse consequences of a highway improvement and to evaluate methods to maximize benefits and minimize costs. Emphasis will be on residential displacements in urban areas, including methods for predicting the magnitude and incidence of displacements resulting from highway improvements, methodology for predicting the extent to which the supply of existing housing will satisfy the needs of displacees, and identification and evaluation of alternative solutions to displacements by highways. Already under administrative contract is a study being conducted by Resource Management Corporation on highway improvement as a factor in neighborhood change. The objective of this study is to develop a set of indicators for use in predicting socioeconomic and environmental changes in a neighborhood resulting from a highway development. One of the elements to be considered is the effect of displacement of people and businesses on the remaining neighborhood.

6. Stanford Research Institute has initiated a study to develop improved methods for identifying, measuring, and valuing selected community attributes that are affected by transportation changes. One of the investigations centers on the disruptive effects of displacement by highway and public transit improvements on community values.

7. The U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has initiated a research-demonstration program under Operation Breakthrough to determine how to make housing available to people of all income levels, with sensitivity toward low- and moderate-income families. If, in fact, this succeeds and more housing is made available by virtue of this effort, the problem of finding decent, safe, and sanitary housing for relocatees will be eased.

8. A recent attempt was made to determine the extent to which transportation planning and 701 agencies are conducting research on relocation in connection with their planning activities. The results of the investigation have not been outstanding to date. The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission is preparing a prospectus for a housing study in Milwaukee that will include surveys relating to problems of displacement by urban renewal and highway projects. Highway officials in the District of Columbia are developing a data collection, storage, and retrieval system for acquisition and relocation data on planned highway projects. To date, it covers only one pilot project. The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency is conducting a systems evaluation in developing its 1990 transportation plan. Detailed evaluation criteria utilizing a rating scale have been developed for evaluating transportation corridors. The rating scale includes a displacement measure defined in terms of land use type, with density and condition of housing considered for residential areas. The Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Council is doing a study of housing needs of those relocated in which an estimate of future displacements is being made in aggregate terms.

In summary, research currently under way on the displacement of people when private property is taken for highways, urban renewal, or other public use does not appear to be extensive. Recent legislative changes in relocation assistance authorized for highway displacements in the 1968 Federal-Aid Highway Act and the present consideration by Congress of a Uniform Relocation Assistance and Land Acquisition Policies Act, however, indicate the serious concern given to the problems surrounding displacement. Obviously, research efforts need to be encouraged and supported.

In many cases there will be no feasible alternatives to involuntary relocation. Research must help find solutions to the displacement problem. The question is, How can research assist in providing a sound, humane, and effective relocation process when displacement is necessary?

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