

PLANNING PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN RELOCATION

Summary Statements of Workshop Panel 1

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It is generally agreed that consideration of the nature, scope, and impact of the relocation problem must be introduced at the earliest possible stage in the planning process. The effect of displacements by a highway project will be magnified when added to that of displacements by other projects, and the cumulative effect produces severe strains on both housing and social resources of a community or urban complex.

The considerations of relocation factors are important not only in developing sound plans but also in developing community support and participation in the planning process. Community involvement may differ materially from one project to another and from one community to another. Public approval and toleration of any project, however, will strongly center about the success or lack of success of the relocation effort—the point of greatest friction between the public and its government.

Different types of projects create different types of relocation requirements. A proper understanding of the relocation process would be materially aided by the development of research aimed at determining (a) the definition of "community" involved in each type of project, (b) the role of community involvement in each type of project, (c) the point in time at which such community involvement should occur in each type of project, and (d) how and when the parties directly affected by relocation should be brought into the relocation process.

An initial survey should be made in the proposed project area to obtain certain data needed as an informational base for choice of route location. These data should include the number of families, individuals, businesses, and institutions that may be forced to relocate and information on relevant characteristics of families such as education, job skills, financial resources, size, and social service needs. This preliminary information should be collected without arousing fears in the community involved. An inventory must also be taken of the available replacement housing market, turnover rate, and the demand that is placed on such housing resources by other programs currently in existence. A critical part of the inventory is the identification of special factors such as political relationships, relevant community attitudes, special social service needs, subgroup boundaries and attachments, employment patterns, and social linkages and attachments. Similar surveys should also be made in the neighborhoods that are considered as potential receiving areas for relocatees.

It is essential that a program be established for coordinating the efforts of all agencies involved in the relocation process including those that can assist in relocation as well as those whose programs cause relocation. Available social service programs and agencies must be analyzed; appropriate channels for communication, cooperation, and coordination must be established; and, if at all possible, agreements on priorities and displacement schedules for all area programs should be developed.

An effective plan for meaningful participation by the affected community residents in the planning process should be developed as soon as the project alignment is reasonably detailed. This participation should provide the residents with an opportunity to express their relocation preferences, both as individuals and as a community. Key to such participation must be the development of proper information on both the program and the available relocation benefits. Any plan must contain provisions for self-monitoring and for continual review and criticism to ensure its currency.

To aid in the development of such a planning concept, research is suggested in the following areas:

1. Develop an up-to-date catalog of available federal programs that might assist in the relocation process and, more importantly, develop an active advisory service to keep the relocation project advised of changes that will affect the ability of such programs to actually deliver needed assistance.
2. Develop an information system that reports on housing resource availability, including public and private housing, in the areas available for relocation. This system should maximize the speed of the housing "opening" in the impacted areas. Present systems are too slow to be effective.
3. Develop a training program for personnel engaged in relocation activities and develop appropriate technical manuals.
4. Develop public information material dealing with relocation and with the effects that relocation will have on the individual.

It is usually assumed that the announcement of a public project that will result in displacement of people in an urban area triggers a general economic decline within the project area and that the amount of the decline is directly related to the time element involved. There is evidence that this is not always true. Because such an assumption is detrimental to project planning, a research study should be made to determine whether there is a decline in neighborhoods affected, what economic and social factors are involved, and whether such factors are attributable to the announcement of the project or related to other circumstances affecting the district.

In addition, research should be done to determine what may be done to maximize freedom and mobility of both individuals and businesses within the project area during the time lag before acquisition without sacrificing relocation benefits. A further study should be made to determine whether such staggered acquisition creates any special problems for those who remain until the normal acquisition process occurs.

The needs and desires of those involved in relocation, both for physical housing and for social service systems, cannot be accurately assessed through political representatives, local minorities, or public forums. Three major groups are involved in relocation—those actually displaced, those not displaced but immediately bordering the area of displacement, and the community at large that immediately surrounds the improvement—and their problems differ. Methodology must be developed to measure the genuine needs of these 3 groups. Relocation must be measured in terms of the viewpoint of those actually affected, not in terms of the viewpoint of the planners.

Interviewer selection and training techniques must be developed. Special attention should be given to determining attitudes of special age groups, particularly those of the elderly who appear to suffer the greatest damage from relocation. The preferential patterns will be of major importance in determining the type of housing resources that will be necessary for relocation. The positive rather than the negative aspect of the relocation process should be stressed. Any measuring technique should include data relating to the success or lack of success of a relocation program and, hence, must involve a careful consideration of follow-up techniques.

There are clear differences between problems generated by urban and rural relocation. The size of rural population centers is considerably smaller than that of urban centers with the result that impact of a project may be greater in proportion. It is in rural areas that special groups whose customs, cultures, or religious associations are likely to be found, such as in Indian and Amish communities. Each of these isolated special communities has unique problems. Relocation housing, especially in rural areas, makes impact results highly visible. A house next to a highway in a country town that is brought to decent, safe, and sanitary standards may be the only house in the community with plumbing. Research should be done to determine the peculiar effects of projects in towns with only one industry in which elimination of the industry would destroy the economic base of the entire community. Consideration should be given to the possible application of the new town theory in connection with such situations.

Other considerations should be given to the effects of relocation in communities where economic and social services are removed from the community. The necessity for a relocatee to be reestablished within reasonable traveling distance of his place of employment is one of the basic criteria of relocation planning. Relocation, however, should not just maintain the status quo of the worker. It should, if possible, present an opportunity to upgrade his employment opportunities.