

DEVELOPMENT OF A DATA BASE FOR BIENNIAL NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION NEEDS REPORTING

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For the 1972 study, the National Transportation Needs Study made heavy demands on the existing data bases and planning processes of the states. The time frame of the Biennial Needs Study made it mandatory that the responses be keyed to existing processes. Very little primary data collection was possible. Thus, states that had extensive statewide planning processes found that they could gather a great amount of the required data from their ongoing process. States that did not have such a process found the task much more difficult. There is a need for additional data, separate from the states' systems, to support the overall analytical and reporting process concerning transportation needs. Some of these required data, such as information on industry's investment plans, are being collected. Other kinds of data with longer lead-time requirements are under development but are not yet available.

In short, in 1972 the data flow has been something of a one-way street with data moving from the states to the federal level primarily. We can help to redress this imbalance by returning to each state its own data and the data from the other states in an effectively usable form. Tabulations from the states' returns and special tabulations of urban areas and states stratified by type will be available in computer tape, microfilm, and printed form.

The lead times are great for the development of the kinds of data and system we require. We must begin now, even before the 1972 returns are in, to plan for 1974 and beyond. What kinds of realistic goals can we establish for 1974? Certainly a major goal is to make the biennial reporting a natural by-product of the existing process. In addition, I think we can establish the following goals:

1. Add transportation systems performance measures to the data set reported;
2. Provide the states extensive input data collected at the national level;
3. Provide better information system support to the states; and
4. Add more time and money to support the process.

If the Biennial Needs Study is to be a viable and effective process, it must incorporate the capacity to describe the quality of performance of all modes of the national transportation system. It must include an ongoing performance indicator system including such measures as average line-haul speeds, load factors, and measures of schedule adherence. In order to obtain some of these measures, the U. S. Department of Transportation has been working with the U. S. Bureau of the Census to make the 1970 census data more effective for transportation planning. One product of that effort is the standard tabulation of the journey-to-work statistics that will soon be available. Other aspects of this effort include improved geographic coding capability, improved simulation network development, and improved capability to use and relate street inventory, traffic, and safety data.

One of the major elements needed to provide improved input data is better information concerning intercity commodity and person movement data for all transportation modes. Our office has already established the national railway-bill statistics program, which provides data on the movements of goods by rail at the detailed commodity level. Similar programs are under way to provide data on the movement

of goods and people by air, motor, and water. These programs will require the cooperation and joint effort of many federal agencies, particularly the Census Bureau. It is important to note that these data will be of use to the states beyond the purposes of the Biennial Needs Study. These are data that are extremely difficult and expensive to collect at the state level. They should become valuable in the general data base of statewide planning.

The question of information system support to the states is more complex. After the 1972 returns are in, they will be carefully studied for indications of reporting problems and changes in the process that would be desirable. In addition, a committee composed of state representatives and our field staff will review the entire process and make recommendations for 1974. Also, any of the models or processing systems used at the federal level will be available to the states. We are very interested in receiving suggestions and recommendations on the kinds of systems support assistance most needed by the states. These might be in the form of special computer package systems, systems designs, or processing assistance.

An appropriate time schedule might be as follows: (a) draft manuals out to the states by spring of 1972; (b) final manuals out to the states by June 1972; and (c) final reports in from the states by June 1973.

The goal is to give the states and urban areas a year to complete the reporting process.

We are budgeting for a fund of \$5 million per year to support the states' needs study process. In addition, equal or greater funding would be made available as a separate fund to the cities participating. This is substantially more than was available for 1972. The proportioning formula will be the same as that used in computing allocations in 1972.