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Urban Mass Transportation Administration

The first federal Mass Transportation Assistance Program was established in 1961 under authority of the Housing Act of 1961. The program was transferred to the Department of Transportation on July 1, 1968, from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, at which time the Urban Mass Transportation Administration was created.

From the inception of the program, national policy has put high priority on efforts to aid cities in solving the increasing problems of urbanization. The Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, authorizing \$375 million to be spent during a 3-year period, initiated major federal involvement in public transportation. This was followed by the Urban Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1970, which authorized \$3.1 billion during 5 years and stated the intent of Congress to provide \$10 billion to be spent during a 12-year period. This was the first long-term commitment of federal funds for public transportation.

Under the provisions of these acts, UMTA assists in the development of improved urban transportation systems through programs of financial aid for capital grants, research, development, and demonstration projects, and technical studies. Capital improvement grants are made to public bodies providing up to two-thirds the cost for new transit systems and modernization of existing transit equipment and facilities. Research, development, and demonstration projects include studies, tests, and demonstrations of new ideas, methods, systems, and equipment for improved transportation planning, systems, and operations. Technical studies grants are made to public bodies providing two-thirds of the cost for long-range transportation planning studies, short-range transit development programs, preliminary engineering activities, and special studies.

Of these programs, UMTA's greatest impact on regional transportation planning has been achieved through the technical studies program. Section 9 of the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 authorized the Secretary of Transportation to "make grants to states and local public bodies and agencies thereof for the planning, engineering, and designing of urban mass transportation projects, and for other technical studies, to be included, or proposed to be included, in a program (completed or under active preparation) for a unified or officially coordinated urban transportation system as part of the comprehensively planned development of the urban area."

Activities funded under this program include the area-wide, long-range, continuing component of transportation planning, which defines the general framework or direction within which detailed transportation plans—highway and transit—are developed; short-range planning activities, which define a 5-year coordinated public transportation system that is consistent with comprehensive and long-range transportation planning for an urban area; preliminary engineering of rapid transit systems, individual rapid transit lines, and equipment; and special studies, such as transit needs of Model City areas, new towns transportation studies, airport access studies, and collection-distribution studies.

Long-range studies include the initial component of the transportation planning program, the continuing activities, and the plan refinement phase. This last phase provides for the detailing of the basic framework developed in the initial phase. This includes detailing the proposed system on a project-by-project basis to enable decisions to be made on priorities for implementation. Activities include detailed route and station location, station design, and station access and impact. Specific emphasis is placed on detailed analysis of environmental, social, and economic impact of the proposed system as well as the impact on special target groups.

Inclusion of project planning activities—plan refinement and preliminary engineering—under the UMTA planning program provides a unique opportunity for carrying the program from initial planning through detailed design to implementation.

Of special note are the short-range planning activities that provide for the creation of a 5-year transit development program. This document outlines a 5-year implementation program of transit improvements—bus and rail—within the urban area and pro-

vides for the integration of capital, noncapital, and operational improvements that are consistent with the long-range comprehensive and transportation planning activities.

Foremost in UMTA's administration of the technical studies program has been the implementation of the goals stated in the Transportation Secretary's memorandum of August 5, 1971, creating a trial program for improved intermodal planning. Through the technical studies program, UMTA has been working closely with the Federal Highway and Federal Aviation Administrations and with HUD in giving new emphasis to the evaluation of urban transportation alternatives, to the more effective coordination of different modes of transportation, to the impact of transportation on city growth and structure, and to the preservation of urban values.

In keeping with these goals, UMTA's policy has been to insist on the development of coordinated transportation programs before UMTA will provide funds for long-range transportation activities in the region. This coordination is achieved through the preparation of coordinated "operations plans" (covering 5 or more years of activity) and preparation of an annual unified work program. The necessity for a unified work program has had significant impact on the coordination of regional planning activities. This document jointly prepared by all state and local planning and operating agencies through the coordination of the regional planning agency describes, at a minimum, all transportation planning activities to be done in the region during a 1-year period, regardless of funding source. If possible, all comprehensive planning activities should be included as well. Through use of this document in support of funding requests, UMTA is able to properly evaluate the requests and to determine how its activities relate to the local regional program. At the heart of UMTA's effort is the concept that planning must be cooperative and that the development of coordinated transportation planning work programs will foster the cooperation to achieve a meaningful transportation planning process.

Of equal importance is UMTA's policy of making single grants to a regional planning agency to cover all long-range transportation planning activities. In most areas this agency is responsible for comprehensive and transportation planning and is in the best position to guarantee coordination of transit planning activities. However, although the regional planning agency is responsible for coordination, the local operating agencies or subregional jurisdictions may be responsible for performing many of the work tasks. Interagency agreements can be locally negotiated, passing the technical studies funds through to the specific subregional body or transit agency. Again, UMTA believes that this policy will most readily provide the cooperation necessary to achieve meaningful intermodal planning.