



WORKSHOP I: ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION FOR STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

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Report

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The need for a general review and evaluation of the

OBJECTIVES

To identify current statewide transportation planning strategies being developed and used by the states and to classify and evaluate their essential characteristics.

To recommend improvements in the overall administrative framework to ensure continuity in statewide transportation planning.

To recommend a program of research related to the organizational and administrative aspects of statewide transportation planning.

ISSUES CONCERNING INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

What are the various administrative and organizational approaches being used by the states in transportation planning at the state level?

What administrative mechanisms have been established for addressing problems of all modes of transportation?

What is the administrative responsibility of such units on a day-to-day basis?

What kinds of mechanisms have been used by the states for funding the state transportation planning process?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the regionalization of central office functions?

ISSUES CONCERNING EXTERNAL RELATIONS

What is the proper role of the planning unit, especially in its relations to other department of transportation units such as design and construction?

How can a state organize to adequately harness all participating state agencies in a total coordinated planning effort?

What is the proper relation of a state transportation planning unit to regional and metropolitan planning agencies?

How can citizen groups be properly involved in the activities of the state transportation planning unit?

What is the proper relation of the state transportation planning unit to private sector organizations such as railroads?

What is the proper division of responsibilities between the state transportation planning unit and the state comprehensive planning unit?

organization and administration of statewide transportation planning was derived from the trend in recent years for states to establish departments of transportation. To date, 23 states have transportation departments, and 13 other states are reviewing legislation that would create such departments.

The broad responsibilities of these new organizations, some of which are being assumed by state government for the first time, require new guidelines for relations among both the units within the organization and the public and private agencies outside the organization. The workshop was, therefore, divided into task forces to deal with the issues in these 2 areas. The combined reports of the 2 task forces follow.

A general theme in the discussions of both task forces was that the great differences among the 50 states necessitate great flexibility and variety in organizational and administrative mechanisms. These differences are reflected in the state constitutions themselves; in the wide variety of boards, commissions, authorities, and agencies in which the transportation planning process is vested; in the different modal needs of each of the states based on geographic and population size; in the number and size of urban areas; and in funding limitations.

Because of these wide differences, the underlying recommendation of both task forces is that any policies or guidelines established at the federal level provide a maximum of latitude and flexibility for state action in solving state needs and problems. Furthermore, internal state transportation agency organizational structure, as well as state planning and policy procedures, should be determined at the state level.

Both task forces agreed that, regardless of the individual choice of organizational arrangements for statewide transportation planning, the effectiveness of the planning is basically determined by the effectiveness of management. Inadequate organizational structure and lack of communication and interaction, both within the state transportation planning unit and among the state transportation planning unit and external agencies, organizations, and individuals, can cripple the efforts of capable professionals. However, the best organizational and administrative structure cannot overcome limitations in the technical capabilities and the dedication and sincerity of personnel.

POSITION, STRUCTURE, AND FUNCTION OF THE PLANNING UNIT

Current Organizational Practices

Each of the 23 transportation departments currently in existence consists of staff divisions to establish procedures and advise the chief executive officer in policy formulation and the operating divisions in implementing department policies and programs. The organization can be classified as modal, functional, or mixed modal and functional, according to the responsibilities of the operating divisions.

A modal organization categorizes primary operating divisions by modes of transportation, such as highways, aviation, urban transit, railroads, and water. Most duties and powers are performed under each division for that mode. The planning function is in a staff advisory unit or within a modal division or both. Nine transportation departments have a modal form of organization.

In a functional organization, the operating divisions are responsible for a specific function for all modes, such as planning, design, construction, and safety. Only 2 states, New Jersey and New York, have a functional organization, although several states are studying reorganization along functional lines.

A mixed organization includes both modal and functional divisions at the operating level. Ten states have a mixed modal-functional type of organization. As a rule, planning for all modes is conducted in an operating administration division.

Definition of Policy, Systems, and Project Planning

The distinctions among policy, systems, and project or facility planning affect the posi-

tioning, organizing, and staffing for each level of planning. The identification of policy planning as a relatively new and critically important element of statewide transportation planning, in fact, may be one of the most significant products of the conference.

Policy planning can be defined as a conscious process leading to a set of coordinated policy decisions that, in turn, lead to the achievement of a defined set of goals and objectives. Policy planning is involved with questions of resource allocation throughout the state, both in terms of allocation by geographic area and by transportation mode. It is not involved with the review or recommendation of specific facilities or corridors or even transportation networks. In this sense, policy planning is a "top-down" approach, starting from basic state goals and working through the general state plan to evolve transportation policy consistent with those goals.

Systems planning, as the term is used in this report, is a process under which transportation networks and corridors are defined in a "bottom-up" effort, starting from forecasts of population and economic growth and continuing through estimates of person and goods movement to a physical description of the systems required to meet those real or implied needs.

Providing scale and direction to this effort throughout the process are the basic state transportation policies and allocations of state resources derived from those policies and consistent with them. The latter information is a product of the state policy planning effort.

Among the principal tasks associated with this line-level systems planning activity are the following:

1. Collection of data for the determination of modal needs and demands and the design of data recording and retrieval systems for this purpose;
2. Overall statewide system planning at the scale of the multimodal network, including terminal consideration;
3. Design of the physical integration of networks and the modal balance that is responsive to the demonstrated needs, demands, and resources;
4. Design of unimodal networks that are viable and can operate at optimal conditions when considered separately from other modes;
5. Technical assistance to urban transportation studies and local transportation studies involved with 701 planning to ensure adequate technical quality, compliance with federal and state requirements, and conformity with the needs of interregional movements;
6. Public transportation studies at both the local and the regional level; and
7. Environmental impact analysis of systems.

Project or facility planning is a third level of activity that is necessary to achieve comprehensive state transportation planning. Individual facilities require an unprecedented number of design procedures that often involve activities normally carried out by planners. Typically, the following are among the areas of detailed planning involved:

1. Scaling of individual facilities to demand considerations and coordination between designer and planner to ensure that the scale of the facility reflects the true scale of the demand;
2. Assessment of the environmental impact of individual facilities on small areas and communities; and
3. Integration of the planning requirements associated with overall corridor planning for individual transportation facilities in both urban and rural areas.

Principal Functions and Responsibilities of the Planning Unit

There should be a single planning unit reporting to the chief executive of the transportation department. The unit should be primarily responsible for maintaining a consistent, central, and strong direction for the overall transportation planning and programming process from policy planning through systems planning and programming.

The central function of the unit is to ensure the logical flow of this overall planning and programming process. This unit must be given the responsibility for formulating an overall policy plan for the department and a multimodal transportation systems plan that is consistent with those policies. This unit should house or direct departmentwide activities such as environmental planning and research relating to planning. It should encourage the implementation of the systems plan through all planning and design stages of projects.

It should participate in all programming, budgeting, and other activities that aid in the implementation of the plan and be specifically responsible for the coordination of the individual capital improvement programs into a single multimodal program.

Position of the Planning Unit

An assessment of each state's problems and strategies should determine its appropriate organization. For most states contemplating the creation of a transportation department, a staff-level planning unit probably represents the most logical and efficient organizational alternative. That planning unit should contain, as a minimum, both policy planning and multimodal systems planning as basic functions under its responsibility. This is true, particularly, for states that are organized along modal lines. The intimate relation between policy planning and systems planning organizationally is important because of the strong linkages between these activities. Policy planning cannot and should not be undertaken in a void. It must draw on previously undertaken systems planning activities if the policies that are to be promulgated are to be based on hard information. Similarly, the multimodal systems plan must gain its direction from the policy plan for the scale of each modal investment.

Policy Planning and Multimodal Systems Planning

Policy planning is uniquely a statewide function that should have high visibility within the planning unit. It must be a separate and distinct function of the statewide transportation planning process and maintained separately from the multimodal systems planning function. This is not to say, however, that a physically separate policy planning unit need be created. Whether a separate staff is maintained to undertake policy planning is a function of the size and complexity of the state and the available manpower within the planning unit. Multimodal systems planning should similarly be identified as a central responsibility of the planning unit, whether located at the staff or modal level.

The different planning requirements for less developed modes or modes over which the state does not have direct implementation responsibility, such as railroads and pipelines, may have to be treated quite differently from modes such as highways, transit, and aviation. For the former, planning through the policy planning process may be a sufficient level and the only practical level at which such planning can be conducted.

Staff Disciplines Required

Planning staffs to implement planning in each level should be determined only after an examination of the planning problems peculiar to the state. In general, however, there should be modal specialists available for both policy planning and multimodal systems planning. In addition, there should be transportation generalists, environmentalists, transportation economists, administrative specialists, specialists in the area of public finance, behavioral psychologists, sociologists, and others as necessary.

Project Planning

Project or facility planning should be carried on by modal divisions in a mixed or modal

organization. If the successful completion of a project plan involves a major corridor study with multimodal or policy implications for the state, the planning for the project should be undertaken as a cooperative venture between the central planning unit staff and the modal division.

Detailed facility planning should be separated as a function from the unit that is responsible for policy systems planning in that day-to-day responsibilities for facility planning and implementation will drain the energies and time that should be devoted to the broader statewide issues.

Early Evaluation of Current Problems

Early evaluation of current problems such as energy shortages, rail reorganization, and environmental degradation is a joint responsibility of both the policy planning and multimodal systems planning staffs. Two separate and distinct functions related to this area may be identified as the "lookout" function and the "mobilization" function.

The lookout function involves responsibility for constant monitoring of transportation systems performance and identification of impending problems so that plans may be developed in advance of a potential crisis. This is clearly the responsibility of the systems planning staff, who monitor information for the department and, through ongoing analyses, should be capable of anticipating such situations.

The mobilization function is logically the prerogative of the unit assigned the policy planning function. That unit should be responsible for focusing all efforts of the department in the formulation of an immediate response to problems that may occur without warning or that cannot be anticipated. This staff would not, by themselves, formulate responses to these problems, but would ensure that the proper attention is brought to bear on the problem.

In situations of immediate or grave concern to the department, this function would probably be assumed by the chief executive and his immediate staff. Less grave situations or problems may be assigned to a unit that can undertake more protracted analysis.

Capital Improvement Programming and Budgeting

The typical process of preparing unimodal capital improvement programs needs to be revamped and strengthened by a broad-based multimodal program produced by the statewide systems planning process. To make these programs more fiscally responsible, the planning unit should work closely with the fiscal unit that prepares long- and short-range financial forecasts and with the modal units that prepare catalogs of permanent improvement needs. District or regional offices or agencies can and should aid in this effort. The planning unit should provide the central direction for preparation of the multimodal transportation improvement program and budget and depend on the modal divisions for detailing that program.

It was generally concluded that the state transportation capital improvement program should be widely distributed so that local subdivisions are aware of state short-range financial scheduling and can schedule resources compatibly.

REGIONALIZATION OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

Each state must determine the degree to which the statewide transportation planning process is to be decentralized and conducted at the substate or regional level. Substate planning is clearly most viable in those states that are larger and more complex.

Policy Planning

The statewide policy planning effort is not a function that can be effectively decentralized. The nature of policy planning is uniquely a statewide function that must be conducted out of the central office and that provides scale and direction to the systems planning to follow, whether that latter function is provided as a central office or sub-state function.

Metropolitan Transportation Planning

The metropolitan area transportation planning processes that have been in existence in most urban areas since the early 1960s have developed relatively sophisticated transportation systems plans. These established processes should be recognized as an integral part of the statewide planning process. In most states, metropolitan area transportation systems plans can be integrated directly into the statewide transportation planning effort.

The statewide policy planning effort will provide the principal framework within which the metropolitan transportation systems plans are to be developed. The statewide policy planning effort should provide a basic resource allocation to all areas of the state and to all modes of transportation, thereby providing an appropriate scale for the metropolitan systems plan.

INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER AGENCIES

Importance of Broad Involvement

As important as it is to statewide transportation planning to involve all agencies, groups, and individuals responsible for the planning and delivery of transportation services, it is equally as important, if not more so, to ensure that other agencies, institutions, and individuals who have any previous, current, or past linkages with transportation also are involved in some manner throughout the process of statewide plan development. Transportation competes in the state budget with other services such as education and health services. Even more directly, the delivery of transportation services tends to influence the form and direction of state development and, consequently, the need for delivery of those services. Similarly, the actions taken by many other federal, state, and local agencies may have profound influence on the aggravation or alleviation of the need for transportation services.

Although these observations have become almost axiomatic to planning theory, there has not been adequate treatment of these external relations, particularly at the level of statewide transportation planning in most states. Consequently, a key charge to the workshop was to deal with the external relations of a state transportation department and to prepare recommendations for the improvement of those relations.

The following types of groups, agencies, and individuals should be involved in the process of policy and plan development:

1. General policy planning and budget-making groups in the executive branch of state government;
2. State legislature;
3. Other state functional agencies;
4. Regional, substate, and local agencies;
5. Citizens and citizen groups;
6. Special interest or lobbying groups;
7. Representatives of the private sector that provides transportation services; and
8. Interstate or multistate coordinating groups.

Timing of Involvement

Prior coordination and interaction with other groups and agencies are fundamental to the eventual implementation of transportation plans and policies. In the process of involving other agencies and groups, coordination in the name of implementation and at the time of implementation is too late, wrong, ineffective, and often counterproductive. Those who prepare transportation plans have frequently seen an alignment of individuals or groups oppose a transportation plan or program without adequate understanding of the basic issues underlying the plan. Generally, this is caused by a lack of adequate and open involvement with groups outside the implementing agency. Consequently, there must be external interaction and communication with groups outside the planning unit, and that interaction and communication must occur during the process of plan development.

The issues around which the technical work program is structured should be identified early. The proper role of the transportation planner is to develop and analyze alternative plans and to make recommendations to the decision-makers and, in this process, to ensure that the decision-maker has a full understanding of the issues that concern other agencies, groups, and individuals who may be influenced by that plan. This requires full communication and interaction. The transportation planner should neither presume to speak for other agencies nor identify or evaluate their concerns. They must be directly involved throughout the planning process.

The mechanisms to achieve an adequate level of coordination and interaction with the agencies external to the transportation planning agency are somewhat less defined than the mandate to so do. Furthermore, the multidisciplinary expertise needed to solve complex problems relating to a transportation plan or program can often be found within these agencies. In general, a variety of techniques may be required to achieve the required degree of interaction.

Use of Committees

Setting up committees of individuals representing agencies or groups is a time-honored mechanism used at every level of government to provide a measure of communication. Examples are the policy, technical, and citizen committees that represent state departments, regional planning organizations, the private transportation sector, and special interest groups. By themselves, however, they are insufficient for handling the level of interaction that is called for in the statewide transportation planning process. Without a stated task and without a stated set of limits to their areas of defined responsibility, the efforts of such committees are often unfocused.

A-95 Review

Similarly, the agency review guidelines promulgated in circular A-95, issued by the U.S. Bureau of the Budget, are a proper and necessary vehicle to inform a broad variety of official agencies of impending projects and, consequently, of the results of planning programs. The A-95 review process is necessary, but by itself is not an adequate provision for ensuring input to important decisions made during policy and systems planning. The A-95 review is a vital project review procedure, but cannot be construed as a substitute for proper coordination. A drawback of the application of this procedure in most common practice is the exclusion of all but official government agencies from that limited process.

Executive and Legislative Support

Active and explicit expressions of support from the executive and legislative branches of state government reinforce the planning process. State transportation departments

should ensure that there is real interaction and coordination with these branches of government. This interaction should go beyond the departments' public relations offices. State legislators, in particular, must be involved in the planning for those projects that directly affect their constituencies if their support for implementation of the plans is anticipated.

Total Statewide Development Plan

Unquestionably, a state should undertake a total development plan that coordinates and unifies all aspects of land use, health, education, welfare, transportation, recreation, and other statewide systems facilities, programs, and policies. The interchange of information, procedures, and proposals among state agencies responsible for these functional areas is invaluable in the preparation of an overall statewide transportation plan at both the policy and the systems planning levels. The coordination of such an effort is most appropriately the function of the state comprehensive planning agency or department.

Given the state of the art, however, most states probably cannot hope to achieve a fully integrated policy plan incorporating all of these functional elements. Consequently, it is not recommended that the funding for all of these functional areas be pooled, at this time, into a single planning technical studies fund. Rather, it is suggested that the states focus on developing an adequately integrated set of multimodal transportation plans and similar plans for other functional areas in mutual coordination and cooperation with all appropriate state functional agencies. In the future, as a more complete integration of these functional plans is feasible, a total state development plan funded by a single federal fund may become an attainable objective.

Coordination of State Transportation Agencies

At the state level, substantial coordination within the overall transportation planning process may be achieved by coordinating the many separate transportation boards, commissions, agencies, and authorities that traditionally exist within states. They need not necessarily be consolidated into a single commission or authority. Such coordination could be expected to encourage multimodal planning and programming and to facilitate implementation of transportation projects throughout the state. The agencies should include those responsible for regulation of transportation services.

Coordination With Regional Agencies

Established regional policy bodies for metropolitan areas should play a major role in the statewide planning process by providing direction and leadership to metropolitan systems planning functions. These bodies, in turn, must develop a cooperative working relation with the state to ensure the fiscal responsibility of any plan that they promulgate.

Adoption of State Transportation Planning Process Guidelines

A useful mechanism to ensure widespread understanding of the ground rules for the statewide transportation planning process and a first step to ensure the enlightened participation of other agencies are adoption and publication of a set of uniform process guidelines. Such guidelines should be established and adopted by each state. These guidelines would be similar to the federally mandated Action Plan for highway planning, programming, design, and construction. Although the general thrust and the intent of the workshop are not to suggest that the U.S. Department of Transportation require the establishment of such procedures, we did agree that it is in the interest of each state

that such guidelines be considered.

In the development of these guidelines, differences in the facility planning processes for each of the modes should be considered and recognized to ensure a logical implementation process. The process guidelines should be extended to include substate and metropolitan transportation planning as it may exist and may be incorporated into the statewide transportation planning process. The differences between substate or metropolitan transportation planning processes should be recognized. In most states, this will require the preparation of regional process guidelines that are, in turn, incorporated within the overall state process guidelines or Action Plan.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Scale Considerations

Direct participation by citizens in the planning process is essential, but, nevertheless, extremely difficult at the statewide level. Further, there can be no explicit guidelines set for the best manner in which to establish citizen participation at the statewide level. New techniques must be developed.

The greatest experience to date has been with citizen participation at the regional, local, and project levels, where citizen groups have a much more direct interest and understanding of the problems of their specific communities. As the base for planning becomes larger, the direct relation between a citizen and a plan becomes more distant. An adequate citizen participation process through a single, centralized statewide process may be impossible and may require that the process be regionalized.

Two-Way Communication

The flow of information must occur in both directions: from the state transportation agency to the outside and from the outside to the state transportation agency. All too frequently, this necessary exchange of information has not occurred and, in fact, has been superseded by a number of more or less active public affairs programs of these agencies. The transportation planner should be considered an "honest evaluator of alternative plans and programs." To provide such an honest evaluation, the planners cannot assume that he or she understands all of the conflicting objectives of the external agencies and groups, but instead must learn to listen actively and openly to the positions, interests, and concerns of these groups and individuals.

COORDINATION WITH PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION SECTOR

Modal Advisory Groups

Advisory groups should be established for each transportation mode to permit the interests, views, and recommendations of those that provide transportation services, such as the railroad, intercity bus, trucking, and marine shipping industries, to be heard. These transportation modes have frequently been ignored or even excluded from the statewide transportation planning process.

Involvement of Regulatory Agencies

The regulation of private transportation operators is a needed and traditional authority and responsibility of state government. Strained working relations and differing points

of view among the state transportation planning unit, the state regulatory agency or agencies, and the elements of the private sector that provide transportation services cannot be resolved by excluding the regulatory agency or agencies from the process of plan development. Such an exclusion will neither improve regulatory policy nor eliminate the regulatory function or its importance. The modal advisory structure adopted provides one appropriate mechanism for such involvement.

However, the inherent distrust of the private sector of the state regulatory function may jeopardize, at least initially, relations between the state planning unit and the private industry sector. This indicates the necessity for a much more intensive communication effort.

FEDERAL FUNDING AND INVOLVEMENT

Unified State Transportation Planning Program

Many of the administrative improvements that have been made in funding the metropolitan transportation planning processes might well be extended to the statewide transportation planning process. Even the new metropolitan transportation funding arrangements, however, do not go nearly far enough to meet the needs of statewide transportation planning, which requires maximum flexibility if the multimodal implementation powers and responsibilities of the state transportation department are to be fully utilized.

Unified state transportation planning programs should be developed by each state annually or biannually and could provide the basis for both state and federal funding of the transportation planning process. They should incorporate all statewide policy and systems planning efforts, the unified transportation planning programs prepared by the metropolitan areas of the state, and planning for nonmetropolitan regions and smaller urban areas of the state.

Distribution of Federal and State Planning Assistance

Both federal and state transportation planning assistance should be tied to the adopted state unified transportation planning program. Federal funds to be allocated to the state and any of its component jurisdictions should be aggregated as a "block grant" that could be applied to the unified state program without the current categorical or geographic limitations and obstacles.

Priorities for the distribution of both limited federal and state planning assistance to statewide, metropolitan, and nonmetropolitan planning could be accomplished through a formula to be developed by the state with local participation. This formula should receive a single federal review in which the comments of all affected federal agencies should be coordinated and should be reviewed on a regular basis by the state and adjusted as needed. It should clearly reflect transportation needs throughout the state as defined by the state transportation policy plan.

If a state is to assume the responsibility for meeting its own transportation needs, it must be given the latitude to determine where and in what amounts federal and state transportation capital funds are spent. Concomitant with this is the responsibility for allocation of state and federal transportation planning funds. The allocation-formula approach will ensure that the allocation of planning funds is accomplished rationally and not capriciously.

Consistent with this approach, the states must be granted maximum responsibility and flexibility in the preparation of these work programs. This suggests the provision of federal planning funds with limited federal guidelines for their application.

Single Federal Funding Source

To carry out unified state transportation planning programs requires that a singly administered source of federal funds be provided. Such a source of federal funding could be composed, at least initially, of the combined planning grant fund programs of the Federal Highway Administration, Urban Mass Transportation Administration, Federal Aviation Administration, Federal Railroad Administration, and Office of the Transportation Secretary.

Along with these funds, however, additional nonearmarked funds will be needed to support and expand statewide planning programs, particularly for those modes that have received little attention from transportation planners. Additional funding also will be called for to support policy planning. New funds perhaps should be provided directly from the Office of the Secretary of Transportation so that their multimodal application will be ensured.

This single planning grant fund should be available for any policy, system, or corridor planning study, regardless of the original modal source of those funds. Many of the mistakes made in the name of transportation planning in the past stem from the inherent interest of states and metropolitan areas to take advantage of established funding programs for a particular transportation mode. The lack of "modal strings" associated with a single-source planning fund could ensure maximum objectivity in future statewide multimodal transportation planning.

It follows logically that all of the planning funds used within the single-grant fund should be adjusted to a common state or local matching ratio.

Federal Coordination

Federal coordination of the unified state transportation planning programs should be through review by a single federal source similar to the federal Intermodal Planning Groups. A clear need exists, however, for greater coordination and direction of these groups. If they are to assume these new responsibilities, they must have expanded professional staff resources to assist in this task and to provide day-to-day liaison with their state counterparts.

Representatives of the federal government should participate at all levels of the planning organizational structure. Federal involvement, however, should be nonvoting on committees and supportive of the process. Care should be taken that the federal agencies do not become directly involved in local policy issues.

Federal Process Guidelines

A great deal of confusion exists because of the variety of and differences among the process guidelines promulgated by the federal modal administrations. Differences, for example, have made it extremely difficult to hold a single corridor public hearing for a combined highway and transit project, a situation that must be corrected immediately. In response to this problem, it is suggested that the Office of the Secretary of Transportation, in cooperation with the modal administrations, prepare a unified set of U.S. Department of Transportation process guidelines similar to the action plans of the Federal Highway Administration.

These guidelines should cover the entire planning process, from policy planning through construction. They should include common requirements for modal administrations for items such as public hearings, environmental impact statements, certification of state and metropolitan planning processes, and labor standards for minority participation. They should supersede existing process guidelines established by each of the modal administrations.