

# CONFERENCE REACTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

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One conference spokesman said that the purpose of TSM was to conserve—to conserve energy, to conserve money, to conserve the time of urban residents, to conserve environmental quality. I think that we all grant considerable merit to that purpose. Let me suggest a broader definition of the purpose of TSM: to improve—to improve the contribution of transportation to urban life. One part of this broader definition must be to conserve, but it also suggests a more important criterion for selecting projects and measuring accomplishments: Will things get better for the urban dweller?

There was an implication in many remarks during the conference that TSM can supplant a capital improvement program. I was thus happy to hear California Transportation Director Gianturco say that new facility solutions continue to be considered in her state and continue to be built. They are not stopping the building of urban freeways, and I presume that they are not stopping consideration of high-capital transit. They recognize that capital replenishment in any society is an important consideration.

The urban transportation field has a legacy of capital investment, and we cannot live indefinitely off of that past capital. Those past investments depreciate physically and functionally.

The highway plant that this country put together during a 50-year span is depreciating at the rate of about \$7 billion a year. I am sure that there are comparable figures for transit facilities. We have to reinvest in that capital plant. We may not reinvest in exactly the same things or in exactly the same places because this is a changing society and a growing society in numbers of citizens and in wealth. We must divide our resources between making best use of what we have, reinvesting in what we are depreciating, and meeting inevitable change and growth. And this is a difficult kind of question for a city or a business or a family. How many of the available dollars will be put into annual consumption? How many will be invested in longer term durables? Traditionally the problem has been to get enough dollars

together to do some of the big, long-term things; and traditionally this has been one of the principal roles of the federal government. The federal role now seems to be changing; and perhaps that is the most important change represented by the TSM concept—a shift of federal dollars from long-term to short-term objectives. There is the obvious danger that, if the federal source of long-term investment is eroded away because it is being spent in some of the shorter term areas, the cities and counties and states are not necessarily going to be in a position to pick up the burden of the needed long-term investment. And we really must do both.

Another significant change associated with TSM is the role of the metropolitan planning organizations. Are they to form a new layer of government between local and state governments, or are they a coordinating mechanism only? Clearly, this question complicates the development of a federally acceptable TSM plan in many communities. However, let me emphasize that our real objective is not to develop a plan, not to meet federal rules per se. Our job is to improve transportation, to improve its contribution to urban living, and to improve the transportation system that is available to our people. That is a great goal, and that goal can be reached under lots of different jurisdictional systems.

And that brings me to the criteria for selecting projects and measuring accomplishments. A successful TSM effort has to have specific objectives, a set of priorities, and ways to handle the trade-offs among conflicting objectives. Some of the conference papers discuss setting of these objectives. I would like to add, in emphasis rather than in disagreement, that these must be the community's objectives. Objectives set by technicians or bureaucrats—federal or local—are not going to be persuasive. More discussion on how best to arrive at community consensus on objectives would have enriched the conference. After objectives, we have to have yardsticks that say this is really what we are trying to do and this is the scale on which we are going to measure. And then we have to measure the things that we are doing

and the effects of the things we are doing.

There are some quiet revolutions going on in this country. We do not know about most of them because we do not measure them. Half of the people in the United States now get to work in some kind of multiple-occupancy vehicle. Some TSM proposals may be aimed at solving a problem that is taking care of itself. Another quiet revolution that is already happening is the trend toward flexible work hours. This, too, is helping solve peak-hour transportation problems. Urban destination patterns are changing as well, and points of stress in our transport system may not always be where we think they are. Mark Twain once said: "It isn't what you don't know that gets you into trouble in this world, it's what you know that isn't true." And there are some things that we may think we know about energy efficiency, cost efficiency, and when and where and how people get to work that may not be true. So let us be sure that we address TSM projects to real problems and to the right problems. And that means doing some measurement of the problem before we jump to the solutions.

I was, therefore, surprised that the conference discussions seemed to be predominantly about getting downtown. Downtown is an important place in our cities, but it is not the only place in our cities. I was further surprised by a statement made that the TSM concept is not

applicable to the suburbs and that TSM actions that improve the quality of transportation in the suburbs are counterproductive to the city's goals. I hope that such a position represents only a few cities because I do not think that we want to reduce mobility. I do not think that we want to reduce the freedom of choice of people or coerce them to live and work in ways or in places that fit our plan but not their plans. There is a theory, and not a bad one, that the sum of a series of individual optimizations is going to be a total optimization for the group. Plans that are designed to let people optimize their situations, their mobility, and their travel will produce a better city.

And finally, if we are going to have the right objectives and be able to implement the right solutions, we need to communicate. We need to hear as much as if not more than we say. And if we do not hear, we are not going to have an answer to the question that was mentioned in one of the first conference panels on Monday morning, "Who is the council of governments to tell me how I have to live?" If the answer is not convincing or if the public's attitude toward what we are doing is negative, we can not succeed. We will have wasted a great deal of effort and lost a great opportunity to improve the contribution of transportation to urban life.

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One wishes that, after having heard so many thousands of well-chosen words about TSM, that one could produce an eloquent and creative concluding statement. Failing that, I will instead observe from three different perspectives what I think we heard at the conference and perhaps should remember.

#### FEDERAL PERSPECTIVE

Federal government officials at the conference were indeed sponsors of it, and there were some messages there for them. The first one is that TSM is accepted. Six months ago I am not so sure that was true. I did not hear anyone at the conference say that TSM is a bad idea and we ought to forget it. We heard many quotations from learned sources saying that conservation and the things that TSM is aiming for are worthy, are in the national interest, and are in fact essential.

The second message is that it will be a long time before the impacts are seen. As Americans, we have two sacred notions: We can solve all problems in 1 year or less, and we can solve anything if we have enough money.

TSM runs counter to both of those notions. I think those at the federal level have to accept the fact that TSM actions are longer term and are not necessarily a quick fix to troublesome situations. The Minneapolis Skyway that we saw during the conference is an example. I was impressed with how long ago it had been started on the one hand, and how effective and really quite impressive it is on the other.

TSM solutions are not highly visible. You cannot see car-pool programs. You cannot see staggered hours. A computerized signal system looks like any other signal system. We may, therefore, feel we have not done anything even if we have been successful. And

the public may feel the same way. For that reason, we may need more of the kinds of things that were suggested by the conference panel than we have been used to in other programs—more citizen participation, more public relations, and maybe some funds for that sort of thing.

The third message is that the federal agencies are going to have to be gentle in their application of TSM regulations. TSM action agencies have to be concerned with the combination of all the modes, the long-range and short-range aspects, the operational planning, and long-term capital planning all at once. And there is no methodology to pursue. As a result, at the end we are left with whoever it is who reviews the program at our local level and decides whether we made it or not. This is an extremely exposed position.

The top-level federal officials at the conference said that they intended to apply the regulations gently, and I believe they intend to do that. But sometimes something happens to top-level intentions before they reach the lower levels, and therein lies some danger.

#### LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

What were some messages with regard to the local level, which is the action level? First the diversity of local institutional arrangements and the essentialness of that diversity were stressed. A number of the case studies indicated that communities that have a history of successful intergovernmental relations will be able to accommodate TSM with no difficulty. On the other hand, those that have a history of tension and struggle for a variety of reasons may have great difficulty in instituting TSM actions. We must therefore have a variety and a diversity of ways to handle TSM. And I am not so sure that I see that metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs)