

## Informal Discussions of Selected Topics

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Speakers: James Pickford  
Arthur Davis  
Anthony J. Catanese  
Oscar Sutermeister

The speakers focused on topics that mirrored changing priorities in transportation and land use policies as they affect governmental responsibilities at each government level. Stress was placed on emerging initiatives in the present administration for a new national policy on urban growth and development at the same time that priorities in public programs are either changing or under stress. Note was taken, for example, of a popular vote in one major eastern city that favored job stimulation over environmental regulation, while another panelist stressed that our national concern with growth problems and growth management has not allowed us to concentrate sufficiently on the problems of declining areas.

Transportation programs were seen to provide new initiatives in community building and land development, at the same time that national and state agencies were

unsure of themselves in responding to these initiatives. An example was the opportunity to create multicentered suburban activity centers that is provided by newly planned radial mass transportation systems. State governments and regional agencies were also seen to face an uncertain future as the roles allotted to them in national planning and related programs remain unclear. One panelist indicated that the role of state planning and development agencies remains unclear in an administration that apparently intends to place greater stress on regional solutions to urban problems. At the same time, regional transportation planning agencies were seen to be struggling with their new planning mandates, and some urged a review of experience to date under unified transportation planning programs.

## National Land Policies and Programs Affecting Transportation: Group Discussions

*Ralph Widner, Academy of Contemporary Problems, Columbus, Ohio*  
*George T. Lathrop, John Hamburg and Associates, Inc., Chapel Hill, North Carolina*

Speakers: Mortimer L. Downey  
Bruce D. McDowell

U.S. Assistant Transportation Secretary Mortimer L. Downey commented on several activities in the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) including city revitalization (particularly in central cities), equalization of the city and the suburb as residential environments and as economic centers, and energy conservation.

Concerned with city revitalization and equalization of cities and suburbs, Downey urged better planning and programs to stimulate transit investments. DOT will give preference to cities that emphasize public transit (not necessarily subways); this emphasis may become a requirement for participation in some programs. Transportation priorities will shift from highway construction to maintenance and the best use possible of existing facilities. The present administration believes that the process of developing policy is as important as the policy itself.

Secretary Downey also referred to DOT's participation in the Urban Policy Task Force, which is concerned

with a solution to such problems as were highlighted by a visit President Jimmy Carter made to the South Bronx. Downey noted that people usually suggest transportation as a solution, but transportation facilities in the South Bronx already are very extensive. Also, programs of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare currently in effect in the South Bronx are inserting about \$2000 to \$3000/person into the economy annually—close to the concept of the guaranteed annual minimum wage.

Downey also noted that local motor vehicle travel consumes about 22 percent of the petroleum used in this country, that all transportation consumes about 55 percent, and that about half of the energy used for transportation is wasted. There is tremendous potential for energy conservation in transportation but little incentive. Downey urged a policy of pricing energy at its replacement cost; planning should be based on what energy will cost, not what it costs now. Plans should be made to improve energy efficiency, to reduce travel, to reduce

the unused capacity among alternative transportation modes, and to take advantage of the benefits that transit can produce. Three techniques are available: persuasion, economics, and, as a last resort, legislation.

National objectives affected by transportation include reducing federal regulatory activities, encouraging economic recovery, and preserving intermodal choice. Regulatory activities will be restricted to safety and protection from monopoly and will protect the consumer and not the regulated industry. Rebuilding bridges, secondary roads, and railroads can put many people to work, with 15 percent of the contract work going to minorities, Downey stated.

Downey also commented on the shortage of funds for transportation and the national objectives that transportation can help achieve. Funds for transportation, particularly highways, may suffer because of efforts to balance the federal budget by fiscal 1981 and because revenues may decline as fuel consumption is controlled.

In response to a question on railroad reconstruction, Downey referred to the question of nationalization or emphasis on the private sector. So far, under the Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act, DOT has found that the successful private railroads are not interested in government assistance. In the middle are a large number of railroads that are looking for help but want to preserve their own identity and are not interested in nationalization. A third group, particularly those in the Northeast, are interested in money and reorganization; DOT is looking for levers to provide assistance to them. Areas in which it appears that there may be some promise for offering assistance to the railroads include (a) waterway user charges, (b) perhaps, highway user charges, (c) improved management, (d) improvement of labor relations and current labor agreements, and (e) changes in the regulatory structure.

Bruce D. McDowell emphasized the ways the federal government affects land use through ownership and management of land, location of federal employment and contractors, federal aid and planning requirements, and unplanned activities. McDowell indicated that there can be more coherence in the way the federal government affects land use but that this is likely to come incrementally and with difficulty.

McDowell said that the current sun belt and frost belt controversy is another example of the complications inherent in directing transportation policy toward other than immediate transportation objectives. Briefly, the situation is that one area is growing faster than another. This differential growth rate is evidence of national policy working in the South and the Southeast, regions of the United States that needed help. The nation is homogenizing; what is happening is what should be happening. The observed outcome includes a completely different phenomenon, i.e., central city decline, which happens to be concentrated in the Midwest and the Northeast. Now there is a mixture of effects, which are being translated into differential growth rate but are, in fact, two separate and distinct issues. These issues are differential growth and geographically concentrated central city decline.

Ralph Widner emphasized McDowell's comments by recounting some of his experiences in examining New England and the Midwest in the context of the differential-growth-rate controversy. He observed that much of the physical decline in the New England area is occurring as a result of the fact that the physical arrangement of cities and towns, industries, work places, and residential locations in the New England area is the result of growth that took place in the context of the transportation system of 50 to 75 years ago. Now, these artifacts of that earlier development and transportation system are adjusting to new patterns of development activity, leaving excess capacity and unused facilities in some places, while new construction and development take place in others.

Widner called attention to the policy recommendations in the remarks of McDowell and Downey. For example, there is a struggle to bring coherence out of the U.S. system but without giving up the diversity and pluralism everyone wants. Apparently the administration would like to move toward more of a market in terms of shopping for transportation services. Widner noted that both Downey and McDowell seemed to be emphasizing transportation at some subnational level, i.e., transportation systems that are larger than metropolitan areas or a single state, such as the Northeast or the South.