

transport options, mobility, and services, maybe we should call upon ourselves in legislation to foster and promote that kind of system.

Those of us who are providers and users of the system, need to begin to change the public attitude about transportation and the services it provides. One of the ways that can be done is by doing the best possible job

### DATA NEEDS FOR NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION POLICY

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It may be helpful for you to know that the National Transportation Policy Team is a truly intermodal, eclectic gathering of senior analysts from FAA, the Office of the Secretary of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Railroad Administration, the Coast Guard, and the Maritime Administration, and others. We are trying to take a comprehensive and multimodal view in response to the Secretary's concern with strategic planning and his wish to assess where the Nation's transportation system should be going. The policy statement should be released by January 7, 1990. The last comprehensive assessment was made 10 years ago by the National Transportation Policy Study Commission, and the last comprehensive study by the Department of Transportation was done in 1977.

My involvement in national policy studies and my other experience has been from a surface perspective: mainly in urban issues, freight issues, and highway issues. Those issues have remarkable parallels to your concerns with congestion and growth, environmental constraints on airport capacity, and "smart airports" (which I hope will be at least as intelligent as our proposed "smart highways"). Both highways and aviation are facing growth in demand with limits on supply, and the extent of future growth is not clear. If you look at population trends according to the Census Bureau, the population of this country may actually hit a peak and stabilize or even begin to decline somewhere near 2020. Some have suggested that, if we meet all of the capacity needs that we

of explaining the nature of transportation, identifying trends, and assessing the implications for the future.

That is the purpose of this TRB workshop, and we appreciate your effort. We also appreciate your full involvement in the development of the transportation policy, and we will look forward to working with you when that policy is announced and its implementation begins.

foresee by 2020, we may build for the ultimate peak load and end up with overcapacity in the long run. On the other hand, we have been saying that for many years on the highway side. There just cannot be so much time in the day that people are willing to drive cars, and there cannot be so many cars in the world because there just are not that number of people. Yet we have not hit saturation yet on the highway side, and I suspect the same to be true on the aviation side.

Moving to data issues, I look from my surface perspective at you in aviation with a real sense of envy. You actually know how many planes you have got in your system. You have some idea of how big your system really is. You actually take note of origin and destination patterns and try to monitor what is going on.

Those of us on the highway side spend a lot of time fighting over how many vehicles there are in the country, and what is a truck. When you ask for information like that from 50 different states, you get 50 different definitions. That's called federalism.

You have great data resources that we are envious of, and I know that you have had a fight to keep these resources in the face of deregulation, budgetary constraints, and paperwork reduction mandates. Your success in maintaining your information resources has been a success story for the other modes to follow.

Your battles are certainly not over, and I am certain you professional "number crunchers" all feel that there are many data elements that need to be improved. There are certainly many opportunities for improvement, and many challenges to keep what information we have.

Secretary Skinner has provided a marvelous opportunity in aviation and in the other modes to improve data resources. We recognize that, while we do not have the time to correct the data problems in order to have a better information base for the policy statement on January 7, at least we can now take a look at what -- if we had the information for national decision-making -- would we do better? What information would we really need to do the job if we had everything we wanted? What can the DOT, other agencies, and private industry do to improve the data base for national decision-making?

As an adjunct to the Secretary's policy effort, the Transportation Research Board has been asked by the Department of Transportation to undertake a two-part special study of data needs and issues. This workshop is one of the lead-off events of the first part, in which meetings are being held throughout the rest of this calendar year for data users and providers to get together and express their needs, problems, and opportunities. The deliberations of this workshop and other meetings will then be synthesized in a special session in the TRB annual meeting on the week of January 7. The results will become the basis for the second phase of activity, in which a blue ribbon panel will develop official recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences to the Secretary of Transportation on how to improve the information base for national decision-making.

This is an ideal opportunity since the decision-makers seem to be honestly interested in better information, and they have provided us with a forum to address problems like: what do we need to know for national decision-making about the quantity, geographic distribution, value, service characteristics, operations, and other aspects of passenger and freight transportation in aviation and other modes? How good are the coverage, quality, availability, and utility of existing data? What are the major problems, omissions, and opportunities for improvement in existing data? What are the institutional mechanisms for monitoring the data we have and for fostering feedback from the user community so that our data bases actually meet the needs?

We want to know about the problems related to privatization, decentralization, and funding of data collection. What are some of the mechanisms for recovering the costs of data collection. Will even analysts have to pay charges?

What about the issues like benefit-cost evaluation of information itself? Under mandates like the Paperwork Reduction Act, we have to lay out what

the respondent burden is, we have to lay out how much data collection and maintenance are going to cost, and then we have to defend what we want to do by identifying the benefits of the data. Quantification of the benefits of good information is not an easy task.

How will our data needs and data acquisition program be affected by new data collection methods, methods of data aggregation, and methods of data management? Will we be able to make better use of the data we get, or capture data in a less burdensome fashion? Can we cope with sudden floods of new data, as happened when we started collecting flight delay information and swamped DOT with a sudden staggering flow of numbers to be transformed into useful information. That experience was somewhat analogous to the days when NASA launched the Earth Resources Technology Satellite (ERTS) which started taking pictures of the world every few minutes. NASA quickly discovered that ERTS created many reels of computer tape every day, every day of the week, every week of the year. Suddenly, we were two years behind in just processing the data coming in. One last general issue is closer to home: training the next generation of users and providers of transportation data. I am not familiar with the situation in the aviation industry, but I know that the experienced professionals in highway and transit agencies are getting older, and we do not have enough new people coming into the field.

There are many technological opportunities for data collection and use, and there are many institutional challenges that we need to face. Often aviation seems to be the leading edge. The aviation community first discovered that, when you deregulate without paying any attention to the data collection programs used to support the regulatory regime, you might lose a lot of data that was used for planning and other purposes.

You had to scramble in 1978 to save the data sets that might have gone into the sunset with the CAB and had purposes beyond regulation. Your efforts were very effective in helping some of those data sets survive.

The data crisis of 1978 was an institutional problem. The current policy study you can think of as an institutional opportunity to get your needs and thoughts on the table and look at the challenges for the future. I hope there will be much discussion of these issues in the upcoming sessions. What you have to say will definitely provide the basis for the deliberations that will become recommendations to the Secretary for specific actions.