

INTRODUCTION

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Future historians might one day point to the 1990's as the time when transportation planning and investment policies in the United States underwent a major transition. The Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 and the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) one year later have become points of departure for this transition. In both cases, the legislation has set in motion efforts to redefine the purpose and structure of transportation planning and investment decision making. Five years ago, transportation officials were not much concerned with the conformance of transportation plans, programs, and projects to air quality plans. Now, this is a major concern in air quality nonattainment areas in the U.S. Two years ago, transportation planners had never heard of congestion or intermodal management systems. Now, transportation decisions are to be based on the products of such systems. Multimodal planning and programming were considered activities best taught in college classrooms, but not practiced in real decision making situations. Now, the terms multimodal and intermodal are used to describe the type of planning and programming that should be undertaken in states and urban regions.

With this backdrop of change that is occurring to transportation planning, the Transportation Research Board, in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, and the Washington State Department of Transportation held a conference in Seattle whose primary purpose was to examine the major characteristics of multimodal planning and programming. The conference was the third major TRB conference of 1992 which had a focus on some aspect of the changing planning and institutional characteristics of transportation decision making in the 1990's. The first conference, "Moving Urban America", was held on May 6-8, 1992 and focussed on the general characteristics of the planning approach that would be developed in response to the Clean Air and ISTEA requirements. The second conference, "Transportation Data Needs", was held on May 27-29, 1992 and emphasized the different types of data and data collection techniques that were now necessary to support transportation planning. The third conference in Seattle was intended to be much more specific in its recommendations, with special efforts made to include new groups in the discussion whose participation was the direct result of the federal

legislation (e.g., environmental groups, port authorities, freight movers, etc.). The conference had four major objectives: (1) review the emerging issues affecting planning and programming decisions, e.g., accommodating environmental criteria and implications of the recent clear air and wetlands requirements, (2) assess current and new approaches to programming and planning including institutional and technical aspects, (3) determine the steps required to address emerging issues, and (4) develop a research agenda.

The conference was organized in such a way as to provide for maximum interaction of participants. Sessions were structured around four major topics: multimodal planning, multimodal programming, finance, and institutional issues. A resource paper commissioned for each topic was presented in plenary session with critiques provided by some of the leading transportation officials in the country. After each plenary session, the conference participants were divided into groups and spent about two hours discussing questions for each topic that had been prepared apriori. Each of the breakout groups had the same questions, with emphasis given to developing specific recommendations and actions steps. The final session of the conference was devoted to the breakout group moderators presenting the consensus findings from the group discussions. In this way, it was hoped that every conference participant would have the opportunity to express his or her opinions and recommendations on topics of interest.

The conference attracted participants from transportation agencies, consultants, academic institutions, and private transportation firms. This cross section of transportation interests represents the makeup of transportation planning and programming as we will know it in the next decade. As such, the results of this conference should be considered as a good indicator of the needs and perceptions of the transportation profession as it heads toward the 21st century.

A special note of thanks is given to the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, and the Washington State Department of Transportation. In particular, the conference steering committee would like to thank Duane Berentson of the Washington State Department of Transportation and his staff for supporting the conference. This support was instrumental in making the conference the success that it was.