

public in the planning document; i.e., beyond 2020 and in the NEPA document for environmental clearance.

If this obstacle is not removed in the Federal process, the MIS may be the only planning document where this fact can be recorded. This procedure does not provide clearance for the purchase of right-of-way or ancillary elements to be designed in the initial construction to conform with the ultimate footprint proposed for the facility. This is an issue that needs to be addressed if decision-makers are to be considered candid and honest by the stakeholders and the public.

Finally, and in closing, thank you for allowing me to present my thoughts to you about the MIS procedure. I hope my comments have given you some insight into some problems that will be with us in the years between now and 2020 and beyond, as we all try to exercise 20/20 vision in our transportation planning process.

## **Involving Elected Officials in the Decision-making**

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How do we inform and involve decision-makers? We have to first come to terms with what we mean by decision-makers. My assumption was that we were talking primarily about elected officials and that we were going to somehow involve them in the public participation process. The public involvement process must take place early and often.

Does the process take away decision-making flexibility? Yes and no. If you are from the old school of elected officials, the philosophy is, "Just tell me how to get what I want done." That takes away flexibility. If you have a different approach to the decision-making process and recognize the new realities of consensus decision-making, it probably gives you more flexibility.

Because I am not a member of an agency, the concept of interagency collaboration is a difficult one. I see a lot of collaboration. Is it working? We do not know, because no MIS has come to completion.

Is it improving our decision-making process? I would say most definitely, and that may represent some of the bias that I have about the participation process.

Have citizens influenced the outcome? I have served on

one MIS, and it definitely has been influenced by citizens. Citizens actually contribute to the decisions we make, not the ultimate decisions necessarily, but decision-making as part of work groups.

## **Getting things done**

Why can't we get things done? We did not get things done before major investment studies were put in place. To blame MIS for the failure to get things done is inappropriate. Our failure to get things done has a lot more to do with a period of extreme public skepticism about everything, fiscal responsibility, and elected officials' responsibility. As an elected official living under an imposed two-term limit, I am out of office in 1998.

The MIS was put in place because it is the only way we can address public skepticism and convince the public that spending money for new facilities is worthwhile.

## **Conflict of authority**

The fundamental paradigm we all struggle to address is the problem of the conflict between Federal and State authority over transportation and the traditional authority that Federal and State officials have had over transportation money and funding, as well as the dysfunction that exists between them and local government officials who have control over land use. The MIS process, we hope, provides a forum to address those issues.

There is the traditional notion of the role of State and local authority over these issues, state control over transportation, State governments being the appropriate depository of transportation authority, and local governments being the appropriate depository of control of land use. Frankly, it's not really a new issue.

## **The role of regionalism**

The new tool in the twentieth century may be the notion of regionalism and the development of regional government, even though that is a very new notion and one that has not really gained tremendous support among the populace.

There is another issue coming to the fore. It grows out of the problems we are having with fiscal scarcity. We have grown used to the era where transportation developed as a public entitlement. Perhaps we are now moving toward thinking of transportation as a private utility. Especially as resources get scarcer and scarcer and we start moving towards private toll roads, are we

in fact introducing a new model that is going to raise all sorts of other issues in terms of access and equity?

With regard to public skepticism, are we moving from an era of representative democracy to one of public democracy? In popular democracy, elected officials are subject to term limits, and public spending is subject to referendum. The public demands access to the table and the decision-making process. If it is not willing to pay, whether through taxes or tolls or some other mechanism, we're not going to make any decisions.

### Face-to-face with reality

Lots of realities confront the MIS model. That is what makes it hard, especially because this model is only two years old and not many people have done it or taken it to the final step. But elected officials with one term want the road that was planned before they even got into office completed before they have to go back and face the electorate. There is the confrontation between the planner-driven model and the political and economic development realities. We forget that this is a free-market economy, at least theoretically. It's a capitalist society. The developer comes into the community or the region and puts a whole lot of money on the table and says, "I want to develop this land now. Build me the transportation I need." The developers are not a part of the planning process necessarily, but they, too, are decision-makers. It's their capital, and development is what we want. Sometimes they call the shots on when it happens and how it happens. That confounds the whole planning process.

What should we try to achieve in terms of MIS? The MIS is an attempt to bring popular democracy into the decision-making process—an attempt to reach out to the public and involve them in the process. Many elected officials will resist it, but the fact of the matter is elected officials do not want to make decisions unless the public is involved in the process and supports the results. Frankly, it's too risky to do otherwise.

The other part of the equation is that if we expect the public to pay for it, we have to involve it in the process. We have to bring citizens to the table and make them feel they are stakeholders. But elected officials don't want you to go out into their communities and start messing around with public participation processes if they don't know

about it and are not involved in the process. The public participation process cannot work unless it includes the elected officials who know what is going on in their home districts and who will ultimately make the decisions.

The MIS can serve a very significant function as an educational tool. It provides a significant opportunity to educate public officials and the public about the problems we face in transportation and in the decision-making we have to do. The public, in my estimation, does not understand that the future of transit is going to demand an economic sustainability. You have got to get out there and engage the public in the debate if you want transit. MIS is the opportunity to bring those people to the table, involve them in the process, make them stakeholders, and work with them.

MIS as a process will bridge the gap between local and State officials in terms of control of land use and transportation and the dichotomy that exists. It also will connect both of those to environmental, socioeconomic, financial, equity, and access issues.

### Case in point: Woodrow Wilson Bridge Corridor Study

Our Woodrow Wilson Bridge Corridor Study is an FHWA project. It is a failed facility, and it is falling apart. In 1989/90, an FHWA proposal was rejected by the public. Just about that time, the new MIS process was beginning. We made a decision to use the MIS approach in preliminary stages. The creation of a steering committee that included FHWA officials, the National Park Service, representatives from local government, the City of Alexandria, Fairfax County in Virginia, and Prince Georges County in Maryland was critical. The Committee also included representatives from both Maryland and Virginia State Highway Administrations, as well as the District of Columbia, and the Mayor's Office and the City Council for the District of Columbia.

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The approach was to have the steering committee bring all decision-makers to the table and involve them in the process and, at the same time, start with a bottom-up approach by public outreach. There were town meetings and public outreach efforts. The public was actually involved in the process of deciding what issues and concerns would be addressed by the work groups. Then

they selected work groups and technical staff to start helping to make decisions and move through the decision-making process. These work groups include, for example, an interchange task force. There are a number of significant interchanges on either side of this bridge. Whatever we do with the facility we put in place, it will have tremendous impact on the interchanges. We have members of the public who are engineers working on these task forces, so when State engineers come in with plans for the interchanges, we have citizens who are also professional engineers and have the ability to say, "No, there is another alternative you have not looked at." The public is influencing the decision-making process and is part of the process for making recommendations.

The steering committee takes back the information to the local governments and to the other State officials in the form of progress reports. We have taken advantage of our cable TV access to make sure the public is getting informed about what is being done.

How well has this worked? We are moving towards a final alternative but have not made a decision. We are confident about the direction we have gone, because we have such a tremendous level of citizen participation and involvement of all elected officials as well as the other stakeholders along the way.