

COMMENTS ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

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Each year, case histories of various types of inter-governmental cooperation are presented at various conferences or meetings; yet, the practical occurrence of such arrangements are not as wide spread as might be advantageous to our society. Governmental entities or agencies may often be overwhelmed by the constraints which make cooperative efforts difficult to achieve. Some of the hazards encountered are: ego or authority domination, political antagonisms, legal or statutory, inadequate budgeting, and poor planning or management. When constraints to desirable cooperative programs are properly identified, successful solutions can be devised.

Most of the TRB, AASHTO and WASHTO Conferences and Maintenance Committee Meetings that I have attended during the past twelve years have contained papers or discussions presenting ideas on how to perform some maintenance function or activity by some alternate means or procedure to the normally accepted practice. In some cases, these discussions or papers offered case histories of unique multiple jurisdictional utilization of resources in a cooperative venture to achieve common objectives. Frequently I, along with many of you, have attempted to apply some of these presented ideas to our own work problem areas. All too often we have not been as successful as we would have liked to have been. We have discovered constraints in our own environment either not encountered or not recognized in the originator's presentation.

You have heard John Kirtland present some very excellent cases on accomplishing goals through cooperation of various levels of government and through participation of people who have different employers and different objectives. As we say and hear these comments on how people achieve and make their efforts spread over a large base, we wonder why it is not more universal. If it is as simple as has been described by the various papers and previous comments, why do we not all do it? What does it take to get such movements off dead center and going? I think we are often overwhelmed by the many constraints which govern each of us in

our own particular political areas.

Some constraints we can overcome by our own efforts, others will take legislative action. One of the major constraints we encounter is ego, pride of authorship or individual authority. Whose's the boss? Who is going to run the show? Many progressive programs have been killed or extremely maimed at birth due to these ego situations. We have all known those individuals who, if they didn't think of it, it wasn't worth a damn. How many times in reviewing a proposal by someone else, we finally conclude, "the guy had a good idea for a start, but I am going to revise his whole program to make it work for me". I can recall the extreme efforts we made to inaugurate a highway maintenance management system in Arizona. Half of the district engineers immediately wanted to revise the entire system to fit their individual ideas for their districts. This, of course, would lose all uniformity in a state program. I also recall some experiences in the early committee planning work for transportation systems in the Salt River Valley of Arizona, when I, as a county engineer, participated with the various cities and towns in the valley along with the state and federal people. There was a dominant feeling by the staff from one of the participating agencies who felt if they weren't running the show as the most important entity involved, the show would not go on. Eventually these problems were surmounted by great effort of various individuals and of good thinking people until objectives were reached.

Frequently, we run into political constraints where either political sympathies or political antagonisms prevent full cooperation or participation in desirable programs. Sometimes these kinds of constraints clear themselves up at the next election. Frequently we live with them and must endeavor to make our progress in spite of these kinds of burdens.

Perhaps the greatest constraints are the legal constraints that are imposed on each of us who work in government. I once had a lawyer explain to me exactly the definition of legal constraint. I wanted to accomplish some useful purpose and he advised me that this could not happen under the existing legal constraint. I responded something about being prevented from running this particular operation like a business and solving my problems efficiently and economically. The lawyer replied, "Lanford, you do not run government like a private

business. In business or in your private life, you may do anything, you may do what you please without external controls, unless our legislative bodies have enacted a law making it illegal. However, when you work for government, it is the reciprocal of such a situation. In government you are not authorized to do anything unless it is specifically enabled or required by the statutes. In order for you to proceed as a government employee with any endeavor, it must be directed or enabled by the State Legislature, the Congress, the Courts or other lawful government. Thus, you can see there are many areas in which we might easily achieve the goals desired except that no law has been passed which allows us to do so.

Endeavors of multi-jurisdictional cooperation must also be adequately planned in order to circumvent all possible constraints. The programs must be well thought out and organized in advance as to exactly what is to be achieved, who is to manage or direct, who is to participate, and how it is going to be paid for, and when it is going to be accomplished. Back in my county engineering days, I could always count on receiving a phone call about the middle of August from a school superintendent saying to me, "Lanford, we are going to open a new school on September 1st. It is out in the middle of the section, and there aren't any roads leading into it. How are we going to get our school buses to the school. We are opening in two weeks". This event seemed to occur every year at mid August regardless of the notice I gave to the various educational institutions and offices that any road planning had to be done at least one year in advance. As you can well appreciate, these crises situations are solved by stopping ongoing work, by rushing in and losing all of the efficiencies gained by organization and planning. We always managed to get the school buses to the schools; but, frequently over very primitive facilities. Then there was always the hassle of getting the proper access designed and constructed simply because someone forgot to coordinate planning.

During the last decade or perhaps longer, most states, many counties and cities, have adopted maintenance management techniques and systems. I have found since we implemented and perfected our state highway maintenance management system in Arizona, the areas of cooperation and participation with other agencies or political subdivisions has been much enhanced. We are now more capable of predicting and performing our share in an intelligent manner. A few years ago, the State Park Department came to the Department (ADOT) and said they had many roads, parking lots, and driveways extending from a few hundred feet to eight or nine miles in length that are part of the state parks system. However, their organization being park oriented, did not have road equipment, maintenance equipment or the knowledge and skill to perform the work activities necessary to maintain and preserve their street and road system. They were proposing that the Department of Transportation take these facilities over. This is where we bumped into our first legal constraint. Maintenance funds for the Department of Transportation are generated out of the fuel revenues and other such related taxes and are specified to use only on the state highway system. The requested service could not be considered by law, unless the State Board of Transportation would declare these park systems into the state highway system. This would reduce authority of the park services on those facilities. The parks people didn't want to have

their authority within the state parks watered down by that sort of arrangement. A study of the state parks proposal was made. Using maintenance management techniques, the total resource needed and a schedule to accomplish the needed activities was defined. This was presented to the Legislature who made a budgetary agreement. They budgeted funds for the State Parks Department to be transferred to the Department of Transportation under an inter-governmental agreement which was initiated and executed for the Department of Transportation Maintenance. Froces to maintain these parks facilities within the various districts. This has worked very well. Our recording system has a suffix to designate the parks identified work activities. It is all computerized. It comes out in a report and monies are transferred from the State Parks Department to the Department of Transportation Maintenance Fund for accomplishing these activities. In this matter, we are also able to provide the appropriate amount of manpower and equipment resources without robbing the highway of their activity needs.

Inter-agency or inter-governmental cooperation can frequently be the answer to the most efficient and economical use of available resources to achieve desired objectives. However, there is more to it than just agreeing to do so. We must consider all of the constraints that are involved. Planning cooperative programs must be thorough. All financial agreements should be budgeted and programed in advance. The advantages of the proposed activities should be well defined so that political oppositions can be minimized. Managerial authorities must be established, but most important of all, the legal authority to do what is intended needs to be thoroughly ascertained in advance; and, if necessary, legislative action should be recommended to make the proposed activities legally responsible.

We must always keep in mind, the citizens we serve frequently are the same people regardless of which institution or political subdivision we may be representing. The motorist as he drives down the highway does not readily identify or react to a political boundary or a change in jurisdiction. The average citizen normally does not care from whence the money is derived or who provides a service as long as the benefits are there. With the high inflation rate we all have been suffering these past few years and with the continued deflating of our ability to achieve normal results; it behooves each and everyone of us to make every effort to make our community's meager resources extend further to accomplish necessary services. The very idea of joint community use of resources available may extend each of our goals to areas of fuller service with more economical advantages than we can by each going their separate way.