

Introduction

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The old adage says that history repeats itself. To that extent, the current discussion can be viewed simply as a repeat or a continuation of the conference that took place in Albuquerque in 1973 in preparation for the 1980 census. An evaluation of the 1980 census in preparation for the effort in 1990 certainly has both merit and value. This conference, however, has built on and, as a result, goes well beyond the 1973 effort. As users of census data, the transportation community has become more knowledgeable, more experienced, and more demanding. It also has become more realistic in understanding the importance of data as well as the limitations and costs. The producer of census data, the Census Bureau, on the other hand, has become more aware of and sensitive to the needs, more understanding of the concerns and problems, and even more responsive to the differences within the transportation field.

The session on Plans for the 1990 Census clearly illustrates how much progress has been made since 1973; it brings together in one forum three of the Census Bureau's senior, key decision makers and experts to inform transportation planners of the plans for 1990, in other words, to detail where the bureau is today, where it expects to go, how it expects to accomplish its objectives, what obstacles stand in the way, and how all of these matters will affect the transportation community. Certainly, this is information that is basic to the understanding and so necessary to the dialogue between transportation planners and the bureau in determining how the 1990 census can best serve transportation needs through the end of the 20th century.

The first paper, prepared by William P. Butz, Associate Director for Demographic Fields, presents an overview of the planning process for 1990 and contrasts the current approach with that leading to the 1980 census. As such, it highlights the issues and alternatives being considered by those at the bureau faced with planning and leading the 1990 endeavor. It carefully sets forth and describes the five areas in which the bureau fully expects to make improvements over the 1980 performance, namely, collection, automation, outreach and publicity, coverage improvement and measurement, and content. This understanding of the bureau's thinking is a vital backdrop to an intelligent discussion of transportation needs.

The second offering, by Peter A. Bounpane, Assistant Director for Demographic Censuses, focuses specifically on the issues concerning transportation data. Following some introductory detail on the planning process, Bounpane devotes much of his discussion to issues unique to transportation items in the census, including questionnaire content, coding, and tabulation. The hard questions he raises will certainly result in intensive discussion by transportation planners and form the basis of future dialogue with the Census Bureau.

The final paper, by Robert W. Marx, Chief of the Geographic Division, provides the transportation expert with a clear description of the bureau's proposed methodology for dealing with location, in other words, how the bureau plans to assign each housing unit and work location to the correct geographic location, be it street, tract, county, or political entity. A close reading of Marx' paper is of particular importance to the transportation community, given

their need to deal with truly small-area data. His paper describes clearly and in detail the bureau's bold new approach to provide the required support materials.

It is important to note that, taken together, these papers provide the background so necessary to a mutual and satisfactory interface between transportation planners and the Census Bureau, and one that can only lead to a successful conclusion, given the positive and constructive nature of these papers.