

## "FEDERAL POLICY ON URBAN HIGHWAY PLANNING"

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Let me say at the outset that as far as urban highway planning is concerned, the federal policy is a long-standing one of cooperating with other units of government and coordinating the highway plan with the total urban plan. A policy by itself doesn't answer such questions as who does what or who furnishes the money and how much. However, these are things that can usually be worked out providing all parties are sincere in their effort and are aware of their own and the other fellow's part in the picture.

The fact that there are at least three levels and usually several units of government involved is what brings about the biggest problem—the mechanics of getting them together. Actually, it is quite simple once every one gets squared around as to the common problem, and the nature and extent of the other fellow's interest in it.

It goes without saying that cities and towns are quite sensitive to what the state may do with respect to improving roads and streets in their area;—whether it involves widening, reconstruction, by-passes, or new freeways. These things are of vital concern to them. For whenever improvements are made on state highways, changes take place. There are changes in traffic patterns,—not only on the state highway itself, but also on adjacent roads and streets. And there are changes in land use. These frequently are of such magnitude that the whole complexion of urban development may be affected, expensive adjustments to existing streets may be called for, and there may be significant impact upon both present and future taxables, expansion, redevelopment, and the like.

It is small wonder, therefore, that cities are concerned about the course of future development in their areas. If a projected major route, for example, goes through the center of town, that's one thing; if it goes through the edge, that's another; and if it by-passes, that's still another. But wherever it finally goes, it will have an impact on the area, and one which all of us, in carrying out our planning responsibilities, must be assured will best serve the needs of traffic and community development.

Let us now examine this problem of urban highway planning from the standpoint of federal policy. The principal ground rules involved have already been mentioned,—(1) the urban highway planning effort should be a *cooperative area-wide undertaking* and (2) the highway phase should be *coordinated* with the total urban planning effort.

The first ground rule recognizes the fact that urban highway planning cannot successfully be handled unilaterally by any one authority or level of government. Cooperation between all levels of government and area authorities concerned with highway and transportation matters is essential.

The second ground rule concerns the fact that urban highway planning cannot be successfully prosecuted as a separate entity. It must be coordinated and integrated with other urban planning considerations. Planning and locating urban highways should be based on more than just traffic needs,—they should take into account such things as future community designs as well as avoiding unnecessary splitting up of existing neighborhood units; they should recognize the importance that urban communities place upon park lands, historical landmarks,

esthetics, tradition and prestige; and they should be concerned with such matters as land values, future development patterns, drainage areas, and water supply.

There is nothing unusual about these items. They are part and parcel of what highway engineers have been running into in planning highways in urban areas. Since they pertain to matters that are prime considerations in the development of the total urban plans we can safely assume that the highway engineer is not entirely in the dark as to what constitutes the objectives of the urban planning profession. The basic problem, then, is not that of calling the highway engineer's attention to any deep and mysterious void in his comprehension of what's going on in the urban planning profession. Rather, it is a matter of bringing about the desirable and necessary cooperation and coordination contemplated under the two basic ground rules.

I'm sure we'll all admit these are excellent ground rules. The only hitch is, who does all this cooperating and coordinating? Who takes the lead? Who puts up the money?

These are good questions. In order to get some of the answers, it would be well to review what's been happening over the past few years in the area of urban highway planning. A little historical background is helpful to an understanding of the federal policy and of developments now taking place on the national scene with respect to urban highway planning. More importantly, perhaps, it shows up urban highway planning as something that has been fostered and encouraged for years by highway people, and not as something that is brand new.

Urban highway planning is not new. It has been with us ever since it was included in the continuing cooperative highway planning activities of the states and the Bureau of Public Roads,—over 25 years ago.

From these early highway planning surveys came the data used in the Bureau's 1941 report to Congress, entitled, "Toll Roads and Free Roads." That report showed that the focal points of the nation's transportation network was in the cities. It also contained specific suggestions on this matter of coordinating highway development with total urban development.

Then, in 1944, another report, "Interregional Highways," was presented to Congress. That report was prepared by the National Interregional Highway Committee made up of the most eminent planners of that time. The staff work was done by the Bureau. Here again, the matter of coordination between highway planning and total urban planning was emphasized. It is significant that this report lays down principles of highway location and design in relation to total urban development needs that are as sound today as they were then.

It was in 1944, too, that Federal-aid Highway legislation made its first apportionment of funds for urban work. This brought to most states their first experience with the full dimensions of the urban problem. The need to improve planning techniques and to develop more effective state-local cooperation soon became apparent.

Recognizing this, a number of leading city officials and other authorities on city planning got together to form an organization called the National Committee on Urban Transportation. The Bureau of Public Roads participated to a substantial degree in financing the work of this group. The objective of the Committee was to prepare a general guide or blue-print as to how a continuing fact-finding and planning program could be set up in easy stages in cities, large and small.

They accomplished this monumental objective. Manuals of procedure for doing this are now available. Thousands of copies have been sold and are in widespread use. The procedures are so designed that they can be installed economically by the cities themselves to cover various operations,—engineering, fiscal, legal, and administrative. Many of the studies are eligible for federal-aid highway fund participation if submitted by the state as part of their highway planning survey program. These will produce the facts required for evaluating local transportation needs which will, in turn, facilitate local cooperation and joint planning efforts with other local, state and federal agencies.

Another important force in bringing about a better state-local relationship in matters of coordinating highway planning with urban planning is the joint effort of the American Association of State Highway Officials and the American Municipal Association. These two organizations, through their Joint Committee on Highways which has a Public Roads' representative as Secretary, have gotten their key people together in frequent meetings. This has been most helpful in bringing about a better understanding of ways and means to accomplish their mutual objectives. This committee, for example, has sponsored a number of meetings where state and local officials have gotten together to consider cooperative approaches to the urban transportation problem; they were one of the sponsors of the Sagamore Conference; and they are proposing to initiate a series of local programs to supplement the recent series of Urban Planning Seminars which were organized by the AASHO.

Perhaps the most notable advance in bringing about a better mutual understanding between state and local groups on matters of urban transportation was the Sagamore Conference, mentioned previously. At this conference held in 1958 at Sagamore Center, Syracuse University, there was attendance by 55 carefully selected top highway officials, mayors, city managers, city planners, business men, economists, and other specialists. This group prepared a statement of what constitutes the individual and mutual responsibilities of state and local officials in producing a sound and acceptable plan for transportation that is effectively geared to both future community and highway user needs. Briefly, this statement pointed up the essentiality of cooperation between all units of government; it recognized the benefits of the federal-state relationship in the highway program; and it emphasized the position of state highway departments as the king pin in highway matters.

One of the many results of the Sagamore Conference was the previously mentioned series of urban highway planning seminars held by the AASHO. The purpose of these seminars was to acquaint top highway people with the many phases of urban planning and how they bear upon transportation. The last two of these seminars were held last month,—one at the University of Illinois and one at the University of North Carolina. Public Roads and State highway officials attended these seminars. At these meetings, certain things became clear. For example, although State highway departments don't have all the money they need for urban highway planning, they are better off than the city planners. There is a difference in what is being done in large cities and small cities in the area of urban planning. Many of the larger cities have urban planning staffs with which the highway planners can cooperate. The problems in these large cities are complex and they spill over into adjoining communities. Getting these community representatives together in the first instance to consider matters of joint interest is often a major time consuming task in itself. In most of the smaller cities there is no planning agency; it is up to the highway engineer to do most of the job. Even so, he should cooperate with the available local officials to the maximum degree. Usually there is someone, somewhere, who has some pretty well formed ideas on what is locally considered as the community plan and who acts as spokesman on such matters. Such persons should be brought into the picture. When they are, the highway planners job is usually made much easier.

Additionally, whereas urban planners are developing certain standards and guide lines for urban planning, these do not appear to be generally as well developed as those being used in highway planning by highway engineers. The urban planner, too, differs from the highway planner in that he has to depend on others to carry out his designs. If these other agencies, such as zoning authorities, do not measure up to their responsibility, much of the urban planner's objectives will not be realized. In summary, it might be stated that the seminars emphasized the importance of State highway officials in taking the initiative in bringing about effective cooperation with local officials in a patient, sympathetic, and persevering manner.

Patience, understanding, and perseverance,—these are matters that tax the mettle of the State highway department. It can be granted that highway planners have developed powerful tools for their job such as O-D Studies and traffic assignment procedures. These tools are useful to urban and regional planners as well. Nevertheless, if we highway people are to retain our position, we must keep on top of the job. We must do more than think just in highway terms. We must understand the language of the urban planner, and appreciate what his problems are, where he fits, and how he thinks.

In terms of positive actions taken thus far by the states, a recent survey reveals that in 28 states, the highway departments have formally designated individuals or units to handle cooperative dealings with local urban units; in addition, 36 highway departments have joined with local authorities in developing plans for urban highway systems. In 12 other states, there has been cooperation and design of certain major routes. Within the Bureau of Public Roads, also, there has been established an Urban Highway Division to furnish technical aid and cooperation.

What we have discussed so far shows that the urban problem is not new to highway engineers. Developments over the past 25 years provide substantial evidence that highway agencies recognize their job and are keeping on top of it. During this period, the Federal-aid Highway program has become the largest program of Federal-aid for capital improvement in urban areas. Thus, it often constitutes the most crucial single factor in community development. The impact upon the community of highways constructed under this program is direct, widespread, and often of massive proportions.

We have seen that Federal and State highway officials have recognized this problem. We have reviewed the actions they have taken to encourage planning which meets both the objectives of sound community development and the purposes of the Federal-aid highway program.

As of today, there are two planning programs at the Federal level which are directly concerned with urban matters. Highway people are involved in both of these. It may be well to review what is developing in this regard inasmuch as there is likelihood we will be hearing more and more about these in coming months insofar as urban planning is concerned.

You are quite familiar with one of these. It is the highway planning survey program. This program has been made available under Federal Highway legislation since 1934. It sets aside an amount for planning and research equal to 1½% of the total program funds. These funds have facilitated planning aimed at assuring a highway system compatible with sound community development.

The HHFA, the Housing and Home Finance Agency, also administers various programs that have a continuing and major impact on the character and direction of urban development. These involve urban renewal, public housing, advances and loans for community facilities, and the like. Of necessity, the HHFA is concerned with future land use, local finances, and other community programs such as water, sewer, and transportation.

Because of this, the HHFA provides matching grants for comprehensive planning of metropolitan areas in their entirety and of smaller cities and towns. This broad interest is helping localities to look at their over-all development problems and possibilities. It assists them to do the necessary planning and programming for future developments.

Obviously, the two planning programs,—the HPS 1½% program and the HHFA program,—have common goals. To assist in meeting these goals, the two Federal agencies involved are setting up a trial arrangement for joint financing of urban planning. The objective is not merely concerned with planning matters. In fact, the larger, longer term, objective is to develop effective cooperation and coordination both among the local governments within a metropolitan area, and between those governments and the State and Federal agencies involved. In the beginning, this joint activity may be limited to metropolitan areas where the need

is greatest and the prospects for significant accomplishment are most promising.

To get this joint effort underway, a Joint Steering Committee will be appointed at the Washington level. It will be the job of this Joint Steering Committee to supervise and evaluate this trial program for coordinating the use of HHFA urban planning grants and 1½% highway planning funds.

In addition to the Joint Steering Committee, there will also be a Regional Joint Committee at the field level, made up of representatives of the regional offices of HHFA and the Bureau of Public Roads. It will be the function of this Regional Joint Committee to encourage and assist in the joint use of highway and urban planning funds in those metropolitan areas prepared to carry on such comprehensive undertakings. Either state or local agencies may initiate a proposal for a jointly financed planning project. However, the project must be jointly sponsored by (1) a State High Department, and (2) a State, metropolitan, or regional planning agency eligible for urban planning grants.

It is emphasized that this will simply be a demonstration operation at this time in order to develop experience in practical planning operations. It will not be a substitute for present procedures in regular program operations.

Highway people can be justly proud of what they have been and are accomplishing in urban highway planning. At the Federal level, the policy will continue to be that of promoting cooperation among and between levels of government on area wide planning and coordination of the highway plan with the overall urban plan. Under these ground rules, an impressive record is being racked up. To sustain this record, there must be continued efforts to advance the techniques of highway planning. Highway agencies must also develop full competence in the entire range of urban planning. This includes the establishment of firm and effective relations with local urban units. It also includes getting action programs underway at the level where it will do the most good,—not at the Federal level,—not at the State level,—but at the local level and by the local people themselves.

The need for leadership in bringing these things about is clear. As of now the State highway departments are, nationwide, accepted as the leaders in this matter. Being leaders they must exercise leadership. Otherwise someone else will inevitably take over and do the job for them.