

Coordination of the Urban Renewal and Highway Improvement Programs

D. GRANT MICKLE

Deputy Federal Highway Administrator, Bureau of Public
Roads, U. S. Department of Commerce
Washington, D. C.

More and more of our rapidly growing population will live in urban areas, particularly in metropolitan areas. Future changes in the physical characteristics of these urban complexes will profoundly influence the health, happiness and prosperity of all our people and the strength of the nation. The federal government assists various types of development which contribute significantly to the physical character of the urban environment. It has a responsibility to see that these aids are used efficiently and economically and is vitally interested in encouraging and assisting the sound growth and redevelopment of our cities and their surrounding urban areas.

SOURCES OF FEDERAL AID

The federal-aid highway program, administered by the Bureau of Public Roads, is the largest program of federal aid for capital improvement in urban areas. The impact upon the community of the highways constructed under this program is direct, widespread, and often of major proportions.

The Housing and Home Finance Agency also administers various programs which have a continuing major impact on the character and direction of urban development. Urban renewal projects involving the acquiring and clearing of blighted areas and the rehabilitation of structures in such areas are under way in many cities. Community renewal programs for which grants are available to pay up to two-thirds of the cost will permit communities to approach their problems of blight on a citywide, rather than on a piecemeal basis. The FHA system of mortgage insurance, the public housing program, and advances and loans for conserving open-space land and for the planning and construction of community facilities, including mass transportation facilities, all directly influence the shape and quality of urban development.

Funds for planning are available under the programs administered by both agencies. Most of you are probably familiar with the so-called 1½ per cent funds. Federal highway legislation since 1934 has provided that 1½ per cent of the funds apportioned to the states may be used for planning and research purposes. It is, and has been, the policy of the Bureau of Public Roads to encourage the state highway departments to utilize these funds to carry on adequate, continuing planning programs, including planning studies for urban areas.

The Housing and Home Finance Agency provides matching grants for comprehensive planning of metropolitan areas in their entirety and of smaller cities and towns. Funds for this purpose were first authorized by Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954 and the program is commonly termed the "701 program." The Housing Act of 1961 explicitly extended the definition of the elements of comprehensive planning to include "transportation facilities."

ESTABLISHMENT OF COORDINATED PLANNING

The need for cooperation between the Bureau of Public Roads and the Housing and Home Finance Agency in administering their respective programs is evident, and even before the passage of the 1961 amendments to the Housing Act procedures for promoting the joint planning of highways and other elements of urban development had been agreed upon.

In November 1960, general announcement was made of an agreement between the Department of Commerce and the Housing and Home Finance Agency to use highway and urban planning funds jointly in an urban area where local and state bodies are prepared to establish coordinated planning. A joint policy and procedural statement was issued pledging both agencies to stimulate a continuing process of planning and development coordination which will:

1. Give consideration to all forces, public and private, shaping the physical development of the total community.
2. Cover land uses and controls as well as plans for physical development and combine all elements of urban development and redevelopment into a clear-cut, comprehensive plan of what the citizens want their community to become.
3. Cover the entire urban area within which the forces of development are interrelated.
4. Involve in the planning process the political jurisdictions and agencies which make decisions affecting development of the metropolitan area.

5. Link the process of planning to action programs.

The objective, then, is not merely a planning process but the development of effective cooperation and coordination both among the local governments within a metropolitan area and between these governments and the state and federal agencies involved in area development activities.

A Joint Steering Committee was established and assigned the responsibility of developing procedures for coordinating the use of 1½ per cent highway planning funds and HHFA urban planning grants and putting those procedures into effect. Also regional joint committees were set up to:

1. Explore the interest and the capacity of agencies in any metropolitan area to carry on comprehensive planning for the entire area;
2. Encourage the joint financing procedure;
3. Advise and assist state and local planning agencies and state highway departments in the development of proposals for jointly financed planning projects;
4. Review and make recommendations with respect to applications for such assistance; and
5. Provide advice and assistance during the operation of an approved planning project.

Any state or local agency may initiate a proposal for a jointly financed planning project, but such a project must be jointly sponsored by a state, metropolitan, or regional planning agency eligible for urban planning grants, and a state highway department. The regional joint committees will provide advice and assistance to any agency wishing to initiate such a project and will work with the sponsoring agencies to develop an approvable project. Cost-sharing arrangements will be developed by agreement among the sponsoring agencies on the basis of the planning project prospectus, subject to the approval of the HHFA and the Bureau of Public Roads. Procedures are now being developed which will reduce to a minimum the bookkeeping required for proper accounting of expenditures from the separate funds.

Mechanics have also been established to carry the coordination of programs administered by the Housing and Home Finance Agency, and its constituent agencies, and the Bureau of Public Roads down to project level. For example, the Public Housing Administration advises our regional offices of their tentative approval of proposed sites selected by local authorities. Upon receipt of this information our field offices note the locations on urban maps and in case of apparent conflicts take appropriate steps to resolve them. It is the policy of the Community Facilities

Administration to clear all highway projects with the Bureau of Public Roads to ascertain their relation to the federal-aid highway system and any planned improvements. The manual of the Urban Renewal Administration provides that "the selection of the urban renewal project area must be checked with plans for State or Federally aided highways to assure that conflicts do not develop in (1) the establishment of project boundaries or (2) the planning and execution of the project." In turn, the Bureau of Public Roads keeps the constituent agencies of the Housing and Home Finance Agency informed of our programs.

COORDINATED ACTION IN TENNESSEE

I do not intend to imply that we are always fully successful in avoiding conflicts. Both agencies are conscientiously attempting to hold them to a minimum and to resolve those that do occur expeditiously. We do have many examples of complete cooperative planning at the project level. Robert E. Barkley, who was urban renewal coordinator in Chattanooga, Tennessee, recently reported on the integration of improvement programs in that city. In his words: "A freeway and a large amount of land leveling are major elements of the 403-acre West Side Urban Renewal Project in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The project offers an excellent example of economies achieved through coordination of public works programs. Chattanooga has interrelated slum clearance with downtown freeway construction, utilities expansion, and community facilities fringed by light industry. The total cost of this work will be considerably less than that estimated for these programs if they had been undertaken separately. The savings are due solely to careful project planning and imaginative engineering studies."

The freeway transverses the entire length of the urban renewal project and has been located so as to form a buffer between the central business district and the residential areas projected in the urban renewal plan. It provides interchanges with streets serving the downtown section and the urban renewal area and has enhanced the marketability of land in the area. At the same time street revisions included in the urban renewal plan will improve the accessibility of the freeway.

The freeway requires approximately 63 acres within the urban renewal project. Part of the right-of-way had been acquired before the urban renewal project was started. The remainder of the right-of-way was acquired under an agreement between the state highway department and the Chattanooga Housing Authority whereby all severed parcels were acquired in their entirety. This eliminated double negotiations and claims for severance damages, and the total cost of each parcel was

prorated between the two agencies on the basis of the relative land area in each project.

The construction of the entire Chattanooga freeway system will require more than 5 million cubic yards of borrow. Before the urban renewal project was started the Tennessee Highway Department planned to dredge material from the Tennessee River, stockpile the material to drain and consolidate it, and then haul it to the fill sections. Need for regrading parts of the renewal area in order to increase the amount of buildable land led to consideration of the hills in the renewal project as an alternative source of borrow. The principal public works expenditures for the renewal project are estimated at approximately \$4,962,000. By coordinating the urban renewal and highway programs, additional grading estimated to cost approximately \$2,250,000 will be provided at no cost to the Chattanooga Housing Authority.

COORDINATED ACTIONS IN CONNECTICUT AND IN VIRGINIA

Cooperative planning by the city of New Haven and the Connecticut State Highway Department led to the coordinated programing and development of three urban redevelopment and freeway projects. The Oak Street Redevelopment Project is now nearing completion as a modern and attractive commercial and high-rise apartment area. Through the midst of the area is a modern freeway which adds to both the appearance as well as the transportation access of the reclaimed area. By cooperative planning a coordinated project has been achieved to the mutual advantage of both the renewal project and the freeway. The freeway, only three blocks from the retail heart of the city, was designed to service downtown New Haven while providing free movement for through traffic. In undertaking the redevelopment project simultaneously with the highway construction, New Haven was able to capitalize on the benefits of the highway through a controlled land-use plan on either side of it.

The Wooster Square Redevelopment and Renewal Project in New Haven is another project also being coordinated with a proposed freeway which will pass through the area, serving as a barrier between residential uses and an industrial district. The new freeway (Interstate 91) is designed in such a way as to discourage the use of neighborhood streets by industrial traffic. Coordinated planning in this project has aided the renewal project, and has also appreciably simplified the problem of locating the freeway.

The third New Haven project is the Long Wharf Redevelopment Area. Here, the construction in 1958 of the Connecticut Turnpike

along the New Haven harbor front has made possible the reclamation of an extensive land area for uses which include new industrial sites, a regional food distribution center, marine facilities, and a heliport. With the freeway bounding one side of the area, and the railroad the other, the land enjoys prime transportation access to all parts of the region.

In Norfolk, Virginia, extensive redevelopment of the old central area is under way. Much of the work has represented closely integrated planning on the part of redevelopment and transportation authorities. The city will soon add to its tunnel, bridge, and highway system a new urban expressway 2.4 miles in length, of which 1.7 miles will be within an urban renewal area. The project is designed to provide a major facility for the free flow of traffic to and from the central business district, plus sufficient capacity to carry traffic using the new Elizabeth River Tunnel connecting the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth.

I could continue discussing coordinated programs in Pittsburgh; Chicago; Des Moines; Washington, D. C.; Burlington, Vermont; and many other cities but I feel certain the examples I have given point out the values of coordinated action.

Both the Bureau of Public Roads and the Housing and Home Finance Agency are placing increasing emphasis on their efforts to obtain cooperative, coordinated planning. They have pledged their full cooperation and technical assistance in support of a long-range effort to produce transportation plans and programs for every city over 5,000 population. This effort is being sponsored by the American Association of State Highway Officials and the American Municipal Association, and the National Association of County Officials. This program will be inaugurated by a series of meetings at which state, city, and county officials, civic and business leaders, and other appropriate people will participate in discussions of what is involved. This is a major effort that will strain the technical, and possibly the financial, resources of the many agencies involved, but we are confident that the program will be effectively carried out.