CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
IN URBAN POLICY

by

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ABSTRACT

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Citizen participation has always been a hallowed concept in our form of liberal democracy. It not only legitimizes the political process but is also a strong force for citizen education. If properly implemented, participation can be a constructive component of the local planning process.

There has been a trend in urban government towards the professionalism of reform. One unfortunate result of this has been a decline in responsiveness to the needs and desires of the urban citizenry. Ostensibly desirable public projects have been met, after substantial expenditures in planning and design, with severe citizen dissatisfaction. This distortion of priorities and subsequent waste of resources can be alleviated by a better reading of needs through increased citizen participation.

The evolution of the participatory concept is traced and the reasons for the success or failure of past attempts are identified. A case study of successful citizen participation in transportation planning is given. The final analysis suggests ways to increase the benefit and minimize the disutility of citizen participation in urban policy formulation.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THESIS ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Involvement in Transportation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion and Structure</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE. Participation: An Overview</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Trends</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The War on Poverty</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Renewal and Development</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Failings of Participation</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Benefits</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO. Case Study in Transportation</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Approaches to Involvement</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge versus the Highway</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Origin of the C.T.F.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start-Up of the C.T.F.</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of Concern</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and Staff</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avenues of Influence</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE. Conclusions and Policy Implications</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements of Successful Participation</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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INTRODUCTION

Historically, Americans have cherished the ideal that citizens should have the right to a strong voice in the running of their government. This tradition, which manifests itself in all levels of government, is particularly strong in Massachusetts as one of the original thirteen colonies. Colonial experience with King and Governor bred a strong suspicion of executive power among our founding fathers. The separation of powers and its corollary doctrine of checks and balances as elaborated in our state and national constitutions give testimony to this basic distrust of any excessive concentration of power. As our commitment to democracy widened, these doctrines were soon followed by the extension of popular controls over the executive. It has thus been universally recognized that every citizen has the right to not only express his views, but more important, to have those views heard by the government. To deny this premise is to deny our very system.

Unfortunately, this heritage has not always been strictly adhered to. There are far too many areas of

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profound governmental control over which the average citizen has virtually no influence. This is especially true in urban areas where significant portions of the population, such as the poor or minority groups, have virtually no access to the day-to-day decisions which fundamentally affect their lives. As a result, many decisions are made without a clear understanding of the needs or desires of the affected client group. Consequently not only are the programs inadequate but the corresponding negative public reaction impedes any future solution of the problem.

Obviously this is a situation which can be neither ignored nor tolerated. If we truly wish to solve our pressing urban problems, it is essential that city planners and administrators have an accurate reading of not only the problems but also the real and final impacts of any proposed solution. To this end it is proposed that a viable mechanism be established to institutionalize citizen input in the local planning and decision-making processes. It will be the major contention of this thesis that in addition to its intrinsic democratic values, well managed citizen participation is not only beneficial to those involved, but can also be a constructive force in the local planning process.
THE PROBLEM

Traditionally the citizen has had two prescribed forms of access to his government; the election of officials and referendum. Though not truly institutionalized, such things as public hearings have provided an effective, albeit episodic, means of exposing public officials to citizen opinion. Finally a citizen could try to individually influence an official or join a special interest group whose lobbying could conceivably influence official decisions. Although all these forms of participation have their value, the fact remains that the average urban dweller is continually moving further away from his government. There are many reasons for this phenomenon, four of which will be discussed here.

The first major factor in this decline in representation arises from the mere fact that the government has constantly increased its influence over the private lives of its citizens. It seems only natural that as governmental power increases, so should the level of citizen participation. As one participation advocate put it:

"...the expansion of governmental interventions in the economic and social life of the nation increases the stakes of participation: the government does more and therefore more is to be gained by having a voice over what it does."
Clearly the amount of citizen participation has not kept pace with increased governmental control.

The second factor is a matter of simple arithmetic. Thirty years ago a city councilman might represent 15,000 voters. Today that same councilman may represent 100,000, 250,000 or more voters.\(^3\) Compounding this problem is the fact that many urban communities have maintained the same legislative structures that were originally intended for a vastly smaller population. Cambridge, Massachusetts, for example, still relies on a part-time mayor and city council. It is obvious that legislative representation has also failed to keep up with the greater population.

The third factor involves the growing ethic of "professional elitism" in city planning and administration. The movement for organizational efficiency in government, which spawned such concepts as the city manager, tended to de-emphasize the need for contact with the people. This effect was also unintentionally magnified by the reform movement of the early 1900's. Despite his onerous reputation, the old precinct captain of the machine era performed a


valuable function by connecting the individual's small needs with the larger concerns of the government. He was able to get things done, cut red tape, and in general give people the feeling that they could touch and use their government. In the attempts to avoid politically run cities this valuable liaison system has been reformed out of existence: unfortunately it has never been replaced. Instead cities are run by professional bureaucrats who, in avoiding political involvement, have seemingly forgotten that they are still responsible to the public. Although professionalism and efficiency are desirable goals, they seem to have been instituted at the expanse of responsiveness to the citizenry.

The fourth and final factor has to do specifically with the central city. It is a well established fact that the rapid growth of the suburbs has drastically changed the composition of the inner city population. The inner city is characterized by large proportions of the poor and racial and ethnic minority groups. While these groups have the greatest need for government services, they also have the least knowledge of the services available. This means also that fewer citizens will actively seek a participatory role on their own initiative. If the city government does

4 ibid.
not seriously elicit opinions from these groups their needs and desires simply remain unheard. The resulting alienation and distrust of such a significant portion of the urban population is in itself a harm which cannot be overlooked.

The net effect of all these trends is that the urban citizen's voice in the running of his government is decreasing. While there are those who contend that citizen participation is a desirable end in itself, it is not clear that increased participation will always result in better decisions. It is clear, however, that participation can be useful in preventing seriously deficient programs. Without continuous public participation this safeguard can not be realized. For a specific example of this we turn to the area of transportation planning.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS

Transportation planning has never been one of the more controversial aspects of the urban scene. For this reason there has never been much citizen involvement in decisions of transportation investments. Unfortunately, the production of an ostensibly desirable transportation improvement that is later met with severe citizen dis-
satisfaction. By this time, of course, a substantial and irretrievable public investment has been made in the planning, design, or even construction of the facility. Somehow either a misunderstanding, a change, or a disregard of true public interest is involved. Whatever the mis-match, the consequences appear too expensive to be ignored. Citizens in San Francisco, New Orleans, Milwaukee, Baltimore, the District of Columbia, Memphis and more recently Boston have challenged hundreds of millions of dollars in transportation investments. It has become painfully obvious that the government and public can no longer afford to "find out later" that a given facility is undesirable for reasons that might have been predetermined by fuller public participation. This is a growing concern at the local level since more and more responsibility for transportation planning is being placed on municipalities.

The era of blind faith in and commitment to the interstate highway program is finished. It is now incumbent upon urban localities to develop a transportation planning capacity hopefully to better serve the needs of their citizens. As the focal point of both needs and impacts,

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local government must be the one to determine whether a project will have the support of the citizenry before too much time and money has been wasted.

As later portions of this thesis discuss this problem fully, no further elaboration is required at present. The important point is that the harm subsequent to the lack of citizen participation is definite and substantial. Even a hard core cynic can understand the waste of such magnitudes of money and manpower.

CONCLUSION AND STRUCTURE

While it is easy to discuss and defend citizen participation in abstract terms, its implementation remains a problem. This introduction has established the general problem of lessening citizen involvement and the resultant harms. The remainder of this thesis will examine the real problem associated with making citizen participation "work".

Chapter one will be devoted to the overall issue of citizen participation in urban affairs. The evolution of the citizen participation concept will be traced by an examination of the federally inspired attempts at participation in urban renewal and the poverty program. The
reasons behind the failure of these attempts will also be identified. Finally the most common arguments for and against citizen participation will be presented.

Chapter two deals with a specific example of citizen participation. The Cambridge Transportation Forum, a citizens group, established to provide continual input into the local transportation policy-making process, will be the sole subject of this chapter. Topics to be covered include its origin, case history, organization and influence on the planning process.

Chapter three, the final chapter, will offer conclusions and recommendations for the participatory process. A case for increased participation will be presented along with suggestions for painless implementation. The main conclusion to be defended is that the benefits of active citizen participation can be achieved without undue detriment to either the goals of social reform or the efficiency of urban government.
CHAPTER ONE

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION: An Overview

The term "citizen participation" means different things to different people. Some envision a select group of business and civic leaders, sitting around a large walnut table, rationally discussing the city's economic problems with the mayor. Others immediately think of an angry crowd of parents, meeting in a church basement and planning a march to block a proposed highway through their neighborhood. Still others equate citizen participation exclusively with the involvement of the poor or minority groups. Because this term can justifiably be interpreted in so many ways, it is essential at this point to define it more precisely for the purposes of this paper.

Technically, participation can include every possible input of citizen opinion into the governmental decision-making process. For the purpose of this discussion, however, citizen participation necessarily takes on a far more limited meaning. In general only those forms of participation which have official government sanction will be considered. This includes such things as the mayor's "select citizen task force" or recognized neighborhood
organizations. It does not include any citizens group which is organized around a particular dogma or a certain side of an issue. In this category fall political organizations and any special interest groups ranging from the local chapter of SNCC to the Chamber of Commerce. This qualification does not deny the fact that such groups have a profound influence upon and often overlap the more institutionalized forms of participation. Rather, it accepts the reality that if we wish to change our approach to citizen involvement, this change can only be realized in the participatory efforts which the government initiates or sponsors.

With this definition in mind, this chapter proposes to give a picture of the general concept of citizen participation at the local level. Its evolution in a number of different urban areas will be described, to be followed by the most common arguments for and against the participatory process.

GENERAL TRENDS

At one time citizen involvement in urban affairs was viewed rather narrowly by municipal governments. Usually only the community elites, those who already had political or economic power, were invited to participate. Even the purpose of these "blue ribbon" panels was limited to
advise on the technical aspects of a proposed action rather than an assessment of community needs prior to the drafting of any specific plan. But since the plan was so often coincident with the best interests of these select participants, no one complained and the entire process was characterized by consensus and cooperation. Needless to say this resulted in simplifying the tasks of city planners and administrators.

The consequences of such limited citizen participation were inevitable; the interests of the business and civic leaders of the community were those most often served by city programs. In urban renewal, for example, legislation called for the attainment of two potentially conflicting goals: the redevelopment of the center city and the provision of low-cost housing. The fact that urban renewal has destroyed far more low-cost housing than it has replaced gives testimony that the former goal has been given higher priority. This situation can be attributed at least in part to the class of citizens involved in local renewal decisions.

The Sixty's saw a major change in the concept of citizen participation. Spurred by new federal urban legis-

lation and a general aura of urban activism, the non-elites of the city began organizing to gain access to decisions formerly controlled by the elites. At first the traditional city powers found it easy to dispense with these minor threats to their authority. As time went on, however, citizen groups became better organized and more importantly, with every new fight, gained in political acumen. Soon delays were granted and finally the scrapping of programs was achieved.

Naturally the traditional decision-makers resented and resisted the intrusions of this new political force:

"The American experience has shown that government officials and administrators resist efforts at community participation. To them it is a threat. To the politician, it creates new political forces that challenge his traditional base of support. To the civil servant, citizen involvement challenges his professional status, his competence, his ability to determine goals according to what he thinks is correct."

As a result of this initial negative response, there was generally very little cooperation between officials and the emerging citizen groups. The release of any documents to such groups by an official was seen as tantamount to cutting one's own throat. City officials opted to clam up and dig in for the battle.

The citizens groups, on the other hand, soon realized their inability to propose and have enacted their own solutions. It is not even clear that many of these groups were even able to draw up any consistent plans. Instead they found power in the ability to block the proposals of the elites. This veto power soon became commonplace as community groups grew more suspicious of any city action.

The final result was a stalemate. Neither side saw any hope for compromise; so nothing happened until the non-elites were discouraged and gave up. Unfortunately the experience left great bitterness on both sides and everyone lost. This unhappy chain of events was typical of most citizen participation. To better understand this evolution of the concept, we examine specific areas of urban concern, which were most closely involved with participation: the poverty program and urban renewal.

THE WAR ON POVERTY

Inconspicuously lodged in Section 201 of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 is a definition which has caused considerable controversy, action and reaction in all parts of the country. The definition holds that "The term 'community action program' means a program . . . which is developed, conducted, and administered with the maximum
feasible participation of the residents of the areas and members of the groups served."

(emphasis mine) Since this act has proven to be the most comprehensive piece of poverty legislation in our nation's history, one would assume that it would receive intense Congressional consideration. Such, however, was not the case either for the Act or for the issue of resident participation:

"In retrospect, it is interesting to observe that the abbreviated section-by-section analysis that usually accompanies bills in Congress did not even mention citizen participation at the time of the poverty hearings and that Sargent Shriver's articulate presentation of the merits of the program included merely the innocuous sentence, 'Above all, it (the community action program) includes the poor people of the community whose first opportunity must be the opportunity to help themselves.'"

It is a testimony to the legislative skill of then President Johnson that it took a mere five months for the entire Economic Opportunity Act to clear Congress. This expediency, however, left the newly established Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) on very unstable grounds. While committed to the ideal of meaningful residential involvement, the OEO also was responsible to avoid overstepping a tenuous Congressional mandate. The intent of the legislation was clear. In a program designed to rehabilitate people, maximum feasible participation was necessary to enable the poor to use their bootstraps. The precise role

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of the poor, however, was never clarified. The legisla-
tion, in fact, did not even give a hint as to the size of
the ballpark.

Sensing this potentially explosive situation, the
OEO started off with a relatively mild approach. Ini-
tially the poor would be involved in what has been termed
"client participation". The emphasis was to be placed on
organizing and directing the demands of the poor toward
the city agencies which could serve them. In this way it
was hoped that these agencies would be more responsive to
their poor "clients." As OEO became better established,
it began to push for more representation for the poor.
Foremost among its actions was the establishment of a one-
third quota of representation for the poor on CAP Boards.
Meanwhile, attempts to minimize political controversy over
implementation were quickly decaying. The original vague-
ness of the legislation fostered attacks on the OEO by both
the right and left.

Although the traditional local political elites
rarely initiated poverty programs, they quickly became
involved when the political potential of client participa-
tion was revealed (as in the Mobilization for Youth Program).
At the Mayors' Conference of 1965, proposed resolutions

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9 Van Til, op cit.
blamed the participation of the poor for "fostering class struggle." The middle class professionals who ran the service agencies also came out against participation if for no other reason than it greatly increased their workload.

On the other side there were many organizers who felt that the poor had received too little. The leadership of the Black Community, which had emerged during the struggle for civil rights, was quick to demand that the poor deal not only with administrative issues but the policy considerations of the program as well. Often attempts to organize ethnic groups were made by community leaders who themselves aspired to become political elites. As a result, the emergence of any powerful indigenous organizations of the poor (ala Alinsky) were rare indeed.

Amid this controversy the OEO decided to retreat to a more traditional form of participation: a combination of both elites and the poor. By this time, though, an adversary relation had been established and any bid by blacks or the poor for power ended in stalemate. The hopes for real representation of the poor were further crushed in

1967 when the Green Amendment was passed. This amendment resolved the dilemma between traditional American beliefs and participation of the poor by placing the final power over the poverty program once again in the hands of the established political elites. As Mrs. Green\textsuperscript{11} put it in defending her amendment: "those who are helping to pay shall have a voice through elected officials."

Thus, the inevitable link between economic and political power is maintained and the poor may merely reject or accept what is offered. The OEO in the meantime has sunk into oblivion under the Nixon Administration. "Maximum feasible participation" once only a twinkle in the eye of Sargent Shriver is no more than a forgotten nightmare.

URBAN RENEWAL AND DEVELOPMENT

Citizen participation, in one form or another, has long been a component of our urban renewal programs. The Housing Act of 1949 was the first piece of renewal legislation which specified community participation as a necessary feature of a "workable program". The bill called for a community-wide citizens committee to advise local planning

agencies on the administration of renewal plans. It is important to emphasize the advisory nature of the participation. Despite government rhetoric, the planning and execution of the renewal process was principally determined and run by the local planning agency, with approval of the local governing body. Even in those communities where the citizen committee was not solely used for rubberstamping, those affected by the plans had little voice in the process. "These committees were often so broadly constituted that the urban renewal area residents were only a small voice compared to the more powerful articulations of business, labor, organized religion, social welfare, industry and education." 12

As has been alluded to earlier, the results were urban renewal projects which most benefitted the community elite.

In response to this problem, Congress enacted the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966. Section 103 of this act required "widespread citizen participation in the program." Not only were the renewal area residents to have more say in the project, but they were to be included in the planning stages. As one HUD official put it:

"The convictions upon which this policy is based were reached after long and searching explorations. These explorations squarely faced the fact that federal, state and local programs involving massive

physical or social changes were frequently not addressing citizen concerns and were being confronted by resistance where residents had not participated in the planning. The studies recognized that the area in which this program would be implemented had truly, as Congress found, faced marked deterioration in the quality of the environment and the lives of large numbers of people. 13

It is important to note that unlike the poverty program, participation was to include both elites and non-elites. At first this produced easy victories for the elites as in Lake Meadows in Chicago, the West End in Boston, and Kips Bay and Stuyvesant Town in New York. As opposition became more organized, however, neighborhoods began winning delays in implementation. This was due in large part to the efforts of the federal government in assisting citizen groups. In a policy statement issued by HUD, the following requirements were made:

"The neighborhood citizen participation structure must have clear and direct access to the decision-making process of the City Demonstration Agency so that neighborhood views can influence policy, planning and program decisions . . . in order to initiate and react intelligently in program matters, the structure must have the technical capacity for making knowledgeable decisions. This will mean that some sort of professional technical assistance, in a manner agreed to by neighborhood residents shall be provided. Where financial problems are a barrier to effective participation, financial assistance (e.g. baby sitting fees, reimbursement for transportation, compensation for serving on Boards or Committees) should be

extended to neighborhood residents to assure their opportunity to participate." 14

This was of course a big step forward in the concept of citizen participation. Not only were residents invited to participate, but they could receive compensation for their trouble. Unfortunately, despite this help, it soon became clear that citizen groups once again found power only in the ability to veto plans. With notable exceptions (ie Adams-Morgan project) citizens were unable to propose and have accepted any constructive action. As in the poverty program, the inevitable stalemate resulted and eventually citizens lost interest.

THE FAILINGS OF PARTICIPATION

If one were prone to generalizations, one could safely say that the federally inspired citizen participation of the sixty's was a dismal failure. This does not imply, however, that the concept of active citizen participation in urban affairs is inconsistent with efficiency and productivity in city government. Rather it is incumbent upon those who still have faith in our democratic heritage, to determine the reasons for this failure. It is to this question that we presently turn.

To many academic planners the answer lies in the nature of the participants. Most of the concerted efforts at participation to date have been aimed at the socially or economically disadvantaged. While these people have the greatest need and the least representation, they also have the least knowledge of city government and programs. Furthermore the poor and minority groups have a basic mistrust of city hall. In their daily struggle to survive, they do not feel they have the time to participate in a government they feel is fundamentally opposed to their interests. To Banfield and Wilson\textsuperscript{15} this translates into the lack of "community-regarding and public regarding ethos." (Presumably our urban renewal officials, who for years ignored the critical need for low cost housing, are blessed with community-regarding ethos.) According to Bellush and Haus-Knecht,\textsuperscript{16} Citizen participation raises "unrealistic expectations" for non-elite citizens who have neither "morale-cohesion", "capacity for effective membership," "leadership", "knowledge" or "awareness", all seen as "prerequisites for participation." The conclusion reached, of course, is that citizen participation defeats


the goals of policy reform and implementation. Among many academic critics then there is the inclination toward the professionalization of reform.

I personally find this a hard line to swallow. It is granted that participation among the non-elites is difficult due to their limited perspective of urban ills and solutions. It is never the less mighty presumptuous to equate education and economic status with the ability to act in other than a selfish manner. Perhaps the crux of this matter lies more in the approach to participation. As the Cahns note:

"People respond to the terms of the question put . . . Until recently, there has been no attempt to create forums in which the poor have been asked to make decisions as composite human beings, as human beings who have something valid to say about the allocation of resources from the point of view of the entire community. Instead, they have been forced into the role of responding as selfish, dependent individuals. By confining the poor to speaking in that role, professionals purport to prove an incapacity to function responsibly in any other role." 17

Just as there are those who blame the intractable nature of citizens, there are also those who blame the intractable nature of the government:

"The forms of government we now use were sufficient for providing the caretaker services

that were required in simpler days. But, as instruments capable of handling the complex, subtle social and human concerns of modern urban citizens, they are failures. They are too distant, too bureaucratic, too simplistic in their approach. What is even more dismay- ing, they are becoming less and less democratic - immune to the citizen who wishes to express himself on problems that affect him." 18

While there may be some truth in this, it does not seem that our city governments are inherently encapable of accommodating citizen participation. The problem appears to be involved more with the present attitudes of our city officials. Many tend to consider participation as something separate from the routine activities of government. Until citizen input is recognized as an inherent component of the decision-making process, there can be little hope for success.

Perhaps the most significant criticism leveled against citizen participation concerns its effect on the length of projects. The inclusion of citizens often lengthens the planning process to the point of either obsolescence or ultimate defeat. It also involves the expenditure of scarce resources in terms of money and manpower. To many planners this is simply too high of a price to pay. If there is indeed a pressing time or revenue constraint, to the point where participation would endanger the project,

18 Axworthy, op cit.
this is a valid argument. It should not be used, though, as a rationalization to dispense with all participation. As one qualified observer noted in this regard:

"The effort to achieve participation cost local officials dearly, not so much in actual delays of planning or construction, but in what the delays revealed about the local government's ability to conduct its business effectively." 19

Participation necessarily involves the exposure of plans and procedures that at one time were immune to inspection. It is only natural that professional planners would resist such an affront on their competence. It must be remembered, however, that as public servants, planners have an obligation of full disclosure to the public. If the present crisis in our federal executive branch has taught us anything, it is that there is always a danger in the absence of disclosure and review.

A final criticism of citizen involvement concerns the parochial tendencies of many groups. It is often hard for citizens to think on a community level:

"Participating citizens grind their axes on behalf of their own geographical locality at the expense of the total community and of other localities. The outcome if they are successful is a disproportionate allotment of total community resources to the specific locality whose

19 Martha Dethick, "Defeat at Fort Lincoln", The Public Interest, No. 20, Summer 1970.
participating citizens have been influential with the professional planners and the government officials." 20

This of course puts officials who must think in total community benefit in somewhat of a bind. It is no worse, however, than allowing a small elite group the only access to decision-making.

There can be no doubt that there are many potential dangers in citizen participation. It is essential that planners and administrators realize the hardships before any effort is made. This singular fact could explain many of the failures of participation in poverty and urban renewal. The Federal government suddenly mandated participation, which was neither desired nor prepared for by local officials. The results were disastrous:

"Officials at all levels often seem to fail to understand what they are setting in motion when they undertake to engage the community. This failure, more than any real threat in the process, seems to produce most of the disfunctions and bad experiences, which are exacerbated when the foregoing obstacles are encountered." 21

Citizen participation is not something to be taken lightly; unless a total commitment is made by officials, the attempt will be crippled from the onset. If the commitment is there, the benefits can be substantial.

THE BENEFITS

The fact that certain efforts at citizen participation have failed to institutionalize citizen input in social policy does not mean that these efforts have been without benefit. Citizen participation can be advocated not only as a necessary condition for the success of urban programs but also as a desirable end in itself. Thus any program which offers a chance to participate is valuable regardless of the effects on social policy. Advocates of this bend feel that its major purpose is to act as a militant watchdog in civic affairs. The late Hugh Pomeroy, a city planner with a distinguished career himself believed as much: "Shall (planning) then be left entirely in the hands of bureaucrats - like me for instance?", he asks. And he answers his own question: "Not at all. I do not trust myself to make decisions for the community. Planning is making decisions profoundly affecting the whole form and character of the community and the manner of life of its people. That calls for deeply rooted citizen participation."

In a related argument, citizen participation is often hailed as a force for citizen education. As John Stuart Mill wrote, "The most important point of excellence

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which any form of government can possess is to promote the virtue and intelligence of the people themselves."\textsuperscript{23}
Surely even if the poor never achieved any influence in the poverty program, they became more politically aware of the situation. At least those who participated learned how the poverty program worked and which agency to go to with their problems.

There are also valid arguments for citizen participation which bear directly on the successful implementation of urban programs. Citizens in general are suspicious of any government program presented as a fait accompli. Opposition occurs less on the basis of program merits than on the method of implementation. To avoid such costly and unnecessary delays, some semblence of citizen participation is valuable in all stages of the planning and design of a program. Not only will the program be more likely to address the most critical areas of concern, but it will be less susceptible to community veto. This is often a prime concern in urban renewal:

\begin{quote}
"When there is citizen participation in the planning stages of a renewal program, plans can be formulated which reflect the desires and needs of residents as they perceive them. Moreover, having had a hand in the planning, residents are already predisposed to accept
\end{quote}

the plans which they feel they have helped create, even though the plans finally involve changes in the neighborhood they would not have agreed to without prior discussion and change of their attitudes." 24

In many ways citizen participation can be of great help to the planner. It not only lessens community opposition but can also relieve political pressure. If it leads to a better understanding of the needs of citizens, it can only lead to more effective programs. Seriously deficient programs can also be more easily identified and eliminated.

The benefits are too great to be missed merely because a social scientist tells us that citizen participation is inefficient and raises conflicts. Any change which shifts the balance of power will necessarily cause conflict. The critical challenge to American social policy in the years ahead lies in developing the participatory process to its fullest potential and smallest harm.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated the current dilemma of citizen participation. Because of its poor track record,

citizen participation has invoked a thorough denunciation by most city planners and administrators. There is a real danger of the pendulum swinging too far away from participation, back to the point of unresponsive city government serving the interests of an elite minority. To avoid this danger, we must commit ourselves to the search for better, more workable forms of participation.

The next chapter examines one such effort. By most indications it is an effort which has successfully involved the citizen in the planning process. By an analysis of this program, perhaps a better understanding can be achieved on how citizen participation works. Only by rigorous investigation can we hope to turn participation from an administrator's nightmare into a useful tool for the solution of our pressing urban problems.
CHAPTER TWO
CASE STUDY IN TRANSPORTATION

In the past decade America has witnessed a crisis in urban transportation. Highways, once seen as the savior for the city, have fallen into disrepute. Our recent energy crisis only served to dramatize the folly of depending so heavily on the private automobile. Almost as an afterthought, the methodology of the planning process associated with the highways has also come under increased attack. Many people feel it is the closed and unresponsive nature of the traditional transportation planning process that has caused the distortion of our transportation priorities. Transportation officials are under growing pressure across the nation to more rigorously consider the multilateral impacts of their decisions of the communities they serve. Unfortunately with the death of the highway panacea, officials are left with no clear cut policy to follow. Even more alarming is the fact that no inherent mechanisms exist to guide the structuring of a new policy based on the needs and desires of the urban citizenry. It is to this problem that we now turn.

For ten years after the passage of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, committment to the interstate system was absolute. The federal government provided the funds
and the states were responsible for planning and construction. If localities were consulted at all, it was always in terms of determining the most desirable location for a highway. Few people, including the urban dweller who longed for the freedom of the road, ever questioned the wisdom of building the highway in the first place.

As the negative impacts of highways became apparent, however, people began to take a second look. This was especially true in the central city where costs in terms of air pollution, noise, dislocation and congestion were severe and where benefits were often questionable. Slowly but surely communities began to question the carte blanche of highway advocates. "We have already seen evidence of this throughout the country where transportation officials are facing court reversals of their decisions, overrulings by chief elected officials, rejection of bond issues, and a general lack of support by the very people they are trying to serve." 25 This conflict had two detrimental consequences; not only was money lost but transportation improvement came to a virtual standstill. Across the country, unfinished freeways, overpasses, and other structures stand as silent although constant reminders of the danger in failing to consider community opinion. Clearly, when

litigation must be resorted to in order to block a project that has already claimed millions of dollars, something is wrong with the approach.

Amid all of this controversy, the individual citizen was given only sporadic chances at participation. Before discussing possible changes in the approach to transportation planning, it is well to examine some of the previous attempts at involving affected communities in transportation projects.

TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

It is generally conceded that there are two basic forms which have traditionally been used to elicit community opinion of a proposed transportation project. Both have serious deficiencies which make citizen participation a mere formality.

The first is the use of a small group of prominent individuals assumed to be representatives of the community. These individuals usually include local public officials, business representatives and other "leading citizens." This method often is tantamount to excluding the public from participation in the study. The views of such a select group more often than not diverge widely from those of the community as a whole. This is not really surprising since
it is common for a group of citizens, such as the Chamber of Commerce, to have members who do not even live in the community. What is even more important is that the average citizen does not consider such selected groups as being representative of his feelings. Instead people in the community feel ignored and alienated by the government and their citizen representatives. Since this reaction only hardens resistance toward any project, the use of a select citizens' group not only fails to serve its purpose, but also inhibits successful resolution of the problem.

The second method of involving citizens is the public hearing. It is utilized quite frequently because it is often prescribed in legislation. The rationale of this approach is that it gives any interested citizen the chance to hear proposed plans and comment on them. Anyone who has attended a public hearing realizes the weakness in this approach:

"Although this method appears to be an entirely acceptable one, and one that is in keeping with the highly valued principles of a participatory democracy, it all too frequently degenerates into an arena of conflict. There are numerous examples of hearing being prematurely closed or, worse, not even allowed to begin because of the unmanageable uproar or threat to the personal safety of those presiding!" 26

The reasons for this antagonism are related directly to the

nature of public hearings. Usually the plans presented at such hearings have already been formalized and few options are presented. This automatically gives the citizen participant only the alternative of totally accepting or rejecting the proposal. Moreover, citizens have very little knowledge of the plans prior to the day of the meeting. Operating without more complete information, people tend to feed on the anxieties of one another, and antipathy for the project multiplies. Often citizens come with and read prepared statements which have nothing to do with the government proposal. With such lack of flexibility on both sides, it is easy to understand why confrontation and bitter conflict almost always result. It is clear that the public hearing is often counterproductive for all concerned.

Perhaps the crux of the issue in past attempts at participation is the fact that they only arise in crisis situations. Citizen opposition materializes when a direct threat in the form of a transportation improvement is specifically proposed. By this time considerable time, effort and money have usually gone into the project. If citizens are successful in blocking the project, the only conceivable result is the loss of money and considerable antagonism to carry over into the next effort.
In order to avoid this unfortunate situation, a new approach is desperately required. The remainder of this chapter will look at one such attempt in the urban community of Cambridge, Massachusetts. A citizen group called the Cambridge Transportation Forum (CTF) has been organized to provide continual citizen input for the transportation planning process. It is hoped that such an approach will do much to alleviate the costs of our current urban transportation crisis.

CAMBRIDGE VERSUS THE HIGHWAY

Cambridge, Massachusetts is an urban community of roughly 100,000 residents. It borders Boston proper, an attribute which makes Cambridge similar to the central city community. It is a diverse community with both the very rich and the very poor. While there is a great deal of industry within Cambridge, most of it is perilously close to obsolescence in light of today's economy. Cambridge is an academic community, boasting the existence of Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). At the same time it is a community of relatively insular neighborhoods, whose long-time residents have deeply established roots and limited contact with the outside world.
This diversity is both an asset and a liability. While preventing the sterile homogeneity of many urban communities, it also makes the policy-making process quite difficult. The nature of the City government tends to accentuate this problem. Cambridge has a plan E government, which means it has an elected City Council; a Mayor, elected by the Council from its own ranks; a City Manager, appointed by the City Council; and line departments, whose personnel are appointed by and responsible to the City Manager. In theory, the Council makes the policy which the Manager dutifully implements. In practise, though, this is rarely the case. The City Council, which is only part time without any staff, finds it hard to arrive at any consistent policy. The reason usually given is the Council's inability to accurately determine community opinion. The City Manager, then, without much guidance, is forced to make most policy decisions. It is often a toss up whether the independent line departments will in turn support this policy.

The fragmentation and lack of coordination is graphically illustrated in Cambridge's fight against highways. In 1966 Cambridge and other Boston area municipalities found themselves confronted by a plan for a network of inner city highways. For Cambridge, the State proposal
included the construction of three major highways: the Route 2 extension, the Inner Belt and the Intermediate Belt.

The City Council, which had been historically anti-highway, immediately adopted a stance against all three projects, especially the Inner Belt. It soon became clear, however, that this policy was not fully accepted. Many City officials either remained silent or actively worked against the Council mandate. Even the Council contradicted itself on occasion. They passed, for example, a Workable Program submission to HUD which left the structures within the boundaries of the proposed Inner Belt free of any code enforcement. The implication, of course, was the inevitable construction of the highway. Indeed the only thing that characterized Cambridge's response was confusion. With some officials working for, some against, and most indecisive, it seemed inevitable that the highways and their ancillary facilities would be built as the state had planned them.

Into this hopeless situation sprang a citizens group called Save Our Cities. Dedicated to the prevention of any highways in Cambridge, this group began to organize citizen opposition. In order to effectively match State documentation, Save Our Cities enlisted the aid of Urban Planning Aid (UPA), a group of economists, architects, lawyers,
planners and community organizers, mostly from MIT and Harvard, which had been formed to provide technical aid to neighborhood groups. With the help of UPA, Save Our Cities initiated a massive drive against the State proposal. To make a long story short, this effort enabled the City Council to enforce its policy decision in the line departments. Those who opposed the Council position were relieved of their transportation responsibilities. The City Manager's office became actively involved in opposition. After a series of small victories, Save Our Cities, UPA, and the City Manager's office were able, in January 1968, to organize a massive demonstration of Cambridge citizens and officials to march on the State House. Joined by nineteen other Boston area community groups, the demonstration demanded that the Governor stop all construction and planning of highways within Route 128. This called-for moratorium on highway activity was eventually declared by Governor Sargant, sparing Cambridge the intrusion of any highway.

While many people were pleased by this decision, the entire experience had many negative aspects for Cambridge. It demonstrated a total lack of coordination and direction in Cambridge transportation policy. It further showed the unresponsiveness of Cambridge officials to the desires of Cambridge citizens and their elected representatives. But unlike most tales of municipal government,
this one has a happy ending. The experience with highways gave impetus to a drive for greater citizen participation in transportation policy. The next section describes how this goal was identified and finally realized.

THE ORIGIN OF THE CTF

The Cambridge experience with transportation in the sixties revealed that the transportation planning process was far from adequate. The need for reform was further necessitated by the advent of revenue sharing. Localities have been increasingly expected to bear more and more of the burden of transportation planning. It was these conditions that prompted the Cambridge Departments of Planning and Development and of Traffic and Parking to conduct a thorough analysis of the local transportation planning process. The study was funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation as a neighborly gesture. (The Transportation System Center had recently moved into Cambridge.). Released in December 1972 the study was titled *Improving the Transportation Planning Process in Cambridge and Other Small Cities*.

Although it covered many areas concerning the organization and procedures of the local planning process, the primary focus of the report was on the input of the citizenry.
The report was based on the premise that "Top-Down" trans-
portation planning (where policy is generated at the higher
levels of government) leads to a distortion of priorities.
This distortion in turn leads to the aforementioned dys-
function of an ostensibly desirable transportation invest-
ment being met with severe opposition well into the project.
To avoid this, the report contends, fuller citizen partici-
pation must occur before considerable resources have gone
into the design and planning of the project. This partici-
pation is only feasible on the local level where the greatest
access to officials is provided the citizen. This does not
mean, however, that citizen input is restricted to local
transportation decisions. Citizens can also provide infor-
mation so that local officials can better represent the com-
munity interests on regional and state levels.

It was for all these reasons that the report recom-
mended the establishment of the Cambridge Transportation
Forum. Initially it was to be associated with the City
Manager's office. Although other options were explored,
such as a City Council Forum, it was agreed that the CTF
should be closest to the point of real policy formulation;
that being the City Manager. The report went into great
detail on how the CTF should be established and operated.
The City Manager or his delegate would be the chairman.
Representatives from every recognized citizen group in
Cambridge would be invited to participate. Those who were interested but not affiliated with any organization could observe meetings and speak during certain portions of the meetings. With membership came the responsibility of perfect attendance, either by the representative or one of two delegated alternates. The City Manager was also committed to certain CTF responsibilities: to submit quarterly reports on transportation activities, elicit CTF response to budget proposals, provide comprehensive staff assistance, and in general see that the CTF had access to any transportation related material. The study even went so far as to outline the format of CTF meetings.

The report was submitted to the City Council for approval on April 3, 1972, and on April 10, the Council passed a resolution supporting the Forum concept and urging its speedy implementation. At this point in time it seemed that all systems were go and that Cambridge would soon embark on this experiment in comprehensive citizen participation.

Somewhere along the line, however, something went wrong. Although the CTF was included in the work program of the Planning Department, it was given very low priority; it was so low, in fact, that it received neither funds nor staff support. According to one Cambridge official this was due to the recalcitrance of certain municipal officials
who felt threatened by the entire CTF concept. So while supporting the program publicly, these officials quietly impeded the project by not supporting it financially. For six months after all the positive rhetoric, the CTF floundered from lack of support.

The Mayor and City Councillors who supported the CTF were naturally perturbed by this situation. There was little they could do, however, since they did not have any staff themselves. By a fortunate coincidence this problem did not persist. Under the direction of Justin Gray, MIT initiated a project to provide staff for the City Council. Twelve graduate and undergraduate students were assigned, whose aim was to ensure the policy-making role of the City Council. John Hixson and I, both MIT Urban Studies undergraduates, were assigned to the Council Committee on Transportation and Parking. This appeared to be the perfect opportunity to begin the CTF. Because the Planning Department had shown so little desire to establish the CTF, it was decided that it would be formed under the auspices of the City Council. This was actually more practical than the original proposal since the Council theoretically possessed the power to formulate transportation policy. As will be seen later, the final product represents a compromise between these two positions.
Actual work on the CTF began in the early spring of 1973. As of this writing, the CTF has been fully established and already shows signs of having a significant effect on Cambridge transportation policy. The remainder of this chapter will consist primarily of my personal observations of citizen participation at work.

START-UP OF THE C.T.F.

When John and I first entered the project, we had little idea of what to expect. Because so many facets of the original proposal had been abandoned, it was like starting from scratch. We were fortunate at this stage to have the able assistance of Henrietta Davis, a social planner with the Department of Planning and Development. She was helpful in providing the connections we needed in the Cambridge bureaucracy and also in securing the necessary clerical assistance. This link proved to be very valuable in the early stages of the CTF, offering an informal avenue of communication between the CTF and the Planning Department. Although Henrietta often felt the pressure of divided loyalties, her very presence helped develop a feeling of cooperation between the citizens and the Planning Department. Unlike many cases where citizens complain of undue influence on the part of the government, Henrietta was pressed, often against her will, to take an active role in the early leader-
ship of the CTF. This tended to reduce anxieties on both sides which reduced the potential for antagonism.

The first step taken was to determine if there was indeed any public interest in the CTF. Through consultations with City Councillors and transportation officials, we put together a list of people who had already demonstrated any interest in transportation. These people were telephoned, and Councillor Duehay, the chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Parking, sent out formal letters of invitation for the first meeting. A campaign was also launched in the media. For three weeks before the meeting, articles or meeting notices appeared in the local newspaper urging the attendance of any interested citizen.

The first meeting was held on June 7, 1973, in the Mayor's office. The meeting was chaired by Councillor Duehay and attended by the Mayor, Planning Department representatives, and about twenty-five citizens. After the concept and history of the Forum had been explained, citizens were given a chance to express their views. It soon became clear that a great number of people were interested in the CTF. Another meeting was scheduled and a steering committee established to set up an agenda.

Once the steering committee had been set up, things began to happen. Meeting twice a week, the steering committee began considering various organizational schemes and a
series of issues suitable for the CTF. It is important to note that membership on the steering committee was open to anyone. In the meantime, John and I performed all the routine tasks of running any organization: writing and mailing minutes, sending our meeting notices, doing background research, issuing press releases, etc. We also served as a liason between the CTF and the City Councillors. Our weekly meetings with the Mayor assured at least continual cognizance on the part of the Council that the CTF really did exist.

A blow by blow description of all that happened that summer would bore even Saul Alinsky. Before moving into specific issues concerning the CTF, however, a number of general statements must be made.

Unlike the Planning Department approach where the citizens would have moved into a predetermined structure, the Council preferred a "hands off" stance. Mayor Ackermann and Councillor Duehay, the two main proponents of the CTF, felt the CTF would be stronger in the long run if the citizens themselves determined the structure and operational policies. In this way the strength of the CTF would be dependent not upon an artificial link with the government but on its own ability to formulate a reasonable point of view. This independence was also to be reflected in terms of the CTF leadership. The Planning Department called for a member of the bureaucracy as the chairman. When the point of entry changed to the Council, there were those who felt that either
Duehay or Ackermann should appoint a chairman. This idea was quickly vetoed by both for a very simple reason: the citizens would have much more faith in a leader elected from their midst as opposed to one forced upon them from above.

In general the Council was saying the following to the citizens: "We have gotten you together and told you what we want. Go away (taking your two MIT students with you), organize yourselves, and come back when you have something responsible to say."

This is what they came back with:

MEMBERSHIP

Of any issue, membership was the one most hotly debated in the early stages of the CTF. The controversy centered on the question of whether any sort of restrictions or requirements should be placed on membership.

One group of citizens favored an approach similar to that of the Planning Department Model. This view held that membership to the CTF should imply definite responsibilities. To join, for example, a person would have to attend a certain number of meetings and then be voted in by the rest of the CTF. To maintain the privilege of membership, a certain attendance record would be required. The reasoning behind this view was that without any restrictions people would
not take the CTF seriously. The fear was also voiced that special interest groups would stack a meeting if it was concerned with their particular issue.

The opposing viewpoint was that membership should be left completely open; if one came to a meeting, one was automatically on an equal standing with everyone else. Proponents of this position argued that it would be hard enough to attract participants without any restrictions. Transportation is not exactly a "hot" issue; so even if a person would not attend regularly, his participation should be encouraged. It was also pointed out that an open membership policy would preclude any attacks on the CTF on the grounds of exclusion. It would be hard for anyone to criticize a CTF position if that person could have participated and did not.

The latter of these two positions eventually won. The CTF today has only minimal conditions pursuant to membership. Many of the fears of the former position have proven to be groundless. So far no special interest group has flooded any of the meetings. Neither has the lack of regulation seemed to have had any effect on the level of commitment.

The current membership concern has become that of representation. Since the CTF is only an advisory body, its
influence depends largely on how representative its membership is. The City Council has even stated that it will not take the CTF's recommendations seriously unless it can demonstrate that it is truly speaking on behalf of the community as a whole. Unfortunately, it is difficult to attract representatives from all factions of Cambridge. The Forum's openness and lack of dogma tends to attract only a certain type of person. In order to elicit representatives from all parts of the city, it is often necessary to actively seek out spokesmen. The steering committee has done much in this regard by visiting neighborhood groups, attending community school meetings, etc. While the situation has improved over the months, the CTF is still far from being ideally representative. Hopefully as the Forum becomes better known and more established, representation will increase. At least the open membership policy assures that no one is excluded, except by their own decision not to participate. The task now becomes making sure that everyone is aware of this opportunity and its value.

SCOPE OF CONCERN

Many past attempts at citizen participation in Cambridge have failed simply because the citizens were unsure of their function. Either the scope of the group was unreasonably broad, resulting in confusion, or the citizens were
confined to relatively inconsequential matters. This was perhaps the major concern of those citizens who gathered in the Mayor's office for the first meeting. Many had had a great deal of experience in citizen groups and knew that with no direction, citizen organizations soon degenerated into aimless discussion groups. Since the CTF had no specific issue to be based on, it was essential that the citizens be given a good idea of what was to be expected of them.

At this stage guidance from Councillor Duehay and the Mayor was critical. The most important qualification of scope was that the forum would deal only with policy questions, as it would be expected to help the Council fulfill its policy-making obligations. As has been said before, the reason for the Council's failure in this respect had been uncertainty of public opinion. The CTF was to fill this gap.

The emphasis on policy is critical. The Forum might consider the possibility of more emphasis being placed on mass transit; it should not, however, go on to investigate possible alignments for new bus routes. This is the function of the Planning Department. Thus any administrative concerns were defined as out of bounds for the forum.

It is often quite difficult to convince citizens of this important distinction. Policy formulation, though actually more crucial than administration, is easier for
citizens to handle. One does not need technical expertise, but rather a good idea of what one wants. The problem is then to combine all the different wants into a general policy statement. Despite nearly constant reminders to this effect, some citizens went on for months bringing up the timing of walk lights or the routing of the mini-bus. As the distinction was finally absorbed, the CTF was able to accomplish far more in a meeting.

Another restriction on the CTF’s range of concern was that only community-wide issues should be considered. Once again many people found this hard to fathom. They preferred to spend the entire meeting talking about the potholes in their street. The CTF was not meant to be a transportation ombudsman. There were already many avenues, such as neighborhood organizations, to deal with localized problems. In addition such discussion tended to take up too much time in CTF meetings. There were some transportation officials who warned that if the CTF became a clearinghouse for individual complaints, they would not support the Forum. Fortunately persistence paid off and the incidence of spleen venting tapered off.

A final limitation in scope came from the pragmatic realization that the CTF can only affect Cambridge transportation decisions. It is useless, for example, to discuss
matters over which only the MBTA has control. The Forum does not even have the time to cover all local decisions, much less those under extra-local jurisdiction. This was another limitation which was stated at the outset and which greatly reduced wasted effort and time.

It is clear that one of the prerequisites for successful citizen participation is a clear understanding from the beginning of the role of the citizens. Without this direction, the citizens might either antagonize officials by going off in all directions or lose interest from not knowing what to do. Fortunately the CTF did not suffer from this lack of purpose. Not only was this issue thoroughly reviewed and determined in the Planning Department/DOT Report, but city Council proponents were on hand to assure that the citizens knew their purpose. The question was then left up to the citizens on how to best fulfill this role.

ORGANIZATION

The CTF as a whole meets only once a month. Obviously this does not leave enough time to deal with very many policy issues. In order to compensate, it was essential that work be done between meetings. This called for some kind of organization. In the initial stages, there were those citizens who did not feel that the CTF should have any complex
structure. As the term "Forum" implies, these people thought that the CTF would fill enough of a need by providing a place once a month for citizens to air their opinions. Fortunately, most of the citizens had more ambitious plans.

In July of 1973, the steering committee began grappling with the issue of organization. After months of drafts and redrafts, the CTF finally approved an organizational scheme in the late fall. According to the plan, primary CTF work would be done in five standing subcommittees: Traffic and Parking; Public Transportation; Goods Movement; Bicycles and Pedestrians; and Special Mobility, including the elderly and handicapped. These subcommittees would meet at least once a month and any work or proposals would have to be approved by the entire Forum. Every Forum member would be expected to participate as a working member of at least one subcommittee. A permanent steering committee was also established to include the officers of the CTF (chairman, vice-chairman and secretary) and the chairmen of the five subcommittees. The chairmen of the subcommittees were to be appointed by the chairman of the Forum.

This structure, though simple, has proven to be effective. In October, elections were held and a slate of responsible officers was approved. By now all the subcommittees have been established and are fully operational.
Depending on the chairman, these subcommittees have proven to be indispensable in making the Forum effective in its policy advising role.

The present organization and structure of the CTF is a far cry from the highly structured and restrictive model in the original Forum report. Nevertheless, it fulfills its purpose and, more important, is accepted by the citizens who devised the organization.

INFORMATION AND STAFF

One easy way for officials to hamper the efforts of a citizen group is to withhold information concerning its projects and proposals. Without this information, the citizens can not formulate any responsible position and may end up by opposing everything on general principle.

This has not been the case with the CTF. The officials of the Planning Department and the Department of Traffic and Parking have been extremely cooperative. For the first few meetings of the CTF, the main objective was to acquaint the citizens with the myriad of transportation issues facing Cambridge. To assist in this "education", the Planning Department assembled a ten page document explaining the major transportation activities that were underway in Cambridge. In addition the top officials of many City depart-
ments came and spoke at these meetings to assure that the citizens realized what they were working on and how they were limited. Since this initial period, the Planning Department, Traffic Department and Police Department have sent representatives to all CTF meetings in order to answer questions. If nothing else, the citizens at least now have a good idea of what is going on in Cambridge transportation. To my knowledge, the CTF has never failed to receive any information that it has requested. This cooperation has not only helped the CTF to formulate better policy decision, but it has also alleviated what might have been an adversary relationship between the citizens and the bureaucracy.

Staff support is also an essential element. The CTF has relied so far on the assistance of MIT students. Since the work is not extremely technical, this has been an adequate arrangement. The Planning Department has been helpful in this respect by providing John and me with office space and access to clerical assistance. As an extra benefit, our presence in the office has established an informal communication link with the bureaucracy.

The MIT project of staff assistance is soon to be ended; however, the City Council has approved funds for continuing support of the CTF. The future thus looks bright for further operation.
AVENUES OF INFLUENCE

Under the present agreement the CTF is officially an advisory body to the City Council Committee on Transportation and Parking. The issues that the CTF reviews are either referred to it by the Committee or initiated with the consent of the Committee. The CTF is expected to make all of its recommendations directly to the Committee or its chairman. Since the Committee is a committee of the whole, the CTF influence is dependent on the City Council. It is unclear how much the City Council will respond though it clearly depends on the range of citizen support that the CTF can muster.

While this relationship sounds fine theoretically and gives the CTF its legitimacy, it cannot be depended upon to give the CTF much power. The City Council is a part-time position and really does not have much power itself. Unless the Council is unanimous in its policy, there is no way to enforce its position among the bureaucracy. Furthermore the councillors barely have time for their own work, much less time for the CTF. In order to truly influence transportation policy, it is clear that the Forum cannot depend exclusively on the City Council.

To make up this gap the Forum has developed other informal avenues of influence. Foremost among these is its relation with the Departments of Planning and Traffic.
There are many officials who feel a responsibility to the Forum since it was they who originated the concept. These officials have bent over backwards to be responsive to the CTF. In return the Forum has on occasion provided these departments with support. An example of this was when the Planning Department wanted to make a 24 hour truck survey in Cambridge. Lacking the adequate manpower, they requested and received volunteers from the CTF. It is this air of cooperation that has increased the informal range of CTF influence.

Most professional planners and administrators will accept any competent criticisms or suggestions. It is incumbent on the CTF to maintain its high standards and thus perpetuate this now fruitful relationship with the City departments.

RESULTS

The CTF has been fully organized and operational for little more than six months. It is thus hard to say whether it will continue to be a viable and influential organization. All indications to date are that it will.

The biggest issue that the Forum has influenced concerns the Cambridge position on the Clean Air Act of 1970. On September 4, 1973, Governor Sargent released his proposed
Clean Air Transportation Plan for the Boston Region. This plan was a modification of a plan previously proposed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Both plans were developed to achieve the air quality standards and deadlines mandated by Congress in the Clean Air Act.

In general this plan called for a series of parking restrictions aimed at reducing the number of cars coming into the area. There were two levels of severity with the more restrictive regulations applying to an inner "core" area. This distinction was critical for Cambridge since they had the option of being included in the core area. Initially the City Council decided to ask to be included. The reasoning was that otherwise Cambridge would become a parking lot for the spillover from Boston.

The Department of Planning and Development did not agree. In a report submitted for Council approval, they contended that Cambridge's inclusion in the core area would have substantial economic detriments. They went even further in some cases to oppose restrictions that were to be imposed area-wide.

In order to resolve this dilemma Councillor Duehay requested that the CTF look into the matter. The first reaction of the Forum was that the Planning Department analysis was marked with serious deficiencies. This was under-
standable in that the Department's report was prepared under a state-imposed deadline which was later extended. The Forum decided that more time and study was required before the City could formulate a position.

Over the next few months the CTF conducted an intensive investigation. A number of Forum meetings were devoted almost exclusively to the issue. At one of these meetings the planning Department was given the opportunity to present and defend their position. Other groups also appeared to present their views. All possible issues from the enforcement requirements to the health aspects were researched in detail.

Under the auspices of the Council Committee on Traffic and Parking, the Forum organized and conducted a series of public hearings on the EPA guidelines. A questionnaire was written and distributed to citizens and businesses. The results showed that citizens overwhelmingly favored the EPA guidelines with Cambridge included in the core. Even the business response showed that the economic concerns of the Planning Department were not widely shared by local businessmen.

In the final analysis the CTF recommended that the City support the EPA requirements with Cambridge included in the core area. Councillor Duehay agreed with this
position and asked for assistance in writing a report on behalf of his committee. The report, written primarily by the CTF, was presented to the Council in January 1974. One council man commented that it was "the best report to come out of the council in years." The rest of the Council agreed at least in part and adopted all of the report's recommendations. As of this writing, that report is the official Cambridge position to the State and the EPA.

This entire episode greatly enhanced the status of the CTF. The members saw that they did not need any specific delegated authority to influence decision-making in Cambridge. A coherent, responsible position with demonstrable support of the citizenry is sufficient at least in the eyes of the Council. As the first real test of the CTF under fire, this situation demonstrated that citizens not only have something worthwhile to say but also that their government will listen.

CONCLUSION

The story of the CTF bodes well for the future of citizen participation in urban policy. Amid widespread cynicism of the participatory concept, the CTF has succeeded in gaining the acceptance of citizens and government officials alike. Its benefits have been substantial in terms
of citizen education and improvement of the transportation planning process.

The key element in its success has been the attitude of government officials. The CTF is not considered as a non-symbiotic entity thrown in to satisfy federal requirements. It has instead been accepted as a valuable tool in the decision-making process. No decision has ever suffered from the addition of input.

From this position of responsibility, the citizens have acted in a responsible manner. They have gained in respect for their government and their government's problems. This is truly refreshing in an age where the people and the government seem to be drifting further apart. The next chapter proposes to extend the singular success of the CTF into general policy statements for all attempts at citizen participation.
CHAPTER THREE
CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The trend of the last few decades in urban government has been towards professionalism in planning and administration. Our elected officials have continually abdicated their power in terms of policy-making. Many major decisions are now made by professionals who have never had to worry about what will happen next fall at the ballot boxes.

This trend is not bad per se. With regard to efficiency and honesty in government, this trend has even proven to be beneficial. There is, however, a danger in the lessening of responsiveness to the needs and desires of the citizenry. When this lack of responsiveness leads to widespread dissatisfaction on the part of citizens it is clear that something must be done to increase the input of citizens in the decision-making process. Somehow the lessening of representation through elected officials must be balanced.

Citizens across the nation have been demanding greater access to the decisions once held by these professionals. The majority of the attempts to date to provide this access have resulted in failure. Many practicing and academic planners have equated this with the inherent weakness of the citizen participation concept. Such a view is indeed shortsighted. Not only are we committed to this concept by our
democratic heritage, but the reasons for failure are more often the fault of the approach rather than the ideal.

We must then continue to advocate a greater role for the citizen in urban government. This chapter proposes a number of methods which could ease the implementation of citizen participation.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PARTICIPATION

It is often hard to generalize about citizen participation. Every effort is unique and the reasons for its success or failure may be determined by the personalities involved, the issue considered or the form of government present. It is entirely conceivable that a set of circumstances exist which entirely preclude successful participation. Nevertheless it is possible to identify certain key elements which increase the chances of success.

Foremost among these elements is the need to institutionalize citizen participation. The input of citizens should not be considered as something added on to government but as an integral part of the decision-making process. This may call for actual changed in the structure of local government:

"The point of these criticisms is that if citizen involvement is to be a positive factor in the planning of the cities, then there must be a redesigning of governmental institutions and a reshaping
of administrative and political practises to incorporate citizens as legitimate actors in a way different from their normal roles as voter or recipient of programs. Presently government is not structured for a participative kind of involvement. Citizen involvement is grafted onto the structures that exist and is therefore unnatural or non-symbiotic." 26

Whether actual structural changes are required depends on the individual circumstances. The crux of the issue is that the citizen group must be seen as internal. To keep citizens outside the normal structure of government is to deny their permanence and value.

The success of citizen participation is also dependent on temporal consideration. The timing of action is sometimes as pertinent as the form of action. Participation if possible should not be in response to a crisis situation. A crisis usually implies the existence of two opposing viewpoints. In such an atmosphere it is too easy for an adversary relationship to automatically develop between the citizens and officials. One must also realize that the evolution of a responsible citizens group is a slow process. When thrown into the lurch without adequate preparation, citizens will react primarily on an emotional level.

Participation should not be initiated around a specific issue. When this occurs, citizens will enter the process with a fixed point of view, which once again sets the stage for premature conflict. This does not mean that a definite

26 Axworthy, op cit.
purpose can not be established at the beginning of the participation. Indeed it is important that the citizens know what is expected of them. The group as a whole, however, should be neutral at the onset. This initial objectivity is not possible when the participation is centered on a specific issue.

It is better to have no citizen participation than to have a half-way attempt. If the government decides to form a citizens group, it has the commitment to support that group. This means sufficient financial and staff assistance. This commitment also extends to information. Before they can truly have an impact on decision-making the citizens must have access to all relevant material, without which they can not be expected to reach a coherent, rational position.

In a related argument, if the government initiates citizen participation, it must be willing to accept what the citizens have to say. It is for this reason that it is preferable that the government who initiates the participation also be the government which is participated in. Many of the problems in poverty and urban renewal resulted from the fact that the federal government dictated what the local governments had to live with. It may take more time, but it would be better if citizen participation at the local level were initiated by local government. To
go through the motions without a firm commitment is an exercise in futility.

There are bound to be conflicts between the citizens and the government. If there were not, there would be no reason for citizen participation. There must thus be mechanisms and techniques to accommodate debate and discussion of differences in position. Enough communication must exist so that even if the conflicts can not be resolved, both sides understand the reasoning behind the other's position. In the final analysis, the decision rests ultimately with the government. It is our elected or appointed officials who must bear the responsibility for government action. I therefore do not believe that citizen groups should have any delegated authority. Their power instead results from an ability to influence officials. If it is clear that the citizen group represents the community, the officials will listen.

In terms of the make-up of the group, it is always the safest policy to exclude no one from participation. When one begins to impose restrictions, it is hard to set the limit. We do not want a return to the elite group of "leading citizens". These citizens will probably make up the majority under an open system anyway. It is important not to prevent any citizen from taking an active role in his government. When citizen participation becomes
institutionalized and is no longer seen as a way to "get back" at officials, only those who are willing to work will remain.

Although citizen participation under this new system becomes part of the government, a certain amount of independence is still required. Citizens should be allowed to determine their own leadership and organization. To impose these from above automatically puts citizens in a subordinate role. Citizens will have a far stronger commitment to something that they created. This also averts later criticism that the government was only interested in token participation.

Many of these requirements for successful citizen participation can be attributed to the correct attitude. There must be the attitude on the part of elected officials, concerned professionals and citizens that the plans are the end product of their joint efforts. Officials must not consider participation as a lessening of their authority but as an additional input for better decision-making. Citizens must not enter the effort with the feeling that planners and officials are their adversaries but rather that they are partners in the effort to make things better. Only when this cooperation exists can citizen participation be utilized to the mutual benefit of all.

-67-
SUMMARY

It is too late to dismiss the concept of citizen participation with the excuse that it raises conflicts or is inefficient. Our urban problems require that we use every means available to identify and fill the needs of the urban citizen. This can only be accomplished if our government has a better idea of what the needs are.

No one, especially the author, will contend that citizen participation is an easy concept to implement. The notion that the people and the government are somehow natural enemies has been deeply ingrained. Although a certain wariness is healthy, this should not be taken to the extreme where the government is so out of touch with the people that it can no longer serve them. It is essential that we commit ourselves to the concept that people have the right to a strong voice in the operation of their government. The only solution is a concerted attempt at citizen participation.

This chapter has proposed a philosophy by which we can successfully reap the gains of active citizen participation without suffering undue detriment. The road is long and arduous and there will undoubtedly be many failures along the way. But the benefits are great and definitely within our reach. With the government and the people finally working together, we can not lose.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


-69-


