Making the Metro Connections: Integrating MPO Transportation Planning with Land Use and Intermodal Planning

by

Karen Kho

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning on May 15, 1995 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of City Planning

Abstract

A challenge for metropolitan America of the 1990’s is to address traffic congestion, infrastructure service overloads and other urban problems within a fragmented local governance system. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 tackled this challenge by encouraging multi-agency coordination and empowering Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in the regional decision making process.

This thesis examines current and historical links between transportation and regional activities for land use and intermodal planning. The federal government has been instrumental in shaping regional planning, but in the past, implementation failed at the local level where regional planning was never embraced. Early reviews and surveys of post-ISTEA planning show that the state of practice remains far from the objectives of ISTEA. MPOs have little communication with local governments, which inhibits effective coordination between transportation and land use planning. In intermodal planning, particularly for freight movement, MPOs face a steep learning curve.

The author interviewed planning professionals in two regions, Miami, Florida and Syracuse, New York, to identify obstacles to coordination and opportunities to strengthen linkages. Obstacles to coordinating transportation and land use activities include limited MPO jurisdiction, dispersed planning responsibilities, conflicts with private property rights, poor local planning capacity and the lack of state support. Intermodal planning can be hampered by complicated financial arrangements, the absence of project evaluation methods, unclear MPO roles, lack of multi-agency coordination, and no State support.

To further strengthen linkages, this paper recommends consolidating single-purpose federal agencies, creating new intergovernmental grant programs, letting MPOs administer these new programs, dedicating funding for these programs, providing local assistance for land use planning, and changing the incentive structure for the private sector. In conclusion, ISTEA takes a good first step in encouraging more collaborative and integrated planning. MPOs should be given a chance to build up their technical capacity, because they can provide a needed structure for addressing the vexing urban problems of congestion, growth, environmental quality and economic development.

Thesis Supervisor: Frederick P. Salvucci
Title: Senior Lecturer, Department of Civil Engineering
Biographical Note

Karen Kho received a Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies with Honors and Departmental Citation from the University of California at Berkeley in 1992. Following graduation, she became a John Gardner Fellow in Public Service and worked for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the metropolitan planning organization for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. At MTC she contributed to development of the long-range transportation plan, in particular, coordinating the public outreach program. Karen has also worked for the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Taubman Center for State and Local Government at Harvard University, and the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center of the US Department of Transportation. At the Volpe Center, she participated in the joint Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration enhanced planning reviews of metropolitan planning organizations. During her second year in the M.C.P. program at MIT, Karen received a Federal Highway Administration Eisenhower Grant for Research. In fall 1995 she will begin working as a Policy Analyst in the Office of the Secretary, US Department of Transportation in Washington DC. She obtained her position through the Presidential Management Intern Program, a 2-year career development program in the federal service.
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I. Introduction

"After a decade of decentralization of authority and responsibility, urban transportation planning is faced with the problems of low density land development patterns, congestion and air pollution which need to be addressed at the regional scale or even on a Statewide basis. The institutional arrangement in most urban areas, however, does not lend itself to coordination and integration of the various elements needed to bring about more efficient land use patterns. The institutional arrangement is fragmented vertically between various levels of government; horizontally among the large number of local units of government; and functionally among transportation, land use, air quality and other service areas."

A challenge for metropolitan America of the 1990's is to overcome the mismatch between fragmented local institutions and the scale of regional problems. To effectively address transportation and other quality of life issues, local, regional and state agencies must transcend their narrowly defined jurisdictional boundaries and functional responsibilities. They must improve institutional structures by ensuring democratic control over metropolitan policies, while preventing policy gridlock and parochialism. As Charles Royer, former mayor of Seattle, said, "With one or two exceptions, no government structure or means of governance is in place to allow for democratic decision making across the real community, and there is no constituency for these emerging regional communities. The problem is that there are regional problems and local governments."

Of course, the problems of urban America cannot be attributed solely to governance failures. An ongoing conflict between individual and societal rights shapes the debate over the appropriate public role in regulating private activities. Since the 1980's the American public has become more skeptical of government's role in society and has favored increasing individual freedoms at the expense of larger societal objectives. Many of the legal, institutional and political changes taking place today are a result of this shift in perception. This lack of trust in public institutions complicates the task and makes it more difficult to address urban problems.

The prevailing local governance system, characterized by its fragmentation, has led to growing disparities between declining central cities and rapidly expanding suburbs. It has resulted in traffic congestion and infrastructure service overloads throughout metropolitan areas. In the area of land use planning, the problems of cumulative development impacts and spillover effects are not effectively addressed by local governments. These problems

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and others have led some scholars and practitioners to advocate new, more effective institutional structures.

The record on regional government

Regional governance is an option which has resurfaced over the years as a potential solution to urban problems, usually as an attempt to manage growth. However, the establishment of a truly comprehensive regional body, with authority over all major governmental functions, is an unrealistic solution to local fragmentation. Gaining popular support for regional government would be an uphill battle: "In most areas there is little political support for true metropolitan government because it runs contrary to the perceived self-interest of most citizens." American citizens tend to support smaller government entities, with decisions made at the lowest level possible. Most people believe metropolitan governments will be less accessible and less sympathetic to individual concerns. Increasing tensions between central cities and their wealthier suburbs exacerbate the problem. Suburban residents resist being lumped with central cities, but they also reject local suburban governments being combined into a larger agency. A regional government might eliminate the need for duplicate suburban administrative functions, thus sparking fear of losing local control.

Historically, the federal government has played a strong role in shaping and defining metropolitan structures and planning. Attempts to establish true regional governments date back to the 1920's, but most of these efforts have failed. Implementation broke down at the local level, where regional planning was never embraced: "Regional planning was not as effective as its protagonists had hoped. It was mainly a creature of federal initiatives, and frequently did not receive more than nominal support from member governments... Moreover though one of the major objectives was to ensure that individual federally funded projects were in harmony with metropolitan or regional plans, such plans often did not exist." Some exceptions exist, such as the Portland Metro and Twin Cities' Metro Council, but these agencies arose mainly through local initiatives.

In the absence of a single, multi-functional regional agency, responsibilities have been distributed among multiple regional entities. Unfortunately, the existing agencies tend to be weak and specialized. In few regions of the country do regional governments wield real influence. Although many regional agencies were established to address growth problems, land use controls remain firmly under local jurisdiction. Different regional agencies may disagree about what "regional" priorities and needs are. While one agency's mission may be to enhance regional air quality, another's objective may be to increase local economic development prospects. To further complicate matters, the jurisdictions of these agencies

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may overlap or they may fail to encompass the problems. Rather than coordinating policy and planning, regional entities may waste resources battling over turf and funding.

**ISTEA and regional planning**

In the area of urban transportation planning, a new experiment in regional governance is taking place. The recent Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 attempts to bridge the gap between regional problems and local institutions by empowering Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to play a pivotal role in regional decision making. MPOs have been responsible for transportation planning in the nation’s urbanized areas since the 1970’s. Although federal initiatives have shifted direction with different administrations, metropolitan agencies currently enjoy an unprecedented window of opportunity. ISTEA gives these specialized and previously weak regional agencies the chance to explore their potential for becoming more influential regional players. Since MPOs are now responsible for making some transportation project funding decisions, they have assumed new importance for localities and states. ISTEA also set new standards for the cooperation and integration of planning activities.

Much of the responsibility for achieving ISTEA’s multi-modal, multi-disciplinary objectives lies with regional agencies, traditionally the weakest link in the federal system. Despite renewed interest in metropolitan planning, the historical record and popular sentiment do not bode well for success. Many in the transportation community are waiting to see whether MPOs are up to the tasks ISTEA laid out for them.\(^6\) Given the current political climate, it seems the trend toward decentralization from the federal government to lower levels of government will continue. However, whether metropolitan agencies will be strengthened or weakened depends on how effectively they build a local constituency for their services and overcome the obstacles to implementation of ISTEA’s objectives.

**Land use and intermodal planning**

In strengthening MPOs and requiring them to cooperate with other agencies, ISTEA is taking a new approach to regional governance. Rather than creating rigid federal regulations or imposing a new layer of government which could override local priorities, the emphasis is on flexibility and building a consensus among different regional interests. Through its planning regulations and Management Systems requirements, ISTEA encourages stronger linkages between transportation and other forms of metropolitan planning. Two areas specifically mentioned in the legislation as requiring increased coordination are land use and intermodal planning. MPO activities in these areas depend on the voluntary cooperation of other agencies in coordinating policies and plan implementation, because planning activities in these two areas have occurred, to a large degree, outside the context of MPO transportation planning.

Intermodal improvements, which require collaboration among multiple agencies, both public and private, have been neglected by the urban transportation planning process. The

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private sector has engaged in intermodal planning of freight activity, but historically, MPOs have not incorporated the concerns of freight movement into the planning process. Existing intermodal facilities like seaports and airports often lack adequate public road access to their facilities. Intermodal passenger facility planning has not been well coordinated among operating agencies, despite the fact that many transit operators participate in the urban transportation planning process. Multi-modal or multi-operator improvements are left without strong advocates or vocal constituencies during the project prioritization process, because each operator competes with others for funding of their own improvements.

Land use considerations, although not new to transportation planning, have not been addressed effectively by the existing planning process either. Transportation plans have been developed independently of land use plans, in part because most MPOs have no jurisdiction over land use planning. In most areas, regional land use plans do not exist, and local land use planning may be voluntary. Unless MPOs can better integrate their work with local governments, they will continue to find themselves in the position of responding to development expansion, rather than planning for optimal use of transportation facilities. "The lack of cooperative planning among jurisdictions is the root cause of many of the mobility problems faced in America...A regional focus... is necessary if spillover problems like traffic jams (as well as solid waste and community facility sitings etc.) are to be dealt with successfully and jobs-housing imbalances narrowed."? Integrating the MPO transportation planning process with other local and regional planning activities may, in the long run, prove to be far more difficult than mastering the significant technical requirements of ISTEA. To overcome the limitations of jurisdiction, authority and funding, MPOs must establish solid working relationships with local, regional and state agencies and private sector interests. They must rely on other organizations and structures to implement supportive and complementary policies. Can such a mixed bag of organizations collaborate in developing effective regional policies? With about three years of experience in implementing ISTEA, we can begin to assess what is being accomplished.

Research objectives

Will a more collaborative and cooperative approach to regional planning succeed where past efforts have failed? In this paper I will examine the current and historical links between transportation and regional activities for land use and intermodal planning. I will outline ISTEA's requirements for integrating transportation with other forms of regional planning, especially for land use and intermodal planning, and discuss the ability of MPOs to meet these mandates. The success or failure of MPOs in integrating their activities has broader consequences for regional governments in general.

I will explore the obstacles likely to arise for MPOs and the impacts of their success or failure in addressing these challenges. In particular, I will focus on the institutional factors that pose obstacles for integration and suggest ways to overcome them. Although

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significant technical challenges exist in these areas, such as the need for a new generation of travel and land use models, there are other research efforts focused on these areas. Rather than emphasizing technical factors, my research will address how the MPO can do better land use and intermodal planning, given its inherent shortcomings. In order for technical factors to have greater influence in decision making, MPOs must establish their legitimacy in the regional forum and integrate their activities with those of other agencies.

As the first major post-Interstate era surface transportation legislation, ISTEA is understandably a work in progress. While breaking new ground in many areas, ISTEA left numerous issues unresolved. For example, how do MPOs coordinate their long range transportation plans with local land use plans if those plans do not exist? To what extent can different regional planning activities truly be integrated? Will MPOs forge new partnerships and exercise their authority? Can they effectively address regional problems and achieve the goals of ISTEA? These are some questions which warrant examination as the reauthorization of ISTEA approaches. I hope to assess MPOs' ability to overcome these barriers to integration and recommend a more fully integrated logic for ISTEA reauthorization or further rulemaking.
II. Identifying the Key Players

The transportation planning process takes place predominately in the public sector, involving multiple levels of government and functional agencies. To the non-transportation professional, this process may seem a confusing alphabet soup of acronyms. Thus, it is useful to identify the key players and their responsibilities before embarking on a review of historical relationships and events. The following description is by no means inclusive of all transportation related agencies, but it accounts for the major players in transportation, land use and intermodal planning in most states.

Federal agencies

The federal government sets national policy and provides financial and technical assistance to states and localities. It has exercised considerable influence through the requirements attached to financial assistance, in particular, the requirement that projects be based on an urban transportation planning process. Federal initiatives have been instrumental in shaping and defining metropolitan planning activities: "Through its evolutionary development, the urban transportation planning process has been called upon to address a continuous stream of new issues and concerns, methodological developments, advances in technology, and changing attitudes. Usually it was the requirements from the federal government to which the planning process was responding." At times, the requirements have been detailed and time consuming, but at others they have been more flexible.

The first federal transportation agency, the US Bureau of Public Roads, was created in 1916 as part of the Department of Commerce. When the Department of Transportation (DOT) was established in 1966, the Bureau of Public Roads was transferred to it and renamed the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). FHWA was followed, in 1968, by the Urban Mass Transit Administration which is now called the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). FHWA and FTA are the most closely involved in MPO transportation planning, and each agency maintains regional offices as well as headquarters in Washington, DC. Over time DOT gradually expanded to include the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Maritime Administration (MARAD), Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), the National Highway Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Office of Intermodalism. The most recent addition to DOT, the Office of Intermodalism, was established by ISTEA to promote intermodal transportation.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was created in 1965 to better coordinate urban programs at the federal level and was originally responsible for mass transit programs. HUD also funded comprehensive planning activities in urban areas, including housing and land use studies and attempted to "facilitate comprehensive planning for urban development, including coordinated transportation systems, on a continuing basis." Since the Urban Mass Transit Administration (UMTA), now called FTA, moved

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8 Weiner p.261.
9 Weiner, p. 37.
from HUD to DOT, HUD’s role in transportation planning has diminished considerably. However, it still remains a source of funding for planning grants, such as the Community Development Block Grant Program.

Following the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has become more important to transportation planning. The 1990 CAAA outlines a plan for achieving ambient air quality in the country, and ISTEA provides the “tooth” to implement it. States which fail to make progress in achieving air quality goals risk losing their funding for transportation programs. Transportation plans and programs must pass the test of air quality “conformity” before they can be approved. These actions require a new level of coordination and cooperation among functional agencies.

Congress, with its two Houses, committees, and subcommittees, plays a central role in shaping transportation policy and legislation. The House recently restructured its committees and consolidated all transportation-related activities into the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. On the Senate side, the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and the Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee have responsibility for transportation-related legislation. Both Houses have appropriations committees, which are responsible for appropriating funds to DOT and related agencies. Major program changes or agency restructuring must be approved by Congress in order to take effect.

State agencies
State Departments of Transportation are the key transportation agencies below the federal level. Most are responsible for the construction, operation and maintenance of highway facilities. Much of their technical capacity was built up during the Interstate Era, when the federal government strongly encouraged the construction of a national system of highways. As a result, their staffs tend to be large and dominated by engineers. In some parts of the country, state DOTs are directly involved in urban transportation planning. The responsibilities placed on MPOs generated resistance from the states, who feared that MPOs would become another layer of government that preempted the states' right of self-determination.

Governors and State Legislatures influence the transportation planning process through various actions, such as passing legislation which complements federal programs, raising matching state revenues (through sales taxes, gas taxes, etc.) and encouraging local planning activities. In some states they have played key roles in establishing land use planning systems that are coordinated with transportation. Some states, predominantly on the east coast, exert substantial control over the regional agencies. This may be partly explained by the smaller size of east coast states, and the importance of the metropolitan region to the state’s well-being. The current trend in federal transportation policy is to decentralize as much responsibility to the local or state level as possible.
Regional agencies

The regional level of government, traditionally the weakest in the federal system, is the major focus of this study. Joint highway/transit planning regulations issued by UMTA and FHWA in the mid-70's laid the groundwork for regional agencies. They established Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to produce long range plans and programs for transportation in urbanized areas. Some of their funding and responsibilities were curtailed during the 1980's, but ISTEA recently enhanced their responsibilities and decision making power. MPO policy boards are comprised of appointed public officials from local and state agencies.

Councils of Government (COGs) or Associations of Governments are in some cases the same agency as the MPO. They are responsible for regional land use planning activities and coordinating with local agencies. Most COGs lack sufficient authority to implement or enforce their plans, and thus rely on the voluntary efforts of their member organizations. Their role is often limited to doing forecasting and providing technical assistance to local governments. Some regions may have Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) instead of COGs. RPAs engage in similar activities as COGs, and may be the same agency designated as the MPO. They may be responsible for coordinating local land use planning or developing regional development projections.

Transit operators in some regions have substantial planning capacity, and their long range plans can have major impacts on land use. However, they are not necessarily well-integrated into the transportation planning process, and their objectives may differ from those stated in MPO long range plans. Transit operators do not have voting rights or representation on many MPO Policy Boards. Airports and seaports are usually independently operated or associated with a city government. Planning activities are undertaken independently of the urban transportation planning process, and their financing usually comes from non-highway sources. As a result, their objectives may also conflict with those of the MPO. They may work more closely with private sector freight interests (see below) that they depend on for business.

Local agencies

City and county governments generally have responsibility for land use planning and maintaining local roads. Local governments generally have been more supportive of ISTEA's provision for empowering MPOs than the States, because it brought programming decisions closer to home. However, they are still skeptical that an additional level of government will erode local influence and become unresponsive to local needs. Local governments usually desire to retain strong control over zoning and land use plans. Economic development agencies may be established to attract new economic opportunities to an area or to revitalize existing ones. These agencies work with developers and other private interests and try to secure funding for improvements from various sources. In some areas, they have played a critical role in facilitating intermodal transportation improvements that have economic development benefits.
**Private sector interests**

For various reasons, proposals to "involve the private sector" have received much attention lately. Current disillusionment with a large central government role and criticism of inefficient bureaucracies has fueled strong anti-government sentiments. Government critics believe the private sector is more efficient and should take over functions that government currently handles. They see a greater role for public provision of services, such as privatization of transit services. Other interest in the private sector is driven by the diminishing public revenues available for transportation services. To fill the gap in resources, some envision the private sector paying for facilities and services that the public sector cannot afford. ISTEA calls for greater private sector involvement, but it does not necessarily mean the direct provision or financing of services. Instead, it represents a shift to a more customer-oriented transportation system. As providers of facilities and services, the public sector needs to improve communication with its customers and consumers. The private sector, in this sense, represents the people who use the system. In particular, private involvement is necessary to enhance understanding of goods movement.

Private sector interests run the gamut from small local developers to multinational corporations. They include national trucking associations representing many small providers as well as transcontinental providers. The major national railroad companies are fewer in number and well-organized. They lost much business to trucks in the post-Interstate era, but recently have begun collaborating with truckers for intermodal movement. Railroads may benefit from participating in the urban transportation planning process, because they can trumpet the benefits of improved local access to their facilities. But major shipping companies, with worldwide operations, may not see any benefits to involvement with MPOs. Multinational shipping firms have a major influence on the economic development of regions, depending on where they locate their business, but they rarely become involved in regional planning. The current system of localized seaport and freight planning has created intense competition among regions, which benefits shippers but does not offer reasonable local returns. Numerous firms provide freight services, and many small scale operations, such as trucking companies, have little time and experience with government processes. Transportation contractors are a major private sector group which has a stake in the planning process, however, they do not represent the customers of the transportation system.

Private sector involvement must be managed carefully. If the purpose of involvement is to communicate their concerns about the transportation system’s performance, that is one thing. But if they think that they are being invited in so that they can foot the bill for transportation facilities and services, they will be less keen on participating. Establishing partnerships between public and private interests may require bridging a cultural gap. How do private operators interact and communicate with planners and engineers? How can the short-term time frames of private firms fit into the longer-term planning process?

In some areas, predominantly California, **transportation management organizations** (TMOs), or **transportation management associations** (TMAs) provide a private sector option for coordinating transportation and land use activities. These organizations are...
formed by private entities, such as businesses, employers, and developers to address transportation issues. Increasingly, developers are using TMAs as a way of mitigating the transportation impacts of their projects. Although they vary in size and scope, all are dedicated to reducing congestion and tend to focus on employee trips. Most have non-profit status and operate with funding from private sector members. Since TMAs are fairly new, their effectiveness in travel demand management is difficult to measure.
III. History of Planning, Programs, and Coordination

A historical review of programs for urban planning reveals multiple attempts to improve coordination among different urban-oriented programs and encourage regional planning. Most of these efforts were initiated by the federal government, and the results have been mixed. They illustrate some of the constraints to linking metropolitan planning activities and provide a baseline from which to evaluate current initiatives.

A. The transportation planning process

An enormous public works program, one which became the driving force in urban transportation planning for over 30 years, was created in the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956. The federal initiative to develop a National System of Interstate and Defense Highways was accompanied by substantial funds for the construction of this system. An irresistible 90% federal/10% local match requirement was offered as an incentive to the States. The Interstate program reinforced the strong role of the State DOTs and engineers in the transportation decision making process. As an enormous construction program, the Interstate program required hundreds of engineers to surmount the technical challenges. States, as the main local conduit for federal funding, greatly strengthened their highway planning capacity and trained a whole generation of transportation professionals. The Interstate program dominated transportation planning because it provided a guaranteed stream of highway funding, in the absence of a corresponding program for mass transit.

Urban transportation planning

The urban transportation planning process started up after World War II, when renewed planning efforts began to address the problems of postwar suburban growth. Urban highways and transit facilities were showing significant wear and tear from increased use and deferred maintenance during the war. The transportation demands of booming suburbs quickly began to strain the existing capacity in the nation’s infrastructure. Aging transit facilities, rising transit fares and the growing popularity of the automobile contributed to a marked decline in transit ridership, which had reached an all time high during wartime. At the same time, rural roads were carrying far more vehicles than anticipated.

Meanwhile, mass transit systems were suffering from severe financial pressures. Declining ridership, deferred maintenance needs, and increased labor costs contributed to their problems. The Housing Act of 1961 addressed some of mass transit’s needs by offering low-cost loans and making planning assistance available for comprehensive planning activities. Further assistance for transit came after the Department of Housing and Urban Development was created in the 1965 Housing Act. Mass transportation was considered an urban program under HUD’s jurisdiction, and HUD helped define the process, strategies and evaluation tools for transit planning.

In 1962, the Federal-Aid Highway Act required urban areas to engage in a “continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative” (3C) transportation planning process. This was the first actual requirement for planning as a condition for receiving federal funding. The
Department of Commerce and later DOT interpreted the act as encouraging cooperation among different levels and functions of government, requiring periodic review and update of plans, and incorporating 10 basic elements as follows:

"1. Economic factors affecting development; 2. Population; 3. Land use; 4. Transportation facilities including those for mass transportation; 5. Travel patterns; 6. Terminal and transfer facilities; 7. Traffic control features; Zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, building codes, etc.; 9. Financial resources; 10. Social and community-value factors, such as preservation of open space, parks and recreational facilities; preservation of historical sites and buildings; environmental amenities; and aesthetics."¹⁰

Throughout the 1960's, great progress was made in developing transportation planning methodology and training transportation professionals. By the late 60's the 3C planning process was established firmly in most urban areas. The momentum of the highway program spurred further research in areas, such as forecasting, and set technical standards in the field. Despite the overall improvements in transportation methodology, the federal role in mass transportation remained small.

**Federal agency restructuring**

Through a combination of factors, the transportation planning process for urban areas became very disjointed and complicated. Federal programs for transportation grew in number and complexity throughout the 50's and 60's. Little coordination of grant requirements or project approval and implementation processes existed, which lead to actions designed to streamline the processes. Changes in institutional structure came before changes in programs. The Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) was established under HUD, so DOT and HUD shared mass transportation responsibilities. The Department of Transportation (DOT) was established in 1966 to coordinate the different transportation programs and promote national transportation policy. HUD and DOT were elevated to Cabinet level status in an attempt to better integrate their activities. UMTA was transferred to DOT during the restructuring, but the division of responsibilities for mass transportation was not clear. It took over a year for HUD and DOT to agree on their respective roles.

However, departmental changes did not simplify the planning process. Federal transportation agencies had been organized by mode, which each one establishing its own requirements for transportation grants. The two administrations most closely linked to the urban transportation planning process, FHWA and UMTA (now FTA) developed different guidelines for projects. The lack of coordination among these modal administrations led to a proliferation of transportation grants and programs. Categorical funding programs placed severe restrictions on types of projects eligible for funds: urban primary streets,

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¹⁰ Weiner, p. 45.
secondary streets, etc. The complexity and narrow scope of these programs made the planning process complex and difficult to administer.

There was even greater lack of coordination between the other transportation administrations and the urban transportation planning process. FAA, MARAD, and FRA served different constituencies and each administered separate budgets and plans. This created financial and jurisdictional conflicts over projects such as providing local access to airports. FAA maintains that its funding, coming from aviation consumers, should only go towards facilities which are part of an airport, and that local jurisdictions are responsible for providing adequate local road access. On the other hand, local jurisdictions often believed that the airport expansion caused the need for road improvements, and therefore should pay for improvements through their own coffers. The squabbling about who should pay for airport-related improvements has yet to be resolved.

Federal program coordination

The urban planning process came under increasing public criticism during the late 60’s and early 70’s for being too highway-oriented and complicated. To compensate for the modal imbalance in funding, capital programs were made available for mass transit programs. Amid "widespread concern that the planning and programming process had become too inflexible and cumbersome," the federal government implemented new strategies to improve intergovernmental coordination. This time, they focused on urban areas, rather than the federal bureaucracy.

In the early 70’s DOT set up intermodal planning programs to integrate planning for separate modes. Intermodal planning groups were organized (IPGs) in each of the 10 DOT regions. The IPGs reviewed transportation planning activities in urban areas coordinated federal funding through a single agency in each region. In 1973, DOT required all urbanized areas to submit annual unified work programs for transportation as a condition for DOT planning funds. This requirement coordinated HUD and DOT funding for planning activities. The establishment of Federal Regional Councils was another attempt to coordinate all federal funding. These councils, comprised of federal officials, were set up in some regions.

Local infrastructure planning

Local governments fit into the transportation process by proposing infrastructure improvements in their annual budget cycle. Most local infrastructure needs are reflected in a 6-year capital improvements program (CIP) and updated annually. Some of these improvements will be funded through general city funds, while others will passed on to developers through exactions and impact fees. Another portion of CIP projects are passed on for consideration by the regional agency and state government. These projects will compete with those from other municipalities and regions for state and federal funding.

\[^{11}\text{Weiner, p. 137.}\]
Developers are often required to fund transportation improvements as part of the mitigation requirements for their projects, usually identified in environmental impact reports (EIRs). Some municipalities require developers to contribute money for unspecified or indirect improvements, such as bike lane construction. Other mitigation requirements involve direct transportation improvements, such as putting in a traffic signal. When developer funds are used to replace inadequate public funds, their privately funded transportation improvements may bypass the regular process for construction. As a result, they can have a strong influence on the timing, design and nature of infrastructure improvements.

B. The evolution of regional planning agencies

Federal attempts to streamline the urban transportation planning process and improve coordination with regional land use planning fostered the growth of multipurpose planning agencies at the regional level. Through grants and planning requirements for project funding, the federal government has shaped and defined metropolitan structures and planning. Only a few regional agencies, such as the Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, were established independent of federal initiatives. In most other parts of the country, HUD and DOT programs provided the impetus for regional planning.

Program and Regional Councils

The HUD 701 program was the first major federal initiative to encourage planning activities at the local level. While the 3C planning process was taking root in the transportation sector, Section 701 of the federal Housing Act in 1954 defined comprehensive planning. It recognized the urban planning process as the forum for addressing urban problems and authorized funds for planning assistance to state, city and other municipal planning agencies.

Subsequent national housing acts clarified the planning provisions of the 1954 legislation and expanded its scope. The HUD Act of 1965 encouraged formation of regional planning organizations or regional councils governed by elected rather than appointed officials, such as councils of government (COGs). The 1970 Act allowed funding of metropolitan and regional agencies and sought to "encourage an orderly process of urban growth and the formulation of local plans and policies. The act indicated that planning should occur on a region-wide basis within the framework of comprehensive planning." Regional councils are the main source of demographic data and projections in a region. However, local governments often disagree about regional projections which counter their own interests. Although regional councils are supposed to provide a forum for local governments to coordinate their policies, they "often devolve into elaborate games of mutual backscratching rather than significant tradeoffs among divergent interests."

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13 Weiner. p. 32.

14 Porter, p. 67.
Their regional plans are usually advisory and lack the force of implementation. Although some regional councils have additional powers, many have not exercised power over local governments.

**Agencies**

The lack of coordination between urban planning processes led to establishment a single project review process in urban areas. Congress passed the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1968, which required federal agencies to inform state governors and legislators of the purpose and amounts of grants in their state. Circular No. A-95, which provided guidance in implementing the Act, contained "the most definitive federal statement of the process through which planning for urban areas should be accomplished. Its emphasis was not on substance but on process and on the intergovernmental linkages required to carry out the process."\(^{15}\)

To implement the task of intergovernmental coordination, the Bureau of the Budget required "clearinghouses" to be designated in each state and metropolitan area. Known as the A-95 agencies, the regional clearinghouses reviewed and commented on local projects proposed for federal funding based on their compatibility with comprehensive plans. They coordinated work with other agencies whose plans and programs might be affected by the federally funded projects. The A-95 review agencies had a general planning purpose and conducted land use and housing studies, although some assumed multifunctional responsibilities, including transportation planning.

**Metropolitan Planning Organizations**

Regional planning gained a higher profile after the joint highway/transit planning regulations were issued by UMTA and FHWA in 1975. The regulations laid the groundwork for creating Metropolitan Planning Agencies (MPOs) and was the largest effort so far to encourage multimodal planning: "The new requirement was expanding the previous requirement on what was considered to be desirable planning process and was focused on what was considered to be desirable planning institution."\(^{16}\) Some A-95 review agencies were designated as MPOs, and in places where two agencies differed, a clear division of responsibilities was required. The primary role of MPOs was to carry out the 3C planning process in each region and serve as a conduit for federal funding. MPOs were responsible for developing an organizational prospectus, work programs, transportation plans, and transportation programs. To accomplish these tasks, they had to integrate state, local, and metropolitan interests.

**The 1980's**

The 1980's marked an era of diminished resources for regional planning and downsizing of federal programs for urban planning. In all areas except transportation, federal involvement in regional planning was sharply curtailed. Ronald Reagan abolished the A-

\(^{15}\) Weiner, p. 78.

process in 1982, amid concerns that the process had become too cumbersome and time consuming. His executive order encouraged state and local processes for intergovernmental coordination instead of federal planning requirements. He sought to increase federal responsiveness to local concerns by allowing states to develop their own process in consultation with local governments. There was a shift to self-certification of planning activities. Overall, the record on regional programs remains mixed: “Planning grants and mandatory requirements (e.g. for "consistency with the comprehensive plan" of proposals involving federal grants, and for the planned provision of affordable housing) were of some effectiveness, although the potential was ‘largely unrealized.’”

Metropolitan planning organizations continued to do transportation planning, but the lack of federal funding and guidelines for programs left them isolated from other types of planning and deprived them of supplementary sources of planning assistance -from former players like HUD and EPA. They faced increasing criticism on several fronts. Federal agencies felt that MPOs were not effectively implementing federal programs, while local government viewed them too concerned with federal programs and not enough with local needs and problems. Most MPOs failed to forge local and state partnerships, and consequently lost legitimacy when federal funding dried up. Local and other regional agencies came to see MPOs as usurping local government functions, operating almost as a fourth level of government. Local governments, by and large, did not foot the bill that the federal government passed on. As a result, the planning capacity of MPOs was diminished considerably.

C. The land use planning system

The goal of linking transportation with other forms of regional planning is not a new objective. In 1962 a report discussing the objectives of urban mass transportation recommended that "we must be sure transportation planning and construction are integral parts of general development planning and programming...federal aid for urban transportation should be made available only when urban communities have prepared or are preparing up-to-date general plans for the entire urban area which relate transportation plans to land-use and development plans." The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1962 also required that urban areas consider land use as an element of the 3C planning process. But over 30 years later, planners are still trying to make the connection between transportation and land use plans.

Federal (HUD) programs

The federal government has avoided direct involvement in land use planning, because land use regulation is primarily a state function. It issued a Standard State Zoning Enabling Act in the 1920’s and has encouraged comprehensive planning, but its programs were usually not linked to the local development process. Other HUD programs, including Model Cities and Community Block Grants provided funding for comprehensive planning.

17 Cullingworth, p. 244.
18 Tomazinis, p. 28.
19 Weiner, p.40
at the local level. However, these programs included many socio-economic aspects and
did not have widespread effects on the land use planning system. Comprehensive
planning, as established by the HUD 701 Program, took place in the context of urban
renewal, and consequently, most of its proposals focused on revitalizing city centers. One
underlying assumption of comprehensive planning was that different land uses were
incompatible and should be separated. As a result, comprehensive plans tended to divided
cities into areas with different purposes, such as downtown office development, apartment
houses with retail, or residential.

Most importantly, comprehensive planning provided a framework for coordinating
development with transportation programs. The Interstate program had been authorized
without any provision for coordinating highway building with development in urban areas.
By virtue of the fact that major sums of federal funding were available in both the
Interstate and 701 programs, city planners began to combine the two in promoting
metropolitan development. Many regions envisioned a transportation system consisting of
beltways surrounding central cities with spokes connecting it to outlying areas. It may
have seemed a well-coordinated federal strategy for urban areas, but it arose largely
through local initiative: “Far from being a grand national enterprise, or a fantastic
conspiracy by special interests, as some critics charged, the form taken by metropolitan
development, and the specific concentration of federal subsidies on saving the central city,
were consequences for the most part of efforts by large-city political and economic
interests.”\textsuperscript{20} Nevertheless, planning activities followed the direction of federal funding.
Comprehensive plans encouraged highway construction, because they brought a dedicated
and guaranteed source of funding to regions, and it could be coordinated with downtown
revitalization efforts.

The Johnson administration created the Model Cities program, which targeted the poorest
urban neighborhoods and sought to coordinate federal programs for metropolitan
development. It emphasized citizen participation and hoped to stimulate local solutions;
however, it required cities to develop complex and technical proposals which were subject
to HUD evaluation and oversight. The amount of local planning that actually took place
fell far short of expectations. Lack of support in the business community, including real
estate developers, played a large part in the demise of the program. The Model Cities
program attempted to strengthen regional councils of government, which had been
established earlier. Metropolitan planning agencies were supposed to coordinate all
regional programs and review local HUD proposals. Although many new regional
planning agencies were created and accomplished their review tasks, they failed to
increase their stature in local political spheres and “no progress towards true metropolitan
planning resulted.”\textsuperscript{21}

In the early 70’s the Community Development Block Grant programs was established.
Richard Nixon combined urban renewal, Model Cities, and other urban programs into

\textsuperscript{21} Fox, p. 204.
community development "block" grants. Despite the Watergate scandal, Congress approved Nixon's major reforms and revisions of urban development programs. Community Development Block Grants went to the mayor or other chief administrator and were supposed to target lower-income citizens and ensure citizen participation. However, HUD no longer had the ability to withhold funds if the cities failed to achieve this objective or if they submitted inadequate plans. Block grants were integrated into the general city budget and independent development authorities were eliminated. Given this new freedom, local governments selected some questionable projects, such as golf courses and wave-making machines. Rather than targeting lower income areas, the funds were widely distributed throughout cities.

During the 1980's, funds for economic development and urban renewal were eliminated, but Reagan supported one new urban program, called Enterprise Zones. Modeled after British enterprise zones which lifted planning restrictions and property taxes in selected industrial areas, the American version consisted of tax breaks and regulatory relief to businesses in economically disadvantaged areas. During the Bush administration, Jack Kemp proposed a program which would designate recipients based strictly on demographic distress. The program has evolved during the Clinton administration to include the requirement of a strategic plan for local actions and now "sends the signal that recovery depends on local initiative and holds out federal assistance as reinforcement, not as the agent of change." The legislation was finally approved in 1993, and the Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Communities program is off to a promising start.

Response to the program has been impressive, with 519 jurisdictions applying for a designation. In December 1994, six cities and three rural areas were designated as Empowerment Zones and 91 other areas received Enterprise Communities designations. Each Empowerment Zone will receive block grants of $100 million (urban) and $40 million (rural) and tax credits for businesses. Each Enterprise Community will receive $3 million and flexibility in using tax-exempt bonds. The Clinton administration is so enthusiastic about this program that it has already improvised and expanded its scope. Six "supplemental" empowerment zones were created to includes additional communities, and all applicants are eligible to apply for a $30 billion pool of funding or waivers of federal regulations. The administration would like to support the 400+ losing applicants and encourage their initiatives. The program could very well be expanded, because GOP leaders in Congress have expressed interest in it.

State initiatives
State leadership has been important, not only in encouraging metropolitan coordination, but in establishing land use planning systems. States can delegate land use powers to local governments (and most have) and issue regulations to encourage coordination. Since the 1970's a handful of states have taken back some of the locally delegated powers in order to develop growth management systems. Beginning with Oregon, and followed by

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Florida, Vermont, Maine, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland and Washington, these states have established statewide planning guidelines or adopted growth management legislation. Rapid growth or development pressures drove the search for new options. The states often enacted land use planning programs out of concern that local governments were incapable of making non-parochial decisions, or as a response to some crisis - such as the threat of federal controls or a development with major impacts on local resources.

Each state has tailored its program to particular local conditions and requirements: some programs are more “top-down” while others are more “bottom-up.” Some states require certification of local plans, while others rely on voluntary compliance with incentives. The concurrency feature of some growth management programs, notably Florida’s, provides a framework for coordination transportation improvements and development. It requires that adequate infrastructure be provided concurrent with the construction of development projects. Previously, it was assumed that supporting infrastructure would be built in tandem or shortly after a development. This caused enormous backlogs of infrastructure needs to accumulate at the local level.

State land use reforms require a massive mobilization of support from different interest groups and political players; thus it is unlikely that they will spread quickly to others states. A consensus must be established not only to pass the legislation, but to follow through with implementation. Even after passage, growth management requires long-term support. Private sector opposition to reforms often leads to the weakening of legislation over time. Local fears including “home rule concerns and other interjurisdictional relationships” must be overcome before such legislation can succeed. Strong gubernatorial leadership has been proven necessary for comprehensive land use changes.23 Because of these large political and economic obstacles, growth management programs are not a likely alternative for most regions.

Local processes
All fifty states have delegated land use powers to local governments, so by and large, land use planning is a creature of local government design. But some experts claim that planning does not actually occur at the local level.24 Most of what would be considered land use planning activities are essentially zoning - which is one tool of planning, but not a comprehensive, reasoned policy for addressing the use of land. In theory, zoning is supposed to be based on a plan, but in reality, few zoning codes emerge from the exercise of comprehensive planning. Localities which have developed zoning systems often adopt or amend them in reaction to major or controversial developments. The result is a reactionary, rather than a proactive approach to addressing land use needs.

24 Cullingworth p. 11.
Aside from the handful of states that have adopted growth management programs, local land use planning is largely uncoordinated. The prevailing local government structure in the US makes it difficult: "The major characteristic of American local government ... is its fragmentation ... This results in parochialism, an extremely narrow view of the public interest, and typically a weak system of government." There is a strong sentiment that decisions should be made at the lowest level possible, because it will be more accountable to the public. Even in those states where land use planning is mandated, implementation is problematic: "To prepare plans, and to state goals is one thing: to give them substance is another." Local governments may require additional technical and financial assistance to bring their activities in line with state policies.

The problem with strong local governments is that they are not well positioned to address larger forces. Economic factors play out on a metropolitan, national or international scale, so municipalities can hardly isolate themselves from the effects of these larger interactions. Decisions regarding housing, employment, recreation, and retail are made at a regional level, so local governments must make policies that enhance their relative attractiveness to businesses and individuals. Often, local governments compete for resources - to lure away a large employer from another jurisdiction, or to attract a regional retailer. At best these policies are reactive - attempts to take advantage of larger forces or mitigate their unwanted impacts. The dilemma is that the American public values strong local controls, but the economy operates on a regional scale.

To complicate the matter, local governments are not held accountable to higher levels of government, or even required to produce land use plans: "land use controls are essentially a local matter. Over most of the United States, local governments are not required to operate any system of land use control, and though most do have a zoning system, some have none at all. Only in a few states are local governments subject to any type of control by state government." Often, the accumulation of local plans becomes a de facto "regional" plan. The current land use system lacks a process for addressing cumulative or overflow impacts of regionally significant developments. Given the widespread absence of regional plans, there is no forum or policy body for making decisions or recommendations on a larger than local level. Councils of government are often reluctant to oppose the development plans of any given locality, because local participation in the regional agency is voluntary. A local government can simply withdraw its membership and dues if it is displeased with any actions.

Local resistance to regional land use controls is not based simply on a fear of losing control, but on concerns that the drive towards increased efficiency and standardization will run roughshod over the character and individualism of local communities: "The difference between town-based and region- or state-based planning and control is not just a matter of the level of government. It is also a difference between place-centered and

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25 Cullingworth p. 194.
26 Cullingworth p. 238.
27 Cullingworth p.10.
interest-centered emphases.” Higher levels of government tend to focus on single issue areas, such as transportation, wetlands, sewage, or housing. They apply uniform standards to all communities, without the possibility of making tradeoffs among the different issues. Local planning, however, must take into account all of these competing objectives and “create a way of reconciling these concerns or interests in light of the specifics of the place. Such place-responsive planning shapes development guidance to the peculiarities of the community, ideally heightening rather than flattening the singularities that give the community a distinctive character and sense of place.” In Massachusetts, the Cape Cod Commission has been granted strong powers over the regulation of local land use. However, although it tries to encourage compact development, its performance standards prohibit the kind of development that it seeks. For example, “Provincetown...is an extraordinarily wonderful village, largely included in a National Register district, hopelessly congested, prone to flood hazards, reputedly polluting... but wonderful to visit and for many, a wonderful place to live. The likelihood that such a place could ever be replicated...is essentially precluded.”

The Courts
The American land use system is also characterized by the strong role of the courts. In the absence of oversight by regional, state or federal agencies, controversial developments are pushed into the judicial system: “It could be argued that...judicial controls in the United States take the place of political and administrative controls of Britain and Canada.” Although only a fraction of land use cases make their way to the courts, but they tend to receive a high profile. The courts can only rule on the constitutionality and legality of local government actions. In general, they do not coordinate policies and consider the long-term impacts or quality of zoning and planning. Over time, the courts have produced a plethora of legal cases and precedents which address land use issues. Unfortunately, much of it is unclear, because the Supreme Court has avoided giving clear direction. It tends to rule narrowly on issues and may overrule previous decisions. Furthermore, state courts have issued contradictory interpretations.

Local governments have developed some creative ways to address the transportation impacts of developments. In addition to exactions and impact fees, or requiring developers to construct improvements, some localities have developed transit oriented development guidelines. However, recent court cases (Lucas and Tigard) have elaborated on the need for a “reasonable relationship” to exist between the impact of a development and the mitigation required. The current property rights initiative in Congress might severely limit the ability of local governments, or any level of government, to coordinate transportation and land use planning. They might require governments agencies to bear the burden of proof that their regulations do not constitute an unreasonable burden on property owners or diminish property values below a certain threshold. Given the limited

31 Cullingworth p. 188.
resources available for local land use planning, this requirement could effectively curtail attempts to mitigate the transportation impacts of development.

D. Intermodal planning

Intermodal and multimodal planning have become buzzwords since ISTEA, but everyone seems to have their own definitions of the two terms. In this paper, multimodal refers to the consideration of more than one transportation mode in the planning process, while intermodal planning addresses the interconnections of different transportation modes: “Multimodal planning is focused on system choices, whereas intermodal planning emphasizes the most efficient way of moving from point to point through the system.”

Multimodalism provides a framework for intermodal planning to occur.

As a concept, intermodalism has been advanced in the private sector freight industry, which has long been involved in moving goods from one mode to another. In the private sector, the transition to intermodalism was spurred by changes in the marketplace and international competition. The competition between various freight modes, such as truck, rail and barge, has significantly diminished since the middle of the century. Deregulation of the airline, railroad, and trucking industries led to a greater customer orientation. Freight providers realized that improvements in customer service and market access could be achieved through intermodal cooperation. They have become partners, rather than adversaries. It did not matter to the customer what mode their product traveled on, but how quickly and cheaply it could be delivered. Intermodal container movement, spurred by the design changes of large cargo ships, represents a growing segment of the market. This trend of collaboration seems likely to continue in the foreseeable future.

In a broad sense, intermodalism encompasses all movements from one mode of transportation to another, whether for passengers or freight. Most of the intermodal planning occurring in the public sector involved mass transit services. Even in this area it was limited, because transit operators tended to view each other as competitors for scarce resources. Most regions house multiple transit agencies, each with jurisdiction over a narrow area, such as a city. The fragmented nature of these services made coordination among agencies extremely difficult. With each operator looking out for its own interests, and with limited transit funding available, intermodal improvements inevitably fell to the bottom of the priority list. Consequently, not much literature exists on public sector intermodal planning. This is a new area for surface transportation legislation, unlike transportation and land use coordination.

The state of public sector planning for freight movement was even more bleak: “The urban transportation planning process and methodologies that had been developed through the decade of the 1960’s emphasized passenger movement. Little attention was given to the problems of commodity movements in urban areas.”

33 Weiner p. 100.
concerns, a conference on goods movement was held in Warrentown, VA in December 1970. The conference revealed the lack of a fundamental understanding of goods movement, lack of data for making informed decisions, and the lack of techniques for forecasting future movements. Although some State DOTs engaged in intermodal freight planning, by and large, MPOs were not involved in it. The reason is that MPOs are beholden to local interests and “People vote, containers don’t.”

Intermodal facilities, which provide connections among different transportation modes, are the backbone of an intermodal transportation system, but unfortunately, they are often the bottlenecks. Most of these bottlenecks occur where modes should connect best - in the metropolitan areas. Different transportation modes tend to overlap and compete for resources in urban areas. They are usually poorly coordinated, resulting in a lack of continuity or redundancy of services. In intermodal planning, it is important to look at the nodes of activity, as well as the links that connect those nodes. Intermodal facilities receive insufficient attention, because they do not belong fully to any particular mode. Good examples are seaports and airports, which have never fully been integrated into the urban transportation planning process. These agencies, although part of the public sector, are often run as highly independent agencies. They may operate independently of other transportation services or possess dedicated sources of funding.

Operational responsibilities and financial resources are dispersed widely, with some in the private sector and others in the public sector, which has lead to competition over turf and lack of accountability. The potential for funding from both sides may inhibit cooperation, rather than increase it, because each assumes other should pay. Intermodal improvements generally do not compete well against traditional transportation projects in the public planning process. As a result, railroad terminals, warehouse distribution facilities and other intermodal centers have been neglected in the urban planning process, despite their regional impacts. Their sponsoring agencies, whether a private firm, a single municipality or an independent authority were not required to participate in the planning process because they did not use federal funding. As a result, their investment decisions have been made with little regard for the broader context of transportation decision making.

Intermodal planning brings together a host of different public and private interests. Intermodal improvements often require multi-agency agreements for planning, financing, regulation, and implementation. Since their benefits are spread out over various jurisdictions and modes, intermodal improvements often lack strong advocates and are bypassed for improvements with clear local benefits and less complicated funding requirements. The lack of adequate performance measures and analytical tools for making tradeoffs among various modes has compounded the problem of including intermodal improvements in regional priority setting. Extensive interagency cooperation is needed to undertake effective intermodal planning.

IV. MPO Involvement in Land Use and Intermodal Planning

A. Objectives of ISTEA

Passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act in 1991 marked the most significant shift in national transportation policy since the Interstate Highway Act. It has changed the institutional, financial and political framework of transportation investment: “Applying the new directions embodied in ... ISTEA demands a sea change in the way we think about transportation investments and the role they will play in society.”

Many of the Act’s challenges will be faced by metropolitan areas: linking transportation, land use and air quality, improving intermodal connections. In particular, metropolitan planning organizations are being transformed with new decision making authority. Given the lackluster performance of previous regional planning agencies, skeptics are concerned that MPOs are not prepared to implement ISTEA’s provisions. But before we evaluate their preparedness, we must see what ISTEA envisions for them.

1. Coordination of Land Use and Transportation

ISTEA lists 15 factors which must be considered by metropolitan planning organizations. Consideration of these factors is supposed to result in transportation plans that consider broad-ranging transportation issues and are consistent with other metropolitan area concerns such as land-use planning, energy conservation, and environmental management. The extent of consideration given to each factor may vary depending on the factor’s relevance to local circumstances; however, they all must be considered. Factor number four, as described in ISTEA and elaborated in federal planning regulations (in parentheses), addresses transportation and land use coordination by requiring MPOs to consider:

"The likely effect of transportation policy decisions on land use and development and the consistency of transportation plans and programs with the provisions of all applicable short- and long-term land use and development plans. (the analysis should include projections of metropolitan planning area economic, demographic, environmental protection, growth management, and land use activities consistent with metropolitan and local/central city development goals (community, economic, housing, etc.), and projections of potential transportation demands based on the interrelated level of activity on these areas.)"  

Coordinating transportation and land use planning may be one of the most difficult tasks required in ISTEA, because public oversight of the land use decisions is controversial and highly restricted. Development projects may have enormous impacts on the transportation system, yet a process for addressing developments of regional significance does not exist

in most areas. At the same time, large-scale transportation projects which impact environmental quality, community livability, development potential, and growth projections may be planned apart from the land use system. A mismatch between national and regional transportation planning and locally-driven land use planning exacerbates the problem. In most parts of the country, land use controls remain in the jurisdiction of city and county governments, whereas transportation planning has traditionally been undertaken by state and regional agencies. Finally, even if transportation and land use decisions were integrated completely, larger economic realities and market forces may overturn these decisions.

Ideally, transportation investments should complement existing and proposed land use plans in the region. The MPO’s regional transportation plan can address land use issues, such as current trends and future land use plans, and describe the context of regional land use planning: what environmental protection measures, development incentives, growth controls or growth management initiatives exist in the region. In addition, it can demonstrate how the transportation plan supports metropolitan and local/central city development objectives, because such considerations are essential to understanding the interrelatedness between transportation and land use planning. To successfully “consider” land use plans, the MPO needs to establish strong linkages with local and central city governments as well as any regional land use agencies. This may require outreach efforts to ensure that city and county planning staff are aware of regional transportation priorities and to gather local input in developing transportation plans. For example, the MPO might make presentations to local boards on important planning issues or invite local staff and policymakers to intensive workshops during the development of major planning products. Over time, such outreach activities may encourage better coordination of transportation and land use planning.

This factor places transportation investments in the context of broader community values. When coordinating transportation and land use plans, planners sometimes need to make tradeoffs among conflicting local objectives. For example, a community may place economic development and neighborhood livability high among their priorities. However, economic development might require expansion of the transportation system, such as airport or seaport expansion, that would lessen neighborhood livability. Total consistency between local development goals and transportation investments may be incompatible with the efficient use of transportation funding. With limited resources available, not every community that seeks transportation improvements can receive them. Although MPO planners may not be able to resolve these conflicts of interest, they need to be cognizant of the effects their transportation decisions will have on land use and development. In addition, they should know what land use and development objectives or projections exist in the region and what demands they will place upon the transportation system.

2. Facilitating Intermodal Planning

In the opening remarks of ISTEA, Congress set forth its intent “to develop a National Intermodal Transportation System that is economically efficient and environmentally sound, provides the foundation for the Nation to compete in the global economy, and will
move people and goods in an energy efficient manner." ISTEA makes intermodalism - the consideration of all forms of transportation in a unified, interconnected manner - a major focus in transportation planning. Developing a truly intermodal system requires unprecedented levels of collaboration among agencies which have previously been operating competitively. At its best, it would provide a seamless and efficient transportation system to the customer, whether moving cargo from ships to trucks or rail, or transferring passengers from bus to air.

ISTEA contains various requirements for intermodal and multimodal planning, particularly in the planning regulations and management systems provisions. Among the fifteen factors for metropolitan planning are two which address freight movement. Factor number seven covers sites of national and international significance, including intermodal facilities:

"International border crossings and access to ports, airports, intermodal transportation facilities, major freight distribution routes, national parks, recreation areas, monument and historic sites, and military installations (supporting technical efforts should provide an analysis of goods and services movement problem areas, as determined in cooperation with appropriate private sector involvement, including, but not limited to, addressing interrelated transportation access and service needs of intermodal facilities.)"

This factor draws attention to areas and facilities which have recreational or historical importance, contribute to national and international competitiveness, or maintain national security. For example, the North American Free Trade Agreement may contribute to increased volumes of trade across international borders, and MPOs should consider strategies to facilitate freight movement in these corridors. Efficient and accessible intermodal facilities for passengers, whether they are airports or bus terminals, also contribute to the economic attractiveness of a region.

This element also highlights the need for coordination between surface and non-surface transportation planning. ISTEA seeks better integration among modes and the incorporation of non-traditional modes in urban planning process: air, water, freight rail. In particular, airports and seaports, which are key intermodal facilities, need to receive adequate consideration and representation in regional priority setting. Ideally, one would find an appropriate balance of modes, with each mode prevalent in the areas where it is most cost effective and efficient. Links in the system would be smoothed out so that transfers among modes could be made without hassle.

Factor number 11 requires MPOs to consider the "Enhancement of the efficient movement of freight," which may also lead to the identification of intermodal improvements. The

37 ISTEA, Section 1024.134 (f)(7).
38 ISTEA, Section 1024.134 (f)(11).
safe, efficient and timely movement of goods is critical to regional and national economic competitiveness. In addition, freight movements serve the daily needs of the metropolitan population - transporting food, clothing, and fuel. To increase the understanding and integration of freight concerns at the metropolitan level, ISTEA includes freight among the fifteen factors which MPOs must explicitly consider. Multiple transportation modes converge and concentrate in metropolitan areas, necessitating intermodal transfers - from ship to rail, rail to truck, or truck to air. ISTEA challenges MPOs to make these connections as efficient and seamless as possible.

Close coordination and cooperation between the public and private sector is essential to improving freight services. Unlike other transportation services, goods movement is provided primarily by the private sector. The private sector will continue to provide most freight transport services, but the government can get involved where the nodes or joints in the system need reinforcing. MPOs can identify areas of critical importance and provide the basis for further evaluation of freight needs and investment strategies. Because they possess data and experience valuable to planners, private sector participation is needed to identify and implement intermodal improvements in the region. For example, improving landside connections at seaports will benefit railroads, ports, shippers and the regional economy.

Skeptics question the MPO's ability to look beyond parochial concerns and consider national competitiveness. Intermodal freight systems do not fit nicely into the context of regional transportation planning, because the concerns of freight transporters are global, rather than regional in scale. Economic considerations and the profit motive drive their decisions, whereas regional governments must respond to community values. As a result, MPOs may have difficulty understanding freight concerns, and freight providers may be hesitant to participate in a process with questionable benefits to their business. However, it is in a region's own economic interest to have a well-coordinated freight system.

The level of partnership between MPOs and freight interests can serve as a measure of how seriously MPOs have considered freight issues. In regions where freight constitutes an important segment of the transport system, MPOs should make a concerted effort to contact and include freight representatives in planning activities. Major freight providers and customers need to be represented (i.e. ports, railroads, truckers, shippers) in problem identification and priority setting. Beyond simply extending an invitation, MPOs can encourage the participation of freight representatives and solicit meaningful input. The involvement of freight interests is crucial to building a consensus for transportation investments in the region, especially for intermodal improvements.

ISTEA requires MPOs to develop multimodal criteria for evaluating projects and making tradeoffs among modes. Through intermodal planning, MPOs can begin to quantify the importance of freight facilities to the region's economic viability. This will be especially

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important for facilities which serve state, national, or international markets. For example, seaports have had little success at marketing themselves or advertising their services as a public benefit. Even airports, which move hundreds of passengers per day, have difficulty expanding their services due to community opposition. Although such opposition will probably always exist, MPOs could at least determine the consequences of reduced airport capacity.

3. MPOs as negotiators, facilitators and partners

ISTEA tries to strike a careful balance in empowering MPOs. On one hand, the federal government must give MPOs enough clout to negotiate with state and local agencies, yet on the other hand, it cannot diminish the role of directly elected state and local decisionmakers by giving MPOs too much power. They must build local support, and at the same time, satisfy their federal benefactors. Metropolitan governments are, by nature, in the uncomfortable position of juggling between local and national objectives. MPOs can live up to the goals of ISTEa if they provide a forum where a consensus on transportation needs and solutions can be built. Since they must rely on other agencies to implement their transportation plans, they cannot set regional priorities in isolation. Rather, they should ensure that the agencies which do operate or finance services make decisions which better serve regional interests.

MPOs can serve the unglamorous, but crucial role of establishing a framework for transportation planning: "Success in consensus-building requires honest framing of real issues in language that conveys the complexities of the issue to the public...Issue framing is one of the most difficult and critical tasks for successful partnerships and consensus building." MPOs can fill a critical void in transportation planning by facilitating the discussion of regional transportation objectives, service needs, and appropriate solutions. For example, they can draw attention to the importance of a strong seaport and airport in an internationally competitive market and can incorporate freight concerns into the regional priority setting process. They can help the federal government identify missing links in the national intermodal system. In this capacity, as a partner in the metropolitan political structure, MPOs can speak for regional needs and objectives.

MPOs are required to consider and analyze many factors for which they do not have sufficient information, technical expertise, or jurisdiction. As a result, the MPO must establish effective linkages with the individuals and organizations which possess this information. Positive working relationships should exist between the MPO and a variety of affected parties, including regulatory agencies, state and local government; public and private transportation operators and system users; and environmental, energy, land use planning, housing and development officials and organizations; citizen advocacy groups; and the general public. Through a collaborative effort, the MPO can broaden the scope of the planning process and ensure that transportation plans are consistent with other regional and local objectives.

Ultimately, the consideration of land use and intermodal issues in the planning process should influence planning decisions and project prioritization. Internally, MPO staff should possess a better understanding of the factors, how to analyze them and incorporate them into the planning process. Over the long run, this enhancement of staff ability should lead to a more comprehensive and proactive planning process. Transportation investments should more accurately reflect the needs and interests of the metropolitan area. Increased interactions between the MPO and other agencies can lead to greater MPO influence on decisions made by other agencies. For example, the relationships established in analyzing land-use planning decisions may create opportunities for the MPO to influence land-use planning decisions.

B. State of Practice

Early reviews and surveys of post-ISTEA planning show that MPOs diverge widely in their abilities to undertake the new planning requirements. In some regions, effective planning processes predate ISTEA, while in other regions, the MPOs find themselves constrained by time and resources in meeting the mandates. The overall state of practice remains far from the objectives of ISTEA, and the success of ISTEA in encouraging better regional planning is not assured.

1. Roles and responsibilities of most MPOs

Current evidence points to a wide range of capabilities among MPOs. In general, larger MPOs tend to be better technically equipped. According to Hank Dittmar of the Surface Transportation Policy Project, “The east coast MPOs lean more to state interest while the western MPOs lean more to local interest, but there are many factors involved, including who is on board.” Western states are large enough to preclude close state oversight over the metropolitan areas, while on the east coast, there are several metropolitan areas which encompass more than one state. Beyond these observations, it is difficult to draw general conclusions about MPO abilities because the dynamics at work in each region greatly determine the MPO’s role.

According to a Volpe Center report, the status quo in planning practice differs greatly from the planning goals of ISTEA. In general, MPOs are removed from major decisions, rather than being viewed as leaders or negotiators. Most MPOs lack a directly representative base, lack jurisdiction over land use decisions, cannot directly generate revenues and do not operate or build transportation services. Long range planning focuses on one or two modes and single scenarios, rather than alternatives with multimodal options. Financial planning was virtually nonexistent for plans and programs, and

public participation received only cursory attention. As a result, most MPOs face a huge learning curve in achieving ISTEA’s goals.

Since most MPOs are comprised of appointed rather than directly elected officials, they do not adhere to the “one man, one vote” credo. As a result, MPOs may be hamstrung by their questionable political legitimacy: “There is a ‘political messiness’ involved with decision making by MPOs, which are generally voluntary consortia of local governments that find it hard to ‘swallow bad medicine.’”44 Should they be held accountable to their policy boards, to the public, or to greater social objectives? Some MPOs, such as the ones in Seattle and New York/New Jersey, have been disbanded and reorganized due to local objections that they were unresponsive to local concerns. Many city and town governments approach regional agencies with great skepticism and some resentment, due to the fact that many MPOs are increasing staff while local governments are cutting back. Thus, a high priority must be given to developing consensus among other agencies.

MPOs must undertake increased responsibilities despite limited legal and legislative authority. Many operate under restrictive enabling legislation, which constrains their ability to undertake multi-jurisdictional planning. Unless they also serve as COGs or RPAs, MPOs lack authority over land use, making it difficult to coordinate their transportation investments with future development. Even MPOs which do both land use and transportation planning may find it difficult to ensure local compliance with their plans. With the exception of Portland’s Metro, MPOs also lack the ability to directly raise revenues. They need to obtain resources through other state and local agencies or through the voter approval. In addition, MPOs lack regulatory authority over transportation, land use and air quality programs. The regional, state and federal agencies which possess these powers may have conflicting objectives, and the MPO is caught in the middle of them. Few MPOs have operational authority over highways, transit or other transportation facilities, which severely limits their ability to implement long range plans and programs. This constraint underscores the importance of building a regional consensus for transportation programs.

MPOs are currently training or hiring staff to handle ISTEA planning activities, such as air quality analysis for conformity, but it will take time for them to get accustomed to an entirely different operating environment. Some very new and highly demanding styles of planning are required, which involve new kinds of data, analysis, and political interactions. Many MPOs, especially those with small staffs and limited technical expertise, still rely heavily on states for technical assistance.45 In addition, the resources available for planning are being spread out among a larger number of MPOs, and have not increased in proportion to the number of new requirements.46

44Prendergast, p. 40.
45Deysher and Spadafora-Rodriguez, p. 3.
46Prendergast, p. 41.
MPO/State Relations

An MPO's effectiveness is strongly influenced by the relationship it has with the state DOT. MPOs may be hamstrung by the prevalence of an old-guard mentality in existing transportation state Departments of Transportation. These institutions are dominated by transportation professionals trained during the Interstate era who were taught to emphasize engineering over other planning considerations: "The focus on the engineering challenge of putting such a large [Interstate] system in place contributed to the dominance of civil engineers in investment decisions. Once products were defined in terms of construction, the opportunity for feedback on the social, economic, and environmental contribution of the facility was limited."\(^47\) As a result, many state transportation planners are ill-prepared to address the multi-modal and participatory requirements of ISTEA. These Interstate-era institutions cannot change overnight, and a massive effort to reorganize and re-educate may be necessary to communicate the objectives of ISTEA.

In some regions, State DOT and MPO tensions may run high: "States are used to running the show, but that's not the case with ISTEA. Will they recognize that? If not, stalemate is a danger."\(^48\) If the MPOs relies heavily on the State DOTs for technical support, it weakens their ability to become equal partners in the planning process. In smaller regions, this is unavoidable, because the MPO staff may consist of only one or two people. At one extreme are MPOs in states such as North Carolina, where the State DOT maintains tight control over planning. The DOT's planning branch employs 60 persons and provides planning services to all 17 MPOs in the state. Little transfer of authority to the MPOs has occurred, and these MPOs face an uphill battle in winning legitimacy in the planning process. They clearly lack the experience and staffing necessary to undertake financial planning, public participation, partnership development, and intermodal planning.

At the other end of the spectrum are MPOs such as Metro Council in the Twin Cities, which possesses broad powers predating ISTEA. Metro Council has long been viewed as a consensus builder and actively engages the public in its work. Recently, the Minnesota DOT encouraged a strong MPO presence by restructuring its decision-making process: "virtually all federal transportation funds coming into Minnesota would be channeled through 'area transportation partnerships.' The Twin Cities partnership would be the MPO region and perhaps one other county."\(^49\) The greatest challenge for the Metro Council will be developing financially constrained plans, but in other aspects, the region appears well-positioned to respond to ISTEA's mandates.

The challenge, then, is for MPOs to move from the state of practice to the state of ISTEA. If they fail to take advantage of the opportunities, the federal government could withdraw support for regional planning, as it did in the 1980's. Largely viewed by other local entities as creatures of federal initiatives, MPOs have to establish a credible role for

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\(^47\) Larson, p.140.
\(^49\) Prendergast, p. 43.
themselves in the urban planning arena. ISTEA assists MPOs in this process by giving them greater responsibility in transportation decision-making. However, because most MPOs lack elective legitimacy, multi-functional purposes, fundraising ability, operational capacity, and regulatory authority, their effectiveness depends on forging cooperative partnerships with other key decision makers and providing a forum for consensus building in the region.

2. Land Use Coordination

Although land use has been included in federal transportation legislation from the start of the 3C planning process, it remains a vexing issue for transportation planners. Previous attempts to coordinate transportation and land use planning have met with limited success and encountered institutional, political and technical barriers. In many urban areas, using land use strategies will show a minimal impact on transportation demand, at least in the short term. Since most urban areas are largely built up, changes to the transportation and development patterns will occur at the margins. It remains a challenge for the political system to address the long-term impacts of land use.

In theory, the current zoning and development process works as follows. First, projections of population and employment are made by regional councils or COGs to determine the expected demand for different land uses. Local governments may accept them or develop alternative projections more suited to their objectives. The projections are then translated into a comprehensive plan (ideally) and a set of actions specifying specific uses of land - usually zoning. Development proposals must then be approved by the administrative public agency. The accumulation of these local actions usually leads to some contradictory decisions, including the neglect of spillover effects into other jurisdictions, competition for business tax dollars, or exclusionary actions to push growth to other areas.

In order to improve coordination, MPOs need to know when and how they can influence local land use decisions. Regional transportation issues could factor into the land use planning process at a few key interaction points:

1. The reflection of regional forecasts of land use and transportation trends in local strategies for land use and transportation;
2. The synthesis or reconciliation of local plans in regional plans; and
3. The response of local governments to gaps and conflicts defined in the regional planning process.”

Regional councils are supposed to develop demographic projections that local governments and MPOs use to develop their respective plans. In practice, local governments often object to regional forecasts of population and employment which do not reflect their own policy objectives. They want to maintain control over their own

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50 Porter, p. 66.
51 Porter, p. 74.
futures, and may alter or disregard regional forecasts that counter their interests. For example, suburban areas may reject increased units of affordable housing, or central cities may deny that their population is declining. Furthermore, regional projections are based on local plans - which often conflict or include exclusionary policies. Even when the forecasts modify these plans, it is not based on a rational regional policy. An element of circular reasoning enters into local land use plans as well, because local governments base their plans on assumed transportation improvements. The end result is that regional projections are based on questionable assumptions, but even if their inputs were more sound, local governments are not required to adhere to the outputs.

ISTEA requires transportation plans to be consistent with applicable land use plans, but such plans may not be available. Transportation plans are usually developed in the absence of clear regional land use plans and frequently with the existence of conflicting local ones. Without regional plans, MPOs often cobble together local plans and accept those priorities. As discussed earlier, it appears that zoning has substituted for true land use planning at the local level: “The distinction between the ideal of planning and the reality of zoning is an important one. Planning is concerned with the long-term development (or preservation) of an area and the relationship between local objectives and overall community and regional goals. Zoning is a major instrument of this; but in the United States it is more. Indeed, it has taken the place of the function to which it is supposedly subservient.”

Once regional plans have been developed, MPOs often fail to communicate the outcomes and implications to local governments or encourage them to change their plans. In cases where the MPOs have altered local plans to fit the forecasting model, many have not informed local planners about the implications for transportation systems, or they may have encountered a lack of responsiveness. Staffing shortages at both the local and regional level may contribute to the problem. Since most local governments are not required to consider regional plans, they may choose to address more pressing requirements.

Aside from the institutional obstacles to improved coordination, MPOs face significant technical obstacles. Their analytical tools fail to account for long term land use impacts. Current travel models do not include non-auto activity, such as pedestrian, bike or linked trips, and the unit of measurement is generally a vehicle-trip, rather than a person trip. A recent survey of MPO modeling practices indicates that many models are based on relatively outdated demographic data. In order to account for rapidly changing travel patterns, these models need to be updated with comprehensive travel behavior surveys and recent census data. Land use models, which demonstrate the effects of congestion on locational decisions, are available internationally but have not been integrated with US

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52 Porter, p. 75.
53 Cullingworth, p. 9.
54 Porter p. 77.
transportation models. As a result, state-of-the-art modeling practice is moving towards integrating land use models and transportation models. The increased use of geographic information systems would allow transportation and land use data to be stored, managed and analyzed in a standard format.

In addition to the technical and institutional problems, a more fundamental problem exists: public regulation of private land markets. Ultimately, the coordination of transportation and land use will translate into restrictions placed on certain kinds of developments in certain places. The current land use system has been shaped by many factors, including federal policies, legal precedents, local fiscal needs, and private land markets. This system has failed to account for or address the negative effects of development, but it is kept in place by a strong base of interests which benefit from the current arrangement. Unless the incentives structures are altered, it will be difficult to effect real changes in the land use system.

3. Intermodal Planning

Reflecting on the challenge before MPOs, Robert Kochanowski of the Southwestern Pennsylvania MPO said: “ISTEA expects to work at the metropolitan level what hasn’t worked nationally. There are renewed expectations on all sides and only modest funding for intermodalism.” Yet he sees the possibility for success, starting with modest objectives, especially for those who create new partnerships. MPOs can build intermodalism into the long-range vision of a region, and many have begun to do so. Over time, a constituency for intermodal planning and a forum for addressing intermodal issues can be established.

Based on testimony to the House Committee on Public Works and Transportation, Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight last October, MPOs appeared to be making a good effort in implementing ISTEA. One of the most visible changes has been the inclusion of new parties in the planning process. This inclusion bodes well for intermodal planning, because it has increased awareness of intermodal issues on all sides. For example, the New Jersey Transportation Planning Authority reported that intermodal issues are receiving greater attention in its region, and that freight interests are becoming involved in the planning process. It believes ISTEA has succeeded in encouraging a more open process.

It appears that both MPOs and freight interests are attempting to forge new partnerships. Some MPOs, including ones in New Jersey, California, New York and Washington, have established advisory councils comprised of freight industry representatives. These councils have helped identify problem areas and improve communication at the regional level. Some industry groups, particularly the trucking industry, have made a concerted

effort to become more familiar with MPO processes and activities. They realize that the best way to advocate their own interests is to participate in the MPO process and seek out common interests with other members of the freight industry. Private firms are accustomed to a short time frame for planning and implementation of their projects, but the prolonged planning process, measured in years rather than weeks requires a long-term commitment.

The exercise of identifying freight system deficiencies has been useful, even if many problems are outside the jurisdiction of the MPO. The New Jersey Transportation Planning Authority has used this information in developing its long-range plan.\textsuperscript{59} Even MPOs with limited resources can increase their intermodal planning activities. The Capital District MPO in Albany, New York has a staff of only 10, but it formed a task force to address freight issues.\textsuperscript{60} To keep the scope of work manageable, the MPO has limited freight issues to items which are within its enabling legislation and scope of activity. It has incorporated freight concerns into its planning products and considers the continued participation of the private sector a measure of success.

The representation on some MPO Boards is changing to reflect the intermodal emphasis of ISTEA. As a result of ISTEA, some transit agencies have gained representation on MPO Boards, although most serve in a non-voting capacity.\textsuperscript{61} A survey of transit agencies by the American Public Transit Association showed that 62\% of respondents had a voting seat on the MPO’s policy board. APTA believes transit voting representation results in a more even playing field in funding decisions.

Intermodal passenger planning is expanding to involve better market research and increased public input. Public consultation in design and integration of intermodal improvements into their surrounding neighborhoods is being given greater importance in some areas. MPOs are addressing the problems of passenger connections by considering factors of quality of service, cost, timeliness and safety that matter to customers.

However, the analytical requirements of intermodal planning have proved more difficult than the participatory ones. An intermodal logic implies the ability to analyze a total trip, regardless of mode, but there are no good performance measures for intermodal trip making. Without them, true tradeoffs among modes cannot be made. How can a passenger rail/bus facility be compared to a ship/rail connection? Since goods movement has not been effectively incorporated into the urban planning process, the impacts of congestion on economic development are not well understood. The costs of congestion may well impact freight to a greater extent than passengers. While people may move


\textsuperscript{61} Testimony Before the House Committee on Public Works and Transportation, Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight. October 6, 1994.
farther from the urban core or endure longer commutes, the freight sector may suffer loss of business.

Without these analytical tools, MPOs do not have a good basis for making decisions regarding intermodal projects, especially for freight. ISTEA does not help them, because it is not clear whether funding can be used for non-traditional modes, such as freight rail. A study by Cambridge Systematics found that “MPOs are making individual interpretations about project eligibility under the ISTEA. When essentially similar projects are proposed to two MPOs, one may be funded and the other ruled ineligible.” 62 This inconsistency has resulted in a lot of private sector frustration.

In a short time, MPOs have begun to make significant headway. In summing up the state of practice in intermodal planning, Mike Meyer pointed out two critical issues for intermodal planners to consider. 63 In order to succeed, intermodal improvements seem to need a convener or advocate, which in some cases could be the MPO. In many of the successful projects, an advocate of seamless transportation made the case for intermodalism. Success also depends on how financial arrangements are made, because they can pose a major stumbling block in planning intermodal improvements.

V. Case Studies

Despite the large obstacles, some MPOs are attempting to link activities in the areas of land use and intermodal planning. A closer examination of their experiences may yield lessons applicable to other regions or provide recommendations for ISTEA reauthorization and further federal rulemaking. If MPOs succeed in coordinating transportation and land use or planning for intermodal facilities, it can increase their influence and perhaps earn them the respect of local and state officials. Most importantly, they could provide a needed structure for addressing the vexing urban problems of congestion, growth, environmental quality and economic development. The following two case studies, one addressing transportation/land use coordination and the other addressing intermodal planning, examine two regions: Miami, Florida and Syracuse, New York.

A. Transportation/Land Use Coordination

The objective of this case study is to identify opportunities for MPOs to improve coordination (on both technical and policy issues) with local entities. The Miami region provides an example of MPO transportation planning in the context of a long-standing Growth Management program. Florida is a large, growing state which is attempting to coordinate its land use and transportation planning through the concurrency feature of its growth management program. The Syracuse region, on the other hand, has a stable or declining population base. New York has no framework or mandate for land use planning, so it provides an example of coordinating activities in an ad-hoc planning environment. Yet Syracuse also faces increasing infrastructure requirements due to the internal dispersion of its population. The case study involves the following steps:

- Establish the context of transportation and land use decision making in the region in order to gain an understanding of the conditions and factors which shape transportation/land use planning in the region.
- Determine the MPO’s role in land use planning by examining demographic projections, MPO plan assumptions, and local interactions - areas identified as key linkage points in earlier chapters.
- Identify obstacles and explore underlying problems, such as a conflict between private property rights and government regulation, which effectively limit coordination.

Region 1: Miami, Florida

Miami is the largest city in Metropolitan Dade County, a growing region of approximately 1.8 million people. Since the 1970’s, employment has decentralized and residential development has sprawled throughout the county. This low-density pattern of development has resulted in a heavily automobile-dependent transportation system and increasing congestion. Anticipated population growth of 32%, led by international migration, will exacerbate the stress on natural resources and physical infrastructure. The region has 20 years of experience in implementing Florida’s Growth Management Act.
Florida’s Growth Management Act

Until the 1970’s, Florida, the fourth largest state in the country, believed growth would pay its own way. But as growth began to threaten the state’s quality of life and unique resources, Florida adopted growth management measures. Since 1985 it has experimented with various growth management strategies. The planning framework in Florida consists of a state comprehensive plan; three state functional plans addressing land use, transportation, and water use; strategic regional policy plans; and local comprehensive plans. The governor’s office is responsible for ensuring compliance among state plans. The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) is responsible for oversight and implementation of the Growth Management Act (GMA). It develops the state comprehensive plan, which state functional plans must be consistent with. DCA also reviews and approves the regional and local plans. Clearly, Florida’s growth management program employs a “top-down” approach. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) produces the transportation translation plan. FDOT success in managing the highway system can be partly attributed to its active participation in growth management activities and coordination with regional planning councils.64 It also works cooperatively with other government agencies and the private sector.

A key feature of Florida’s growth management program is the concurrency requirement, which says a local government may not issue a development order if it will degrade mandated service levels for six kinds of public facilities. Concurrency’s major component is the level of service standard (LOS). How LOS is developed has significant impacts on where development goes. If municipalities wanted to slow growth, they could adopt more restrictive standards and refuse to issue permits. LOS standards are set at the state, county and local levels, and they are not always consistent. FDOT sets LOS standards for state roads, which may constrain local ability to set service levels for transportation. Municipalities develop separate concurrency management systems, which often differ from one another and the counties. County LOS standards do not apply to facilities within a municipality, except in a few charter counties. In essence, state law treats each local government as though no other local governments existed.65 Each one adopts its own standards, and there is no mechanism for reconciling different LOS standards. One roadway could be subject to different standards for each jurisdiction it passes through. In recent amendments, the Legislature partially addressed this problem by requiring local governments to use state measurements on the intrastate highway system. But it did not resolve the underlying contradictions, and there are still differences in LOS standards among cities which share facilities.

The Growth Management Act established a Development of Regional Impact (DRI) process for handling large developments. The Regional Planning Councils served as a forum for developers, local governments and other parties to discuss their interests. Participants in the Growth Management process believe that the DRI process works to

64 McCue, J.
65 Turner, Clark. Interview of March
some extent.\textsuperscript{66} It only addresses large scale projects, but it tempered quite a few developments and worked well at the project level. On a systems level, the DRI process does not coordinate impacts and mitigations. For example, projects usually include mitigation measures which address their own impacts, but they are not coordinated with other large projects. If DRI had a framework for using impact fees, it might be more effective in the long term. In general, developers were displeased with the DRI process and exerted pressure to change the system. They resented what they saw as unfair exactions for infrastructure, which were applied only to large developments. Many believe a separate review process is unnecessary now that local comprehensive plans are adopted. These local plans must include an intergovernmental coordination element (ICE), which should address developments with greater than local impacts.

The State Legislature was swayed by some of the development community’s objections and has adopted legislation that will phase out the DRI process by 1997. It will be replaced with an enhanced ICE element in local comprehensive plans. ICE will provide methods for reviewing and approving developments with impacts on one or more jurisdictions. The ICE element requires that if a development will have an impact on neighboring counties, county must negotiate with others. If the affected municipalities do not reach an agreement, the law provides for arbitration and other means of settling the problem. The Regional Planning Councils are now developing model ICE elements, which are supposed to serve as vehicles for reaching agreement. The RPCs will coordinate local rules and try to ensure that ICE moves to a more regional model. Since the ICE process has just been adopted, it is too early to tell if it will work. ICE probably will improve communication and identify resources that communities want impacted minimally, and it could result in mitigation measures that would not otherwise be developed.

Critics fear that developers will have more control over local planning processes under ICE. Already, some say that "developers have become too influential in the local decision-making process, either by using their financial muscle to win exemptions to the comprehensive plans, or getting on the boards themselves that make the decisions."\textsuperscript{67} But at the same time, a proliferation of local rules could be problematic for developers. Even the development community realizes that the ICE process could be more troublesome if more entities make different interpretations of the rules. Ultimately, local governments may use a hybrid process - with ICE and a DRI-like process. Very large projects may be best addressed in a DRI process, which brings together multiple interests, while projects with lesser impacts can be incorporated in the ICE element.

Enforcement and funding of the Growth Management program have been lacking. On paper, the consistency requirement for Florida’s local governments is very strong. All localities are required to produce plans and land development regulations. DCA can issues findings on lack of consistency and pressure local governments to use compliance procedures. It can impose discretionary fiscal sanctions, including state revenue grants

\textsuperscript{66} Chan, Ping. Phone interview on March 22, 1995.

and infrastructure monies. But in practice there is no formal system to reconcile the different plans, so inconsistencies remain. DCA has avoided making negative findings on local governments and has not exercised its authority to develop land use plans for local governments. The State does not uphold local planning standards, and planning assistance alone cannot induce compliance. The Growth Management program has lacked sufficient funding for local planning activities. Florida ranks low in terms of total state taxes per capita, because many of its new residents escaped higher taxes elsewhere and strongly resist tax increases. No state income tax exists, and personal property tax and real property (ad valorem) taxes are capped. As a result, Florida does not spend much on public services compared to the size of its population. Local tax mechanisms are available to municipal governments, but not counties where much of the growth is taking place.

Framework of local planning

A system of regional agencies was first authorized by the Environmental Land and Water Management Act to carry out the regional impact assessments required for DRIs. On paper, the RPCs possess more powers than the standard COG; they have a “direct appeal” over local government actions. State agencies probably would support RPCs if they appealed local government decisions. The State does not have experience with the local agencies, whereas regional agencies have been working on implementing the GMA with local governments since 1986. But in reality, RPCs do not exercise their power over local governments. RPCs also have been criticized for failing to integrate with other substate regional agencies and being preoccupied with DRI reviews, which distracted many from producing regional plans.

The South Florida Regional Planning Council (SFRPC) includes Broward, Dade, and Monroe counties. The South Florida region experienced less resistance from the development community than other areas, because it adopted more consensus based approaches. SFRPC did not draw clear lines among interests and attempted to involve all parties from the beginning of the process. The SFRPC has established a coordinated review process for developments, which brings together all the agencies involved in a DRI, including local government, state, federal, and water management agencies. The SFRPC provides recommendations to local governments, which are generally followed. Local governments may rely on the region to do project EIRs because they do not have adequate staff and resources. Another major responsibility of the SFRPC is to develop a Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP). Local comprehensive plans are required to be consistent with the SRPP. The Regional Policy Plan and MPO plan are supposed to be “consistent to the maximum extent possible.” In general SFRPC and local government relations are friendly, although SFRPC has more direct interactions with the county. Some small communities are essentially built out and virtually none of their developments have a regional impact.

68 Stroud, Janet.
69 Chan interview.
70 Chan interview.
71 Chan interview.
Dade County is unique among metropolitan governments. Metro-Dade, as it is also known, embodied the ideals of the two-tier metropolitan government model. A 2-tier governance structure is based on a federative model where powers are shared between a “metropolitan authority carrying out ‘wide’ functions (controls on air pollution, waste disposal) and local authorities responsible for narrower functions (traffic regulations, housing codes).”72 This model has collapsed somewhat, because a majority of population now lives in the unincorporated area where the Metro government provides their local and area-wide services. Metro-Dade operates under a county manager form of government and has elected board members. It has been criticized by minorities for its at-large election system, and the courts recently ordered it to adopt single member districts.

Metro-Dade County develops policies for its unincorporated areas, but not municipalities. It has the capacity to engage in strategic planning for its share of the region through the growth management process. The county’s policies are established in the Comprehensive Development Master Plan (CDMP), which applies to the County’s unincorporated area. However, Metro-Dade sets minimum standards of services because all local comprehensive plans must be consistent with the CDMP. Local standards can be stricter, but not more lenient than the county’s. Metro-Dade provides many services countywide, and the only major power it lacks is zoning. It can set service standards to further implementation of its policies. The County has extensive power over transportation services, since provides all transit and many roadways. Municipalities have transportation authority only for local streets, and they are still required to obtain county approval for all kinds of improvements.

The Metro-Dade MPO is essentially a county department; its governing board is comprised of 90% county representatives. This arrangement allows for close contact with other county departments, and indirectly, coordination with local governments. The Metro-Dade MPO does not have technical staff that MPO’s normally have, but rather, draws on expertise of other county departments. Consultants do many of its detailed studies, such as the Congestion Management System and the transportation plan. In general, the MPO develops plans and the County Public Works Department implements them. Public Works keeps track of roadway LOS and development proposals as they pertain to roads. Public Works staff meets with developers to determine if roads will be dedicated or not. In addition, it serves on many of the same MPO committees as the Planning Department. The Planning Department develops the Comprehensive Development Master Plan (CDMP) which designates an urban development boundary. The CDMP identifies locally significant resources, including those within a jurisdiction that could be affected by others, or those outside which they may affect. The traffic element of the CDMP contains more information about concurrency and tradeoffs between development density and transportation impacts. The Planning Department also does a site plan review of proposed developments and maintains an up to date listing of

development projects that are finished or completed. The *Metro-Dade Transit Agency* (MDTA) is another important county department, because it provides services that offset roadway requirements under concurrency.

*Local governments* have little jurisdiction over transportation issues, because the county and state own most of the streets within its boundaries. In setting LOS standards, they can adopt levels equal to or stricter than the county or state. The formal relationship between the city and county, as far as transportation planning is concerned, would make it seem that county exercises all authority. In practice the county does its best to cooperate with municipalities in setting standards and developing plans. Most people are not aware that county has such extensive powers, because it negotiates with local governments.\(^{73}\)

**Dade County land use issues**

Dade County wants to encourage infill in its cities and development in unincorporated areas near the cities. Since it is a largely built-out urban area with 27 municipalities, the unincorporated areas are the only place left for growth. The unincorporated area accounts for 50% of the population, but over 50% of the area. Development is heavier in the north/east portion of the county, where the urban development boundary is located. Infrastructure cannot be widened or improved in most of east county. As a result, Metro-Dade adopted a 2-tier LOS standard for county and state facilities. Years 1-5 of the CDMP allowed more lenient or worse standards - LOS E almost everywhere, and LOS D outside the urban area. After year 5 a long term standard went into effect, which allows greater degradation of roadways in urban areas and stricter standards in other areas. The concurrency process involves several County departments, including the transit agency. The MDTA keeps track of corridors where development is being approved and tries to increase service levels in those areas.

Over time, interpretation of the state’s Growth Management law has changed – especially regarding concurrency and traffic. The most recent Legislature adopted new requirements which are more liberal and provide more options to meet concurrency. In particular, Transportation Concurrency Exception Areas (TCEAs) are now allowed in built-up areas. Dade County requested redesignation of its entire urban infill area as a TCEA. This means that these unincorporated areas are subject to minimal concurrency requirements and LOS standards. Municipalities, such as the City of Miami, can choose to keep LOS standards, but there is an incentive for them to pursue exemption as well. Dade County’s TCEA was approved because it has Metrorail, Tri-Rail and other mass transit options available.\(^{74}\) At the same time, Dade County adopted higher LOS standards for its suburban fringe.

The cities now have an incentive to adopt similar standards to the county’s. Because Dade County’s eastern unincorporated area has no concurrency requirements, it is more attractive for developers than other areas. If cities such as Miami and Coral Gables seek any new development, their only option is to request concurrency exemption as well. But

\(^{73}\) Turner, Clark. Phone interview on March 22, 1995.

\(^{74}\) Woerner, Mark. Phone interview on March 24, 1995.
the problems of meeting LOS standards are beginning to catch up with Dade County. Now there are parts of unincorporated West Dade County where developers are finding it more difficult to get their projects approved. There will be more political pressure to change the standards, because they are beginning to put limits on development. Some of the unincorporated areas now want to secede from Dade County.\textsuperscript{75}

Even if concurrency worked in theory, many cities do not enforce it. Those who do may be punished by their diligence, because developers will move to areas where LOS standards are more lax, rather than areas with comprehensive land development standards. For example, the City of Coral Gables gets a lot of pass-through traffic which is generated outside its boundaries. The southern portion of the City of Miami borders the north and east of Coral Gables. Douglas Road, a 5-6 lane collector which divides the two cities, is reaching the limits of its capacity for handling traffic. The two cities approached concurrency differently: Miami took a liberal approach and allowed more development, while Coral Gables limited development to avoid overloading Douglas Road. As a result, there are 4-story developments on one side of the road in contrast to 13-story buildings on other side. Coral Gables feels its CDB is being adversely impacted by the increased traffic, and that it is put at a disadvantage in attracting new developments. The city is close to building capacity because of traffic generated beyond its borders.

Local support of growth management is lacking, and there is no concerted or consistent regional effort to implement it.\textsuperscript{76} The State provides very little funding for planning activities, which exacerbates the problem. There is no requirement that county and local government comprehensive plans be consistent with one another, although individually, they must be consistent with state regulations and the Regional Policy Plan. Most larger municipalities have a staff, but many contract out for their comprehensive plan updates. Coral Gables, a wealthy community in the Miami urbanized area, can afford to plan. It is fortunate enough to have a five member professional planning department, but smaller municipalities may have only one person, or a part time person. In some regions, all local plans are done by the RPC, because these small cities or rural counties do not have sufficient staff. Cities like Coral Gables strive to meet state deadlines, but a lot of other local communities hesitate to implement the Growth Management provisions. Either the communities have no money, or they believe that regulations will change with the political winds. Furthermore, differences among neighboring county LOS standards and interpretations of Growth Management creates pressure to allow more development. Much of the growth in South Florida is going to Broward County, just north of Dade, which has little transit service and sprawling development patterns.


\textsuperscript{76} Dunphy, Robert. Phone interview on February 2, 1995.
Role of the MPO

- **Land use assumptions**
  In addressing land use issues, the MPO relies heavily on the Planning Department for assistance. The MPO long range transportation plan, which is currently being updated, will have many linkages with the CDMP. The long-range plan must be consistent with service standards set forth in the CDMP. The Planning Department will produce the demographic and land use data needed to update the transportation plan, and they have a strong hand in all land use issues. Basically, the MPO uses what the Planning department develops for them and considers it a systematic consideration of land use. Future development which is included in land use projections is assumed to meet concurrency requirements.

State law requires population information to be developed on a 5-10 year basis. Most cities rely on the State for population projections. The Planning Department provides countywide data to the MPO, and the CDMP is amended every 2 years to update the population figures. Dade County, unlike other areas, adopts population figures. County figures are based mostly on historic trends and the amount of vacant land available, but does not just assume maximum buildout. It tries to reflect the character of local communities. The projections are a result of doing a land capacity analysis of vacant land in unincorporated areas. Boundaries are based on census tracts and can link back to municipalities.

The transportation and land use link breaks down because the MPO does not forecast alternative land use scenarios with the transportation system. It currently uses fixed land use assumptions and tests different transportation networks on them. In addition, the gravity model is not sensitive to different land use scenarios at a traffic zone level. It does not allow one to determine the impact of compact growth versus sprawl or show where growth would go with a higher mode split. Many variables factor into the transportation model, but they may not be the right ones. For example, it uses the number of dwelling units and number of employees, but acreage or intensities may be more relevant in analyzing transportation/land use linkages. There is talk of joint development to support major transit projects, but is not an integral part of long range planning. Transit investments will not necessarily be accompanied by a change in zoning along transit corridors.

- **MPO planning products**
  The MPO is not involved many transportation/land use projects, partly because the competition for UPWP funds is strong. The transportation/land use projects that do exist are conducted primarily by the Planning Department. For example, it is studying transit zone districts with minimum densities and no parking requirement. However, these regulations would apply to the existing transit system, not the future one. The Planning Department proposed several new projects on transportation/land use

77 Woerner interview.
coordination, but only one was included in the UPWP. There was disagreement about what kind of proposals were appropriate for UPWP funding. One proposal would have examined elements of urban design which influence transportation and identified ways to design neighborhoods which can be served better by transportation facilities. Some county staff objected to the proposal, because they thought neighborhood design was a land use issue, not a transportation issue. The projects included in the UPWP do not represent innovative or systematic considerations of land use issues. The UPWP project on land use/transportation coordination involves work which the county would be required to do anyway. It provides funding for the Planning Department to do a traffic amendment analysis for the CDMP, which is necessary any time the CDMP land use element is amended.

- **MPO/local government interactions**

The MPO has little direct contact with local governments. Generally, interaction occurs through public hearings and citizens advisory committees, but they do not actively initiate contact on these issues. The City of Miami is represented on the MPO's transportation planning advisory commission and SFRPC's committee on transportation issues. The city stays in touch with what is going on and when issues of interest to it arise, makes sure its views are incorporated. Smaller jurisdictions may have interactions with SFRPC, but not the MPO. Coral Gables interacts with the SFRPC when its Master Plan amendments need to be reviewed, or for DRIs, but does not regularly attend RPC meetings.

Recently, municipalities have become more interested in what federal funds are available, especially through the Enhancements program. The Enhancements program seems to have broadened participation in the planning process and sparked local interest in the MPO. In addition, UPWP Planning money is being made available for municipalities to undertake transportation related planning at the local level. Since their planning activities are financed through local general fund revenues, the assistance helps. One UPWP project which may increase MPO contact with local governments is the Countywide Parking Study. Local governments generally establish minimum parking requirements, but the County would like to change these policies. It will need the cooperation and consent of local governments to implement any proposals.

**Obstacles to coordination**

- **Underlying obstacles**

The conflict between private property rights and public programs is an underlying problem in coordinating transportation and land use. Resistance from the development community, as seen in the DRI process, may scuttle any attempts to truly curtail private property rights. It remains to be seen whether county commissioners will relax

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78 Woerner interview.
79 Woerner interview
LOS standards in western Dade county once developers begin to pressure them. Local control over land use is also a sensitive issue. Although Florida’s Growth Management Act includes strong enforcement provisions, no regional or state agency has exercised this authority over local governments. The county cannot force local communities to agree to different land use assumptions. If the goal is to encourage compact growth, one might prefer to invest in transit. However, building transit requires denser developments than currently exist, and local governments will resist raising densities. One could adopt a county-wide policy to not build infrastructure in low-density areas, but a successful coordination of transportation and land use will require an increased educational component.

- **Lack of funding**

One persistent problem is the lack of local resources for planning activities, which the Growth Management Act seems to have exacerbated. The state requires expensive, technical planning but provides no funding for it. A better way to do concurrency might be to identify communities which really need help instead of applying the same rules to all and spreading money so thinly. Some local planners believe the end result is not better planning, but more bureaucracy, because some just follow the letter of the law.\(^\text{80}\) Certainly, this defeats the intent of the Act, which was to rationalize planning and development. The MPO will have difficulty coordinating its investments with supportive land use plans if local governments are overwhelmed with other responsibilities or understaffed.

- **Failure of Growth Management**

Many observers believe the Growth Management Act has largely failed to achieve its objectives.\(^\text{81}\) Developers have found ways to circumvent local comprehensive plans, and the developments which are now approved in Florida will accommodate six times as much population as currently exists. Concurrency has not accomplished what it was intended to. Although it provides a clear link between development and infrastructure, it has been used more as a regulatory mechanism rather than planning tool. It can direct development to the wrong places and does not provide a long term vision for development. The future of Growth Management remains in doubt, since many of its key provisions are being watered down. And the State has backed off from strictly enforcing the law since the Secretary of Community Affairs was “rebuked by Gov. Lawton Chiles in 1993 for her efforts to punish St. Lucie County for violating its own plan.”\(^\text{82}\)

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81 Binkley, Christina. p. F1.
82 Binkley, Christina. p. F1.
**Region 2: Syracuse, New York**

**Framework of local planning**

The City of Syracuse and the County of Onondaga are located in central New York State, housing a population of approximately 470,000. The city covers about a third of the county’s territory. In the past two decades, population growth has remained relatively stable or declined, and state projections show a small increase through the year 2010. The Syracuse area provides an interesting contrast to both Seattle and Miami, because it does not face the same growth pressures. However, mirroring national trends, its central city has lost population to outlying suburbs. Economic development and revitalization of the urban area is a key objective for the local business community.

A plethora of local government entities exist in New York State, which has no unincorporated communities. There are 152 towns and villages, not to mention cities, counties and special districts. As a result, land use and transportation responsibilities are scattered among five levels of government. Cities, towns and villages have control over land development, while counties are responsible for providing infrastructure to support the development. Unlike Florida and Washington, New York does not require local governments to develop comprehensive plans. Even where plans are developed, they may not reflect a systematic consideration of a community’s needs: “Plans are more like zoning codes as opposed to vision.” If a municipality develops zoning ordinances, it must establish a Planning Board and a Zoning Board of Appeals. County governments are fairly strong in New York; they provide social services and infrastructure. Under state law, counties must review all major development proposals, but their review power is mostly advisory. If a municipality disagrees with the County’s findings, it can override the county with a majority plus one vote of its elected officials.

Onondaga County operates under a County executive form of government. The *Syracuse Onondaga County Planning Agency* (SOCPA), handles planning functions for both the County and the City of Syracuse. The County collects a 3% sales tax, which is shared among the county, schools and towns. Some towns are subsidized, because they do not collect any property taxes. Budget cuts at the county level are forcing coordination and consolidation of existing programs, which may be beneficial in the long run. However, cutbacks do not bode well for local government planning capacity, which is already limited. Many municipalities have only volunteer planning boards and only three have professional staff. SOCPA has provided technical assistance to many of these municipalities. Existing local zoning ordinances may be based on adopted or unadopted land use plans. One rural town has no zoning at all. As a result, developers frequently bridge the gap between the municipalities and county engineers.

The *Central New York State Regional Planning & Development Board* (RP&DB) was created by New York State law under a general mandate. RP&DB encompasses four

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counties: Onondaga, Cayuga, Oswego, and Cortland. Each county appoints representatives to the board, with a total of approximately 20 members. RP&BD receives economic development administration grants and local contributions, which are based on population and geography. Onondaga County is the largest in terms of population. RP&DB engages primarily in land use and canal planning, but does not develop land use plans. It also works on economic development projects, programs, loans, environmental issues, and water quality and provides local planning assistance in these areas. RP&DB is currently the administrative agency for the MPO. A private sector counterpart to the RP&BD is the Metropolitan Development Association (MDA). Whereas RP&BD represents a microcosm of the region’s diverse interests, MDA includes the CEOs of the 50 largest corporations in the region. Most of these businesses are located in Onondaga County, and they include major financial institutions, manufacturers and retail. The MDA obtains grants to conduct planning studies, and it plays an important role in facilitating economic development projects.

The Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC) is the smallest MPO in New York. It has a staff of 10 and covers Syracuse and Onondaga County. The normal MPO arrangement in New York is for a local agency to host the MPO. Administrative functions, such as providing health insurance for staff, are handled by the host agencies. Onondaga County is the MPO’s host, but recently it has contracted with the Regional Planning & Development Board to be the administrative agent. The MPO is now located in the same building as the RP&DB. The two agencies have separate and distinct functions, although there is some degree of collaboration. The MPO Board includes the Regional Planning & Development Board, Metropolitan Development Association, Central New York State Thruway Authority, New York State DOT, Onondaga County, City of Syracuse, and the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority. Although all members vote, the latter four agencies are considered signatories in MPO; this core group must participate in all MPO agreements. (Explained in UPWP)

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT) controls the lion’s share of transportation financing and programming in the region. Since Syracuse is in the snow belt and receives an average of 110 inches of snow each year, weather is the predominant factor in state transportation planning. NYS DOT uses a lot of salt during the winter, which adversely affects its many viaducts and bridges. As a result, NYS DOT emphasizes the physical needs of the transportation system, and gives highest priority to safety and pavement management in funding decisions. Other transportation agencies in the region include the Central New York State Thruway Authority, which oversees the New York State Thruway and barge canal. It is a state agency funded entirely by the tolls it collects, and it provides grants for economic development projects. The Central New York State Transportation Authority, more commonly known as Centro, operates local bus service in three counties, including Onondaga. Centro’s state enabling legislation authorizes it to provide coordinated transportation services on a regional basis. In addition to bus services, it manages parking garages and paratransit. Other major bus providers in the region include Greyhound, Empire Trailways, and Adirondack Trailways.
Current land use issues
Onondaga County is facing some major planning problems, and water quality tops the agenda. Onondaga Lake, in the center of county, is extremely polluted by sewage and industrial discharge. The County is under court order to clean up the lake, which will cost an estimated $1.2 billion. These expenses will be passed on to property owners, and some businesses and developers have already left because of it. The County seeks to simultaneously encourage economic development and discourage sprawl. Although the County is concerned about sprawling development in its outer fringes, the Water Board, a state agency located in the county, has other objectives. The region’s water supply is transported from Lake Ontario, and the Water Board is still paying off bonds that it took out to build the necessary infrastructure. In recent years, the region has lost many large, water-consuming industries, which leaves the Board with excess capacity that it is eager to sell. It would like to make water available throughout the county and encourage development. Municipalities, which are not sensitive to growth issues, also pressure the water agency to extend service. They contend that local governments pay into the Water Board fund whether or not they get service.

Several major economic development projects are occurring in the region, including redevelopment of the Erie canal and barge revitalization, which will have significant land use impacts. Old industrial sites are being converted to retail use, and other infrastructure projects are being planned. Local agencies are aware that such activities provide good opportunities to integrate transportation and land use and hope to capitalize on them. One particular project, the Stadium Market Center, will be discussed in greater detail in the second half of this case study, which focuses on intermodal planning.

Onondaga County has an adopted plan which lays out policies for land use and infrastructure through the year 2010. The plan is updated every 5 years, and the 2020 update is beginning now. The update will be a more comprehensive plan than the current one and will include a physical map. The current plan attempts to manage growth by encouraging redevelopment in the city and infill of suburbs. Instead of using more controversial measures, such as a growth cordon, the plan seeks to direct development by carefully controlling infrastructure. By imposing infrastructure requirements, such as water and sewer extensions, the County hopes to achieve the same results.

The County’s development goals, as stated in its policy plan, are based on the following considerations: “the important interrelationship between land development, public infrastructure and fiscal capacity; the need for intergovernmental and private sector coordination in the promotion and management of land development and infrastructure; and the needs for effective County government management of land development and infrastructure.” Although population levels have remained fairly stable, travel has been increasing due to the decentralization of development within the County. As a result the county’s tax base is stable, or even declining, but the demands for infrastructure have been increasing. Transit service is difficult to provide, because of the low densities that

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characterize most of the region. This problem will increase as the region’s population ages and places special demands on the transportation infrastructure.

Role of the MPO

- **Land use assumptions**
  The municipalities rely on Onondaga County for most of their data needs. The County monitors building permits and collects development data on a monthly basis. It has tracked development for 15 years, and as a result, has a good idea how much development is occurring in the county and where it is located. Traditionally, the state has forecasted population and housing growth for each county. Onondaga County reviews these numbers, takes the overall county projection, and calibrates it to the municipalities. The County works with the MPO in estimating demographic and job growth. It allocates growth among municipalities based on zoning, past transit service and use, and the availability of vacant parcels.

However, the State no longer really makes population or employment projections, and regional demographic forecasts are no longer produced by SOCPA.\(^6\) The Central New York RP&DB, which is under contract to administer the MPO program, does demographic forecasting for the County. It maintains close contact with local governments and develops forecasts on county or city levels depending on how local governments want the information. In addition, RP&DB is designated an affiliated data center and manages census information. It is currently producing report on central New York’s existing conditions and growth projections.

- **MPO planning products**
  Both Onondaga County and SMTC have expressed strong interest in integrating land use and transportation. The MPO staff includes no land use planners, but the Executive Director is seeking ways to address land use. The County used to engage in transportation and land use planning, but they have recently suffered a reduction in staff. The County would like to pursue demonstration projects and hire consultants, but it all depends on the outcome of the state budget. Despite limited resources, the Unified Work Program (UPWP) and SMTC’s Long Range Plan give evidence of local interest and effort. The UPWP and transportation plan represent first attempts to link transportation and land use and strengthen implementation at the local level. Next year’s UPWP identifies key corridors for coordinated planning and provides funding for further study. The transportation plan, adopted in January, highlighted the disconnect between transportation and land use (to the extent that land use planning is done at all) and establishes the MPO’s role in bridging that gap.

The transportation plan was developed through the collaborative effort of several agencies. The RP&BD devoted a full-time staff member to the project and wrote the aviation and canal elements. SOCPA also played a large role in developing the LRP.

\(^6\) Hayes interview.
principally by writing the land use element and existing conditions description. The planning process included a vision component, and all interested parties were invited to attend. Special committees spent 6-8 months identifying recommendations for the plan. Some of the findings were that transit needs to be a more equal partner in the process and that the transportation system should move everyone, not just disenfranchised parties. However, the dispersed pattern of settlement in the region makes it extremely difficult for transit to be viable, and transit trip times are very long.

- **MPO/local government interactions**

SMTC has strong ties to the City of Syracuse and Onondaga County. At present its interactions with local governments are limited, although it actively solicits input from towns and villages. During the long range plan update, approximately 20 public meetings were held, and SMTC made a concerted effort to encourage local participation. Local representatives came to one or two early meetings, but then did not reappear until problems arose (such as a project in their area being eliminated). The lack of sustained participation can be attributed partly to a shortage of local resources. Generally, the person who handles transportation issues is preoccupied with operational concerns: keeping potholes filled, fixing traffic lights, or processing traffic violations take priority over long-term or region-wide issues.

In the future, SMTC is planning to work more closely with local governments in developing transportation plans. SMTC’s long range transportation plan articulates a land use action plan, with the aim “to promote the development of an efficient urban area and a sense of community through transportation planning.” The plan assigns $1 million over 25 years to develop transportation plans for all 15 villages, 9 towns and the City of Syracuse. Although these resources are not substantial, they will help ensure that local plans are consistent with regional transportation and land use policies. SMTC can provide additional incentives by investing TIP money in communities that have plans in place to preserve traffic capacity.

A complementary effort to encourage land use planning is outlined in the UPWP. The UPWP identifies priority corridors for transportation and land use planning. SOCPA will work with towns to develop land use plans along busy travel corridors and provide models for other towns in the county. It will review current policies and regulations and provide technical assistance. Often, towns along same corridor do not communicate with each other, not to mention coordinate policies. The County hopes that planning assistance will protect community corridors and address density issues. The identified corridors include Rt.31, a 2 lane roadway which crosses the state. It parallels the NYS Thruway from Rome to Rochester and carries a lot of truck traffic. It includes Clay, a suburban community with a shopping mall, which is experiencing major bottlenecks in that area. SOCPA is helping Clay develop a land use build-out

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88 Landerkin interview.
plan for the corridor. Another work item involves the rural Town of Arsellis, which is on the fringe of suburbanizing. They can then go from town to town and provide planning assistance.

Obstacles to coordination

- **Dispersed responsibilities**
  Because there are so many levels of government in New York State, the integration of planning activities requires going “out of your way to communicate and coordinate.” Nevertheless, the County and the MPO are making progress. For example, the County is working with the state and county highway engineers that issue driveway permits. It would like driveway permits to be withheld until a community has an approved subdivision plan. The County is encouraging subdivision projects to include features such as clustered driveways. The transportation plans and land use plans that SMTC and the County are helping local governments develop should increase local awareness and interest in transportation/land use coordination.

- **Limited MPO jurisdiction**
  The UPWP item funding local planning activities holds promise for increasing local/regional coordination, and SMTC can encourage it by targeting TIP funding to communities that adopt plans compatible with MPO and County objectives. However, SMTC remains limited in its ability to integrate transportation and land use planning, because it does not control the majority of transportation funding coming to the region. Of the $168 million in federal funds and $34 million of state funds included in the recent TIP, only about $4 million of STP Urban funds were programmed directly by the MPO. The region no longer receives CMAQ funding, because it is a maintenance area. As a result, the State plays a heavy role in setting regional priorities.

- **Lack of State guidance**
  Efforts to change the thinking at the State DOT are coming slowly, and the State could play a more supportive role in land use coordination. NYS DOT sponsored a statewide conference on “Access Control,” which addressed growth management and control of access to major highways. This conference stimulated interest in land use issues among regional NYS DOT staff and helped increase their sensitivity to broader transportation issues. They explored new concepts, techniques and possible legislative changes. Onondaga County has used its development review power to train NYS DOT regional staff and local officials in transportation and land use issues. However, the message of ISTEA, that transportation should not be planned for its own sake, has not trickled down through NYS DOT ranks. The County laments the lack of clear state policy addressing land use.

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90 Kitney interview.
91 Landerkin interview.
Opportunities for improved coordination

The MPO is one player in the complex arena of transportation and land use planning, and its ability to integrate land use and transportation planning is affected by numerous factors. In both Miami and Syracuse, limited local planning capacity and a lack of funding for land use planning posed major problems. The strategies used to coordinate transportation and land use vary widely, but generally the MPOs rely on other agencies for technical assistance in addressing land use issues. There is much room for improvement in the area of MPO and local government coordination, which should be an essential component of any attempt to improve integration of transportation and land use.

- **Tools for declining areas**
  Transportation and land use strategies need to be developed for stable and declining areas as well as growing areas. Although New York's population is not growing, travel demand continues to increase. The requirements of growing populations compared to stable or declining populations are different, and the tools should be adapted. As Onondaga County's chief planner puts it "travel demand mitigation is a weak tool." Even in rapidly growing Dade County, the city of Miami has lost population and employment to suburban areas. The city's financial woes have led it to eliminate planning positions. Strategies for addressing Miami's transportation and land use problems may be more similar to Syracuse than to suburban Dade County. These strategies can be linked to economic development or revitalization efforts, as was done in the Syracuse region. Economic development funding can be used to undertake comprehensive local planning and formulate a development vision for the community.

- **Supporting State role**
  State policy may not be a determining factor in land use and transportation coordination, but it can encourage or hamper local efforts. Although Miami has 20 years of experience with Florida's growth management, law staff at the Metro-Dade MPO are not actively involved in land use issues. They rely on County Planning Department staff for land use inputs. State interest in land use planning has not filtered down to the local level, and in some places has been almost totally disregarded. Private property interests seem to have prevailed or state attempts to manage growth, especially because local governments do not have the capacity or will to restrict development. In contrast, the Syracuse MPO is very interested in land use coordination. With assistance from the County, it has laid out an ambitious program for increasing MPO activities in this area. New York provides no framework for land use planning and the lack of regional NYS DOT staff support makes it difficult for the MPO to adopt more innovative approaches. The vast majority of transportation funds are still controlled by the State, so the MPO's influence is quite restricted.

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92 Kitney interview.
Nevertheless, the region is focusing its resources and attention on a few key transportation corridors and developing land use strategies for them.

- **Education and local assistance**
  Efforts to increase local planning capacity and awareness of transportation and land use interactions are needed. Local governments currently do not play a significant role in the planning processes of either the Miami or Syracuse MPO. However, they are interested in what federal funding is available for non-traditional improvements, so one way to bring local governments into the MPO process is through the Enhancements program. More sophisticated technical tools may allow MPOs to test different scenarios of development and assess their impacts. This information should be disseminated to the local level, because it can improve local planning capacity. MPOs can also become more proactive in educating local governments about the impacts their land use plans (or lack of plans) will have on transportation planning. If MPO transportation planners joined their land use counterparts at the county or regional level in providing local assistance or encouraging change, the combined effort might have an impact.

- **Federal incentives**
  To encourage transportation and land use coordination, ISTEA could strengthen the requirements for regional land use goals and plans. For example, it could establish an explicit relationship between land use planning and highway funding. Giving priority to transportation improvements which are based on adopted local land use plans would provide an incentive for local planning. However, there must be funding for doing these land use plans. Even if some state or local funds are available for planning, they are usually inadequate for the technical work needed. ISTEA could encourage MPOs to use some UPWP funding for land use planning activities that will maximize the effectiveness of transportation investments. The amount of funding that is made available for land use planning may be minimal, but it can go a long way in improving MPO and local government relations.

**B. Intermodal Planning**

The objective of the second case study is to identify opportunities for MPOs to encourage intermodal planning. The same two regions are examined as in the transportation/land use case study. Miami and Syracuse are both hubs of intermodal movement, although Miami clearly handles a larger amount of activity. Both MPOs are small players in the framework of regional decision making. They must work with airports, seaport, transit agencies, and state entities to encourage intermodal planning. The case study involves the following steps:

- Determine how the MPO has expanded its intermodal planning activities
- Understand how intermodal improvements are identified and evaluated
- Identify major obstacles to implementation of intermodal improvements
Region 1: Miami, Florida

The South Florida region is a major hub of passenger and freight movement in North America and is expected to increase in importance in the coming years. The Miami airport is the eighth largest in terms of passengers and the number one cargo airport in the world. A majority of its passenger and cargo business serves the Latin American market. Miami is also the cruise capital of the world, with many air passengers going directly to the seaport. The seaport, airport and cruise industry will be making major investments in the coming years. The seaport and airport are spending several hundred million dollars to expand their facilities, while the cruise industry will spend approximately $5.2 billion on new ships. Passenger air travel is expected to increase from 32 to 50 million and port travel from 3 million to 5 million in the next decade. At present, 200 to 300 trucking firms operate at the seaport, and congestion is severe around downtown where the port and interstate are connected. Cargo movement will increase by a couple million tons in the next few years.

The transportation demands on the fast-growing South Florida region are acute, and there is no space for expanding roadway facilities. The Florida Department of Transportation has taken a leading role in intermodal planning and does not consider itself to be a highway department. It has adopted a policy of not building any highway facilities beyond 6 SOV lanes plus 4 HOV lanes and has become actively involved in transit planning activities. This self-imposed restriction has opened up the possibility for alternative solutions to the congestion problems in South Florida. The strong supporting role of the state has facilitated intermodal planning in the region.

MPO intermodal planning activities

- **Staffing and coordination**
  The Metro-Dade MPO is actively involved in intermodal planning, particularly for transit facilities. Unlike other MPOs, the Metro-Dade MPO does not have a strong technical component in-house. The MPO staff serve as project managers for planning activities, with consultants doing much of the analysis. The MPO benefits from close coordination and cooperation with other county departments. In fact, other agencies view them as another county department. Staff from other county departments are assigned to work on MPO projects on an as needed basis. The airport, seaport and transit agency are all county departments which participate in MPO planning activities. One project which the MPO has recently put out to contract is a Freight Movement Study which will identify truck routes to and from the port - an extremely congested area. The MPO also heads and chairs the development of a Congestion Management System and participates on state policy and technical committees.

Since the Seaport and airport are net money makers in the county, they have a lot of clout. They are being integrated into the MPO process more thoroughly, now that the

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94 FTA/FHWA Enhanced Planning review, March 22 session on Multimodalism.
95 Woerner interview.
TIP has included their projects, and so will the long range plan. However, the planning of the major intermodal project in the area, the Miami Intermodal Center and East-West corridor has occurred, by and large, outside the long range plan update. A strategic vision for the region has been outlined in the 2010 Plan that the airport and seaport developed, but it is not yet reflected in the MPO plan.

**Identification and evaluation of intermodal improvements**

Intermodal projects in the region are identified by a process of "directed brainstorming."96 Any participant in the MPO process - the different county departments, the state and local agencies - can propose to study a corridor or area which are experiencing congestion. At the moment, the MPO is looking at congested interchanges, the southern terminus of the existing rail system, the Miami Beach area. The long range plan will examine 6 major corridors for intermodal improvements. For example, State Route 836 has been called a parking lot, and cannot be expanded because it would require clearing a large urban area. The LRP committee is examining several transit corridors and ranking them in order of priority. As part of the update, the MPO is developing a needs plan and cost-feasible plan. The financial constraints requirement has helped the region eliminate a lot of wish list projects. It has narrowed the scope of study and evaluation. The needs plan may contain 6 transit projects, and maybe only two will be funded. The needs plan demonstrates a transit orientation, which is a shift from past prioritization.

There is no established paradigm for evaluating intermodal improvements.97 The UPWP develops a decision tree, but analysis is conducted more on a best professional practice basis rather than on objective criteria. Improvements are ranked according to different issues on an ordinal scale of -10 to +10. These issues are weighted according to importance and later aggregated. In 1995 transit improvements were 7 of the top 10 project candidates. The rankings may be adjusted to eliminate the bias for different evaluators. However, more complex questions cannot be answered: How does it improve accessibility as opposed to transportation? How will it impact the local community?

The MPO has also experienced problems in making tradeoffs between freight and passenger improvements. For example, port access tunnels were competing for funding with extensions of the transit system. The MPO decided to make the tradeoff to facilitate transit passenger movement over freight movement. They figured that the port has money to make improvements, but the transit system does not. Passenger movement takes priority, although the MPO has begun a freight movement study. It is looking at ways to better serve the freight sector, but facilitating truck or rail movement may conflict with the objective to not build roads. The impacts of economic development vs. congestion must be weighed.

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96 Baron, Frank. Phone interview on April 19, 1995.
97 Baron interview.
Miami Intermodal Center and East-West Corridor

The Miami region is planning an enormous intermodal facility which some have called the "Grand Central Station of the South." The Miami Intermodal Center (MIC) would be located just outside the airport and serve as a central transfer point for different modes of travel. It would house several bus, rail, airport shuttle, and rental car facilities. The East West Corridor project would link the Florida International University, the airport, downtown, the Seaport, historic districts and the Miami Beach convention center. The project originated in 1990, when several studies were looking at the corridor. FDOT undertook a study of the Route 836 corridor, which could not be expanded by traditional means. At the same time, the Airport was heavily involved in developing an Airport Survival Plan, and the Port was updating its Master Plan. The Airport and Seaport wanted to link their facilities to facilitate the movement of passengers to and from cruise ships. The airport has long needed to improve terminal circulation, because it is extremely crowded with shuttles and other commercial vehicles. The MPO was conducting a planning study of an off-site center to improve circulation and identifying potential sites. Eventually, these efforts merged into the MIC and East-West project.

The project has been characterized by an unusual degree of collaboration and cooperation among agencies at the federal, state, county and local levels. The State DOT has set the tone for collaboration by expanding beyond its traditional activities in highway planning. It considers itself a truly intermodal organization and took the initiative in coordination project development with relevant state and federal agencies. The State DOT negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding with the FHWA, FTA, FRA, FAA, Maritime Administration and the Coast Guard early in the process. In addition, Florida's commerce, environmental protection, historical resources, fish and game, water management, natural resources departments and the governor's office have been kept informed of the project's progress. At the county level, Metro-Dade's two tier governance system simplifies the task of coordination, because many of the relevant agencies are under one roof and the same Board of Commissioners. Disagreements between different departments are resolved internally, rather than in public and the number of conflicting objectives is reduced. Finally, at the local level, various departments within the cities of Miami, Hialeah and Miami Springs have participated in project planning.

The ongoing participation of various passenger, freight, community, business and other groups has led to broad support for the project among public and private interests. Project planning has included a high degree of public involvement and collaboration by multiple public and private agencies. There is approximately one meeting per day of public involvement related activities, and public input has substantially influenced the nature of projects plans. For example, the MIC was originally proposed for a location near a golf course, but the community was highly resistant to the site. FDOT developed other alternatives which were more acceptable to community. Rental car agencies are the primary private sector group involved in the project, because they are located at the proposed MIC site. Their facilities would need to be moved and incorporated into the MIC. The MIC also has a joint development team which is examining potential redevelopment benefits. It is encouraging private development and redevelopment around
the intermodal center and higher densities and commerce around transit station locations. The team is trying to establish different types of activities that will attract people to the center, so that it will become a destination in itself, rather than just a transfer point.

Obstacles

- **Project financing**
  Financing the project may prove a major obstacle, because the nature and size of the MIC and East West project will demand to several billion dollars worth of investment. The consultant and project manager are developing funding strategies for the project and all the relevant agencies strongly support it. Private funding for the MIC and East West project comes mainly from the rental car agencies. There has been indirect discussion of using passenger facility charges (PFCs) for the MIC. The Airport is looking through FAA regulations to see whether the MIC can be eligible, because right now it is not clear whether the MIC is considered to be on the airport site. The only components of the project which can definitely be funded through PFCs are the people connector and airport roadway improvements. However, the greatest financial impediment is that the public has failed to pay for it, although there is popular support for transit. Thus, the project’s sponsors are seeking federal grants to cover the remaining shortfall.

- **No systematic method of identification or evaluation**
  The MPO lacks an objective and comprehensive method of evaluating intermodal improvements. Without one, it cannot make difficult tradeoffs among modes, and between passenger and freight improvements. The emphasis on passenger movement and transit improvements comes more from a policy directive than an analytical basis. Although this reflects the will of elected officials, and perhaps, public sentiment, it may not result in the optimal balance of economic development and congestion mitigation strategies in the long term. The lack of a systematic method of evaluating projects and making tradeoffs among modes makes the MPO process vulnerable to political influence.

- **Unclear MPO role**
  The Metro-Dade MPO is a difficult creature to define. In some ways, it has an easier job than many other MPOs. Because the MPO is regarded as another county department, it possess a political legitimacy that others may lack. The MPO has a clear place in regional decision-making, and it is represented on all the relevant policy and technical bodies. The MPO process is the forum in which transportation decisions are made collaboratively by all the important regional agencies: transit operators, airport, seaport, FDOT, etc. Yet is it hard to discern what the MPO’s unique contribution to the planning process is. The MPO staff is small and focused on project management. It relies on other county departments and consultants to complete much of its work program. How can the MPO can represent national and regional interests

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98 Baron interview.
when it is part of a county government? Transportation decisions are not made outside the MPO process, but it is not clear that the MPO has much influence on its own.

Region 2: Syracuse, New York

Several major transportation facilities are located in the Syracuse area. An extensive highway system serves the area, dominated by the New York State Thruway (I-90) and Interstate 81 which intersect in Syracuse. I-90 is the major East-West travel corridor for the region and I-81 serves North-South travel. Amtrak provides service along the Empire Corridor with a stop in Syracuse, which has the third largest passenger loadings after New York and Albany. Conrail’s main freight rail line to Chicago passes through the region, carrying about 60 trains a day. In addition, Conrail operates an intermodal terminal in east Syracuse.

MPO intermodal planning activities

• **Staffing and coordination**

SMTC recognizes the importance of intermodal planning, and although it has a small staff, it has designated a full-time planner to work on intermodal issues. So far, the MPO has conducted a survey of freight interests in the region and has convened a freight roundtable. It is also working on a rail corridor study to determine what can be done with the lines in existence. Intermodal planning feeds into the other aspects of the MPO’s work. For example, the traffic engineer is interested in intermodal activities, because they have helped him collect more accurate data. The MPO also acquired new traffic counters which can measure speeds, volume, and vehicle lengths.

SMTC coordinates with neighboring MPOs and other agencies in freight planning, because intermodal travel often originates or terminates in sites outside the region. Only portions of rail lines or highway are located within the county’s borders and directly observed by the MPO. It also shares canal and railroad short-line issues with the Genesee Transportation Council, a nearby MPO. In the past, there has been communication among MPO directors, but recently MPO staff throughout the state have been meeting and sharing information through a joint newsletter. The MDA has also assisted in intermodal planning by encouraging its membership to respond to the MPO’s freight survey, which resulted a high response rate. The MDA also helped organize the freight roundtable. SMTC is working with the NYS DOT’s commercial transport division, which is developing the Intermodal Management System.

• **Technical capacity**

SMTC is using a GIS database to map detailed information about intermodal facilities, which will be a useful tool identifying intermodal bottlenecks. Already, it is popular with the private sector, because it will be able to show truckers where terminals, bridges, rail lines, crossings, weight limits, and protectors are located and what roads oversize trucks can use. Since the railroads would not provide a lot of information about their facilities, MPO staff went out and examined them in person. They found
that some existing state and railroad information about the facilities was incorrect. After completing this work, they will have a very good base of information from which to analyze freight movement.

- **Freight roundtable**

The MPO's freight roundtable is off to a good start, judging from the positive feedback about the first meeting. Some even said it was the best MPO meeting they had attended, because it was short and productive. Approximately 32 people attended, predominantly from private sector firms - such as logistics managers. SMTC is carefully managing its roundtable by being selective about the information it requests and being sensitive to what is proprietary or time-consuming to companies. SMTC's freight roundtable is designed to provide cross-training for the MPO and private sector representatives. Participants have the opportunity to learn how the MPO works, so that they better understand what the MPO can do. From the start, SMTC made it clear that they would not get involved in carrier/shipper issues, but that it wanted to focus on infrastructure concerns.

A common issue for several parties was access to Conrail's intermodal facility, which has about 200 trucks going in and out each day. SMTC identified a potential solution to the access problem at Conrail's terminal, but it is encountering financial and institutional obstacles. The current arrangement causes trucks to interact with commuter traffic, a school bus garage, and two schools. With a few changes, this congestion could be reduced. However, the proposed solution would require Conrail to move one of its buildings, which it is reluctant to do. It wants ISTEA to pay for improvements, but federal money cannot be spent to improve private facilities. NYS DOT representatives say that state will not pay to help Conrail either. The project also needs a sponsor, because the MPO is not supposed to sponsor anything. SMTC is trying to arrange for Onondaga County to sponsor it and is seeking help from the Federal Railroad Administration.

**Stadium Market Center Master Plan**

Syracuse is combining economic development and transportation goals in an interesting project - the Stadium Market Center Master Plan. Three major urban investment projects are being coordinated at one site: a 12,000 seat stadium, a redeveloped regional farmer's market, and a regional intermodal transportation center. If implemented, the Stadium Market Center would involve $50-60 million in combined federal sources, state dedicated and special funds, county and private funds. The project is being sponsored by the city's economic development agency, the Metropolitan Development Association, but it represents a collaboration of numerous public and private sector organizations, including the MPO.

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100 Poltenson interview.
Syracuse has seen significant redevelopment in the north and northwest portions of the city. The entire area west of the proposed Stadium Market Center site is known locally as the "Oil City" area, because of its roots in the petroleum industry. As the old oil tanks are condemned and removed, real estate is being freed up for redevelopment. These projects are driving economic development and real estate in the Syracuse area and offer an excellent opportunity to create cross-benefits. A 1.5 million square foot retail facility, the Carousel Mall, has been built right across from the proposed Stadium Market Center site. Its developer is planning to build an additional 800,000 feet on other side of the proposed, which will bring the total to 2.3 million sq. ft. of new development. In addition, redevelopment of the Barge Canal terminal, also called the Inner Harbor, will involve $20 million in infrastructure improvements.

- **Project background**
  The MDA originally packaged the three projects together and obtained urban development funding from the state to conduct a feasibility study. This led to the Master Plan, which was completed in 1993. The project site has an existing 8,000 seat stadium, which needs a new AAA field according to baseball regulations. A new stadium is planned to be built behind old one. A regional farmer's market is also located on the site, where the former Oswego Canal terminal used to be. Finally, the Conrail main line runs near the site, which makes it one of a limited number of sites that can house an intermodal transportation center. The rationale behind combining these projects was that they have different activity peaks and can share access routes and parking facilities. Baseball games usually occur in the evening and late afternoon, the farmer's market tends to be busiest in the morning and early afternoon, and the intermodal terminal would be busiest on holidays, most of which are in the cold season when there will not be much activity at the market or stadium.

The Metropolitan Development Association convened a Technical Coordinating Committee of all the agencies which had a stake in the outcome of the Master Plan and hired a team of consultants to develop the plan. The Technical Coordinating Committee participated throughout the initial design process, which allowed everyone to comment on the project's progress. The fact that the Master Plan was organized by a neutral agency helped to focus the project on passenger service, rather than a single mode. The Technical Coordinating Committee provided diverse inputs and viewpoints, and the end product addressed the concerns of all providers and customers, rather than only a few of them. MPO participation in process quite strong, and it was the driving force behind legitimizing the project and flexing federal funding. The business community hopes the project will improve the image of the city, because the site is currently an eyesore. It wants the three projects to be planned and brought on line in a coordinated manner, but it is particularly interested in the stadium. Approximately $6 million of private funding has been raised for the stadium, but the market and intermodal center have only public funding.

Maximizing use of a site with three major facilities requires carefully managing traffic movement. SMTC is looking for a consultant to do a detailed traffic study of the area.
NYS DOT is building 2 internal access roads on site, which will become city streets. One will be an off ramp from the Interstate that will provide direct access to stadium and would take 25% of the peak load off existing city streets (although the access road will become a city street. It will also provides access to transportation center. There will be traffic impact on the Interstate and on trucking firms in the area. Trucks movements are being incorporated into the SMC study, because there is already significant truck activity on the site. At present tank trucks head for the 4 to 5 oil terminals, although they will move when the tanks do, and retail trucks come to the shopping mall. There is a truck terminal, a truck rental site, and the regional market has an independent truck scale, one of two in the state.

- **Intermodal Center**

  Passenger transportation facilities are scattered throughout the Syracuse area and do not connect with one another. An Amtrak station with 8 intercity trains per day is located east of Syracuse. An intercity bus station, located near the Central Business District in an area perceived as unsafe, is in poor condition and lacks adequate parking. Greyhound, Empire Trailways, Adirondack Trailways use the current bus terminal. The regional airport lies 11 miles north of the city, but has no transit access. Transit services are designed to serve the city center, rather than suburb to suburb or intercity travel. In addition, the New York, Susquehanna & Western Railway runs a popular rail service between the Syracuse University and a major shopping mall.

  The concept of a transportation center in Syracuse has been examined since the early 70's. Several studies were produced by the MPO, the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority, and a consultant. MPO identified several sites over past several years on Conrail main line. They considered the adequacy of existing bus and rail facilities, and eventually led to the MPO's feasibility study of an intermodal facility at the Stadium Market Center site in 1990. Previous studies of the site lead nowhere because the existing Amtrak station would need to close, and people in eastern suburbs were upset about Amtrak moving to northeastern part of city. Furthermore, there was no funding available.

  The proposed transportation center will house all major bus, rail and transit services and provide access for bicycles. Public areas will include amenities such as a restaurant, bar and vending machines. The center is also designed to accommodate future growth in travel, such as high speed rail or other passenger services. The rail platform will be built to comply with Americans with Disabilities requirements and minimize train dwell times. Aside from the physical characteristics of the facility, work remains in coordinating the operational aspects of the various modes. SMTC is exploring the possibility of integrating schedules and services and is encouraging the operators to improve connectivity. The MPO hopes that the project will enhance Syracuse’s position as a transportation hub. It has held discussions with passenger associations and the state and may participate in a marketing plan for Amtrak with feeder bus service. Funding was obtained from four different sources: FTA, New York State Thruway Authority, NYS DOT, and the Central New York Regional
Transportation Authority. SMTC exercised the flexible funding provision in ISTEA's Surface Transportation Program for the project.

Although the MPO conducted early studies, was involved in initial planning of the facility and secured federal funding for it, the project did not really emerge from the planning process. The need for an intermodal facility was identified as part of the MPO process, but it was ultimately political forces that made it a priority. State Assemblyman Bragman, who represents the district, is interested in transportation and the Stadium. He was actively involved in the transportation committee before becoming majority leader and authored legislation for this stadium and others throughout the state. Former Governor Cuomo included the Stadium Market Center in his economic development program for New York. The MPO was told to implement the project and did so by including the intermodal center in its TIP.\(^1\) The project did not undergo a systematic evaluation or compete with other projects for funds. Since the Master Plan has been completed, MPO staff have not been involved in the project's implementation.

- **Current status**

With the initial planning complete, individual organizations are taking responsibility for implementation. The MDA serves as a facilitator and convenes the owners of the projects and their consultants on bi-weekly basis to coordinate construction. Unfortunately, the project has run into some trouble. Prospects for a new baseball stadium are not looking good, and the Syracuse Chiefs may leave the region if a new stadium is not open in 1996. Stadium funding is in doubt, because the new governor did not include the expected $16 million state contribution in his '95-'96 budget. The State legislature needs to put the funding back, or the project will be dead. The budget was not passed by April 1, and could be in limbo for an indefinite time period, given the previous track record of the state. Loss of the baseball stadium will not impact construction of the intermodal center, because the center is a stand alone project. However, without the stadium, the intermodal center will not have the most optimal design. For example, it is designed to accommodate a drive-thru McDonalds planned for the site. The transportation center is still a viable project, but its implementation might be proceeding more smoothly if the all stake holders had maintained their involvement.

Centro, the regional bus agency, is the lead for the intermodal center with participation from the funding agencies: FTA, State DOT, Thruway Authority and some transit providers. Centro felt it was the appropriate agency to own the building site, because its enabling legislation calls for it to provide regional transportation services. There were also no other agencies that were able to take the project on. The MDA or MPO could have done it, but the MPO was without an executive director for several months and the its staff are planners, not operators. After experiencing cutbacks, the SOCPA did not have the staff to handle it either. At present, the regional Intermodal

\(^1\) Poltenson interview.
Transportation Center is in the preliminary design stage. Centro’s consultants are producing the designs, which are circulated to other agencies involved in the center. The initial cost estimates for design have been high, and Centro may be $10 million short in funding for the rail portion of intermodal center.\footnote{Poltenson interview.} After Centro reviews the cost estimates, the project will move on to the final design. Centro’s critics have assailed these revised cost estimates, especially for the rail portion, as a sign of mismanagement.\footnote{Kriss, Erik. “Rail-bus center may face money troubles,” \textit{Herald Journal}. March 28, 1995. p.B1-2.}

After the Master Plan was completed, communication among the major stakeholders (those who participated in the Technical Coordinating Committee) broke down. Some parties feel that arrangements are being made behind closed doors, but have not openly criticized the process for fear of political retribution. They feel the project should be handled by an agency other than the bus company, because Centro’s unimodal focus has caused problems with multimodal issues. For example, the technical requirements of rail service were not adequately addressed in some stages of the design. The consultants produced a design with a very short platform and required multiple stops for trains. The State Assembly Majority Leader, who has been the project’s chief sponsor has openly criticized Centro’s management of the project. Centro’s critics believe that the other operators, Amtrak, Conrail, and Greyhound, were contacted too late in the design process. Amtrak needs to be involved centrally involved in the implementation, because its existing station requires renovations. If Amtrak invests in these renovations it will not relocate its station, and a key portion of the intermodal center will be lost. The project will also impact Conrail’s main line freight service, but Conrail has not been actively involved in implementation of the project.

**Obstacles**

- \textit{State/MPO relations}

There is some level of local and regional frustration with the State’s transportation planning process.\footnote{Landerkin interview.} In general, county and MPO relations with NYS DOT Region 3 staff have improved since ISTEA. NYS DOT is inviting county participation in its planning process. But State priorities are not communicated well to local agencies, and it is not clear how the MPO fits into other state and regional needs. NYS DOT Region 3, which covers Onondaga County, encompasses 16 counties, whereas the MPO only includes one. Although some regional NYS DOT staff approach transportation with a wider perspective, the “good old boys” attitude prevails. NYS DOT does not provide local planners with contextual information about its decisions, such as the range of needs or the amount of money available. Sometimes, it does not consult them at all. An NHS designation in Onondaga County was made without informing the town affected by it, although the designation will bring substantial truck traffic through a historic district and close to a major water supply. The state’s MPOs
meet regularly to discuss common concerns, and recently, they have joined to provide
input into NYS DOT’s Intermodal Management System.

The contrast between Miami and Syracuse is most evident at this point, because strong
Florida DOT support has elevated Miami’s intermodal planning to higher standards.
FDOT took the initiative in negotiating agreements with federal and state agencies,
which would be more difficult to accomplish at the MPO level. Although Syracuse’s
intermodal project is not as complex as Miami’s, the region would have benefited from
greater State involvement and support. It seems that ISTEA has increased awareness
of broader transportation issues, especially at upper levels of NYS DOT management,
but the change in thinking has yet to be translated into new priorities. In terms of
funding allocation, there is a perception that the State DOT always comes out on top.
Invariably, its priorities address traditional maintenance types of improvements. To a
large extent, preoccupation with the physical requirements of the system is justified,
but the emphasis on maintenance usurps almost all available transportation funding.
As a result, it is difficult for regional and local agencies to develop creative solutions
to meeting transportation needs.

- **Multi-agency coordination**

Multi-agency coordination (or lack thereof) has been a difficult obstacle for the region
to resolve. A problem with the MPO process is that the bus agency, county, and NYS
DOT each have their own agendas. There is little incentive for them to cooperate, and
there is no agency that speaks out on behalf on intermodal planning. MPO staff are
wary of challenging the status quo, because they feel their jobs might be on the line.
Centro, as the lead agency for the intermodal center, does not encourage broad
involvement in the project’s planning. As a result, it has bred suspicion among other
agencies and fueled criticism from the project’s political backers. Here again, a
contrast between Miami and Syracuse - or even between the preliminary and current
Syracuse planning processes - is evident. The lack of a cooperative and extensive
participation in the planning process is creating problems for the Syracuse intermodal
center.

- **Unclear MPO role**

The Syracuse MPO is prevented from assuming a more proactive role in intermodal
planning by its unclear role in the region. Other agencies lack an understanding of the
planning function of MPO, and even members of the MPO Board are confused about
the MPO’s appropriate role in any planning activities. At present, other regional and
local entities view the MPO as an agency with money that they can piggyback on. But
despite the fact that SMTC has limited influence on transportation decision making,
the MPO process is seen as a way for local governments to address NYS DOT on
more equal footing. More federal direction and balance might help strengthen
SMTC’s position and give it a stronger voice.

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105 Landerkin interview.
106 Kitney interview.
Financial planning
Planning intermodal improvements with financial constraints has been a problem. With all the state’s money going towards maintenance, there is a sense of resignation about the prospects for implementing other improvements. And if you cannot do anything else, why plan for it? Financial constraints should not preclude looking at what the system should be doing. The split between public and private financing of facilities is also a problem. NYS DOT does not view improvements to roads which benefit private trucking companies as a problem, but it objects to assisting the railroads. A lot of Syracuse’s freight moves by rail, which impacts the region’s economic well-being, so a reexamination of state policy might be warranted.

Opportunities to encourage intermodal planning

Advocate for intermodalism
The MPO can play an important convening or cheerleading role, as the Syracuse MPO did in the early stages of the Stadium Market Center project. But it cannot single-handedly encourage intermodal planning. It needs the support of other agencies, especially the state DOT, to have a more substantial impact. The Miami MPO is unusual because it is considered one of a number of county departments, and it works closely with the transit, seaport, airport, and public works agencies. The reality is that the MPO only exercises discretion over a small portion of the transportation funding that is available in a region. If those are the only funds that are available for intermodal improvements, they are relatively insignificant. Because the MPO does not operate any facilities, it must rely on the cooperation of the operating agencies.

Intermodal criteria and impacts
With improved technical capacity, MPOs may be better able to compare the costs and benefits of different types of improvements. This will increase the objectivity of the prioritization and evaluation process. The Syracuse MPO flexed funding for the Intermodal Center because it was clearly a priority of the Legislature and Governor. Although it will support a good project, it is conceivable that less meritorious improvements might also make their way through the process. As another example, the Miami MPO has chosen to be more involved in passenger, as opposed to freight, intermodal planning. Improved analytical tools may help it understand the tradeoffs it is making in terms of economic development by focusing on passenger movement. Furthermore, it can disseminate this information to other agencies, especially those with a specific modal orientation. Serving as an information and analytical center also can increase the MPO’s legitimacy in its regional forum.

Increased funding
Major intermodal improvements may require substantially more funding than is available in financially constrained regional revenue forecasts. Even though Miami has a profitable Seaport and airport which are making millions of dollars worth of improvements, there remains an enormous financial shortfall. Some might feel that Miami should pay for a large portion of its intermodal improvements, and that if the
public rejects increasing taxes for such purposes, it should not be bailed out with federal funds. But since the MIC and East West corridor are serving national and international markets, it may justify significant federal support. If the federal government wants to encourage Miami-like cooperation and coordination, it should put its money where its mouth is. It can create incentives for intermodal planning by making more funding available for these purposes. The restrictions placed on different kinds of funding are an unresolved problem. Using public money in a way which benefits private agencies is not viewed favorably by many interests, especially when funding is limited. To some extent, the pool of available funding must be increased before more innovative projects can be implemented.
VI. Conclusion: Strengthening linkages

There is potential to change the long-term framework for urban transportation and development by starting with agency restructuring and following with program restructuring. Looking back at the history of urban planning, there have been numerous shifts in agencies and programs. In my view, the next phase of change will involve placing transportation into a larger context of urban problems. This concluding section assesses how well ISTEA is working in terms of improving coordination, discusses some of the current proposals being bantered about in Washington and makes additional suggestions for programmatic and institutional change. These recommendations are based loosely on the surveys of current practice, historical experience, and case study findings.

A. Assessing ISTEA, the planning framework and current proposals

Three years into its implementation, ISTEA seems to be working. It marked a shift away from considering transportation programs for their own sake, and toward viewing transportation within a broader context of quality of life issues. In land use and intermodal planning, the need for this broader context for transportation is particularly acute. ISTEA represents a step in the right direction, because it has broadened the range of planning factors being considered, and it has increased participation in the decision making process. But more changes are needed. Although ISTEA takes the first step in establishing a new framework for transportation decision making, implementation has been somewhat slower than anticipated. A primary problem is that acute financial shortfalls that are being experienced at the federal and state levels. Rather than working cooperatively, agencies may be acting defensively and trying to protect or promote their own programs at the expense of others.

ISTEA's experiment in regional governance and planning focuses on the MPOs. It follows a current trend towards greater decentralization of responsibility from the federal to the local levels. The new Congress is likely to support or increase decentralization, but whether they will favor states or urban areas remains to be seen. The results of the experiment are mixed, because many MPOs have not yet caught up with ISTEA. However, they should be given a chance to improve their technical and institutional capacity. Already, MPOs are being treated more seriously by local and state agencies, because they have responsibility for administering some federal programs. Despite their limitations, they can provide a forum for addressing regional problems, and most urban areas need an advocate for regional issues. MPOs can withstand increased public scrutiny if they engage in the kind of collaborative and cooperative planning that ISTEA encourages. And over time they can contribute to more informed local decisions.

- Institutional roles

**Federal**

ISTEA encourages transportation planners to consider the broader impacts of transportation decisions and coordinate planning among different transportation modes, but the existing federal institutions do not facilitate these activities. The Department of
Transportation operates like a confederation with highly independent modal administrations catering to their particular constituencies. Increased coordination among the administrations would benefit urban areas, as in Miami, where the modal administrations have signed a Memorandum of Understanding. Although some progress has been made in air quality issues, urban programs administered by HUD and EPA are not coordinated with transportation investments. External coordination of these programs may increase, but a more fundamental structural change may be required to overcome the underlying barriers.

The current administration is developing plans for an intermodal surface transportation agency which would consolidate many overlapping functions of the modal administrations, including separate regional offices. Possible benefits include one-stop shopping for local governments and greater emphasis on intermodal planning. However, changing the existing institutional arrangements requires time and money. Past federal emphasis on the development of the Interstate System led to the dominance of FHWA in surface transportation. In urban areas, the transportation decision making structure is dominated by State DOTs, which have established close working ties with FHWA. These institutions and their collective memories will adapt slowly. The proposed restructuring might make the existing confederation of individual modal administrations work more closely; however, the current proposal does not integrate air, water, and surface modes. Many regions need to improve airport ground access, but the FAA’s funding restrictions are severe, and its regulations are not coordinated with the other modes. It is not clear that this will improve under the current proposal.

State
States will continue to have a strong impact on the urban planning process. State DOTs are the 1,000 pound gorillas in urban transportation planning and many will continue to have a strong, direct involvement in urban planning. Their extensive technical expertise and control over the lion’s share of transportation funding ensures them a major role in the future. Where State DOTs take a strong lead in intermodal planning, they make it easier for MPOs to follow. The states can develop guidelines for intermodal planning and provide technical support to smaller MPOs. But States which resist shifting from a highway orientation and sharing responsibility with the MPOs can stifle regional initiatives in intermodal planning. On the land use side, it is more appropriate for States, rather than the federal government, to take a more active role in this area, because land use powers originate with the States. Although local governments may seem to operate with autonomy, they do so at the State’s discretion. The most important thing a state can do to encourage local land use planning is to provide assistance to communities that lack the resources and staffing.

Regional
It is possible to imagine that more powerful, multi-functional regional governments will emerge in the future, but this is a highly improbable outcome. Except in isolated cases, regional planning has been an option of last resort. Regional governments might be formed as a response to crisis situations. If a community faced a serious threat, such as an
environmental disaster, major growth pressures or possible development moratoriums, public support for regional institutions might increase. But they would have to be viewed as the lesser of two evils: better to have a regional government overseeing your affairs than an even higher level of government, such as the State. The American public remains suspicious of an additional level of government, especially one they would have less immediate influence over. The factors that have shaped this perception of regional governance are deeply ingrained in American society are not likely to change.

Even if multi-purpose regional governments were established, they do not guarantee that regional planning will occur. Just because an agency is given responsibility for an activity, such as siting unwanted but necessary regional facilities, it does not mean that they will actually do so. It is quite possible to have regional agencies with great influence and authority on paper, but little practical leverage. They may fear a backlash from other agencies, or they may need the cooperation of local entities to implement their policies. Local agencies could become distracted by the political mayhem that would accompany efforts to establish regional government and lose sight of the end objective: to do better planning. As a result, efforts to establish regional governments could backfire and stir up suspicion and resentment that would impede collaborative planning.

The alternative to regional governance solutions is a focus on bottoms-up planning, with federal or state incentives. Interlocal coordination will occur for certain activities or critical issues. Existing agencies, including MPOs, regional planning agencies, or economic development associations will continue to coexist and their importance and jurisdiction will vary from one area to another. But in all metropolitan areas, these agencies should work collaboratively in order to develop comprehensive strategies and solutions. To encourage this, ISTEA or its successor legislation should make collaboration a precondition for receiving federal grants and aid. In order to receive the money regional agencies must work with state and local governments to develop realistic plans.

**Local**

The unique contribution of local governments in the planning process is their intimate knowledge of a particular place. It is at the local level that tradeoffs should be made among multiple objectives, such as affordable housing, environmental quality, congestion, and safety. Transportation objectives need to be balanced with other quality of life benefits, which means that the decisions made will not always be the most optimal in terms of mobility. Local governments have the most interaction with the public, and they may understand needs and desires of the community best. They should be viewed as the building blocks of the planning process and provide the basis for regional coordination. ISTEA raises the potential for greater interactions between MPOs and local governments—through Enhancements and other programs which fund smaller scale, non-traditional projects.
• Federal grant programs

History has shown that agency restructuring is insufficient to induce changes in the local planning process. When DOT took over transit responsibilities from HUD, it continued to administer separate regulations for transit and highway programs. The programs themselves had to be streamlined and coordinated before local planning processes were simplified. In fact, program changes may be more important than agency restructuring, because planning activities tend to follow the direction of federal programs. Metropolitan areas began to coordinate highway planning with economic revitalization of downtowns because DOT’s Interstate and HUD’s 701 programs provided funding for those activities.

The federal government can exercise its authority by passing mandates, imposing sanctions, or creating incentives. The former two options have fallen out of favor lately, with the unfunded mandates problem foremost in people’s minds. That leaves the latter option as the only viable one. In terms of incentives, nothing speaks louder than money; the reality is that activity follows the purse strings. What form these incentives should take is another matter of debate. Categorical grants have fallen into disfavor recently, because they have been equated with federal micromanagement of local affairs, red tape, and growing bureaucracy. They have the effect of increasing spending in a particular area whether it is for bridges or secondary roads, but they do not change the relative costs of different transportation investments. They just make funding available for certain activities and not others. The pre-ISTEA program structure relied on categorical grants and caused local governments a great deal of frustration, because what localities needed was not necessarily what they were allowed to spend money on. But to their credit, categorical grants explicitly show how public funds are being used.

At the other extreme is the current proposal to consolidate nearly all transportation programs and establish state block grants for transportation. Theoretically, this would break down the financial barriers among modes, much like establishing a unified intermodal surface transportation administration would chip away at institutional barriers. However, history has shown that block grants do not work. During the 1970’s Nixon combined existing urban development programs into the Community Development Block Grants. Federal oversight was minimized, and as a result, projects of questionable value were funded. Block grants sever the ties between those who raise money and those who spend it. The lesson from the 1970’s is that local governments are just as prone to pork-barreling and inefficiency as the federal government. Block grants also will not create incentives to change the existing planning process, and the more established modes will dominate. Since the highway modes already possess good planning capacity and can provide strong evidence to justify their needs, they will probably receive a larger portion of block grant funding. ISTEA-created programs such as Enhancements appeal to a totally different constituency - one that is less well organized and established than the traditional ones.

B. Recommendations for change

Metropolitan areas do not face separate and distinct transportation problems, housing problems, or air quality problems. They must address complex and interdependent issues,
where choices about education and jobs affect choices of transportation mode and housing. However, the existing transportation and development institutions fail to reflect the complexity of urban problems. Public institutions tend to be single purpose, with vertical integration, but little horizontal coordination. Ignoring for a moment the existing arrangements, resistance to change and financial constraints, it is possible to conceive of totally different institutional framework - one that recognizes the complexity of urban problems and does not attempt to solve them independently. The following recommendations reflect actions which the federal government could take in encouraging metropolitan planning and coordination, recognizing its historically important role. There are also many state, regional and local actions which would support or substitute for federal actions, but they are not elaborated here.

- **Consolidate single-purpose federal agencies**
  In addition to the internal restructuring of DOT, a consolidation of single purpose agencies might be beneficial. To integrate transportation and land use concerns, federal agencies with responsibility for urban programs should be combined. One possibility would be to merge DOT and HUD into a Cabinet level agency dealing with transportation, housing and economic development issues. Although this marriage of agencies may seem unlikely at first, there is a historical basis for it. Originally, HUD was involved in mass transit planning, because transportation programs often have a great deal of influence on economic development. Clearly, HUD is a beleaguered agency that is unlikely to survive in its current form. It must redefine its purpose and establish a new constituency. Although this paper is primarily concerned with metropolitan areas, the transportation and development problems of rural areas are important and often overlooked. A multi-purpose Department of Transportation, Housing and Development could address the needs of both urban and rural areas. Since the Congress and administration are actively seeking ways to reduce or eliminate federal agencies, a merger might be one way to achieve increased efficiencies. Regional branches and administrative functions could be consolidated and a more comprehensive one-stop shopping would be available to local agencies. Furthermore, a combined department would place transportation issues within a broader context.

- **Create new intergovernmental grant programs**
  Intergovernmental grant programs should be revamped to complement institutional changes and achieve new objectives. To improve integration between MPO transportation planning, land use and intermodal planning, I suggest creating new programs which integrate transportation with other urban concerns. Transportation programs have already broadened their scope, because special interest groups have been using transportation legislation to address their other concerns, such as sprawl and energy efficiency. For example, air quality issues sometimes are used as a lever in the transportation process as a substitute for the lack of control over land use. Rather than being tacked on to the transportation planning process, these issues should be confronted directly. A combined Department of Transportation, Housing and Development should administer these programs, so that redundancy of urban programs can be eliminated.
Although the current financial outlook is pessimistic, short term budget constraints should not impede long-term objectives. In the future, the gas tax might be raised again, or new sources of funding identified for new programs. The proposed programs do not need to exist indefinitely and encourage reliance on federal outlays. Instead, they should be used to stimulate local efforts and encourage activities which have been neglected. Over time, local support for these improvements and activities will be created. In the long term, it is likely to be more successful than imposing a mandatory requirement for coordination and other activities. The new programs could be created with a sunset provision, so that after a certain period of time grant programs would be consolidated. But this should occur only after it is clear that ISTEA's objectives have been achieved.

The new grants should each have a specific purpose, or goal: to improve intermodal connections, or to encourage land use plans which support transportation investments. A block grant would not work, because a single grant program cannot meet all ISTEA’s objectives. Creating a special program for transportation and land use would encourage local governments to make the connections between transportation and land use. A cooperative and open planning process is one of the central tenets of ISTEA, but it needs greater emphasis. These grant programs also could encourage existing institutions to work better and more cooperatively. Participation in the metropolitan planning process should remain a condition for receiving federal funding. This way, cooperation becomes less dependent on the MPO’s persuasive abilities and voluntarily local compliance with regional objectives.

**Empowerment Zones**

A Department of Transportation, Housing and Development should expand the Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Communities program. HUD has established guidelines for submitting applications, but it does not prescribe what kinds of activities are eligible or not. To submit a successful application, urban areas are required to undertake comprehensive planning activities and show how they would use federal funding. The Empowerment Zones program supports land use planning without mandating it, an approach which accounts for the strong private property ethic that exists in many parts of the country. It rewards public/private partnerships that develop forward-looking plans and stimulates creative local solutions. Transportation improvements is likely to be an important component of these proposals, because several current applicants addressed the need to improve transportation to jobs. A designated Empowerment Zone could receive priority status for funding from other programs, such as the next one, if its strategies serve multiple objectives.

**Intermodal Linkages**

In order to encourage a truly level playing field for all modes, the federal government needs to put its money where its mouth is. Under the current program structure, intermodal improvements do not compete well against traditional mode-specific projects, because their benefits are widely dispersed. Intermodal improvements should
have a separate program so that they are not squeezed out by the requirements for maintaining and operating the existing system. To encourage Miami-style collaboration among agencies, proposals which have strong and broad-ranging local support should be ranked highly. In order to have the best chance of receiving funds, the airport, seaport and other public and private agencies would have to collaborate in developing a strategic plan and raising a local match. This may break down some of the institutional and financial barriers that have hampered intermodal projects in the past. Private sector agencies, such as rail freight, could be eligible for some funding if they can demonstrate a public benefit from their proposals and if they provide a larger local match (perhaps 50%) than public agencies. Again, priority could be given to intermodal improvements that are part of a larger redevelopment package - such as that of an Empowerment Zone.

**Livable Communities**

This program would follow on a series of workshops that were held around the country promoting transportation planning for livable communities. Unlike the Empowerment Zones program, this program would not target economically distressed areas. Rather, it would focus on rapidly growing suburban or rural areas which would benefit from proactive planning. The goal of the Livable Communities program would be to explicitly link transportation and land use issues, and it should encourage local proposals which improve accessibility within a community. This could include neighborhood design guidelines or transit station development. An important aspect of the program would be its small scale, which should appeal to local governments. Typically, local governments cannot relate to regional transportation issues on an ongoing basis, but this program may offer valuable resources to them.

Ideally, the Livable Communities program would be administered by a combined Transportation, Housing and Development agency, because it emphasizes the need to put transportation interests into a broader context of quality of life issues. If funding is made flexible for land use or air quality or transportation planning, local governments could direct it into the areas where they need it the most. A transportation investment might not be the best solution for a community, so local agencies should be encouraged to explore other options.

Like the Empowerment Zones program, the Livable Communities program would include incentives for the business community. The federal government could offer federally insured mortgages as an incentive for buying homes in a Livable Community. FHA insured mortgages provided an enormous stimulus to the development sector after World War II, encouraged home ownership, and it contributed to current land use patterns. In order to encourage more sustainable or integrated development patterns, similar or more attractive incentives need to be provided for the alternatives. Banks and other financial institutions served as willing intermediaries for the FHA insured mortgages, because they saw the benefits to their own industry and “sold” the program to individuals. The Livable Communities program could then be partially implemented through private sector channels.
Let MPOs administer new programs

At present, most MPOs do not command enough responsibility to be taken seriously by local agencies. The lack of understanding of the MPO's role among regional and local entities has contributed to the problem. If MPOs are to play a greater role in regional decision making, more funding should be placed at regional discretion, and less at the States' discretion. The federal government could help by giving the MPOs responsibility for administering some or all of the proposed new grant programs. This may be more politically palatable than transferring authority which currently belongs to the States and will help increase MPO visibility in the urban planning process. New programs may attract wide interest and participation in the planning process, like the Enhancements program has done.

As the administrators of these new programs, MPOs may have more legitimacy as regional advocates and facilitators for intermodal planning and coordinated transportation/land use planning. There will be a direct link between their outreach activities and funding available for cooperative planning. City and town agencies with have limited time and resources may find a greater justification for participating in MPO activities if it could lead to increased revenues for local planning. The Empowerment Zone and Livable Communities programs are specifically targeted towards a neighborhood or community scale, which will create an incentive for local participation in the regional decision making process.

Dedicate funding for new programs

Funding should be set aside to achieve ISTEA objectives, because in a traditional planning process, the maintenance and operating needs of the existing system may take priority over more innovative improvements. The new grant programs should not replace traditional public works and housing programs, but rather supplement them. Funding for maintenance or operations activities should not be cut back to fund these programs, but new funding sources should be identified for them. These programs can encourage more visionary planning, which looks beyond the financial constraints of an ISTEA planning process. For example, to promote intermodal planning, a portion of Aviation and Highway Trust funds could be siphoned off for an Intermodal Transportation Account. These funds could be used for improvements such as airport or seaport access, which traditionally have been ignored by the individual modes.

Provide local assistance for land use planning

Land use planning is essential, because good land use plans help ensure that transportation facilities and other infrastructure are used wisely and effectively. However, local ability to conduct land use planning is being limited on all sides. Land use interventions are being challenged in lawsuits, restricted by legal rulings, and challenged by takings legislation. At the same time, Growth Management Acts are being weakened, and funding for planning is decreasing. The lack of local planning capacity has serious consequences for long-term viability of our communities. Coordinating transportation and land use planning will be extremely difficult unless land use planning activities are funded in a more systematic and comprehensive
manner. The Courts are serving a de facto planning role in the land use system, but they cannot and should not have to do so.

The federal government should raise revenues for planning assistance, because states and local governments have failed miserably in doing so. An unfortunate consequence of the current local governance system is that municipalities are highly vulnerable to cyclical changes in the economy. Many local governments are too cash strapped to think about long term needs. They cannot guarantee a steady stream of support for planning activities and also provide other social services. And they will not raise general taxes to finance infrastructure if it will put them at a disadvantage in attracting business and development. State governments are under similar pressures to become more competitive in attracting businesses.

Local governments should be supported because they form the basis for community involvement in urban issues. Public participation is more tangible at the city, corridor or subarea level than at a regional level. It is at the local level that place-centered planning should reconcile multiple quality of life objectives. A Livable Communities program would support visionary thinking at the local level and make land use planning more than a theoretical exercise. But support for local planning must go beyond targeted programs such as the Empowerment Zones or Livable Communities, because only selected regions can benefit from them. Local governments need more systematic and comprehensive assistance, whether from state or federal sources.

- **Change the incentive structure for the private sector**

  Private sector decisions, whether made by developers or others businesses, are shaped by the potential for making profit. If private actions are considered detrimental to public objectives, they can be influenced by targeted incentives. Rather than imposing top-down regulations and stirring up resistance, incentives can be employed to correct for market failures. As we have seen in Florida, land use regulations - whether a town, region or state develops them - will be eroded if they counter financial realities. Political pressure from the business community will eventually weaken regulations which they consider excessively restrictive of private property rights. Instead, federal programs can be designed to work with market forces by using tools such as FHA insured mortgages to encourage Livable Communities. These tools will make it less expensive - or more profitable - for the private sector to become involved with these programs. New programs can include tax breaks, low cost loans, or relief from certain regulations, as incentives for the private sector to support public goals and activities.
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Some of the case study findings are based on information gathered by the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center during the joint FTA/FHWA Enhanced Planning Review of Miami Urbanized Area on March 20-23, 1995. The author thanks Bill Lyons and Phil van der Wilden for their assistance.