



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING PROCESSES

YEAR 2010 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PLAN

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**MEMORANDUM REPORT
NUMBER 87**

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PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING PROCESSES
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PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING PROCESSES

BACKGROUND

On March 1, 1993 the Commission Technical Coordinating and Advisory Committee on Regional Transportation System Planning requested that the Commission staff prepare a schedule of public participation meetings for the current regional transportation system planning process. This schedule was set forth in SEWRPC Staff Memorandum entitled "Schedule of Public Participation Meetings in the Third-Generation Regional Transportation System Planning Process". The Advisory Committee formally considered and approved this memorandum on April 6, 1993.

The approved memorandum established four public participation objectives and outlined a preliminary schedule of public meetings. It noted that final dates for such meetings would be dictated by, among other factors, progress of the planning work. The four objectives concerned: educating the public in the findings of planning process; providing opportunities for public participation in plan making; promoting interagency and intergovernmental coordination; and, providing an arena for informed public debate on regional transportation issues.

At its July 22, 1993 meeting the Advisory Committee requested that the memorandum setting forth the proposed schedule of public meetings be expanded to propose a broader public involvement program. The Advisory Committee formed a Subcommittee to develop a public involvement program and to recommend its adoption to the Committee at-large. The Subcommittee, whose membership is set forth on the inside front cover of this report, met for the first time on August 23, 1993 and directed that the Commission staff, using the approved memorandum and the four objectives set forth therein as a framework, prepare a proposed public involvement program. That program was designed to be consistent with Section 450.116 of the then proposed U. S. Department of Transportation's rules governing the development by Metropolitan Planning Organizations of transportation plans and programs; and was unanimously approved by the Advisory Committee at a meeting held on September 14, 1993.

On November 10, 1993 the Executive Committee of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission formally considered and approved the program after providing guidance to the Commission staff in revising the program on three scores. First, the Executive Committee directed that increased emphasis in the program be placed on the proposed Regional Planning Conference, as it presents a unique opportunity for a broad-based public review and consideration of the preliminary transportation plan. Second, with regard to public informational meetings, the Executive Committee directed that care be taken to ensure that sufficient information is available at the time of any meeting to provide a basis for meaningful dialogue, education, and input into planning decisions. Third, the Executive Committee directed that mention be made in the program of the Regional Transportation Forum held on November 3, 1993 at the Transit Center in the City of Milwaukee. The Forum was jointly sponsored by the Regional Planning Commission and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The Commission recognizes that the regional land use-transportation system planning program covers a broad spectrum of governmental and private development interests; that regional transportation system plans prepared by the Commission affect the daily lives of residents of the entire Region; and that proper preparation and implementation of adopted plans depends upon meaningful public participation in the planning process. Accordingly, the following public involvement objectives have been formulated by the Commission:

1. To educate the public in the findings of the transportation system planning process especially regarding: existing socio-economic conditions and anticipated changes in those conditions that may affect transportation system development; objectives and standards used to design the new regional transportation system plan; alternative transportation system plans considered and evaluated; and the implications of such plans on the overall physical development of the Region.
2. To provide to the greatest extent practical opportunities for the public to meaningfully participate in the plan making process by, among other

means: holding public informational meetings and public hearings; providing ample opportunity on such occasions for questions and comments; and recording and considering such input throughout the planning process.

3. To promote essential intergovernmental and interagency coordination by: broadening the technical knowledge and experience at the disposal of the Commission; and involving elected and appointed public officials and knowledgeable citizen leaders in the regional transportation system planning effort.
4. To provide an arena for informed public debate on the issue of regional transportation system planning by: making use of the public informational media; and publishing and widely distributing related literature--especially summaries of proposed plans and the final adopted plan.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Growing public awareness of, and familiarity with, the public planning function has evoked contrasting, and in some cases highly organized, citizen response. Generally approving of the planning process, although not necessarily of its products, are members of the community who perceive planning to be fulfilling a long-overdue need. Generally disapproving are citizens who seem to perceive planning to be a danger to personal freedom and self-determination. Citizen activism, a formidable force whether reflective of positive or negative attitudes, is an outgrowth of this surge of interest and leads to periodic calls and legislative mandates for more citizen participation in the planning process. In regard to such calls and mandates, the Commission's concern is not so much over whether the proposed participation is offered in agreement or disagreement, but, rather, whether the participation is constructive, offering practical alternatives which recognize both areawide and local needs and objectives, and is based upon careful study and deliberation.

The Commission, since its inception in 1960, has used an intricate plan formulation and review procedure specifically designed to gain the advice and consent of concerned elected officials, citizen leaders, and the general public.

The procedure, utilized by the Commission in all past land use and transportation system planning programs including the conduct of behavioral and attitudinal studies, the use of technical and inter-governmental and citizen advisory committees, and the conduct of formal public hearings, public informational meetings, and regional planning conferences. During the second-generation regional land use and transportation planning effort, sufficient time permitted the Commission to create a citizen advisory committee and to ensure that it could meaningfully contribute to the planning process.

The public involvement program for the current regional transportation system planning effort will include the aforementioned components and expanded efforts to inform the public of planning activities, findings, and recommendations. The program also recognizes the potential of forming a citizen advisory committee. Such a committee could serve to provide input on particularly controversial transportation plan proposals should they arise as well as on-going input not only into the transportation planning and programming processes but into the regional planning process as a whole.

It is also important to note that the Commission co-sponsored a Regional Transportation Forum with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation on November 3, 1993 at the Transit Center in the City of Milwaukee. The forum was held to elicit comments from selected panelists and audience members on transportation issues and concerns likely to affect the separate but coordinated transportation planning work being conducted on the State and regional levels. A record of the proceedings, prepared by the Department, is on file in the Commission offices.

Behavioral and Attitudinal Surveys

The Commission has made extensive use of behavioral and attitudinal surveys in the regional transportation system planning process. The conduct of these surveys enables the general public to make a significant contribution to planning within the Region relating to the essential components of regional development--housing and transportation.

Through the use of the attitudinal surveys, the Commission obtains information and opinions from household members, in a sub-sample of regional households,

relating to: the reasons for selecting a particular mode of travel; the quality of existing transportation facilities and services; how transportation facilities and services may best be improved; how transportation improvements should be funded; the kind of transportation facilities which should be provided for in long-range planning; the reasons for selecting present neighborhoods; and principal items to be considered when selecting new living quarters.

The attitudinal surveys were conducted as part of the first, second, and third major inventories of existing transportation movements and travel habits and patterns within the Region. The third such inventory, including a screenline survey, a home interview survey, a truck and taxi survey, a series of external surveys, a mass transit survey, and an intercity bus and rail survey was begun in late 1991 and completed in 1993. It was conducted at the same scale as the two previous regional travel inventories, carried out in concert with the initial and second-generation regional transportation system planning efforts, and thereby provides a reliable measure of the impact on travel patterns and on public attitudes and opinions brought about by changes occurring within the Region over time. Under the most recent major inventory of travel a sample of about 17,000 households, or about 2 percent of all households in the Region; 37,200 public transit passengers; and 47,100 vehicle operators crossing cordon lines were surveyed. The attitudinal survey was included as a part of the home interview survey of about 1,700 households.

Technical Coordinating and Advisory Committee

The Commission's basic organizational structure has provided, since the inception of the Commission in 1960, for the extensive use of advisory committees in all major planning programs. The current, third-generation, regional transportation system planning program is to be carried out under the guidance of the Commission's Technical Coordinating and Advisory Committee on Regional Transportation System Planning.

The Committee is charged with the responsibility of recommending to the Commission, after careful study and evaluation, a new third-generation regional transportation system plan. In developing that recommended plan, the Committee is to help ensure that all relevant planning requirements and policy initiatives

of the Federal Clean Air Act and Federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act are met.

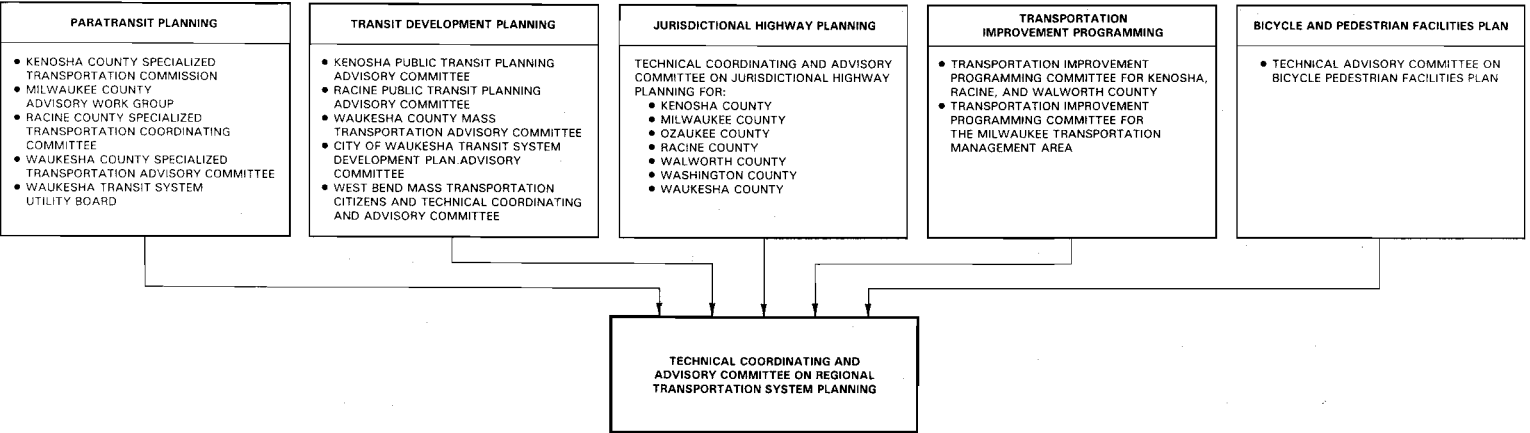
In working with the Commission staff on this assignment, the Committee is expected to bring to bear, through review and comment procedures, the collective experience, judgement, and wisdom of its members on technical work presented by the Commission staff. In addition, Committee members are asked to help familiarize other local, county, State, and Federal elected and appointed officials with the findings and recommendations emanating from the Committee's work, being aided in so doing by materials to be developed by the Commission staff. The Committee members are also asked to help secure intergovernmental adoption and endorsement of the recommended regional transportation system plan upon its completion and adoption by the Regional Planning Commission, so that the plan will truly provide a common framework for subsequent transportation facility decision-making.

Membership on the Committee includes representatives from: the U. S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration and Federal Highway Administration; the Wisconsin Departments of Transportation and Natural Resources; the university community; the municipal and county planning, transportation, and public works departments; and private engineering firms, transportation enterprises, and environmental groups. A complete membership roster of the Technical Coordinating and Advisory Committee on Regional Transportation System Planning is provided on the inside cover of this report. The Committee will meet approximately monthly in open session to undertake its vital responsibilities which include detailed review and comment on the planning work.

Though the Technical Coordinating and Advisory Committee will play a central role in guiding the current long-range transportation system planning effort, a number of transportation related Commission advisory committees, comprised of elected and appointed officials and citizen leaders, will contribute. As shown in Figure 1, such committees have guided or are currently guiding the Commission staff in the preparation of county jurisdictional highway plans, transit development plans, paratransit plans, transportation improvement programs, and the bicycle and pedestrian facility plan. The third-generation system plan when completed will represent a culmination of the efforts of these transportation

Figure 1

**TECHNICAL AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES
CONTRIBUTING TO THE YEAR 2010 TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PLAN**



Source: SEWRPC.

related advisory committees; a broad and representative body of the various geographical areas and viewpoints within the Region.

The Technical and Citizen Advisory Committee on Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Planning will significantly contribute to the preparation of the long-range plan. The regional bicycle and pedestrian facilities plan is expected to be completed prior to the long-range transportation system plan and though documented in a separate report, its findings and recommendations will be integrated into the long-range plan. Indeed, the objectives of the long-range plan call for a multimodal and intermodal transportation system, which includes bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Hence, alternative regional transportation system plans will be evaluated to determine the degree to which they encourage and provide for the development and use of these important modes of the transportation system. Membership on this Advisory Committee is comprised of representatives of local, county, and State public works and planning agencies, and private enterprise, citizen, and environmental groups with experience in and knowledge of bicycle and pedestrian facilities planning.

Public Hearings and Informational Meetings

Public hearings and informational meetings should be scheduled as to ensure that sufficient information is available to provide a basis for meaningful dialogue, education, and input into planning decisions. Accordingly, formal public hearings and/or public informational meetings will be held at key milestones of the planning process, particularly upon the design and evaluation of alternative transportation system plans. Such meetings will take place subsequent to the formulation by the Commission staff, and the review of the Advisory Committee, of the alternative transportation system plans. Public hearings and meetings will provide the opportunity for knowledgeable citizens and public officials to offer vital input useful in the evaluation of alternative plans and in the design of the final recommended plan. At public hearings interested citizens, representatives of business, industry, and civic and environmental organizations, and elected and appointed public officials will have the opportunity to register formal comments.

Public comment expressed at these meeting may indicate that additional alternative plans should be designed, that certain objectives should be compromised, that certain alternative plans should be reevaluated, and that certain alternative plans are preferred. Substantive discussion by the Advisory Committee of alternative transportation plans will follow in order to consider and reflect the public input provided at public informational meetings.

Consistent with Commission efforts to ensure wide attendance at public hearings and meetings, the time, place, and subject of each proposed meeting will be announced in the public informational media, and such meetings will be held at locations throughout the Region. Minutes of all hearings will be prepared, provided to the Advisory Committee and Commission for consideration, and kept on file at the Commission offices. A summary analysis and report on the disposition of comments made at all public hearings and meetings will be submitted to the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration with the plan upon its adoption by the Commission.

Regional Planning Conference

The Commission will hold a regional planning conference when the new transportation system plan is ready in preliminary form. The Commission will attempt to ensure wide attendance by publicizing the event in a timely manner in Commission documents and through the news media. Past Commission sponsored regional planning conferences have featured nationally recognized speakers and small work-group sessions formed to provide conference participants the opportunity to collectively consider important elements of the preliminary plan being considered.

Public Awareness

In an effort to increase the number of citizens who are informed and interested in the transportation system planning process, and in development within the Region in general, the mailing list for the Commission Newsletter will be expanded to include, among others: citizens groups; neighborhood associations; representatives of transit employees; and groups representing disabled, elderly, and low income persons. To date, approximately 1,700 copies of the Commission Newsletter are mailed to interested citizens, organizations, and elected and appointed official within the Region. Nearly 70 copies are mailed to libraries within the Region. The Newsletter will be used to disseminate important findings and preliminary recommendations emanating from the current transportation system planning process. It will also seek to explain the procedures followed by the Commission staff in the completion of the planning work.

In addition, the Commission will issue news releases for inclusion in the weekly newspapers and shopper newspapers within the Region and publish brochures highlighting significant findings and recommendations of the planning process. The brochures will be designed to summarize information set forth in the Commission Newsletter; presenting the most vital information in a format accessible to those citizens currently without an understanding or appreciation of the transportation planning process and its results or who are unwilling or unable to make use of the Newsletter. News releases and brochures will also serve to notify the public of future informational meetings and hearings.

Citizen Advisory Committee

Citizen advisory committees can give effective guidance to planning technicians and to the elected public officials who must ultimately make the difficult decisions concerning regional planning issues. However, because problem solving through public planning is inherently a methodical and time-consuming process, sufficient time must be available to allow for deliberation, consultation, and most importantly, preparation on the part of citizen participants. Such activities, requiring significant staff time and resources, are necessary for participants to gain an understanding of the complexities and interrelationships inherent in public planning issues. If such activities are ignored, if sound planning principles are not considered by a citizen advisory committee, the guidance such a committee could provide, if any, could do more harm than good.

Current Federally required deadlines for the completion by Metropolitan Planning Organizations of long-range transportation system plans have severely reduced the time typically available to the Commission for the conduct of major planning programs. The time constraints also preclude the desired proper use of a citizen advisory committee in the current planning effort. However, because of the important role such committees can have in long-range planning, the foundation for such a committee will be established as part of this public involvement program.

Past experience has indicated that thoughtful consideration must be given to the selection of citizen advisory committee members in order to ensure the membership is representative of the public at-large. In particular, care should be taken to ensure that a balance is attained in the selection especially with regard to the advocacy of transportation modes and interests and approaches to regional land use planning issues. Care should also be taken to attain a geographical balance and to ensure that constituencies under-represented in past planning efforts in the Region as represented in the current planning process.

Because of the aforementioned time constraints, should a citizen advisory committee be formed, its work in the current planning effort would likely be limited to reviewing the conformity analysis required by the Federal Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 and providing guidance if revisions to the adopted

transportation system plan are necessary to ensure conformance with the State Implementation Plan for Air Quality.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Section 450.116 of the U. S. Department of Transportation's rules governing the development by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) of transportation plans requires that a MPO's public involvement program also include procedures for the involvement of the public in the development of transportation improvement programs. A Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is prepared annually by the Commission staff under the guidance of the Commission's two Intergovernmental Coordinating and Advisory Committees for Transportation System Planning and Programming: 1) for Kenosha, Racine and Walworth Counties; and, 2) for the Milwaukee Transportation Management Area.

Membership on the Intergovernmental Coordinating and Advisory Committees is composed of elected officials and agency representatives appointed by the chief elected official of each of the local units of government within each of the urbanized areas in the Region--Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Racine. Within the Milwaukee urbanized area membership is constituted on a one-person-one-vote basis. Membership on the committees also includes representatives of both public and private transit agencies within the Region, and Federal, State, and county transportation implementation agencies.

The technical effort required to develop the TIP is provided by interagency staff teams composed of representatives of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, District 2; the Milwaukee County Department of Public Works; the Milwaukee County Transit System; the City of Milwaukee; and the Regional Planning Commission. All concerned local transportation engineers, planners, and transit operators within the Region are contacted in an attempt to assure, not only participation in, and understanding of, the program development process, but also to assure that information on all feasible locally desired transportation projects is obtained and that all such projects are considered for inclusion in the TIP.

A public informational meeting and hearing will be held to provide interested citizens with opportunities to comment on the annual draft transportation improvement program under production. Records of the meetings and hearings will be provided to the advisory committees, the Commission, and will be provided to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation prior to advisory committee consideration of the TIP. Records of public meetings and hearings will be taken into account when the advisory committees meet to take action on the TIP. A summary analysis and report on the disposition of comments made at the public meeting and hearing will be submitted to the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration with the completed Transportation Improvement Program.

SUMMARY

From the very origin of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, it has been recognized that the regional community and its elected and appointed representatives in government service must be involved in regional planning programs. Indeed, the Commission membership itself consists of a combination of elected and appointed local governmental officials and citizen members. Thus, by intent, policy, and organizational structure, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission has tried to be responsive to its constituents. The Commission believes that meaningful citizen involvement in regional planning programs has great value and can contribute substantially to the formulation and implementation of sound plans.

The public involvement program for the third-generation regional transportation system planning effort includes the use of behavioral and attitudinal surveys; a technical coordinating and advisory committee; public hearings, meetings, and a regional planning conference; and a program to increase public awareness and interest in the planning process. Should the opportunity present itself, a citizen advisory committee on regional transportation system planning will be formed.