REGIONAL PLAN ASSOCIATION, INC.

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NEWS RELEASE

No. 1077
June 4, 1969

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRIORITY FOR HIGH-SPEED TRANSPORTATION IN HIGH-DENSITY AREAS
URGED BY REGIONAL PLAN AT ASSEMBLY FOR U.S. OFFICIALS

"People live and work in cities in order to increase their choices of jobs and other activities. But since the suburban expressway, some of the advantages of city living have been surpassed in more spread-out areas.

"People will choose to live in cities again when there are advantages commensurate with the space people give up to live there. And that requires priority in transportation investment for cities. Otherwise, they will become the dumping grounds for those who cannot find housing elsewhere," Boris Pushkarev, Planning Director of Regional Plan Association, told high-level federal officials today. The meeting was arranged by New York City to enable civic leaders to brief the Nixon Administration on the City's problems. It is being held at the Federal Office Building at Foley Square.

"Figured the way highway planners project costs and benefits, the best transportation investments in the New York Region are in and near the center, midtown and downtown Manhattan," Mr. Pushkarev explained. "Though the costs are high, the benefits are far higher. On a cost-benefit basis, two of the best transportation investments in the Region, using old technology, would be the Lower Manhattan Expressway and the rail link now being planned from Manhattan to Kennedy airport.

"New technology which can operate under city conditions--underground with frequent stops--would provide better investments, particularly the gravity-vacuum

train and some mechanical pedestrian mover for Midtown Manhattan if they prove feasible." A gravity-vacuum train would use the power of gravity and air pressure in a tube partially evacuated of air both to run and to stop.

"Both because cities cannot be left to deteriorate into ghettoes for the unwanted and because the cost-benefit ratio of transportation investment there surpasses any other, priority should be given to city transportation improvements.

"Second, emphasis in city transportation must be on those forms of movement that take little space. Pedestrians require only 9 square feet, subway riders about 20, but automobiles need 350 square feet each on city streets and 600 square feet each on expressways. A 12-foot lane can provide a sufficient corridor for about 45,000 subway riders without great discomfort, for 25,000 bus riders if the bus has a lane unobstructed by cars, for only 1,500 persons if cars and buses are mixed on a city street, and for only 750 persons if automobiles are on the street exclusively.

"Third, since the New York Region more than any other place in the nation is organized to allow large numbers of people to meet frequently, mass transit is used here far more than any other place--and federal transportation aid should be allocated accordingly. For example, three-fourths of all the nation's residents who go to work on rails are in the New York Region. Yet almost all federal aid is limited by geographic area, so the New York Region cannot get its fair share in relation to its transportation system.

"Altogether, a better balance between federal aid to public transportation and to highways is essential if this Region is to be treated fairly," Pushkarev concluded.