

Regional Plan Association

... a research and planning agency supported by voluntary membership to promote the coordinated development of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut Metropolitan Region.

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NEWS RELEASE

No. 1134

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FOR RELEASE: a.m.'s Tuesday
December 9, 1971

PROGRAM TO PRODUCE COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION FINANCING PLAN SHOULD ACCOMPANY SUBWAY SUBSIDY PROPOSALS, REGIONAL PLAN ASSOCIATION URGES

Any subsidy for the subway system enacted by the State Legislature should be temporary while a long range, comprehensive financing program for the entire transportation system for the New York sector of the Region is devised, Regional Plan Association recommended in the current issue of The Region's Agenda, released today.

In October, Governor Rockefeller assured Regional Plan Association that he favored development of a comprehensive, financial program for transportation. The Governor should include a program for the necessary study in his call for a special session of the Legislature, The Association said. About two years will be required to prepare a plan, have it debated publicly and adopted by the Legislature, The Association suggested.

Since the public now accepts the fact that no form of transportation--including highways--is capable of paying its own way, and every form is needed, The Region's Agenda stated, then all modes should be financed as part of a single system.

The steps and considerations for such a study are contained in the attached copy of The Region's Agenda.

Regional Plan Association is a nonprofit civic organization which has been working since the 1920's for a more efficient and satisfying tri-state urban region.

THE REGION'S AGENDA

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 3

DECEMBER, 1971

BUYING TRANSPORTATION

A financial formula to save the 30 cent subway fare is expected to be the subject of a special session of the New York State Legislature very soon.

In October, Regional Plan Association secured from Governor Rockefeller a promise of a comprehensive financial program for the transportation system serving the New York State sector of the New York Urban Region. Any financial program for the subway passed by the Legislature should (1) provide for the research needed for that long-range program and (2) deal temporarily with the immediate fare crisis until the comprehensive transportation finance plan can be prepared, publicly debated and approved--probably about two years.

The idea of a comprehensive financial program for all forms of transportation into the Manhattan central business district (CBD), the most immediate problem, is based on two assumptions, now generally accepted by the public:

***No form of transportation to Manhattan "pays its own way." Each is subsidized in some sense.

***Every form is needed. Each does a particular job best. Loss of any throws an unbearable burden on the others. Even a change in fare or service quality on one affects the quality of service of the others. In short, all modes of transportation to Manhattan form a single system.

STEPS IN THE STUDY

Based on these assumptions, the steps toward a comprehensive financial program for CBD transportation would be:

1. Calculation of the total cost of transporting people into and out of Manhattan every day--separating the costs by peak periods and off-peak.

2. Projection of anticipated costs over a decade.

3. Allocation of present and anticipated costs among those having a stake in it--those travelling, owners of real estate in Manhattan, the City of New York, the suburban counties from which commuters come, and the State. (Federal grants should be funneled through the State as current highway grants are. But these should be changed to transportations grants, giving the states discretion to use them for all forms of transportation.)

4. Money paid by travellers should become part of a single fund.

5. To fill the fund, fares, tolls and other highway-user charges should be set in a fair relationship to each other.

Among the considerations in setting the fair share of the cost to be contributed by each traveller are:

***The best possible use of present investment.

A tremendous sum already is invested in the Region's transportation facilities. Fare and toll levels at different times of day determine whether this investment is used to the fullest advantage. They should encourage use when resulting costs would be low, for example, times when subways run nearly empty. They should discourage unnecessary use when the cost of that use is high, particularly during rush hours.

***Relative quality of service. The packed, hot, airless, slow subways will not improve as fast as suburban railroads, which soon will go up to three times as fast with nearly everyone seated in air-conditioned cars.

***The cost of providing each service. Some people may be getting suburban railroad or bus service that costs far more than anyone would be willing to pay. Some proposed subway extensions might much more economically be served by bus.

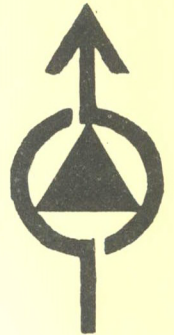
***A maximum share of wages that a person can reasonably be asked to pay to get to work.

A periodic report on progress and problems in implementing The Second Regional Plan, identifying obstacles that readers might help to overcome.

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REGIONAL PLAN ASSOCIATION

THE REGIONS' AGENDA



***The general taxpayer's interest in good transportation to Manhattan. The Region's entire economy is based on Manhattan's remaining the national business center. That depends on bringing large numbers of people together--much better than we do it now. Who in New York State and the Region has how much at stake?

***The contribution of the auto. Who needs to use it? What price should be placed on its environmental damages? How should the motorist be charged, e.g., a tax on parking, higher tolls?

As actual dollars are calculated and allocated, the weight given to each consideration will have to be adjusted and perhaps new considerations added.

FINANCING AND PROJECT EVALUATION

Once shares of the cost are allocated, everyone will be clearer about his stake in the many improvements being proposed for the system. Then, if proposed new transportation projects are clearly compared in cost and services that would be provided, everyone can participate in a rational judgment. Now, people in one part of the Region are indifferent to plans for other parts. The New York City Board of Estimate, for example, added two costly subway extensions in Brooklyn to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's plans without any back-up comparisons. No one protested. If all the Region's subway,

bus and train fares and highway-user charges depended on reasonable transportation projects, those paying them might form a strong force against rash construction.

So, not only can a better financing program be achieved, but also some costs might be cut. Segments of transportation service might be allocated to more efficient modes on the basis of cost analyses. Buses could be substituted for existing or planned subway and railroad service--or vice versa, subways and railroad service might be extended to areas now served by bus. Duplication of bus and railroad service in the same corridors might be eliminated, with improved service at less cost resulting. Buses might be given a better chance to compete with the automobile by running on parkways from which they are now barred.

TO BEGIN

This needed study for the New York sector should be performed by a research team with no direct stake in the answers, but working with the agencies which will have to act on the conclusions: the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Port of New York Authority, the New York State Department of Transportation, the United States Department of Transportation, New York City, and Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester and Rockland Counties.

Then, this look at rational financing and operation of the New York sector's transportation ought to be extended to New Jersey and Connecticut.