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BARRIERS TO REGIONAL COOPERATION  
IN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION  
IN THE NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY REGION

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# BARRIERS TO REGIONAL COOPERATION IN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY

## Chapter 1

### Introduction and Problem Statement

#### Background and Context

The story has been told often. The sustained economic success that thrust New York into international preeminence has been closely linked to the development and maintenance of superior systems of transportation. Whether in the leading role or a supporting position, transportation underwent critical improvements as one economic era evolved into the next. In the 19th Century the Erie Canal made New York City the gateway to the frontier. Later in the same century outstanding port facilities attracted the commerce and immigrant talent that would thrust the region into a role of manufacturing leadership. An outstanding system of ferries were sufficient to overcome the barriers to commerce and labor movement presented by the rivers and bays.

The levels of population and employment at the turn of the century required new and longer term thinking about the nature and quality of the transportation system. As a result, the planners, engineers, and financiers produced a major portion of the network of bridges, tunnels, and mass transit infrastructure that define the surface transportation that we know today. Later, commuter railroads, parkways, and expressways would help guarantee that the suburban era would not mean the loss of economic firepower by the urban centers such as New York City and Newark. With the advent of airborne transportation, the region maintained its international

role by developing state-of-the-art airports that kept the city and region well ahead of potential competitors.

Now, however, for more than two decades, aside from occasional critical maintenance projects and enhancements, little has been added to the transportation network. While it is true that some of the slack has been taken up by significant advances in the region's telecommunications linkages, there remains the persistent, vexing issue of what transportation improvements are necessary to keep the New York-New Jersey region abreast of competition in an era increasingly marked by internationalization of the economic playing field and dispersal of economic power.

The problem boils down to three simple questions: what needs to be done to the transportation system? Who should do it? What stands in their way of success? In thinking about these questions, it is important to keep our field of vision limited to the relatively plausible. There seems little doubt that if any transportation specialist were asked to completely redesign operational and management systems for transportation in the New York-New Jersey region from the perspective of today's needs, the result would bear little relationship to the system now in place. Conceding this, our knowledge of change in complex systems requires us to recognize that however much we are attracted to a particular vision of the future, the likelihood of rapid, and comprehensive structural and institutional change in pursuit of some vision of a planned future is virtually nil.

The realistic problem that emerges is how to improve the existing transportation network sufficiently to help sustain

regional leadership in an emerging economic system where the U.S. no longer dominates, where domestic and international competitors abound, where quality really matters, and where business can be lost if costs are too high. There are plenty of suggestions concerning how to solve this problem, and some of them will be examined later on. But a key feature of the larger issue of what kind of transportation system we need involves the region's institutional machinery responsible for thinking about and addressing the transportation problems. Two issues in particular stand out. How do individual transportation agencies in the region think about larger regional issues? And how do they relate to each other in providing the services that no individual institution alone can provide?

#### Problem Statement

At the heart of the issue of how transportation agencies relate in the production of transportation services is the question of coordination. Indeed, this project is concerned with the impact of formal and informal coordination on the planning and production of transportation services. It examines the structure of coordination of planning and operations for public transportation in New York and New Jersey. The principal objectives are to 1) produce a descriptive account of the main components of the structure of coordination for the region and 2) an analysis of the problems and difficulties hindering progress toward improved coordination of public transportation services in New York and New Jersey.

The impetus for this project derives from the increased pressure on public transportation that has resulted from the broad regional and global trends noted in the opening paragraphs. Specifically they are:

1. Mobility as a regional goal. The region faces two different mobility problems. First, despite the recent relative decline of Manhattan as the regional economic nerve center, each weekday well in excess of 3 million people travel there. These figures represent an increase of over 15 percent in a decade. These travelers face increasing or steady congestion on the bridges, tunnels, and highways; congestion on many transit lines, and frequent gridlock on the streets. A report prepared for the Bi-State Transportation Forum concluded,

...difficulties in accessing Manhattan not only cause inconvenience to millions but are a drain on the economic vitality of the CAD and the region as a whole. To accommodate the increases in Manhattan-bound travel demand projected for coming decades and avoid additional negative economic impacts, resolute action will be required by transportation agencies in the region.<sup>1</sup>

Second, with the increase in population and economic power of the suburbs to the east, north and west of New York City, has come a vast growth in traffic congestion. Solving this aspect of the mobility problem is key to the continued economic vitality of many suburban areas, particularly along the key arteries in these areas.

2. The challenges of global economic competition. The success of many European, Asian, and Latin American economies has

increased economic interaction and interdependence. It has also provided alternatives to New York in such important areas as finance and related services, advertising and communications.<sup>2</sup> Changes in the airline industry has put the other cities within easy reach of both foreign and domestic travelers. In order to maintain its attractiveness to the travelling public, Newark, Kennedy, and LaGuardia need to increase the speed and convenience of trips to and from the airports and improve mobility on airport grounds. Business travellers and tourists are looking for increasingly user-friendly transportation services. Increasing competition from other global cities provide a growing number of options for both tourists and businesses. Additionally, the regional share of domestic air cargo traffic has fallen. This decline seems likely to continue unless ground-access services are expanded.

3. Economic development and dispersal. Transportation infrastructure and services have not kept pace with the enhanced economic development experienced by the region during the 1980s. Nor has it managed to take account of the dispersal of economic enterprises and population to the suburbs. Investment in transportation infrastructure is lagging decades behind these developments.

4. Changes in the nature of the commuting public. Increased population dispersal along with increased wealth has meant the continued growth of auto ownership and use and, consequently,

congestion. Riders who are willing to consider mass transportation options are more demanding. they want comfort and convenience and are willing to pay more. This trend has produced luxury vans and express buses, many of which are poorly integrated into the regional transportation network, if at all.

5. Recognition of the problem. There is growing recognition by transportation and political leaders of the inadequacy of the existing fragmented approach to planning and providing regional transportation services. The last two governors of New Jersey and the governor of New York have strongly endorsed improved transportation coordination within their states. The Bi-State Transportation Forum, representing the heads of the region's major transportation agencies has on several occasions endorsed vastly increased cooperation. In one document published under their names, the Forum stated that

[t]he diverse nature of the region's transportation network, together with the many constraints being confronted, suggests that solving the region's mobility problems will require a multi-faceted but coordinated regional approach. It must encompass both physical improvements and measures for reducing and better managing travel demands.

These impetus to action contained in these five developments, all of which imply opportunities as well as threats, will be lost unless the region's transportation and political leaders choose to

alter the existing methods for doing the public's transportation business. Both leadership and innovation will be required. One important area of innovation must include the ways in which the transportation planners, policy-makers, and providers relate to each other. This means increased cooperation and coordination. Unfortunately, this has not been an area of strength for governmental officials in the region generally. It will require new knowledge and new learning. It is hoped that this report will contribute some useful ideas.

Chapter Two examines the region's previous attempts to achieve coordination. Chapter Three will provide a description of the key coordinating mechanisms for public transportation in the region. The final chapter will offer an analysis of the barriers to improved cooperation and coordination, and an assessment of the potential for improved coordination.

approach

This research starts with a number of assumptions. First, there is widespread agreement in many academic studies, agency-sponsored research and news articles about the problems of regional transportation that the institutional framework, for both planning and operations, suffers from a high level of fragmentation and inadequate coordination. Studies have shown, for example, that the region's institutional setting itself is a root cause of public transportation's failure in the struggle to attract passengers, reduce operating costs, and reduce auto use.

Second, as described above, many transportation officials

argue that poorly integrated transportation services in the region, while tolerable in the past, will increasingly pinch, as the region is forced to compete harder to secure and maintain its niches in the global marketplace. Although these points form an essential element of the logic of the research and are elaborated and supported, it is beyond the scope of this research to prove demonstrate their validity.

At the outset, it is also important to indicate what is not being assumed or asserted here. There is not intended to be any implication that the transportation system lacks coordination. Any such assertion would be silly and completely contrary to fact. It is obvious that major arterial highways connect. In many cases a traveller can transfer from one mass transit artery to another. The problem now facing the region has to do with the quality of coordination and the possible need for new and more innovative approaches to solving the problems documented above.

Transportation agencies in the region. This region has nine major public transportation agencies with responsibilities involving policy, finance, and operations, each making independent decisions about transit services, often without reference to the interests of other agencies, jurisdictions, or the riding public. Additionally, dozens of other highway agencies and local regulatory bodies affect the public transportation system. If the potential for interregional and intermodal solutions is to be realized, important breakthroughs in interjurisdictional and interagency cooperation need to be made. Unfortunately, the literature of

organization theory and interorganizational relations is very incomplete with respect to coordination of complex tasks across a range of public and private institutions. Given this limitation and the magnitude of the research problems, this study cannot aspire to a comprehensive examination of the region; it can only provide a preliminary examination of the most significant issues and problems.

Examination of the history of transportation coordination. Since coordination offers the promise of achieving better a region-wide transportation, it is important to learn the lessons of previous attempts to achieve it and to learn from successes and failures elsewhere. The first chapter is an examination of the history of transportation coordination in the region. It includes an examination of the literature relevant to interorganizational coordination, monographs and reports of previous experiments regional coordination of public transportation services. It will also examine the reasons for the failure or the poor performance of previous attempts at coordination. In addition, this chapter and the following one will include reference to models elsewhere which appear to be relevant to the New York-New Jersey situation.

The principal coordinating mechanisms. Over the years, particularly during the last three decades, a number of approaches to coordinating transportation have developed. These include informal contacts, shared data-bases, liaison officers, interagency committees, interagency agreements, ad hoc committees, institutional consolidation and reorganization, intergovernmental

compacts, and state and federal coordinative policies. Indeed, examples of most of these can be found in operation currently in this region. However, aside from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and New Jersey Transit, few of these mechanisms appear to be important factors in decisions affecting transportation policy and planning. Importantly, only the Port Authority has a broad regional mission. Moreover, in the debate over the future of transportation in the region, few of these integrative institutions seem able to play a major role. The extent to which they can and should be involved and the relative costs and benefits of their involvement constitute an important focus of this research.

Barriers to coordination. There are many factors which help explain both the relative scarcity of coordinating mechanisms in a region with extensive (and increasing) economic and transportation interdependencies and the impotence of those mechanisms that do exist. Among these factors are 1) the independence of jurisdictions, 2) intra-regional competition, 3) different political constituencies and bases of support, 4) different professional orientations to transportation services, 5) ideological and attitudinal differences, and 6) bureaucratic turf protection. Many of these factors constitute elements of a localist and particularist bias characteristic of this region's political system, seen by some researchers as the dominant hindrance to regional development generally.

By way of summary, this project 1) examines the case for

cooperation and coordination, 2) evaluates the effectiveness and benefits of existing coordinating mechanisms, 3) examines the barriers to cooperation and coordination among transportation agencies, and 4) proposes alternative ways of thinking about restructuring the system to achieve better interregional and intermodal approaches to transportation problem-solving in the New York/New Jersey region.

## Endnotes

1. North Jersey Transportation Coordinating Council and New York Metropolitan Transportation Council, *Regional Transportation: Current Conditions and Future Prospects*, April, 1989, p. 19.
2. See Hugh O'Neill and Mitchell L. Moss, *Reinventing New York: Competing in the Next Century's Global Economy*, New York: Urban Research Center, Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, New York University, 1991.

## Chapter 2

### Brief History of Transportation Coordination in the New York-New Jersey Region

For over a century some measure of coordination of public policy has been attempted and occasionally achieved in the region. This chapter reviews the principal successes and failures in these efforts. What approaches have been tried? The main ones are plans, organizations, and political agreements.

#### Regional Plans

Attempts at regional transportation planning in New York-New Jersey have little to show by way of success, despite numerous attempts. During this century there have been eight major attempts to achieve increased regional coordination through systematic planning, though few have met with much success. There have been many other plans aimed at improving local conditions in jurisdictions throughout the region. These are not considered here.

Regional plans aim to coordinate complex multi-jurisdictional activities by developing consensus around a set of principles and programs directed at improving a set of existing conditions. Some plans also make concrete proposals for specific improvements, aimed at ameliorating existing or anticipated conditions. There have been eight major regional planning initiatives this century, most of which contained significant transportation features.<sup>1</sup>

At some risk of over-generalization, planning as an instrument for achieving regional coordination is a decreasingly viable option. The most successful of the eight plans (success being

defined as recommendations implemented) were all from the pre-World War II era. The New York City Improvement Commission Plan of 1907 and the Plan of the Brooklyn Committee on the City Plan of 1914 built on the far-sighted work of Frederick Olmsted. Each dealt with the importance of creating parks, green spaces and sensible connections among the boroughs and outlying areas. Once in print these plans continued to serve as a source of information and inspiration for subsequent planning and site selection purposes. Many of the green spaces along waterfronts and the parkway systems derive from recommendations in these plans.

The Port of New York Authority, established by interstate compact in 1921, was mandated to produce a detailed plan for port development. (The Authority itself as a regional coordinating mechanism is examined in the section below.) The Port of New York Authority Plan of 1921 produced few successful projects. It is interesting, however, because of the reason for failure of its key proposals. The plan identified freight distribution as in the region as the initial top priority of the new Authority. There was widespread agreement among political and business leaders with this conclusion.<sup>2</sup> A bold plan emerged, based in large part on an earlier study commissioned by the states of New York and New Jersey and carried out by the New York, New Jersey Port and Harbor Development Commission. The plan that emerged in 1921 was a comprehensive attempt to rationalize freight movements around the New York harbor.

Two circumferential belt lines were proposed, one along the

waterfront, and one at the fringe of development in the New Jersey suburbs. A tunnel linking New Jersey and Brooklyn would minimize the need for lightering by water and an underground electric automatic goods-delivery system would ease the congestion of trucks on Manhattan streets.<sup>3</sup>

Ignoring for the moment the long-term wisdom and viability of these particular proposals, what is interesting and portentous for future attempts at intra-regional cooperation, are the reasons for the failure of the proposals to advance beyond the first stage.

The proposals had the backing of a rare partisan consensus on both sides of the Hudson. Both state legislatures and the New York governorship were in the hands of the Republicans. Implementation of the plan was dependent on two factors:

the cooperation of the region's eleven railroads, which at first seemed to be forthcoming, and the economic feasibility of the individual projects in the plan, since the authority was legally required to pay its bonds out of revenues and could not use tax proceeds. But even by 1922 it had become evident that the railroads would not support any of the port Authority's proposals for belt line connections. Each railroad was reluctant to give up the local monopoly it enjoyed along its right-of-way for the benefit of participating in a more efficient system.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of this impasse, the Port Authority could not implement its original mandate to improve the coordination of freight movement in and around the New York Harbor. Seventy years later,

the idea of cross-Hudson goods movement systems not dependent on the internal combustion engine have powerful appeal. As the Port Authority proceeded to develop and expand its mission, it focussed increasingly on projects and programs that promoted automobile and truck use, and avoided the rail connections to the extent possible. In the 1980s the Port Authority would see its attempts to improve intermodal coordination at Kennedy Airport fail, in part for the same reason as the failure of the 1921 Plan. Only then it would be the airlines that would declare that individual monopolies at their terminals were more important than financial and political support for a centralized distribution system for people and goods that would produce a cleaner, more efficient operation for the public.

The last plan to have significant influence on future development and coordination in the region was the Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs that was completed in 1929. This plan was the most comprehensive ever undertaken in the New York region. Its scope included the counties east and north of New York City as well as the counties of Northern New Jersey.

Among the plan's many achievements, one of the most important was its articulation of the relationship between the region's physical framework and its social and economic conditions. It was the first to make and press the case for requiring that individual projects justify themselves in part with respect to impact on wider social and economic conditions as well as their relationship to wider regional issues. Many of the plan's proposals dealt with the need to improve coordination of the region's transportation

systems. For example, it urged that new transportation facilities emphasize circumferential rather than radial movements to help ease congestion; it advised that large scale projects take account of transportation and congestion impacts; it pressed for the acquisition of large sites for future airport needs. The foresight and impact of the plan can be judged by the extent to which it was reflected in the future development of the region. For example, many of the bridges and tunnels that were constructed after 1930 were located and in some cases accelerated in accordance with the plan's recommendations. A number of circumferential highways proposed in the plan were adopted by engineers and state highway departments. Similarly, many grade-separated freeways originated in the plan, such as the Merritt and Garden State Parkways. Interestingly, in nearly every case the successes involved highway and highway-related activity. Robert Moses adopted many of the plan's highway proposals. The plan, in fact failed to address the long-term implications of increased automobile ownership. It also failed entirely on the transit front. As David Johnson states it,

The plan also failed to realize its bold rail proposals, thanks largely to the fragmented, private ownership of the railroads, and it failed to realize its too-modest proposals for rail transit, because of the difficulty of coordination across state boundaries, the reluctance of the Port Authority to assume a leadership role in a financially unattractive venture, and the reluctance of new York City transit officials to permit suburban trains on the city subway system tracks.

The result was progress in public highway construction with parallel development of transit facilities, resulting in a greatly decentralized region by 1965 rather than the "recentralized" region envisioned by Thomas Adams [the plan's chief author].<sup>5</sup>

The three regional plans produced in the post-World War II period were more analytical and less project oriented than the earlier plans. As a group they have had far less impact. The most thorough of these was the New York Metropolitan Regional Study of 1960 that resulted in nine major volumes that were published by Harvard University Press led by Raymond Vernon's *Metropolis* 1985. The plan produced a remarkably accurate forecast of what trends of the 1950s would produce 25 years hence if uninterrupted.

Vernon did not conclude that these problems were inevitable or unavoidable, only that they were probable given the forces at work and the fragmented, resource-poor political and governmental structure of the region. Vernon noted that few would even recognize the problems.

His predictions also foresaw declines in the areas surrounding the urban centers, declines in the region's national and international competitive position and server problems related to transportation.

As this report will show it was during the period of the 1950s and 1960s that the last serious attempt was made to come to grips with the region-wide developments that had begun to erode the patina of regional integration and that were rapidly moving beyond the capacity of the region's planners, politicians, and business

leaders to handle.

In summary, planning as a coordinating mechanism has not proven itself effective, especially in recent decades. It has been almost 25 years since any significant regional planning was done. Calls for new planning ventures are rarely heard anymore. Among the reasons for this state of affairs the following seem the most compelling.

1. During the last half century, the region has become progressively less centered on Manhattan. Suburban centers and the counties beyond the 50-mile radius now generate an every growing portion of jobs and settlement.

2. Developments in transportation and communications have supported and furthered this trend, especially the interstate highway system and the success of the auto and truck lobbies to maintain a disproportionate stream of funding directed to the development and maintenance of the highway infrastructure.

3. With the increased decentralization of the region, the political support for any regional view has diminished.

4. Several national trends have emerged that support growing localism and particularism in the region. Civil rights legislation and related court decisions (such as the Mt. Olive decision in New Jersey) has increased the drive for insularity of many middle to upper income whites, thus decreasing the appetite of the residents of hundreds of suburbs for any regional ventures. Environmental legislation has provided

local residents the instruments to halt or delay the kinds of large scale capital projects that are often the upshot of large-scale planning. The citizen participation movement of the 1960s and 1970s at all levels of government has resulted in the politicization of structural change of almost any kind. The up and down side of NYMBY is now widely recognized.

### Regional Organizations

The New York-New Jersey metropolitan region has never had but a single major organization with broad planning and operational authority for transportation. That, of course, is the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (formerly the Port of New York Authority. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ) has been a principal player in regional transportation decision since its establishment in 1921, the result of an interstate compact authorized by the U.S. Congress. PANYNJ has a broad mandate for developing the "terminal, transportation and other facilities of commerce" in the region. As mentioned previously, its initial priority was to take the leadership in solving the region's very serious rail freight distribution problems, a challenge that was eventually abandoned.

Always strategically oriented, PANYNJ moved quickly to establish its interests in the more promising areas of highway and air transportation. As Erwin Bard put it, "within the Port Authority the center of gravity began shifting to vehicular traffic.... The 'do-something' policy in terms of construction was

rising."<sup>6</sup> Doing something involved PANYNJ in becoming the key player in the planning, development, and operation of the impressive array of arteries carrying vehicular traffic between New York to New Jersey. More than anything else it was the Port Authority's strategy to control the bridges and tunnels that provided the basis for its political and financial power from the 1930's forward,

Of course, PANYNJ's highway goals were not achieved in isolation; cooperation and collaboration became a critical part of PANYNJ's strategic and tactical repertoire. In their comprehensive examination of regional development policies in the New York area, Michael Danielson and Jameson Doig demonstrate that the extraordinary power of PANYNJ and its willingness to collaborate with other highway agencies and authorities was one of the important factors in the remarkable success of the regional highway building program from the 1930s forward. Danielson and Doig describe the functioning of the regional highway coalition and document its impressive capacity to envision goals, overcome barriers, and achieve **success**.<sup>7</sup> Most remarkable perhaps is the ease with which this coalition of agencies and authorities coordinated their planning and project implementation. While covert deal-making was hardly unknown, most of their collaboration appears to have been above board and quite public. The key coordinating mechanism appears to have been a shared vision of the need to accommodate the region to the automobile. Each agency saw collaboration as essential to maintaining or extending its power

within its own domain. Danielson and Doig capture the dynamics of this collaboration which extended over several decades:

The authorities' themes of independence and prudent financing were emphasized and then extended to include "cooperative planning" among all highway agencies, and the "urgent necessity" to build more roads in order to "catch up and keep pace with the output of cars."

Then in a passage that captures the emerging critique of the coalition, they wonder why the cooperative powers of the highway coalition have not been directed to mass transportation.

Contrary themes--the possible need for coordination of rail and road planning...were heard only sporadically through the 1960s. Instead, the highway builders responded to one important set of public concerns, and strongly influenced the way transportation problems were defined by elected leaders and in the press, thereby shaping the kinds of solutions that seemed desirable in the public mind.<sup>8</sup>

The key question for purposes of this report is whether the cooperative strategies employed by PANYNJ had or now have any relevance for the twin goals of developing and integrating a public transportation system for the region. It is well known that for decades PANYNJ firmly resisted any operational responsibility for mass transportation. PANYNJ cited its fiduciary obligation to bond holders and, in the absence of taxing powers, its need to remain free of projects and programs that would require deficit financing as principal reasons for its position on mass transit.

But there were additional reasons that made sense from an organizational perspective that are instructive with respect to the regional barriers to cooperation in developing an integrated system of mass transportation. First, PANYNJ made the smart choice of linking its ambitions to a growth industry. Already in the 1920s it had tasted the politics and frustration of attempting to coordinate and manage an industry in decline. Second, PANYNJ could become a strong regional player only if it possessed political and financial independence. A growth industry could support this requirement; an industry in decline could not. It would have been potentially suicidal for PANYNJ to altruistically assume a mass transit mission. Why? Because it did not have the power to command the multiple agencies and organizations whose repeated consent would have been required in any significant systemic reform. In other words, the problem was larger than any single organization's mandate. Third, PANYNJ opted for a strategy where an underlying value consensus was possible. The Port Authority's very mission (to develop and improve transportation and related facilities) required a high level of interaction with other organizational players in New York and New Jersey as well as in the private sector; this would be true no matter which aspect of its mission it chose to emphasize. Of all the conditions that facilitate cooperation, value consensus is by far the most useful, since its existence allows management to move quickly from the phase of goal selection to implementation issues. Had PANYNJ opted for a mass transit strategy it might never have survived the goal

selection phase, since shared values did not (and still do not) exist among the players who would necessarily have been involved in the game. Perhaps this is the fate of any industry or region in decline.

It seems clear that the leadership of PANYNJ understood that the area of mass transit needed the kind of powerful strategic leadership that it provided the highway coalition. In the early 1950s, in another of its repeated defenses of its policy of avoiding mass transit involvement, then Executive Director Tobin noted that "the only long term solution to the transit problem was the creation of an interstate public corporation, with power to make up deficits out of taxes apportioned equitably among the communities which depend upon rail service."<sup>9</sup> Many specific proposals for such a creation have been made over the years. One such proposal almost made it to fruition in the late 1950s, and its history offers lessons offer rich instruction for this report.

Regional Transit District. The most far-reaching attempt at regional cooperation in public transportation planning and operation was the regional transportation district that was extensively studied and widely debated between 1955 and 1958. Financed by fares and local tax assessments in the affected counties, the district would have assumed responsibility for operating commuter railways in twelve Northern New Jersey counties and constructing and operating a new rail loop running roughly from a connection to the BMT at 57th and 7th Avenue in Manhattan west under 60th Street through a new tunnel to the vicinity of Route 1-9

then south through Jersey City to Bayonne from where it turned east through a new tunnel to connect to the BMT once again on Broadway near Wall St. From there it would run North along a newly reconstructed BMT line to 57th St. The proposed district very nearly passed, making it through both chambers of the New York State Legislature, securing the signature of Governor Harriman, and passing the New Jersey State Senate, only to fall short in the New Jersey Assembly. In his careful examination of the strategies and politics surrounding the failure of the transportation district approach, Jameson Doig concluded,

The outcome of the 1958 legislative battle was twofold: First, it indicated that several proposed solutions to the region's transportation problems were not politically acceptable. Second, it suggested that feasible policy goals could not easily be identified or carried out through intraregional efforts north through cooperative bi-state action. As a result of these largely negative findings, leadership in solving the region's transit problems would devolve in future years upon state officials, acting primarily on a state-by-state basis rather than in a regional framework. "

It is important to note that while the Port Authority supported the studies that led to the recommendations, it remained silent in the debate, hoping for the success of the district plan, in part as a strategy to avert support for recurring proposals that it become the agency for regional transportation planning and finance.

The efforts during the post-WWII years to formulate regional

approaches to public transportation, highlight the enormous difficulty of developing policies for regions that span state boundaries. In a region so economically, culturally, and politically diverse as the New York-New Jersey region, it is hardly surprising that a multitude of interests exists and that on any given point they will likely diverge. Moreover, the only potential binding forces, political leadership (principally gubernatorial) and federal intervention proved to be deficient. The former chose to avoid the problem, the latter took the challenge, but may have had no more effect than simply to defer the crisis.

The continuing need for planning and coordination in mass transit and other policy areas led to the development of a planning rather than an operational approach to reform. For more than a decade the Tri-State Regional Planning Commission struggled to bring a measure of cooperation and coordination to the transit field. Its history and demise underscore the difficulties facing those who would bridge jurisdictional boundaries.

#### Tri-State Regional Planning Commission

History. The Tri-State Transportation Committee, an official body formed in 1961, was commissioned to study transportation matters of mutual interest among Connecticut, New York and New Jersey. In response to changing federal mandated regional planning requirements, the Tri-State Transportation Commission was formed in 1965 to review regional transportation and related land-use applications.

By 1967, the commission was reviewing local and state applications for federal funds that required a sign-off by an approved metropolitan planning organization (MPO), a clearinghouse for federal funds. The review process was in response to the Metropolitan Development Act and Intergovernment Cooperation Act of 1966. Later, both bills were incorporated into the Circular A-95 regulations mandated by the Bureau of Budget (now OMB). The intentions of Circular A-95 regulations were to encourage federal funded state and local projects to coordinate with one another and to fit within a broadly supported regional development plan.<sup>11</sup> In 1971, the agency was designated the official MPO and renamed to Tri-State Regional Planning Commission corresponding to its broader role in planning.<sup>12</sup>

The commission was composed of five voting members from each state, appointed by the governor, with each state providing for the appointment of locally elected officials and state administrators. The federal government was represented by nonvoting members. The supporters of Tri-State anticipated that the new agency would help both state and local agencies to focus priorities and policies on the serious problems that each faced and that more often than not contained a significant causal aspect that was interjurisdictional. They anticipated that good planning would provide sound information and insight. The plans were to "aid in solving immediate and long-range problems, including but not limited to plans for development of land, housing, transportation and other public facilities."<sup>13</sup> Means for Achieving Coordination. How did Tri-State achieve

coordination? The leadership of Tri-State understood well that in order to make any progress at all in the direction of regional planning, those in charge of the new agency would have to master the art of coordinating the diverse set of jurisdictions and agencies that constituted its support. They used three basic approaches to solving the coordinating problems that their strategy implied.

First, they placed a premium on agreement and consensus. The chief tactic was to keep the focus of initiatives at such a general level that agreement could normally be achieved. For most aspects of planning, Tri-State was willing to accommodate the policies of the agencies represented on its Technical Advisory Group, thereby achieving agreement, but at the price of reduced specificity.

Two, the main coordinating device was the development of a Technical Advisory Group composed of representatives of many of the agencies responsible for physical planning and development in the region. This approach had the advantage of bringing together parties who often disagreed on the causes and solutions to regional problems. Combined with the first tactic, it also meant that nothing much would happen.

Three, much of the research and planning work that actually got done was the result of following the dictates of the real founder of the Commission, the federal government. Much coordination, in short was the result of the formalized methods and requirements of federal guidelines. This resulted in some solid research and planning analysis. Unfortunately, it did not mean

much to the state and local officials whose decisions were the key to regional coordination.

**The End of Tri-State.** Several events happened concurrently in the early 1980s that led to the fall of the Tri-State Regional Commission in June. These are summarized in the sections below. The most damaging was the Connecticut General Assembly's reluctance to earmark \$140,000 in matching State funds for the Tri-State Regional Planning Board. The interstate compact signed in 1965, required matching funds from each of the three States, otherwise, the Commission was to be disbanded.<sup>14</sup> To ensure withdrawal from Tri-State, the General Assembly introduced a bill forbidding the state from contributing funds from any source toward Tri-State.<sup>15</sup>

Connecticut's reasons for withdrawal are unclear, but there was an underlying perceived displeasure with "Tri-State's urban bias". State legislatures were also trying to cut costs in a last-minute budgetary process and the Tri-State cut was acceptable in view of other options. However, several legislators who actually wanted greater control over Tri-State affairs supported the bill to send a message.

**Weak Direction and Leadership.** On the whole, Tri-State Regional Planning Board operations were best compared to a consulting firm, providing data to State, local and federal governments, thus keeping the applications moving. Tri-State did not raise controversial issues or solicit public opinions, this passive approach to regional planning was justified by, "that's how the

States want it."16 The structure of the commission also encouraged State oriented programs. Many of the commissioners of Tri-State served as State program administrators, easily permitting self-serving interests to outweigh broad, regional planning goals.

Other factors that contributed to murky objectives and goals included vague approval policies and inconsistent review processes. Tri-State's basic policy statement, the "Regional Development Guide" was the most important measuring instrument for the A-95 regional planning process. The guide was adopted in 1968 and was used more than eight-years to determine regional policy. Even though, many past commissioners were not aware of the plan, and those that were described its policies as "superficial".

Critics of Tri-State felt that the public was not included in the review process; Tri-State was lucky to involve other operating agencies let alone the public. Tri-State lacked leadership, direction and goals in determining regional planning issues; therefore, promoting and publicizing critical and controversial planning issues were impossible given Tri-State's weak policy foundation.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the public and public officials did not want to hear about regional planning, since short term sacrifices were usually involved.

The information and data Tri-State collected for regional planning was of limited use to local agencies. Most of Tri-State's studies were in response to federal requirements and the were usually useless for local agencies to determine alternate planning choices. Tri-State also presented the data without giving

distinctions between alternate plans, thus no recommendation was made.

A-95: The Beginning and End of Tri-State. Tri-States' growth paralleled the proliferation of federal programs that required MPO sign-off. The A-95 Review enacted in 1968, originally covered 50 or so federal program, by the mid 1970's the number of federal programs requiring MPO review and comment more than tripled. A task force commissioned in 1979 to study Tri-States' future, found that work activities were entirely driven by federal regulations. The voluminous paperwork generated had little or no value to local planning issues.<sup>18</sup>

The sheer volume of A-95 Review applications also prohibited commissioners and staff from thoroughly reviewing but a few applications. In a three month period in 1975, Tri-State received 512 A-95 applications. Frequently, staff comments were delivered orally to the applicant and no formal review was implemented.

Many local planning boards felt that Tri-State contributed little if any to the process of local or regional planning. The fact that 90 percent of Tri-State's 1976 applications were judged to have only sub-regional impact and passed to local planning boards underscores the usefulness of Tri-States "application processing machine."

Reagan's deregulation of federal agencies and funding reductions for programs greatly contributed to the downfall. Tri-State had built an organization that was interwoven with federal regulations. When the A-95 Review process was dismantled and the

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Section 701 funds which supported most of the Tri-State's non-transportation planning activities were eliminated in 1982, the effect on Tri-State was dramatic. In response, Tri-State, without consociation and clear policy goals, stopped planning work on housing, land use, economic development, community development and environmental issues and focused on transportation since federal funds were available.<sup>19</sup>

Summary of the Reasons for the Failure of Tri-State. Tri-State Regional Planning venture collapsed for a number of reasons; these are summarized below.

First, it was essentially the creation of the federal government and unlike PANYNJ which was also spawned by the federal government, failed to develop its own independent strategy and constituency. This weakness entailed a failure to communicate effectively and a failure to produce really useful regional planning data. It also meant that the new organization had failed to develop a mission, instead of "what ever there were federal grants in aid of."<sup>20</sup>

Second, Tri-State did not have a framework for accomplishing its essential mission, planning. Of course, this is a regional failing, not that of any single agency alone. The sad truth is that there has never been a single regional capital improvement program. In order to carry out its mandate for comprehensive planning for the region, Tri-State had to have a framework for assessing individual capital programs. It chose to develop highly

generalized plans for land development and infrastructure, relying on other planning bodies (county and municipal) to provide detailed guidance. This framework amounted to a set of broad policies and principles. By restricting itself to comparatively non-threatening very general principles, it sustained some political support for the agency's existence, but offered no framework for locational or site guidance or program implementation. It also lacked a basis for aiding understanding of the implications of physical development proposals.

Third, part of the explanation for Tri-State's failure involved its composition. Tri-State never did make up its mind as to who or what it represented. New Jersey and Connecticut appointed elected officials to serve on the Commission; New York did not. Most representatives were state administrative officials; there were few local representatives. These arrangements did little to give the agency clout when and where persuasion was needed, which was frequently since the Commission had no powers of implementation. This state of affairs led, for example, to avoiding taking a position on key regional development issues such as the expansion of Stewart Airport into a regional jetport.

This, of course, is not so much a criticism of Tri-State per se and the people who ran it as the leadership in the region whose myopia (whether structural or personal) led to the demise of an agency that could have provided long-term net benefits to the collectivity as well as the individual components.

Conclusion. The history of public transportation is a story of

developing complexity in the region's transportation service delivery system. The engineers who developed the individual projects initially produced efficient solutions to the problems they confronted at the time. Naturally each of the projects or systems was limited in scope, generally by mode. Historically the main forms of coordination (when some form of cross agency communication became inescapable) involved reorganization. The Transit Authority was formed in 1953. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority in 1963. New Jersey Transit in 1981. Each of these actions, incidentally, responded more to financial crises, than service provision issues. In other words, like the individual systems themselves, the design of coordinating agencies rarely attempted more than necessary to solve an immediate problem that could no longer be ignored. Of course, there is good political grounding for such approaches; these have already been discussed. But such approaches eliminate the possibility of undertaking strategies for regional development aimed at future positioning of the region for greater attractiveness and competitiveness. This theme is taken up in later sections.

Studies by Doig, Aron, and others have shown that systematic coordination of transportation in the New York-New Jersey region has occurred under very limited sets of conditions. Among the variables that have the greatest impact are degree of functional autonomy, extent of modal specificity, degree of vertical integration of policy and finance, and relative power of the interests organized to support a particular mode.<sup>21</sup>

It is critically important to bear in mind that intrastate coordination has not been a failure in all areas. As noted, among highway agencies has been very successful. Moreover, cooperation has often extended to interstate concerns. The reasons for successful coordination in this area has been well documented. The professional, vertically integrated bureaucracies that make, finance and implement highway policies at all governmental levels tends to share similar views of many key issues, including technical and political problems. Highway concerns have traditionally been supported by well-financed, articulate, effective interest groups, that represent the concerns of motorists, the dominant group of users in the transportation arena. These conditions also serve to facilitate horizontal cooperation.

Because public transportation has been in a state of perpetual decline for much of the post-World War II period, transit agencies have rarely enjoyed the conditions that foster positive strategies for policy success. Declining ridership, financial crises, attacks from riders and politicians tended to keep agencies on the defensive. Moreover and in part due to transit's defensive posture, groups that support transit have never found effective voice to articulate the wider public interest served by increased use of transit options.<sup>22</sup> Bridge, tunnel, and highway users still appear to have no understanding of the amount of time they save and pollution they are spared by having a small amount of auto based taxes and tolls go to support mass transit.

The only exception that Doig found to the modally specific basis for cooperation was occasional coalition formation based on perceptions of mutual benefits. For example, the Port Authority prior to its acquisition of the Hudson & Manhattan transit routes.

In 1991, the New York/New Jersey metropolitan region is the only major one in the world without any formal framework for cooperation and planning.<sup>23</sup> The historic problem facing the region can be summed up nicely by the performance of two leading political players at the 1976 annual Tri-State Regional Planning Conference,

Mayor [Abraham] Beame and Governor [Hugh] Carey . . . called for regional cooperation. "We must forge a common purpose and program for action," said the mayor. "We have to band together . . . the federal government will only listen to the potency of regional political forces," said the governor before . . . blasting Connecticut and New Jersey for trying to steal away New York's industries and businesses.<sup>24</sup>

## Endnotes

1. The eight are The New York city Improvement Commission Plan (1907), Plan of the Brooklyn Committee on the City Plan (1914), The Port of New York Authority Plan (1921), The Regional Plan of New York and its Environs (1929), The New York Metropolitan Region Study (1960), The Row Report to the Tri-State Transportation Committee (1965), The Second Regional Plan, Regional Plan Association (1968), and the Regional Development Guide, Tri-State Transportation Commission (1968).
2. See Jameson W. Doig, Metropolitan Transportation politics and the New York Region, New York: Columbia University Press, 1966, pp. 28-29.
3. David Johnson, "Metropolitan Planning in the Region: A Retrospective Assessment," in New York Affairs, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1985, p. 100.
4. Johnson, "Metropolitan Planning in the Region," New York Affairs, p. 101.
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6. Quoted in Michael N. Danielson and Jameson W. Doig, New York: The Politics of Urban Regional Development, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982, p. 188.
7. Danielson and Doig, pp. 177-194.
8. Danielson and Doig, pp. 182-183.
9. Quoted in Jameson W. Doig, Metropolitan Transportation Politics and the New York Region, p. 30.
10. Jameson Doig, Metropolitan Transportation Politics and the New York Region, p. 168.
11. Boris Pushkarev, Transportation: Crawling Towards Consolidation", New York Affairs, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1978. New York University.

12. David Mammen, "The Demise of Tri-State", New York University, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1984. L.D. Solomon and Ruth Solomon.
13. New York State, Report of the Legislative Commission on Expenditure Review, May, 1975, p. 12.
14. "Tri-State Commission Terminated in Wake of Withdrawal", The New York Times, August 1, 1982. XI, 3:1.
15. James Barron, "Tri-State's Demise Leaves Gap In Planning", The New York Times, September 5, 1982. IV, 7:1.
16. Regional Plan Association, Implementing Regional Planning in the Tri-State New York Region, (New York: Regional Plan Association, 1976).
17. "Tri-State Regional Planning Commission", The New York Times, March 7, 1982. XI, 3:2.
18. Mammen, "The Demise of Tri-State", p. 32-33.
19. "Tri-State Regional Planning Commission", The New York Times, April 25, 1982. XI, 3:2.
20. Mammen, "The Demise of Tri-State," p. 34.
21. Jameson Doig, Metropolitan Transportation Politics and the New York Region, pp. 232-238.
22. Doig, p. 210-215, offers an instructive account of the poor campaign waged by New Jersey's political leadership to use Turnpike Authority revenues for transit subsidy. In a statewide referendum the plan was decisively defeated, even in counties that would have been net beneficiaries.
23. David Johnson, "Metropolitan Planning in the Region: A Retrospective Assessment," in New York Affairs, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1985, p. 112.
24. Marlys Harris, "In Search of Regional Cooperation," in New York Affairs, Vol. 3, No. 3, Spring 1976, p. 102.

## Chapter 3

### Transportation Coordination in the Region

#### Coordination and Why Is It Needed

Coordination is the process of relating the elements of a operation or activity. It represents one of the two key aspects of the structuring of complex organizations. Indeed at base, the structuring of an organization really means in the first instance dividing up the organizational work to be done and subsequently coordinating it so as to produce an intended result. Most organizations that survive for any length of time manage these twin processes adequately. Certainly this is true for most of the transportation agencies in the region. Individually they are well structured and have the capacity for internal restructuring, including rearranging the means of coordination, when necessary.

The problem becomes far stickier when the work that needs to be done reaches across organizations. When such a need arises, it becomes necessary to decide, first, who will do the individual tasks and, second, how they will then be coordinated.

It is hypothesized that extensive coordination of transportation is needed in this region because of the interrelatedness of the transportation function. It is important to distinguish between coordination and integration here. It is assumed, in view of the historical record of autonomy and localism that was examined in the previous chapter, that feasible bases for integration do not exist. No doubt there are still comprehensive

planners who, taking a cue from the institutional history of the 1960s and 1970s, could devise grand schemes for integrating all public transportation activities into a unified policy framework under a single institutional roof. There was not then, nor is there now, any cultural, economic or political basis for supposing that such schemes could work. In fact, the structural (and hence policy) fragmentation within this region means, among other things, that the necessary criteria for real integration are missing. Any reorganization to achieve integration would be futile without major change in the direction and magnitude of shared values. Hence, comprehensive institutional integration as a device for dealing with public transportation's institutional interdependencies will not be addressed here.

Coordination, as Harold Seidman has argued, is also no philosopher's stone.<sup>1</sup> It appears, however, to be the best approach for satisfying a number of significant political, organizational, and technical conditions simultaneously. As one researcher puts it, "coordinating procedures should be regarded as a means of maintaining the diversities of American political life, not as concessions to failure..."<sup>2</sup> (Szanton, 1981). Coordination, in other words, recognizes multiple values, and can accommodate conflict. These advantages make it an attractive component of planning and delivering transportation service in the New York-New Jersey region. The extent to which coordination is useful and workable in a policy arena seems to depend upon the extent of interdependencies and externalities within the transportation

system and the recognition of these factors by the key players in the policy arena.

To understand the potential for improved coordination requires the identification of specific areas where common purpose and concerted action appear warranted. This means, first, identifying the important interdependencies among agencies as they plan and provide for public transportation services. Conceptually, this task will be guided by recent work from the organization theory field, particularly scholarship focussing on interorganizational relations.<sup>3</sup> Interdependency will be construed broadly to include not just resource and work flow factors of the organizations themselves, but the transportation requirements of the users.

Conceptually and practically the idea of interdependency in planning and producing transportation services between organizations is problematical. At the heart of the problem is that any assertion about organizational interdependency where government is involved is inescapably value laden. What grounds are there for saying that the Port Authority and the MTA should be coordinating client services more than they are already? Two things need to be recognized. First, there is a policy gap. The transportation services produced by individual organization is the result of years of give and take in the policy process. Even the planning units such as the regional metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) have their mandates. As a consequence, if interorganizational coordination of transportation services is to make significant advances in the region, there will have to be new

enabling legislation at the state and local levels.

But, second, the mandates establishing most state and local transportation agencies provide a broad grant of authority and responsibility that the administrators then define and elaborate. For example, the City Charter and City Administrative Code provide the NYC Department of Transportation with general authority to manage street borne transportation within the city's borders. The particular programs of this or any agency in pursuit of its broad mandate are the historical product of the transportation problems and politics of several generations of players. On the one hand, for a range of initiatives the agency has the power to act, but, on the other, its historical definition of mission has locked it into a structure of existing programs and procedures that absorb the time and attention of managers and employees.

In these circumstances it is no surprise that the top officials of transportation agencies in the region place a low priority on interorganizational issues. Since neither policy nor institutional practice presses the issue, why worry about issues that broaden one's mission when existing commitments command all available energy. Ultimately this is a policy question that political leaders will ultimately have to decide. For purposes of this report, it is sufficient to recognize the underlying value basis contained in the idea of institutional interdependence and to present the best case for why it deserves attention. In the end any decision to enlarge the policy scope of individual transportation agencies will involve the political and agency

leadership. institutions The final section of this report will offer some suggestions on possible actions.

The institutional analysis gap. As in the introductory chapter, academic studies, agency-sponsored research and news articles about the problems of mobility in the New York-New Jersey region have proliferated in recent years. These writings contain a variety of themes. Some focus on congestion, some on environmental consequences, Some on economic development, others on the quality of mass transportation. Regardless of the starting point, the frequent conclusion is that the institutional framework, both for planning and operations, suffers from a high level of fragmentation and inadequate coordination. Two examples serve to illustrate. One study of transit planning in the region concluded that the institutional setting was a root cause of failure in the struggle to attract passengers and reduce operating costs.<sup>4</sup> Another study concerning the reasons for modal choice by automobile users concluded that strategies to decrease auto use will never work without strategic improvement of public transit. This study identified the number of transfers and length of trip as key barriers to transit use and concluded that ensuring the coordination and integration of modes at intermodal connections is a critical condition in reducing auto use for commutation.<sup>5</sup>

In identifying institutional and coordinative failings, these and other studies direct attention to an important gap in the analysis of this region's transportation problems: the role and impact of the institutional framework, and particularly the



coordinative framework, in the planning and operation of the public transportation system.<sup>6</sup>

Recognition of need. Many of this region's political and transportation leaders now recognize the importance of addressing the coordination problem. In recent years several of them have issued calls for increased attention to the problems of public transportation as a regional concern. At a recent meeting of Transportation 2020, for example, one of the dominant themes concerned the need for increased attention to intermodal and regional approaches to public transportation.<sup>7</sup>

The federal government and academic community have also responded to the growing recognition that institutional fragmentation and resource dispersal are wasteful and ineffective. The Surface Transportation Act of 1987 supports a more integrated transportation research orientation by requiring a region-wide focus on critical issues in surface transportation and by directing resources to a single university or consortium. The university community in this region has responded with the beginnings of an integrated examination of surface transportation issues. One of the premises underlying the creation of the Transportation Research Center (a consortium of twelve regional universities) is that effective solutions to many of this region's most pressing public transportation problems require the pooling of academic talent and development of the capacity to focus on problem-solving alternatives across jurisdictional and modal boundaries. The Consortium's operating policies elaborate structures, procedures,

and standards intended to spur collaboration among researchers without regard to institutional affiliation or academic discipline. These organizational efforts, in many respects, reflect positions now being advanced by political and transportation leadership in the region.

#### Principal Methods for Achieving Inter-agency Coordination

What then are some of the potential ways in which complex institutions can achieve new patterns of coordination? What are the possibilities? In addressing these questions the following sections accomplish two things. First, the subheadings represent the range of possible methods for coordinating interorganizational activities. They are ordered according to the relative degree of directedness or compulsion, from the least to the most. Second, these categories provide an opportunity to examine in some detail the operation of several particular cases. Unfortunately, the scope of the research did not permit a full representation of case studies within each category. As a consequence, some categories are more fully examined than others.

Market forces. Coordination through market forces is based upon premises that derive from market economics. The main idea is that the principle of economic self-interest motivates service providers to coordinate with other providers to increase the attractiveness of their own enterprise. Markets possess natural coordination devices that produce accurate, fast information; they tend to be highly adaptable. For example, provider A coordinates schedules

with provider B because the absence of coordination at the intersection of their service systems creates a discontinuity for the customers of each. Thus both gain. This logic undergirds the recommendations of many who advocate privatization.<sup>8</sup> Many of these writers argue further that governmental intervention in this arena has diminished, not advanced coordination.<sup>9</sup>

This approach, when it works, lays a strong claim to superiority. The decentralized nature of ownership and decision-making puts both marketers and problem-solvers closer to operational problems. The quality and speed of information is likely to be superior to that in most large, complex organizations. Indeed, the market approach avoids problems of hierarchy and authority-centered power systems. Moreover, it is cheaper since it avoids most costs of administration and coordination. And because it is private providers can go out of business if unable to sustain adequate market relationships. Under such a scheme the taxpayer need not subsidize either capital or operations.

As a coordinating device for complex transportation systems, the market system also suffers some serious defects. Large-scale planning for capital projects and service provision are unlikely to be undertaken. Private capital has not been invested in large-scale transit systems in the New York region since prior to World War II, at least not without government backing. It is also difficult to envision how market forces alone could meet massive or sudden challenges to the region, for example, challenges to the region's competitiveness in water and airborne transportation of

cargo. There is also some question about how broadly applicable the market is for handling multi-organizational problems, such as the coordination of multi-jurisdictional capital and maintenance programs. At any rate what is unknown, and what advocates have not made clear, is what advantages the market has for such multi-organizational problems.

Common values. Coordination based on the widespread acceptance of crucial common values as the premises for decision-making.

This form of coordination works in situations where ideology is pervasive, leading to far-reaching collective goals. So long as the ties that bind remain tight, implementation can succeed.

This is the case, for example, in Germany and France where there is a strong consensus about the value of extensive, integrated, well-run public transportation systems. A large percentage of the population supports the systems. Managers and employees do not have to live with the demotivating belief that they are merely hanging on in a declining industry. Moreover, the taxpaying public accepts the need for a high level of public subsidy for capital and operating programs.

As discussed previously, such a value consensus has supported highway interests in this country for many decades. Public transportation has no such base of support, even in the nation's most densely populated state, New Jersey.

Elite coordination and collaboration. The days have vanished when powerful members of the business and/or political elites can collaborate to devise and market momentous projects with little

regard for the wishes of the wider public. Most would say that this is for the better. In this region, the construction of the Verrazzano Narrows Bridge, completed in 1964, may be the last major project where elite collaboration was perhaps the critical factor for success.<sup>10</sup>

There is no question about the incongruence of elite determination of land use and capital expenditures in a democratic society. There is also no question that far fewer major new capital projects are undertaken in the age of participation and environmentalism. And despite all the pronouncements about the importance of regaining competitiveness and renewing infrastructure, the leadership in the region has not yet figured out any replacement method that achieves the purposefulness and energy of elite collaboration, old style.

Coordination among agency heads, while not an effective substitute for the kind of collaboration described above, has the potential for shepherding the energies and finances of their agencies in similar directions. Elite coordination can be said to occur when there is basic agreement among or between powerful actors in transportation agencies that cooperation on a set of issues would be beneficial to the agencies and their constituents. The key characteristic of this form of coordination is its informal nature.

Several current examples of this type exist, including the CBD Access Group, composed of high level representatives of New York City-based transportation planning organizations. As the name

indicates, it focuses on matters pertaining to the mobility in the central business district of Manhattan. The New York Airport Access committee might be another that falls within this category, though depending on the degree of formality it attains, it could be shifted to the subsequent one. The Airport Access committee consists of representatives of the Port Authority, the MTA, the Queens Borough President's office, the Mayor's Office, NYSDOT, and NYCDOT. The Committee exists to examine options for improving the economic value of the airports through improving access.

Case: The Bi-State Transportation Forum. The best example of this method of coordination is the Bi-State Transportation Forum. Formed in the mid-1980s, the Forum consists of the heads of the major transportation agencies in the region together with the staff who support their efforts. The participating agencies are the New Jersey Department of Transportation, the New Jersey Transit Corporation, the New York City Department of Transportation, the New York State Department of Transportation, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. The Agency heads meet periodically to discuss issues of mutual concern. The hope expressed by some members was that by meeting informally and regularly the agency heads would be able to build a common regional transportation agenda and build confidence in the potential for increased collaboration. Prominent among the topics in the early years were technical cooperation and improvements in regional transportation finance.

Following leadership turnovers in every agency except one during the 1990-91 period, meetings were held with less frequency. However, members of the staffs continued to meet and advance the agenda. Their aim is to develop good staff reports and provide the best possible information to the principals about the basic issues and their regional importance. Recent priority topics have included several issues of regional importance.

1. Clean Air Act. Staff members have explored the possibility of coordinating responses to EPA regulations. The belief is that there could be significant regional advantages to achieving some common regional responses, since State Implementation Plans under the Clean Air Act will have significant impacts on transportation.

2. Regional goods movement. The two states have very different approaches to goods movement. And there has been little joint action. As noted in the opening chapter, there is widespread recognition that poor mobility for goods is costly and a deterrent to economic progress. The staff could, for example, make a contribution to coordinating a regional approach by documenting the impact of high cost and decreasing reliability. The greatest potential for staff action is to increase the capacity for policy change and joint action by providing a reliable and realistic data base. For this issue this might include, for example, good information about the impact of shifting deliveries to off-peak hours. This kind of information will be essential if the region is ever to achieve

the goal of integrated corridor management that has been proposed by several of the principals.

3. Federal legislation. A number of legislative initiatives at the federal level have growing importance to the region's transportation system. In particular, the recently renewed federal transportation legislation. Historically, this region's representatives in Washington have not coalesced around regional issues. The hope would be that excellent staff material could help form a more persuasive basis for Forum support of improved regional collaboration.

The potential for informal organizations such as the Bi-State Forum is difficult to assess, since it is a new form. Several observations, however, can be made. While its strengths derive from its informal nature, so do its chief weaknesses. The availability of a regular meeting place where any issue can be placed on the table without fear of untimely press disclosure can produce needed candor and foster trust. Staff work can be bolder and more creative.

But if the product of an informal collaborative effort ever gets to the point that it is ready to be put into action, the implementing machinery will be nothing more than the operational arms of six separate organizations. In other words, good cooperative intentions will have to negotiate the obstacle of different organizational cultures and operational capacities. This problem can be circumvented, perhaps, by interagency agreements,

but, such approaches are at a minimum unpredictable and time consuming.

Perhaps a more serious limitation to long term success of informal collaboration is suggested by the rapid turnover of almost all the principals in 1990-91. The trust and esprit built up by the initial participants has to be reestablished all over again. Trust is not transferable. In the current climate of economic decline, citizen dissatisfaction with government, and incumbent defensiveness, the natural tendency of organizational executives is to secure the home front. While from a broad regional-interest perspective, this might arguably be the right time for collaboration, it is difficult to envision such an outcome. Given the magnitude of the problems facing each individual executive, it is unlikely that he will exhibit interest in the problems of his peers.

The main problem then in such arrangements will be keeping the attention and focus of the principals. It is doubtful that they are now ready to form alliances, particularly where the interests of Albany and Trenton are affected. In order to alter this situation, legislative interests and behavior will have to change, not just gubernatorial.

Interagency agreements. Interagency agreements represents a wide range of methods of cooperation. Essentially it involves coordination based on prior definition of areas of common interest and purpose, including rules that define what gets coordinated, who does the coordinating, and how. Some approaches in this category

have a top-down orientation that often affect managers at the top more than operational employees on the line (for example, capital lease-back arrangements), while others involve more in-depth operational activity.

There are many examples of this form of coordination of transportation matters. Capital lease-back programs are a good example. This form of cooperation permits one organization to act as the agent of another in capital acquisition. The Port Authority, for example, has been involved for some time in obtaining capital equipment and leasing that equipment to other operating agencies for a token sum.

An increasingly important form of interagency coordination involves technology-based methods of cooperation. At this time an extensive effort is underway to determine the possibility of employing automatic vehicle identification systems to speed traffic through the extensive system of toll collections on highways, bridges, and tunnels throughout the area. Success in this effort would mean increased mobility and less hassle for motorists and truckers. In order to work, however, the many agencies that impose and collect tolls would have to reach agreement on such factors as compatible technologies and payment systems. The success of such an arrangement could have major implications for the future, since it might indicate the potential for using technology to coordinate transit or even intermodal use.

Yet another form of interagency coordination involves specific operational agreements between two or more agencies. This method

comes in many varieties, often involving information sharing. For example, schedules for New Jersey Transit's service to Hoboken Terminal includes detailed information about PATH and ferry services. PATH and ferry maps in turn show NJ Transit lines. New Jersey Transit and PATH also provide information about equipment breakdowns and delays. These information services require on-going cooperation between NJT and PATH.

Case: TRANSCOM. The Transportation Operations Coordinating Committee (TRANSCOM) is the embodiment of an interagency agreement comprised of fifteen New York and New Jersey transportation and traffic agencies with responsibility for one of the most heavily used road and public transit systems in the U.S.<sup>11</sup> This network ...includes 38 limited access highways with over 6,000 lane miles, more than 2,000 miles of commuter rail track, thousands of buses, and 19 tunnels and bridges, all contained in a 50-square-mile area.<sup>12</sup>

By 1985, when TRANSCOM was established the booming regional economy was producing unprecedented congestion. Since no new highways were being build, maintenance of existing routes was imperative, and in fact extensive maintenance programs were underway or being planned. This together with the growing volume of traffic portended a rush toward area-wide gridlock. The solution was an interagency agreement to create an entity to work at the operational level, dealing principally in information.

Several important problems had to be solved. One is the interagency and interjurisdictional nature of the region. This

represented a major difficulty since unlike Los Angeles, Detroit and Chicago, the New York region is not under the jurisdiction of a monolithic, powerful agency. This situation had led to a lack of information about what resources are available to deal with operational traffic problems as well as a reluctance to deal with problems that encroach upon more than one agency's property. Additionally, capital investments in regional transportation does not tend to be invested in uniform traffic management systems. TRANSCOM's approach was to attempts to bridge the information gap without attempting to impose itself on any member agency. This meant that a premium was placed on voluntary participation. This goal is aided by the means of staffing and finance of TRANSCOM. All employees are on loan from other agencies. It is financed by contribution from participating agencies. Since TRANSCOM is a creature of the participants, a close collaborative relationship is possible. Indeed, some agencies have come to see TRANSCOM as an extension of their own agencies while others see it as a service to be used.

TRANSCOM provides two services. First, it is a notification center for individual traffic incidents. Through a call on the agency's 800 number, TRANSCOM can simultaneously notify any agency that could be affected as well as the major radio traffic services. As network coverage has expanded, the use of this notification network has grown appreciably. In order to improve traffic management in the most heavily used corridors, TRANSCOM has formed interagency incident management teams for six of the most complex

corridors in the region. TRANSCOM staffs these teams and cooperatively the team members have developed plans covering communications, local traffic diversion, as well as regional diversion away from the affected area.

The second service is the coordination of maintenance and construction projects on major arteries in the region. The sizeable construction program now underway means enormous potential delays for motorists. In order to minimize such delays TRANSCOM had develop a program of construction coordination. Those member agencies with construction and maintenance responsibilities send TRANSCOM information on plans months (and sometimes years) ahead of the project initiation. TRANSCOM constantly reviews the plans to note potential conflicts between projects from different agencies that would otherwise not be apparent until construction began. When such conflicts appear, TRANSCOM arranges meetings with the affected agencies to work out a mutually acceptable plan of adjustment. This service has been particularly useful in the corridors leading from New Jersey into New York City. TRANSCOM has used these opportunities to encourage acquisition and use of variable message signage along key arteries in the region.

The success of TRANSCOM is attributable to two factors. First, it is providing a service to agencies that they have come to value, while making minimal claims on their individual priorities and finances. TRANSCOM's main currency is information about highway utilization and incidents. No one's turf is threatened or challenged. Two, the strategy used by TRANSCOM's staff respected

the limitations they faced. The basic approach was to work with member agencies to develop a service they found useful rather than emphasize the importance of TRANSCOM or its leadership. An effort was made to let the facts speak for themselves and avoid any implication of imposition. The leadership also avoided getting involved in any intraagency work--only interagency. This has meant a constant effort to avoid any sense on the part of participating agencies of TRANSCOM attempting to become an autonomous entity in its own right. Thus, TRANSCOM has learned to thrive within the fragmented context of transportation in the region.

TRANSCOM has clearly made a contribution to the management of traffic and traffic demand in the region. It appears also to have had some impact in the development of shared values around the virtues of cooperation. But, in part, the success has come because of the very specific and limited nature of the undertaking. It has not changed the basic decision premises of the individual agencies. It would likely have failed had it tried, It seems very doubtful, for example, that the TRANSCOM model would work for more visible and contentious areas such as capital planning where any attempt at meaningful coordination would involve real money and priorities. Interagency coordinating committees. Coordination by formal committees composed of representatives of participating organizations in the region. The purposes giving rise to coordinating committee vary, as do the levels of the member organizations represented. This form of coordination works best when there is broad agreement on the tasks to be accomplished and

when those tasks do not threaten the autonomy of the member agencies. That is they are best in dealing with general planning issues, data and information. Such committees suffer the defect of any confederative association. Since there exists no higher authority, action must be by consensus. This means that differential burdens cannot be imposed and benefits are expected to be widely distributed. These considerations tend to produce a short-term orientation. When any member organization judges that the burdens outweigh the benefits, it has the option of withdrawing, or at least reducing involvement.

Case: Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) offer interesting examples of the potential for coordination by interagency coordinating committee. The Tri-State Regional Planning Commission served this purpose until for eleven years until its demise in 1982. Tri-State grew from an exclusively transportation-oriented coordinating council (Tri-State Transportation Committee) into a regional agency with a broad domestic policy agenda, which many believe contributed to its downfall.<sup>13</sup> Tri-State was examined in the previous chapter and is not further discussed here. Succeeding Tri-State were two vastly scaled-down organizations: the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council and the North Jersey Transportation Coordinating Council. These organizations are examined in detail below.

Under federal regulations the MPO is required to provide transportation planning under the "3C" process--comprehensive,

coordinated and cooperative. Specifically the U.S. Department of Transportation requires each MPO to produce three documents. They are: The Unified Work Plan (UWP), which is an annually updated document that specifies what the activities of the MPO central staff and the various member operating agencies will be for the coming year; the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is the 5 year capital plan for the member agencies; and the Transportation Plan, which sets out the long term vision of the region.

1. New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) . NYMTC is the MPO for the New York state portion of the metropolitan region. NYMTC's jurisdiction includes the five boroughs of New York City and the counties of Nassau, Putnam, Rockland, Suffolk and Westchester.<sup>14</sup> A good deal of NYMTC's work involves production of the TIP. This provides an opportunity for extensive interaction with representatives of the member agencies, thus offering the possibility of useful coordination in capital planning. Unfortunately the structural, financial, and procedural barriers described below make this more an exercise in compilation rather than coordination.

The TIP structured to reflection the ongoing planning process that takes place at sub-regional levels. Three sub-regions add a layer of administration between NYMTC and the local jurisdictions. They are Mid-Hudson (which includes Putnam, Rockland and Westchester Counties), Nassau-Suffolk and New York City. Each subregion has its own transportation coordinating committee which

hashes out the TIP and submits it to NYMTC. Thus by the time the TIP has been submitted to NYMTC projects have been prioritized reflecting subregional and local considerations.

NYMTC is now in the process of completely revising the long range transportation plan for the region. In most years it has simply made minor modifications to the existing plan and recertified it. For the current version, NYMTC officials are taking a fresh look, by starting from the beginning. This process, to be completed in the first half of 1992, offers an opportunity to engage the agencies and their jurisdictions in useful examination of regional priorities and their own impacts on those priorities.

The potential value of TIP and long-range planning are hampered, in part, due to the fragmented structure of the decision-making process. As a result, it is the final component of NYMTC's mission that offers the greatest possibility of promoting the goal of regional cooperation. NYMTC has the opportunity to initiate activities to be accomplished by the central staff on its own or in conjunction with other agencies in the region. These activities are reported under the Unified Work Plan. NYMTC has made considerable use in recent years of this opportunity. For example, it has participated in advancing the goals of the Bi-State Transportation Forum by providing timely research and analysis of regional issues in conjunction with the North Jersey Transportation Coordinating Committee). It has provided similar support the Freight Service Improvement Conference. NYMTC is also preparing to extend its coordinating function to the training arena, the intent

being to support the use of state of the art techniques by member agencies in such areas as planning and management.

In carrying out its responsibilities (as described above), NYMTC has to confront the kinds of problems facing any regional integrating or coordinating agency:

1. There are multiple tasks and activities, but no mechanism for dealing with the cross-cutting issues, such as finance and individual state and regional policies.

2. There is a dichotomy between who pays and who benefits. Each participating agency represents a territorially specific location with its own political constituency. Individual agencies have little incentive to take a regional view when costs and benefits ultimately get allocated to a specific agency.

3. Moreover, the tasks of planning and operating the transportation system are the responsibility of a large numbers of agency actors who in effect manage bits and pieces of the networks.

4. Confronted with the need to bring coordination to regional transportation problems characterized by the previous three items, NYMTC has little in the way of either carrots or sticks to induce regionally-oriented behavior.

In examining the efforts of NYMTC to carry out its mandate in the context of the foregoing restrictions, a number of the barriers to regional coordination are revealed. In particular, NYMTC

constantly confronts the difficult prospect of attempting to do short and long term capital planning in a framework where the flow of dollars is to the individual agency (often accompanied by restrictions on spending) and where each individual agency makes its own independent decisions as to location of project (ever mindful of local political requirements). Additionally, it is NYMTC'S fate to be attempting to harness its members energies to regional goals in an era where locally-based participation requirements and Nimbyism came of age. There is little question that many regionally focused capital programs will be larger in Scale than local ones. Consequently, more back yards are going to be effected. The result is that opposition will be greater and the chances of success smaller.

Despite the many constraints on regional action, many officials who work at and with NYMTC remain optimistic about the possibility of ultimately achieving increased regional cooperation. In support of their belief in the gradual development of a climate more favorable for cooperation, they cite three general factors.

1. Transportation officials have become more aware of and show a greater appreciation for the clients point of view.
2. With the tremendous increase in travel and traffic during the 1980s, many transportation professionals have come to recognize the interconnectedness of their agencies and others. There is increased understanding that a single agency cannot make a dent in the region's problems.
- 3) There is also a broad recognition now among transportation

that you cannot build enough highways to end the mobility crisis. This means that something has to be done about transit.

If true, this means that there is considerable room for closer cooperation between transportation institutions in the region. Already, some officials have noted a considerable increase in interaction compared to a decade ago. Some attribute this to agency leaders recognizing a need for cooperation where the agencies jurisdictions and plans meet. If true, this provides NYMTC and other MPOs with an opportunity for serving as catalysts in the development of increased regional understanding of transportation issues.

## 2. North Jersey Transportation Coordinating Council (NJTCC)

Like NYMTC, NJTCC serves as regional MPO and is mandated to provide its federal sponsoring agency with the TIP, long range plan, and Unified Work Plan. It covers an area made up of 11 counties and 2 major cities with a population of approximately 5.8 million<sup>15</sup> As noted above NJTCC has worked closely with NYMTC in supplying support to regional coordination efforts. Since the break-up of Tri-State almost a decade ago, however, it has taken a somewhat different approach to its mission than NYMTC. While the latter has specialized in the production and sharing of transportation information and analyses, NJTCC has spent relatively more time in bringing people together for information sharing.

Like NYMTC, NJTCC is divided into subregions. In order to

overcome the perceived urban bias that plagued Tri-State, the meetings are held in the various subregions rather than at headquarters in Newark. This has the advantage of providing both the suburbs and the cities equal opportunity to see each others problems

Each subregion is given money for the preparation of the TIP and additional money is made available on a competitive basis. The competitive money is generally given for projects that are likely to be transferable. NJTCC has also managed to set aside a small the competitive pot of money out of non-UMTA funds to encourage the use of that source for the subregions. The Council of NJTCC is generally composed of elected representatives. The staff provides background material and technical research to aid the development of a common agenda.

NJTCC has been an agent in a number of successes during the past decade. It was a key supporter of the development and use of the Transportation Trust Fund which provides a stable source of funding for transportation. It has supported the establishment of such coordinating devices as the Transportation Executive Council and the Capital Lease-back programs as well.

MPOs, such as NJTCC and NYMTC, would confront major barriers major obstacles if they attempted to elevate their activities beyond the role of data production, analysis, convening, and educating. They are supported in their current configurations primarily by their federal mandates to coordinate capital planning for their regions. The two MPOs in this region have used this

requirement to improve communications and the knowledge base. Moreover, these activities are generally regarded as helpful by the principals. But the real power in the relationship remains based in the comparatively autonomous local jurisdictions. As long as their mandate and resources remain federal, it is difficult to envision their evolving much beyond their current roles.

Intra-state public corporation. The principal method of achieving coordination of transit services within state boundaries has been the public corporation or authority. Generally confined to one or two modes, authorities and corporation rely on consolidation and reorganization to achieve increased coordination of service. Since many of the interdependencies that arise in the production of transit services (including mass transit, bus, and commuter railway are contained within a single organization, the potential for integration in planning and production is vastly enhanced. While the initial impetus for consolidation in most cases has arisen from financial exigency, the goals of the authorities has moved to incorporate operational and even strategic planning.

This form of coordination is the most widely recognized, and consequently, extended case analyses will not be undertaken here.

Intrastate agency. Potentially, the single most powerful agent for achieving regional transportation goals is the state department of transportation. SDOTs are gubernatorial agencies with strong bases of support within the states. Whether or not they pursue regional goals and the quality of their efforts depends heavily, of course, on the level of interest of the governor. The commissioners of

both state DOTs have been participants in the Bi-State Transportation Forum. The changing mission of the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) is developed in detail here, since it has assumed greater authority for statewide transportation coordination than NYSDOT.

Case: New Jersey State Department of Transportation. Although NJDOT has always had a statutory responsibility to coordinate the various roadway authorities and transit agencies in New Jersey, until recently it implemented this authority rather loosely. Traditionally the authorities possessed considerable autonomy and seemed to be operating well on their own. Certainly with regard to the roadway authorities, facilities were better maintained than the state highways and congestion was relatively less of a problem on authority facilities than on many state highways.

A variety of recent developments prompted renewed interest in the statutory coordinating responsibilities of NJDOT. Of particular importance have been the period of rapid growth in population and employment that produced massive congestion on many roadways, the aging infrastructure during this same period, and the increased public demand for better services, especially in view of sizeable increases in toll and fares.

Transportation infrastructure presents particularly difficult issues at this time. And improved coordination is one of the main solutions being implemented. The massive investments in transportation made 30 to 40 years ago for transportation and other infrastructure projects have been paid out. In the meantime new

investment has not been made at a level sufficient to maintain or replace that infrastructure. This development comes at a time when the public is fighting any additional financial burden. In addition many problems stem from lack of coordination itself. For example, there have been occasions when the independence of the authorities have let to such actions as the widening of roadways without adequate interaction with other agencies. Such actions have created problems on adjacent properties. NJDOT money then has to be spent to alleviate those problems rather than on the projects for which the money had been intended. A coordinated approach could lead to a more rational use of dollars and allocation of projects.

These and other problems have generated interest in new approaches to transportation planning, particularly those that offer more coordinated approach to improving mobility. In view of the historical independence of many of the agencies, increasing the extent of integration poses serious problems. At this time there are 13 governmental and quasi-governmental agencies with involvement in transportation in NJ. Few appear to have much understanding of the needs of the others. Indeed, there is no reason to expect that they would in view of their autonomous development and relative independence. The goals of NJDOT and the roadway authorities are quite different. The authorities have every incentive to maximize the number of vehicles that pass through the toll booths. NJDOT exists primarily as an agency that does planning, maintenance and construction. NJDOT is more

interested in overall systems management--widely distributing and reducing vehicular traffic on the road network--than are the authorities.

The prior administration attempted to achieve some coordinating potential through the Governor's Authorities unit. The major control mechanism seems to have been a requirement that the governor sign off on the minutes of each of the authorities, thus permitting the governor and his advisors to exert influence over the actions of the agencies. According to several current NJDOT officials this approach had minimal impact.

The current administration has committed itself to change the extent and level of coordination among these agencies. The main device for doing so is the Transportation Executive Council formed in 1990. It is headed by the Commissioner of NJDOT and includes the chairpersons of each of the independent authorities and other key players in transportation. Its aim is to make policy and to improve the quality of planning. NJDOT is itself is playing an increasing active role in the effort to obtain greater control and coordination. In addition to its key role on the Transportation Executive Council, NJDOT's influence has been extended by the old and proven device of interlocking directorates. Since January, 1989 the NJDOT Commissioner has had an ex-officio seat on the board of directors of the three roadway authorities. The Commissioner also serves as Chairman of the Board of NJT. The head of the Treasury Department and a member of the Governor's staff also sit on NJT's Board. Prior to 1989, there had been liaison activity

between NJDOT and the authorities, by all accounts, it had limited effectiveness in policy decisions within the authorities.

Finally NJDOT is attempting to address the problems arising from minimal attention to transportation planning. The authorities have had no planning units. At NJDOT it has generally received low priority. In 1990 TRANSPLAN was initiated to develop regional and statewide goals for transportation in the Garden State. This effort has received strong support from the Legislature as well as the Governor.

Interstate public corporation. The most successful of existing approaches (success defined in terms of effectiveness in goal achievement) is the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the premier national example of the interstate public corporation. Its mandate for transportation is geographically confined to airports, bridges, tunnels, and ports and within those areas to certain modally-specific responsibilities. In the areas where it has jurisdiction, it has considerable control over the multiple interdependencies of planning, financing, and operations.

As agents for injecting long-term strategic thinking into policy-making, authorities are unmatched among public institutions. This is principally attributable to their relative freedom from external pressure in capital planning and budgeting as well as in operational policy decisions. Port Authority officials agree that this freedom exists, but are quick to add that with it comes a responsibility to confine activities to its twin missions of maintaining and improving the air, port and bus gateways to the

region and assisting economic development. Were the Port Authority to add regional transportation planning and coordination to its mission, the resulting conflict would greatly diminish its capacity for carrying out its basic purposes. For this reason the Port Authority has historically endorsed the idea of a new regional transit authority while declining to add to its existing responsibilities.

Indeed, as described in the preceding chapter, the Port Authority itself once argued that long-term solution to the region's public transportation problems required creation of an interstate public authority with powers similar to its own. The argument was made that in order to be effective at coordinating transportation in the region any such entity would have to be able to "make up deficits out of taxes apportioned equitably among the communities which depend upon rail service."<sup>16</sup> The effort to create such an authority nearly succeeded in the late 1950s and has been shelved since that time. However, the success of the Port Authority continues to present a viable model should conditions ever develop that favor another attempt.

#### Conclusions

This chapter has examined the arguments for greater coordination and the principal methods in use for achieving coordination in the region. As a general approach, increased coordination of transportation policy and planning is endowed with a variety of virtues depending on the advocate. Only the most ideological free market advocates believe that less coordination is

advisable. Coordination is variously advanced as necessary to achieve improved mobility in the region, better utilization of capital, more rapid, cost-effective adoption of technology, more productive use of the labor force, and improved quality of service (including higher and more consistent standards). Especially strong support exists for improving service to the clients of the region's public transportation systems. Significant improvement in service would solidify the commitment of existing patrons and induce new ones to use the public transit system(s). Reasonable success in improving the attractiveness and coordination of the various public transit modes (air, rail, bus, van, taxi) would introduce a valuable, self-sustaining base of public support. Others have held out the prospect that vastly improved coordination could be instrumental in achieving strategic change in regional economics, thereby aiding the goal of improved competitiveness internationally.

Existing approaches to coordination takes the form of managing existing demand or dealing with the problems created by existing demand. There are several examples of institutions that are very successful at the task coordinating the short-term problems that arise within the existing transportation network. Perhaps Transcom is the leading success in this respect. Extensive, valuable coordination also takes place through bi-lateral agency agreements. However, there continue to be many examples of poor or nonexistent coordination in areas where interagency linkages appear to be easily within reach. Examples include the reconstruction of

sections of the Brooklyn Queens Expressway and the persistent, widely recognized matter of airport access.

As advantageous as shared values (both within the public and among transportation professionals) there is no evidence that attitudes are evolving in this direction. Indeed there is some evidence that matters are moving in the opposite direction. A recent survey by the New York Times revealed that ties within the region are becoming more attenuated and that ties to New York City, still the principal economic engine in the area, are rapidly weakening.<sup>17</sup>

The historic suspicion (in some quarters hatred) of long-range planning continues. If strategic change to position the region for a better future really is essential, then the impetus will likely have to come from the private sector. Despite advances in procedural and structural forms of coordination in recent years, the fundamental autonomy of most transportation agencies has not been altered. And to the extent that consent by each of many organizations is necessary for action, there is no evidence that the political and financial incentives that support independent decision-making has been much affected. The Bi-State Transportation Forum, remains, for example, an informal discussion group.

On the positive side, it is accurate to observe that the great variety of coordinating mechanisms in use in the region is valuable. Moreover, no single approach that has proved effective in all circumstances. Many of the techniques and approaches

outlined above for improving coordination are alternatives. Given different structural and political parameters, it is useful to have available different techniques and approaches, depending on the particular contingencies facing an agency. This point serves to emphasize the important role that can be served by those organizations whose mission involves information sharing and education, such as the region's two MPOs.

## Endnotes

1. Harold Seidman and Robert Gilmour, *Politics, Position, and power: From the Positive to the Regulatory State*, New York: Oxford University press, p. 29.
2. Peter Szanton, *Federal Reorganization: what Have We Learned?* Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House Publishers, Inc., p. 5.
3. See James D. Thompson, *Organizations in Action*, New York: McGraw Hill Publishers; and Charles J. Fombrun, "Structural Dynamics within and between organizations," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 3, pp. 403-421.
4. Regional Plan Association, *A framework for Transit Planning in the New York Region*, Report prepared for the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority., 1986.
5. Decision Research Corporation, *Manhattan Auto Use Decision Study*, Report prepared for the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority, 1988.
6. See for example, Roy Sparrow, *The Private Sector's Role in Public Transportation in New York City: Regulation and Contracting*, Report No. NY 06-0132, prepared for U.S. Department of Transportation, June 1987. E.S. Savas, Sigurd Grava, and Roy Sparrow, *The Private Sector in Public Transportation in New York City: A policy Perspective*, Report prepared for the U.S. Department of Transportation, Urban Mass Transportation Administration, January 1991. Also see URS Company, *Express Bus Route Policy Study*, Report prepared for New York City Department of Transportation, 1985.
7. The written and verbal remarks of both Hazel Gluck, then New Jersey Commissioner of Transportation, and Stephen Berger, then Executive Director, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey at the Transportation 2020 Conference, Woodbridge, New Jersey, 1988, highlighted the need for increased cooperation and collaboration in the transportation area.
8. See E.S. Savas, *Privatization: The Key to Better Government*, (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House Publishers, 1987)

9. See for example, E.S. Savas, "Improving the Performance of Public Enterprises through Competition, in Role and Extent of Competition in Improving the Performance of Public Enterprises, (New York: United Nations, 1989, pp. 76-93, and Martin Landau, "On Multiorganizational Systems in Public Administration," Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, Vol.1, No. 1.

10. See Michael N. Danielson and Jameson W. Doig, New York: The Politics of Urban Regional Development, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982, pp. 200-204. The authors make a convincing case for the primary influence of the heads of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and certain newspaper owners in the success of the bridge.

11. The fifteen agencies are: the MTA, NJDOT, N.J. Highway Authority, N.J. State Police, N.J. Transit, N.J. Turnpike Authority, Garden State Parkway Authority, NYCDOT, NYSDOT, N.Y. State Police, N.Y. State Thruway Authority, Palisades Interstate Park Commission, Port Authority, PATH, and the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority.

12. Kathleen Murphy, "TRANSCOM: Keeping Things Moving," in Omnibus: for People Going Places, Lifestyle Media Group, Inc., May, 1989.

13. See, for example, David Mammem, "The Demise of Tri-State," in New York Affairs, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1984, pp. 30-48.

14. The members of NYMTC are:

- Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- NYC Department of City Planning
- NYC Department of Transportation
- NYS Department of Transportation
- NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
- Port Authority of New York & New Jersey
- Urban Mass Transportation Administration
- Federal Highway Administration
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Nassau County
- Putnam County
- Rockland County
- Suffolk County
- Westchester County

15. NJTCC's area of coordinating responsibility includes the following counties in Northern New Jersey: Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union, and Warren and the cities of Jersey City and Newark.

16. Port Authority Annual Report for 1952 quoted in Jameson W. Doig, Metropolitan Transportation Politics in the New York Region, New York: Columbia University Press, 1966, p. 30.

17. New York Times, December 1, 1991, p. 1.

## chapter 4

### Barriers to Cooperation and Conclusions

If the warnings of those who worry about the competitiveness of the New York-New Jersey region are taken seriously, the area is indeed in difficulty. In recent decades every ambitious attempt at broad regional coordination has failed. If significantly improved cooperation is ever to occur, we will have to come to grips with the causes of previous failures. An examination of the barriers to regional coordination and cooperation can advance our understanding of cause. The following analysis of barriers are offered in no particular order of priority.

#### Barriers to Coordination

Funding sources. The wide variety and specificity of funding sources leads to a severe limitation of spending options. Since many of the funding sources put particular restrictions on what the money can be spent for, agencies think in terms of spending each pot of money, not in terms of what projects would be beneficial to other agencies, jurisdictions or the region. Each agency still has its own capital programs and priorities; each makes more or less independent determinations of capital project locations. As a result, the decision premises become narrowed to individual agencies and individual projects. For example, the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority maintains a parking facility in lower Manhattan that many outside that organization believe would make an ideal location for a downtown bus terminal. The variety and

restricted nature of funding sources together with nearly autonomous decision-making by the individual transportation organizations makes regional planning and policy-making a virtual impossibility.

Localism. In view of the specialized character of agency financing, the inclusion of regional values in decision-making can only be achieved if popular support and political leadership advance these values. But even as financing has grown increasingly specialized, the social contract which used to support larger scale urban and regional planning has broken down. To be sure, this development was in large measure engendered by the autocratic nature of the old contract which often led to the decimation of communities in pursuit of highway and other capital programs. Yet the new "contract," if it can be called that, has advanced a highly localized version of participation as the chief virtue. The down side of this movement now has its own label, the NIMBY<sup>1</sup> syndrome.

With the elevation of participation and nimbyism, politicians have grown fearful of supporting major new capital ventures. Transportation (and related) professionals are increasingly reluctant to articulate critical needs that threaten the new compact. No one exerts leadership, no one engages the public about the limits of the participation and nymbyism. Many transportation officials are willing to identify the problem and discuss it. Most prefer to do so anonymously. But if a new political consensus is necessary in order to advance the cause of greater regionalism, the

professionals and the politicians will have to engage in the lost art of leadership. Unfortunately, the impetus for such a development is missing.

Jurisdictional barriers. Jurisdictional boundaries and the politics that boundaries permit or engender remain a major impediment to cooperation. The political gulf between the two states remains as wide as ever. No New York politician feels he or she has anything to gain by endorsing any regional venture where New Jersey is a major beneficiary. The same can be said in reverse of those on the New Jersey side. The Port Authority is under constant pressure to do more for each individual state, not the collective. Politicians in New York, for example, can still be heard complaining that New Jersey got the better of the agreement that placed the World Trade Center in downtown Manhattan and gave developmental priority to the ports on the New Jersey side.

These political disputes have their counterparts in the agencies, both interstate and intrastate. Smaller agencies are particularly suspicious, for example, of the large authorities, MTA and Port Authority. Additionally, the urban-suburban split remains as deep as ever.

The jurisdictional and agency divisions may lead to the apparently contradictory stance taken by many officials and politicians simultaneously endorse strengthening regional perspectives while opposing concrete attempts to achieve increased coordination or integration. There is evidence, for example, that many of the region's transportation officials profess a strong

desire for regional leadership but oppose any greater concentration of power at the regional level.<sup>2</sup> Some observers see the barriers covered by this category as the principal obstacle to regional cooperation. For example, a recent research report concluded,

We do not underestimate the practical difficulties involved in changing long-established policies and programs. But the primary obstacles to adoption of a new regional development strategy will likely prove to be political and bureaucratic, rather than financial.<sup>3</sup>

Structural barriers. One could argue that this category cross-cuts the previous three, and that would be accurate. However, there is something so deterministic and fundamental about the structural aspects of the problem addressed here that it merits its own treatment. Of particular concern are the ways in which the ideas, attitudes, and behavior of participants is channeled by the existing structure of policy-making.

Regarding the intractability of structure in complex systems, Stephen Jay Gould made several pertinent points in an article on the nature of change and innovation in complex systems.

[B]ut intricate structures, involving the coordination of many separate parts, must arise for an active reason--since the bounds of mathematical probability for fortuitous association are soon exceeded as the number of working parts grows.

But if complex structures must arise for a reason, history may soon overtake the original purpose--and what was

once a sensible solution becomes an oddity or imperfection in the altered context of a new future.

This comment serves to reinforce the point that historically the institutional structure of transportation policy-making and planning for the region developed to serve historically time-bound purposes, whether deliberate or fortuitous. This should be understood to include the existing coordinating mechanisms as well as the institutions themselves. Gould continues,

...we must recognize two other commonplaces of history, as applicable to life in geological time as to technology over decades--contingency and incumbency.

That is, chance has a lot to do with in the creation of change, and people in positions of authority are key agents in holding onto the structures that develop.

But who will start rolling the ball of change? Gould concludes, depressingly for those who believe in the rational potential for human intervention,

Stasis is the norm for complex systems: change, when it happens at all, is usually rapid and episodic.<sup>4</sup>

Loosely translated, institutional structures are generally conservative arrangements. Confronted with sufficiently severe crises, people manage to summon the motivation to build new institutional arrangements to meet the changed environment. Otherwise they stay put. Indeed, the structure of transportation planning and policy-making has largely been staying put for the past two decades.

The potential for change

Many thinkers and even more doers are less pessimistic than Gould and believe that change can come about even without a precipitating crisis. And there is some reason for optimism, despite the intractable nature of structure in organizational relationships. For one thing, others have done it. The transformation of industrial Japan is the most prominent of complex organizations deliberately changing through systematic learning and innovation. Many complex American organizations have gone through the same process.<sup>5</sup> There are also examples of the deliberate transformation of regional systems in the U.S. Perhaps the most successful is North Carolina's Research Triangle Park whose development has turned the economy of a central region of that state into a national leader. The Triangle Park required sustained and extended cooperation, indeed collaboration, on the part of dozens of state, local, educational, nonprofit, and private sector organizations. The success of the venture is a testament to the quality of leadership and the vision of those who had to change to make it work.

These examples offer no prescription for decision-makers in the New York-New Jersey region, other than to demonstrate that while coordination among complex institutions is difficult, it is by no means impossible. And when successfully achieved, it can yield a handsome payoff.

Is it possible to get providers and producers of public transport, each with different histories, goals, cultures, resource

bases, clients and political supports to agree on measures that may be in the regional interest (i.e. improved mobility) when these measures may not be perceived to be in accord with an individual organization's goals, cultures and resource dependencies? Is it possible, in other words, to get regional leaders to act (as opposed to vocalize) cooperatively?

The key may lie in the acquisition of new knowledge and the fostering of a willingness to experiment with new knowledge, that is to innovation. Several sources of new ideas are available, some of which should have appeal because they have a track record. Foremost is the total quality management movement.<sup>6</sup> Understood in its broadest iteration, quality management directs the focus of management on the quality of the production processes, and well beyond. The key is to understand the dynamic interdependence of any individual organization on its clients and customers as well as the other organizations that it needs to relate to in order to serve the clients. Thinking along these lines leads to envisioning the regional transportation systems in terms of its critical interdependencies from the client's point of view and changing the system accordingly.

Changing individual thinking is not enough. Another key requirement involves collaborative thinking. For successful coordination to occur among ostensibly interdependent organizations, decision makers must be aware of the potential increase in benefits available as a result of engaging in cooperative behavior.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, most organizations

(including public transportation agencies) continue to make decisions as if the benefits to the individual organization is the only really relevant concern. If the payoff for decisions arrived at jointly is, in fact, low and perceived to be low, few organizational decision-makers will engage in joint action. To change this situation will require dealing with the barriers that forestall coordination and prevent organizational decision makers from seeing the opportunities for cooperation. The chief barriers in this respect are perceptual and communications problems. Assuming that this is so, it suggests that such mechanisms as the Bi-State Transportation Forum is a step in the right direction, but will require progressive strengthening and enhancement. It will also be necessary to produce better analyses of the real value of the benefits of joint action. This would help deal with the problem of decision-makers seeing the benefits, but place a low value on them.

Finally, the key to unlocking the necessary creativity and innovation is leadership. Unfortunately, while we continue to champion greater leaders, we simultaneously place such limitations on their ability to succeed, that only the most stalwart are willing to endure and stay in office. Harold Leavitt's examination of what's wrong with management in the U.S. and the U.K., led him to identify several sources of our difficulties. One of these concerns our changing attitude toward leadership.

"In both of our countries we used to extol our path finders, we encouraged and nurtured them, taught our children

to emulate them, and helped them to grow everywhere in our lands. But the emergence of large bureaucratic organizations; the development of orderly and specialized, systematic, top-down organizational designs; the rejection of leadership as an attribute of individuals in favor of blander concepts of power equalization, all these have contributed to decline in vital, innovative fire-starting path finding behavior...."<sup>8</sup>

In other words, there may be a proliferation of great ideas for coordinating and integrating transportation in the region, but we have managed to hamstring the implementation of good ideas with so many decision points (in many cases veto points) that it has become virtually impossible to reach an end state that differs significantly from the existing one.

Government alone cannot reverse this situation. But it can foster the conditions that encourage innovation and collaboration. These conditions include the following:

1. structuring incentives to get the employees of transportation agencies more informed about and concerned with problem solving within and between agencies and
2. developing increased awareness on the part of upper management about regional transportation issues and developing their skills in collaborative problem solving.

These measures require sustained educational and training programs for managers, professionals and employees. But, in any case, these are long overdue.

## Endnotes

1. Not In My Backyard, in the event someone missed this.
2. See, for example, R. McDowell, "The Metropolitan Planning Organization Role in the 1980s," JAT 18.2, p. 132.
3. Hugh O'Neill and Mitchell L. Moss, Reinventing New York: Competing in the Next Century's Global Economy, New York: Urban Research Center, Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, New York University, November, 1991, p. 64.
4. Foregoing quotes from Stephen Jay Gould, "The Panda's Thumb of Technology," in Michael L. Tushman and William L. Moore, Editors, Readings in the Management of Innovation (Ballinger Publishing Co., 1988), pp. 40-43.
5. See, for example, the entire issue of Business Week of October 25, 1991 which was devoted to the Quality transformation of organizations in the areas of manufacturing, services, government, and research and development.
6. See, for example, J.M. Juran, Juran on Leadership for Quality: An Executive Handbook, Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1989; Richard J. Schonberger, Building a Chain of Customers: Linking Business Functions to Create the World Class Company, The Free Press, 1990; and Mary Walton, Deming Management at Work, Putnam's Sons, 1990.
7. See Matthew Tuite, Roger Chisholm, and Michael Radnor, Interorganizational Decision Making, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1972, p. 3.
8. Harold Leavitt, "Management and Management Education in the West: What's Right and What's Wrong," in Michael L. Tushman, Charles O'Reilly, and David A. Nadler, editors, The Management of organizations: strategies, Tactics, Analyses (Harper & Row, Publishers, 1989), p. 39.

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Note: Schedule of interviews on file with author.