12-9-1971

Areawide Housing Policy: a View from the Trenches

Norman Krumholz

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/oscdl_bonner

Part of the Urban Studies Commons, and the Urban Studies and Planning Commons

Recommended Citation

http://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/oscdl_bonner/92

This Report is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ernie Bonner Collection by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. For more information, please contact pdxscholar@pdx.edu.
When I joined the Cleveland City Planning Commission in 1969, I was anxiety-ridden but optimistic about the prospects for developing an areawide housing program to which the city might make a contribution. I disagreed with those who were skeptical that areawide housing policy could have as its primary goal not merely more housing starts but the provision of many more housing choices in the entire region for the poor and near-poor. I suggested that the skeptics dismissed too lightly the egalitarian nature of American ideals, the weight of recent legislation and the increasing use of federal grant programs to induce areawide planning and development.

Now, two and one-half years later, I am still anxiety-ridden but my optimism is waning. I see a small record of achievement; one suburb contiguous to Cleveland has actually built some housing for low-income families and another is talking about the possibility of public housing for the elderly.
But these modest signs of progress have been all but over-
whelmed by the tide of region-wide indifference -- if not actual
hostility -- to the plight of the poor, the under-privileged,
the black and those of moderate income who suffer from our chronic
housing problem. The attitude of indifference seems to pervade
almost all local governments as well as the bureaucracies which
serve them.

In the past two and one-half years, the City of Cleveland, through
the leadership of its Planning Commission, has made three major
attempts to establish the framework of areawide housing policy.
To date, all have failed, frustrated by the intransigence of both
citizens and their leaders toward any change in the status quo.
The record of our recent attempts to shape areawide policy on
housing is instructive:

1. In January, 1971, the Cleveland City Planning Commission
    proposed a "Fair-Share Plan (FSP) For Public Housing in
    Cuyahoga County." FSP was designed to demonstrate
    first, that every one of the sixty municipalities of
    Cuyahoga County was in need of low income housing,
    and second, that if all shared equally, the impact
    on any one community would be slight. In the plan,
    we arbitrarily assigned two percent of each community's
1960 housing stock for public housing. In every case, we found that the estimated number of families eligible (by income) for public housing in that community would exceed this arbitrarily selected "share" of public housing units for that community.

It is well understood that the city lacks the power to impose any such plan on other municipalities. Although our housing authority has county-wide jurisdiction, the authority may not build public housing in any community without a prior "cooperation agreement" from the local legislative body. Obviously, FSP was proposed mainly as a basis for discussion.

FSP drew not discussion but storms of protest from mayors and councilmen all over Cuyahoga County. Communities whose FSP assignment would have been as few as two or four public housing units complained bitterly about this threat to "home rule."

Now, over a year later, the plan is moribund; it has generated no support and little subsequent discussion. Our efforts to encourage serious consideration and public hearings have met with no success whatever.
2. The second major effort came in February, 1971, when our Planning Commission proposed that a new-town tentatively named "Warren's Ridge" be built in the Cleveland area. As a first step, we submitted a pre-application proposal to the Department of Housing and Urban Development under Title IV of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968. We also petitioned the State of Ohio for its support.

Warren's Ridge New Town called for the development of some 865 acres of almost completely vacant land owned by the city but located in a neighboring municipality a few miles east of Cleveland. Unlike most new town locations, the land is in the midst of a rapidly urbanizing area. Access and infrastructure are already well developed. Our plan proposed to evaluate many social and administrative innovations within a residential community of 8,100 new homes one-third of which were to be made available to families and individuals of low and moderate income.

If FSP precipitated a storm of protest, Warren's Ridge was met by a hurricane. Public meetings were held in neighboring communities and politicians seized the issue
to advance their political fortunes while telegrams, petitions and manifestos of protest bearing hundreds of signatures rained down on local newspapers, mayors, congressmen and on the New Town Desk at HUD. The stated basis of protest was the crowding of roads, sewers and schools and "the challenge to our way of life."

To date, the proposal has developed neither state nor local support and HUD, reading the areawide tea-leaves, has made no response to our pre-application proposal at all. Meanwhile, private building of all types goes on as usual in all areas adjoining the proposed New Town.

3. The third example of our efforts to promote an areawide housing policy has involved our regional planning agency, the Northeast Ohio Areawide Planning Agency (NOACA.) NOACA is responsible for planning and A-95 reviews in the seven county region of which Cleveland is the central city. Circular A-95 (of the federal Office of Management and Budget) indicates that regional planning agencies should review federal grant applications and NOACA, in company with most such agencies, does just that; reviews and rubber-stamps its endorsement.
But HUD regulations require that NOACA do much more. Behind our strong initiative, HUD has asked that the agency deal as well with the substantive problems of the region, of which housing for low-income families is surely one. We have insisted that NOACA's work program include a housing element in line with federal guidelines on equality and "open communities." We have asked that the housing element go beyond mere data-gathering to the development of hard policies and programs designed to weaken racial exclusion and expand the regional housing choices open to the poor and near-poor.

But the politicians who control NOACA's Board have refused to be moved, despite the prospect of losing sorely needed federal funds for the seven county region. At this point, the proposed housing element is still not part of the NOACA work program and the Agency, which was decertified by HUD in June of 1971, continues decertified.

While these three examples of Cleveland's efforts to move toward an equity-based areawide housing policy are somewhat unique, the official reaction to our efforts is not at all unlike reactions to
similar attempts in other areas. The many jurisdictions in metropolitan areas have all the legal weapons they need to "protect" themselves against any change in the status quo. They have a housing "policy" although it is unwritten: it is to resist. There is no other consensus on areawide housing objectives. This is particularly true when an essential goal of housing policy is, as it has been in our case, the expansion of regional housing opportunities for the poor and near-poor. We might have been more successful with proposals for higher housing densities in the region or planned unit developments, but it has been our insistence upon equity which has provided the focus for resistance.

This should surprise no one. Although equity as a goal has strong support in federal regulations and in political rhetoric, it has never received much attention either in the formulation of areawide policies or in metropolitan reorganization. Our attempts to resolve the problems of our metropolitan areas have uniformly concentrated on service and the ease of administration rather than on considerations of equity.

The park districts, sewer and water districts, stadium and transportation authorities which abound on the metropolitan scene were neither conceived nor constructed in terms of equity. These entities were developed solely on the basis of the need for service
and efficiency. But the promise of efficiency says nothing about
the appropriateness of policy, nor about the relevance of program,
nor about the incidence of benefits and costs to different economic
groups in the region. One who seeks elements of equity in such
bodies will be disappointed.

Our contentment with service and efficiency answers to metropolitan
problems presents us with major difficulties when we try to frame
areawide housing policies based on equity.

-- By concentrating attention on functional needs and
organizational efficiency, we have assiduously avoided
the deeper and more controversial questions of areawide
policy including low-income housing distribution, racial
assimilation, economic segregation and fiscal inequalities.

-- By retaining local governmental autonomy and direct
control through referendum elections at the local
level, we have assured the perpetuation of "communi-
ties of limited liability" possessing a powerful inertia
which supports the status quo, with its severe oppor-
tunity imbalance.

-- By supporting numerous units of local government all
based on the image of the homogeneous residential
neighborhood we have divorced resources from responsibilities and rights from duties. Further, we have practically guaranteed that neither the local governments nor the consensus upon which they rest will support housing ventures based on region-wide opportunity. Moreover, as our experience in Cleveland indicates we have helped produce a situation where some local governments can and will block the efforts of others to develop equitable areawide housing policies.

It seems clear that areawide housing policies designed to increase choices for low- and moderate-income families throughout the region are unlikely to emerge from the efforts of local governments. As we have seen, local governments act with vigor to obstruct equity-based regional housing programs, and power clearly lies with those who would insulate themselves against equity.

The "urban county" approach also seems unlikely to produce equity-based policies in housing. While the county may satisfy some of the demands for "stop-gap" measures such as contractual cost-cutting services among local units, it retains the individual nuclei of resistance to equity-based schemes.

Similarly, such policies are unlikely to emerge from areawide agencies such as councils of government or regional planning agencies
which conceive their responsibilities as limited to programs of efficiency. Rural and suburban officials perceive areawide agencies as a threat to local autonomy and act defensively, while central-city officials fear that these agencies may come between them and the higher levels of government on which they count heavily for aid.

Perhaps more equity-based planning and programming activities in housing will be forthcoming from areawide agencies in the future. That, however, depends on the willingness of the federal government -- specifically HUD -- to use the fiscal inducements of its grant programs on a much broader and more-coordinated scale in behalf of equity than it has to date.

If local governments, areawide agencies and even such governmental rearrangements as metro or urban counties are unable to base planning and programming on equity considerations, are we left to presume that there is no remedy in our country for the millions of Americans who live in dilapidated, inadequate, unsafe housing? Is there no remedy for this imbalance of opportunity?

I think there is. I see the federal and state governments filling the necessary role of balancer. Local governments, which are closest to the people in theory, have not been so in fact -- at least not to the nation's wretchedly housed or racial minorities.
Those who live in our ghettos, barrios and rural poverty pockets are often closer to the federal establishment than to City Hall.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. has put it well:

Local government is characteristically the government of the locally powerful, not of the locally powerless; and the best way the locally powerless have found to sustain their rights against the locally powerful is through resort to the national government . . . . The growth of national power, far from producing government less "responsive to the individual person," has given a majority of Americans far more dignity and freedom than they could win in a century of localism.

Equity in housing-choice opportunities has advocates -- however reluctant at times: the federal, and increasingly, the state governments. The federal government has both the necessary vision (as evident in HUD and Civil Rights regulations) and the essential money necessary to support or induce equity in housing opportunities.

I would like to endorse two specific programs which seem capable of promoting region-wide equity in housing choices. The first of these is a proposal for massive reform -- total reform in U. S. housing policy. The plan depends heavily on incentives provided by federal subsidies to the private market. The second lies in the establishment of new state entities.

First, I propose the enactment of a National Allowance Program to aid low and moderate-income households. This program would
provide large-scale money support for housing. Decent housing would then be within the financial ability of each household in the United States. Such a program might utilize a sliding-scale based on economic conditions of each region to relate the amount of the housing allowance to the living standards (and housing costs) of the region.

For example: in the City of Cleveland in 1969, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has set the moderate standard of living budget for a family of four at $10,453, and the moderate housing cost at $1,662 or 15.8% of the total budget. The 15.8% housing expenditure would be applied to all four-person families with incomes below the moderate standard of living level. Thus, a family with an income of $5,000 would receive an annual housing allowance of $862 which would represent the difference between 15.8% of their income, or $790, and the moderate standard of living housing cost of $1,662.

In each region, every household with less than the "moderate level of income" would be eligible. This would include poor individuals and childless couples as well as families. At long last, we will be addressing the housing needs of all Americans of low- and moderate-income, rather than just that small percentage able to take advantage of the few low-rent units available. And these
needs will not be held contingent on "cooperation agreements,"
political subterfuge or housing authority boards hostile to their
own responsibilities.

Let me sketch some of the administrative details. An eligible
household would apply for the allowance and furnish evidence of
its income. An annual income report would be required. An
eligible household would be issued its Housing Allowance in the
form of a check.

Tenants occupying housing units in compliance with local housing
codes would simply endorse the check and turn it over to the
owner along with whatever cash is required to cover the rent.

In the event the tenant occupies a substandard unit, the housing
allowance is not sent to the tenant but held in trust, in the
tenant's name, until such time as the household occupied a unit
in compliance with the codes.

The accumulation of ear-marked housing allowance in this way will
be a means of capital formation for the poor and those of moderate
income. A person would be free to choose to occupy a substandard
unit for a time in order to accumulate a trust fund sufficient
for a down payment on the home which would otherwise have remained
forever beyond reach.
Owners occupying standard units and qualified by income would receive the full amount of the allowance in the same way as tenants, but owners occupying units not in compliance with local codes would receive no allowance. A subsidiary trust would be established, however, as part of this program to guarantee the availability of credit at reasonable interest rates to the eligible owners of sub-standard housing on the condition that future allowances will be used to repay the loans necessary to bring the dwelling up to standard condition.

In all cases, the rent certificates or checks would be endorsed by the occupant of a standard unit and subsequently endorsed by the owner. Only the latter may negotiate the rent certificate for cash at offices of the local public agency or delegated banks.

Here are some of this program's anticipated benefits:

-- By increasing the buying and negotiating power of all poor and moderate-income families while making subsidies conditional on residence in standard housing, we will benefit from powerful market forces in the upgrading of existing units and the construction of new homes.

-- The dwelling-places of the poor will no longer be set apart from the balance of the community.
-- All poor and moderate-income families (not just those for whom public housing units happen to be available) will receive help, with the poorest receiving the greatest subsidies.

-- Incentives will be established to assure owner and/or tenant cooperation in maintaining decent homes at prices occupants are willing and able to pay.

-- Most importantly from the standpoint of areawide housing policy, poor and moderate-income families will be able to choose housing in any jurisdiction and in any location.

A federal housing allowance program as described would do much to insure that all Americans could afford standard housing. It would also provide for some increase in areawide housing choices for low- and moderate-income families. It would not, however, necessarily overcome the persistent phenomenon of racial residential segregation.

To open our communities to all races, the state government must play an important role, probably along the lines of a state development corporation based on that devised by New York State. The corporation's first objective would be housing for low and moderate-income families in a wide range of locations.
with insistence on open occupancy conditions. The corporation could also develop community facilities and industrial projects. It would have broad powers of eminent demain, and would be empowered not only to plan for the property it acquires but to develop the land through all stages including management. The agency would have statewide jurisdiction and would not be governed by local land-use controls or zoning ordinances but only by the state's own building code.

The establishment of such a state agency under a clear equity mandate would weaken the power of local governments to block federally-assisted housing of all kinds through large-lot zoning and other manipulations of local ordinances. It would make clear that we cannot simultaneously enjoy the benefits of large-scale housing production based on egalitarian considerations, while allowing fragmented land-use policies by hundreds of tiny communities locked in fiscal competition and planning only to avoid - not facilitate - change.

Though New York State has already vested power in this kind of agency, I am frankly not optimistic about its chances in other states. Most state constitutions are uniformly more restrictive than facilitative, and constellations of power in the form of lobbies tend to exert more weight at the state level than at other
levels of government. Even in New York State, consistent efforts by UDC to promote housing choices for low-income families in suburban areas may undermine its freedom to act, as a rural and suburban-dominated state legislature may constrict its operations. The same, of course, is true of HUD on the national level as it attempts to impose sanctions in order to enforce its regulations in the face of political pressure. Yet, at this point in time, these seem to be our best options for equitable areawide housing policies.

The program I have proposed will be expensive and politically difficult to develop. We have estimated that an adequately-funded Housing Allowance Program will cost approximately $15 billion a year -- not only a substantial increase in our present commitment to housing but a substantial redistribution of income in favor of the poor. The political difficulties of using governmental bodies such as state UDC's to destroy residential racial segregation argue for themselves. Yet, both are linked to an essential redistribution of income and power in this society which is overdue.

We can no longer avoid a redistribution of the resources of this society.
We can no longer accept subsidy to the richest among us and rhetoric for the poorest among us.

We can no longer believe in an equitable society with the evidence of inequity growing around us.

And we can no longer hope that equity will establish itself inevitably, without sincere efforts on our part.

I believe that state-wide and equity-based urban development corporations and a national program of housing allowances are steps in the right direction. Support for these programs will involve us in conflict at all levels of government and frequent disappointments.

Yet your group may be an important ingredient in ultimate success. I invite you to join me in the trenches.

- end -
TRANSPORTATION AND THE INNER-CITY

by Norman Krumholz, Director
Cleveland Planning Commission

for the
American Society of Civil Engineers, Akron Section
December 9, 1971

In the beginning, the American city was compact, its form determined by the distance a man could walk to and from his home to his work. Later, the form was star-shaped, distended along trolley and railroad lines where new development took place clustered within reasonable walking distance from the stations. Finally, in the years following WW II and continuing through the present, the city virtually exploded with its components scattered to the four winds and to a multiplicity of individual jurisdictions in every metropolitan area. I do not think we can recapture the compact city.

The reasons for these changes in American urban form are not difficult to identify. They have mainly to do with rising family incomes, weak or non-existent land use controls in the developing urban fringe, FHA insurance policies and technological changes. The most significant of these technological changes have been the availability of the automobile and the high-speed highway. With
a good car and a good road, locational choices become virtually unlimited. Those of us who have been able to take advantage of our automotive civilization have enjoyed the benefits of mobility and choice unprecedented in human history.

But while most of us were enjoying this mobility, the mobility of those who lack regular access to a car was suffering both in absolute and relative terms. There is no question but that the national majority which has opted for our automotive civilization, has not only injured the minority but has tended to ignore the problems it creates for those who do not have a car or those who cannot drive. As highways and cars have proliferated, and homes and destinations have scattered, ridership on conventional transit has sharply declined, fares have been increased and service has been cut. For the transit-dependent rider, there are fewer and fewer destinations he can reach at higher and higher prices. CTS, for example, runs about 200,000 bus miles less in 1970 than it ran in 1960 for double the fare. It is ironic; at a time when the central issue of American domestic politics is equality, public programs overwhelmingly cast in favor of the automobile by our federal highway policies has opened an ever-widening "mobility gap" between those who have and those who lack a car.

Those who cannot achieve "automobility" are a substantial group indeed, especially in the central city. They include the poor, the
elderly, and those too young or infirm to drive. In the City of Cleveland, we estimate that 32 percent of all households (about 79,000 households) do not own a car; that of the 46,000 Cleveland families with annual incomes under $5,000, 46 percent own no car; that 48 percent of all households headed by persons over 65 have no car.

It seems to me - in the name of simple justice - that it is this group which must be the prime beneficiary of improvements in transportation policy. It is no stretch of the imagination to state that those people who depend on mass transportation for their mobility have been "injured" by the national decision to opt for an automotive civilization, and deserve compensation much in the same way that those whose homes are taken by a highway are compensated.

Clearly, the broad objective of an equitable transit policy must be to ensure a decent level of mobility to those prevented by extreme poverty, old age or physical disablement from moving freely about the metropolitan area.

Just as it is clear that those who depend on transit for their only mobility demand highest priorities in transit policy, so is it clear that present transit policies serve other objectives almost exclusively. The main beneficiaries of today's transit subsidies and most subsidy programs now proposed are the more affluent riders
of transit and the mass transportation institution itself -- not the transit-dependent riders. This is true from the top - the $3.2 billion available in the Federal Aid Mass Transit Act which has not been earmarked for people subsidies but for capital grants and advanced acquisition of rights-of-way for new or extended rail systems, to the bottom - the flat fare rates which discriminate against the poor.

In the Chicago, Boston and Philadelphia areas, the most heavily subsidized transit riders have been the affluent patrons of commuter railroads. In our own area, the flat-fare structure on the Shaker Rapid produces a cost of 50¢ from the Terminal to the E. 55th Street inner-city stop, and the same cost from the Terminal to Green Road in Shaker Heights, a ride about as far apart in distance as in economic status. The much-heralded Bay Area Rapid Transit system - which will require a projected annual subsidy roughly twice total fare box revenues - is designed to bring people from well-to-do suburban areas to the commercial cores of San Francisco and Oakland. The line has no extensions into North Beach or Chinatown - the poorest and highest density neighborhoods in San Francisco. This criticism is more-or-less applicable to the dozen or so new rapid transit systems now under consideration in metropolitan areas around the country - in Washington, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh. Each requires large subsidies and confers the lion's-share of its benefits on middle- and upper-income riders.
We hear proposals to expand the transit system. If our purpose is to improve the mobility of the elderly, the poor and the disabled who are concentrated in the central city, how will the extension of steel rails into low-density, wealthier suburbs accomplish this? If the answer to this question is: 'We must bring the poor close to job opportunities which are decentralizing' is it not more reasonable to move the residences of the poor close to these jobs and dispense with the expensive, new transit system?

We hear proposals from time to time to make all public transit free. How would this sort of proposal benefit the transit-dependent rider in relation to costs? A recent analysis of a free-transit proposal in Boston pegs the annual cost of the program at $75 million. Beneficiaries however, include a large percentage of people who are neither poor nor dependent on transit, while those dependent on transit would not necessarily receive any improvement in service. On the other hand, if the program were properly directed by specific purpose, the cost of tripling transit service to and from Boston's poverty areas would cost only $4.3 million less any fare-box revenues received.

If the primary direction of transit subsidies should be - as I obviously believe - focused specifically on the needs of the transit-dependent population, it follows that subsidies should be channeled to particular users of transit systems rather than to the systems themselves.
How can transit best serve this specific objective?

First, let me include in my definition of transit everything from buses, to taxis, to job jitneys, to car-pools to rail rapid transit.

Second, let me state that we tend to over-sell the ability of transit alone to accomplish a massive diversion of commuters from their cars. I see a strong case for improving the quality of the rail transit system we already have in half a dozen cities, and for extending the lines in a few cases. But the case for new rail systems now being made in many cities strikes me as singularly weak.

Finally, let me state that urban transit has four critical needs in the current era: money, research, testing and managerial innovation. Until the first is confronted squarely, little progress is likely to be made with respect to the latter three.

It seems clear that mass transportation in the public interest cannot operate solely out of the fare box. Mass transit can make a profit if it deals only with peak-hour demand and the most heavily travelled routes, but this approach to scheduling will injure precisely that group which has the strongest claim to transit improvement. We cannot allow that to happen. Rather, we must insist that the funds needed to supplement the fare box in the interest of
the transit-dependent population come at least partially from the Highway Trust Fund which has indirectly restricted their mobility.

With this in mind, I hope that very soon we will see a transformation of the Highway Trust Fund into a combined Transportation Trust Fund as a single system of transportation finance. This would be in keeping with trends in the system of highway financing which are progressively broadening within an ever more-comprehensive framework. This change would allow local officials to budget a portion of their transportation aid apportionments for transit purposes. To control misallocation of these funds, a heavy proportion of these funds would have to be specifically earmarked for direct subsidies to the transit-dependent rider, much in the way education funds are earmarked for poverty areas under Title II of the Federal Education Act.

Now how can we deal with possible ways of administering subsidies to make fine distinctions among transit users.

One method, already wisely in use in some cities, is the use of identification cards to those eligible for reduced fares such as the elderly and school children. It would be relatively simple to issue similar identification cards subject to a means test to those qualified for special subsidized fares as a result of low income or special physical disabilities.
A less complicated method which would do away with many identification cards would be to charge reduced transit fares for trips beginning or ending in a specified poverty zone. These would have to be supplemented, however, with special cards to identify the aged and disabled living outside the poverty areas.

An alternative way of specifically subsidizing the transit-dependent population would involve putting as much fare collection as possible -- for rich and poor alike -- on a charge basis. Everybody's charge card would look the same but some users -- those qualified by low income or physical disability or age -- would receive a discount on their monthly bill. If the reporting of income and other data were accurate -- which could be assured by computerized cross checking of income tax returns -- the subsidy could be varied according to the specific characteristics of each family.

In terms of system modification, I believe the greatest potential for serving the needs of the transit-dependent population and perhaps the entire future of transit lies in new systems such as the Dial-A-Bus which utilize cars and buses and offer door-to-door pick up and delivery with fare schedules automatically adjusted by computer. Such a system is in development at M.I.T. But we should not overlook the broadened use of taxi or jitneys -- with or without sophisticated scheduling and control devices. As a matter of fact,
taxi cabs could now provide much of the needed service, were it not for franchise restrictions and prohibitions on group fares.

Let me conclude, by briefly summarizing my recommendations:

1. The primary aims of transit policy should be to enhance the mobility of those who cannot drive and those who cannot afford automobile ownership. In my judgment, this is the only group that has a strong case for transit subsidization.

2. The most compelling argument for transit subsidies is that the national majority while opting for an automotive civilization has unwittingly caused a reduction in the mobility of the non-driving minority.

3. The predominant form of transit subsidy should be reduced fares to needy individuals rather than grants to support whole services.

4. The main source of subsidies should be transportation user charges -- that is, highway user tax payments plus the fares of unsubsidized transit patrons -- rather than general tax revenues.

I may have stated some ideas this evening which disagree with some of your judgments. This does not disturb me. What is vital is that those with policy responsibility begin to take fresh looks at
their own preconceptions, at the arguments of their critics and at the unconventional ideas just visible over the horizon of feasibility. If I have stimulated even a few of you to undertake this effort, my purpose is achieved.
Until December, 1969, the City of Cleveland maintained an amicable, if somewhat distant, relationship with its seven-county regional planning agency, the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA). Along with most of the other jurisdictions in the NOACA area, Cleveland had been a reluctant partner in the shotgun marriage that formed the agency. All parties to the match regarded NOACA with some suspicion. The suburbs and rural areas were fearful that they would be asked to commit some of their resources to the problems of the central city, and Cleveland was concerned lest another level come between the city and the federal government on which it depends heavily for aid. Still, Washington was adamant, the ramifications of the association were unknown and so, amidst the usual pronouncements of regional amity, the NOACA union was joined.

It should be clear that pressure for NOACA did not originate at the grass roots level with local governments or political leaders. It originated in the requirements of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 which, in turn, was a response
to criticism that federal programs were in poor coordination with each other and with related local programs. Title II of the Act (Metropolitan Development) states that after June 30, 1967, all applications for federal grants or loans for highways and other transportation projects, open-space projects, hospitals, water supply and distribution facilities, sewerage and waste treatment works, etc. must be submitted for review and comment to a duly constituted metropolitan planning agency. Section 204 of the Act more or less provides that local governments must set up regional agencies to review applications for grants and to comment on their consistency with comprehensive planning in order to qualify for federal grants-in-aid.

Further emphasis in this direction was provided by Title IV of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1966 and Federal Office of Management and Budget Circular No. A-95 (1969). This provides for review of assistance applications for some one hundred federal grant and loan programs by "clearinghouses" which are usually -- but not always -- comprehensive planning agencies. NOACA was one of the many Councils of Government (COG's) and regional planning bodies formed in response to these directives and, like most similar agencies, was established by the governments of the region to do precisely the minimum necessary to keep federal funds flowing.

That was in 1966. A little more than a year later the City of Cleveland had bitter reason to feel that it had helped create a body
willing to do major damage to the City's vital interests without being either able or willing to negotiate any value trade-offs. For in December, 1969, the NOACA Board voted overwhelmingly to approve, over Cleveland's objections, an Interstate Highway (I-290) through the City's heavily-populated eastside which would have displaced some 1,200 families, destroyed three stable neighborhoods and removed millions in rateables from the City's sagging tax duplicate. In taking the action, the Board reversed unanimous recommendations by NOACA's own technical staff, Planning Council and Steering Committee, and endorsed, instead, the long-standing recommendation of the Cuyahoga County Engineer and the Ohio Department of Highways.

It seemed to Cleveland's representatives that in taking this action on I-290, the NOACA Board indicated its disinterest in confining its activities to simply rubber-stamping non-controversial grant requests. Nor was it interested in the "coordination" or "cooperation" specified in the 1962 Highway Act and in various Bureau of Public Roads memoranda. Rather, it seemed almost eager to lend itself to simple political co-optation. In this view, NOACA merely provided data, financial support and symbolic legitimacy for a project dominated by the needs of the highway bureaucracy. What was worse was the realization that Cleveland, with three representatives on a 49-man Board, was virtually powerless to prevent NOACA from taking similar disastrous actions in the future.
Reasoning that the agency, as constituted, could only hurt the city and could not or would not help it, the city chose to fight rather than acquiesce. The decision was made either to truncate the power of NOACA to injure vital city interests, or to bring the agency in line with the letter of federal regulations since these often speak the language of equity (as well as efficiency) in housing, employment opportunities and citizen participation and might help the city.

The events which flowed from the decision to fight are instructive. They illuminate bitter political in-fighting, but more than that they suggest some of the fundamentally different objectives which separate many central cities and the other jurisdictions which make up regional planning and coordinating agencies.

-- Winter, 1969. The 49-man NOACA Board approves I-290 through the City of Cleveland over the vigorous objections of the three Cleveland representatives. (Cleveland has 25 percent of the region's population, but at this time has only 6 percent of the votes on the Board.)

-- Winter, 1970. Cleveland files suit in federal court claiming its right to proportional representation under the one-man, one-vote rule. The city also refuses to pay its dues to the organization pending outcome of the suit.
-- Spring, 1970. NOACA's Board tables a Cleveland parks-in-cities application for 50 per cent federal grant funds for inner-city parks located entirely in Cleveland's ghetto areas.

-- Spring, 1970. By Board action, Cleveland is stripped of representation on all NOACA committees except the Steering Committee and the Board itself.

-- Summer, 1970. Cleveland introduces an open housing and affirmative equal employment resolution to the Board. Part of the housing resolution states that the entire seven-county region must accept some responsibility for housing low-income residents of Cleveland displaced by highways and other programs approved by NOACA. Both resolutions are heatedly rejected, with one Board member stating, "We will bury your housing resolution."

-- Summer, 1970. Compromise agreement is reached on Board reorganization by a NOACA negotiating committee including representatives from Cleveland and the region. The agreement is rejected by the full Board.

-- Winter, 1970. Under federal pressure, and without prior consultation with Cleveland, NOACA reorganizes Board giving Cleveland 8 representatives on a 52-man body (Cleveland percentage is raised from 6 per cent to 15
City persists in its suit and refusal to pay its dues.

-- Spring, 1971. Board member introduces resolution to charge Cleveland one per cent of estimated project costs for all City A-95 reviews processed by NOACA. (In the case of one $10 million sewer application which is pending, the city would be assessed $100,000 in advance.)

-- Spring, 1971. NOACA Law Enforcement Committee refuses to process Cleveland's Law Enforcement Assistance grant applications, claiming that a fee schedule for service must be worked out first. Cleveland Safety Director comments that "this is either extortion or blackmail."

-- Spring, 1971. Cleveland is entirely stripped of its membership in NOACA for not being in good financial standing.

-- Summer, 1971. Cleveland requests an administrative hearing with various federal agencies citing NOACA hostility to the City and its apparent unwillingness to conform with the federal guidelines, especially those dealing with open housing, equal employment opportunity, and citizen participation. The city requests that NOACA be permanently decertified and a new, more representative agency be formed.
-- Summer, 1971. HUD finally replaces the federal carrot with the stick and -- after considerable local protest -- decertifies the agency.3/ 

-- Fall, 1971. A recertification committee is established by Mayor Stokes of Cleveland, the State of Ohio, HUD and NOACA. Its purpose is to see that NOACA is recertified and, to the extent possible, held accountable to HUD guidelines. 

-- Fall, 1971. A new Mayor is elected in Cleveland. The city pays its dues and drops its federal suit and administrative complaints. NOACA remains decertified. 

-- Winter, 1972. NOACA is recertified by HUD after agreeing to raise Cleveland's Board representation to 11 (on a 56-man Board), and agreeing to:

a) an affirmative equal employment program 

b) restructuring its approach to citizen participation and allowing citizens, not only Board members, to serve on this committee 

c) accepting a "suitable" housing element as part of its work program. 

What has been accomplished by all these events? 

In the narrow view, it appears as if Cleveland has won everything it set out to win (except, possibly, the recall of the original I-290 decision.) Surely, the city's improved representation on the
NOACA Board suggests a stronger defense of its interests in future I-290-type controversies.

But beyond that, probably very little of substance has been accomplished. Equal employment which might help ease the plight of the City's black unemployed, meaningful citizen participation which might humanize all public programs by introducing the viewpoint of those who often suffer most directly from their impact, and the provision of more housing choices in the region for those of low and moderate income, all must await the casual study and implementation of those who undertook these programs with the utmost reluctance and then only under the strongest pressures from HUD.

Will the NOACA Board perceive a new constituency in HUD's equality guidelines and the needs of the people of the central city? Doubtful! One can expect NOACA to go on absently rubber-stamping grant-in-aid requests from constituent municipalities, but one has difficulty imagining the agency "advising" or "commenting" that a major program put forth by such majestic, semi-autonomous empires as the Cuyahoga County Engineer's Office or the Ohio Department of Highways was poorly conceived or that the location of a proposed facility was in error. Instead, of course, NOACA will continue to be intensely supportive of the needs of the highway bureaucracy given the fragmentation and weakness of local political jurisdictions and planning agencies compared with the long-term, well-organized,
well-staffed and exceedingly well-financed highway departments. (In 1971, over 69 per cent of the total NOACA budget was provided by Federal Highway Administration funds or local funds matching FHA monies.)

Most importantly, it seems unrealistic to anticipate substantive change in the outlook of NOACA Board representatives because the value systems which are widely shared by suburban and rural politicians and their citizens often specifically exclude concerns which are essential to the well-being of the people of the central city. These concerns include equitable policies in such areas as racial segregation, unemployment, low and moderate-income housing, and transportation.

The emphasis here is on equity, by which I mean improving the choices for those in our society who have few or no choices. It means first, inquiring of all programs or proposals the basic question: who gets helped and who gets hurt by the program at hand, and then supporting programs which assure greater opportunities for those with few choices.

It is precisely this concern for equity which is missing, not only from the activities of the NOACA Board, but from all of our attempts to resolve metropolitan problems by whatever device. This should surprise no one. Although equity as a goal has support in certain federal regulations and in political rhetoric, it has never received much support in the formulation of areawide policies.
Our attempts to resolve the problems of our metropolitan areas have uniformly concentrated on service and the ease of administration rather than on considerations of equity.

The park districts, sewer and water districts, stadium and transportation authorities and the COGS and regional planning agencies, which abound on the metropolitan scene were neither conceived nor constructed in terms of equity, but speak only the language of hostility to waste and "efficiency." But the promise of efficiency says nothing about the appropriateness of policy, nor about the relevance of program, nor about the incidence of benefits and costs to different economic groups in the region.

Our easy contentment with mere service and efficiency answers to metropolitan problems presents us with major difficulties when we try to frame equitable areawide policies. What is more, one clear result of federal pressure for regional cooperation and coordination is to channel more power to the suburbs at the expense of the central city.

Two examples in the functional areas of transportation and housing should underline this point.

As a society, we have opted for an automotive civilization conferring vastly improved access and mobility on the majority. In the process, we have ignored the problems which this auto-age creates for those who cannot own or drive a car. The poor, the elderly, the disabled and those too young to drive must pay more and more for
public transportation, while having fewer and fewer places they can reach. And this group is a substantial part of the population of any central city. In Cleveland in 1965, an estimated 32 per cent of all households did not own a car; of 45,000 families with incomes under $4,000, 46 per cent owned no car; of households headed by persons over 65, 48 per cent had no car.

In the interests of equity and simple justice, it is this group which must be the prime beneficiary of transportation subsidies. It is this priority which must be emphasized again and again at the highest levels. And it should be made clear that the needs of these transit-dependent riders will not be served by a "comprehensive plan" for transportation, nor by rail extensions into the suburbs, nor by broad subsidies to public transit systems, but by subsidies directed specifically for their use.

As representatives of the City of Cleveland, we are well aware of this priority. We proposed to deal with it specifically in an application for a transit study which was submitted to the Department of Transportation in 1970. The people at DOT told us to go away until we had a joint City-County proposal. We returned to our labors and, lo, just such a joint proposal emerged, which we then brought back to DOT for approval.

But the federal agency was not satisfied that the joint city-county proposal was sufficiently comprehensive; after all, parts of the larger region were urbanizing and transportation proposals
would have an impact there. Also, a similar two-county transit study was underway in the neighboring Akron region. So the joint city-county study committee of eleven members was reconstituted as a special committee of the seven-county NOACA; the scope of the study was broadened from one to five counties; and the study committee itself was broadened to twenty-one members of which the City of Cleveland appoints three.

Given this newly "comprehensive" committee it seems likely to expect the following events unless the strongest attention is given to the specific needs of the transit-dependent population:

1) The transit-dependent element will be given high priority in the study outline at the insistence of city representatives, but the study will begin by emphasizing suburban trips to downtown.

2) After one year of study, the committee will make a large grant application to finance two rapid transit rail lines into the suburbs. The politics -- not the planning -- of the committee membership will make this action virtually inevitable. Cleveland's representatives will protest that the transit-dependent component is incomplete and that grant applications should await its completion. They might even threaten to withdraw the city's support from the study.

3) Politicians representing suburban and county constituents and powerful business leaders will be fearful of the loss
of "federal dollars" and will urge the city's repre- sentatives to yield. The newspapers will refer to the city's people as "divisive" and "parochial." Editorials will call for unity and a regional view for the betterment of all. The city will capitulate.

4) The Department of Transportation will approve a substantial grant for the suburban rail extensions, advising that future applications must await additional congressional appropriations. In the general euphoria following the grand announcement the transit-dependent component of the plan will be quietly cropped.

5) In five years, affluent suburbanites in the region will be able to choose either one of their two cars or the rapid for transportation while, left unattended, central-city people dependent on public transit will pay more and more for less and less mobility.

The issue of equity is more acute in housing than in transportation. In this field, we know we have failed our low-income popu- lation tragically. We know we can no longer rely on housing programs for low-income families which do not serve all families eligible, or limit the housing choices of the poor both as to location and type.

We know we must design and initiate a low-income housing pro- gram where:

-- the poor are not set apart in a particular location or jurisdiction.
-- subsidies are available to all poor residents with the poorest receiving the greatest subsidy
-- the poor may enjoy ordinary choices in the type of housing they occupy.

Designing such a program is obviously one of NOACA's responsibilities. But will the representatives of communities which have successfully locked out the poor through legal and administrative subterfuge endorse and promote such a program? Will they support some concept of equity - perhaps based on New York State's Urban Development Corporation? The answer is clearly "no".

Most of the ardent supporters of regional planning, regional coordination and metropolitan authorities or governments campaign under the banner of efficiency -- less traffic congestion, less costly water and sewer services, less overlapping and duplication. Surely, these are important considerations.

But a more inspiring vision is in order. Equity must come to sit at the right hand of efficiency. Justice must swing toward a better balance in our society -- between young and old, white and black, rich and poor.

But the scales of justice are heavy and they move only with great effort. Who will throw his weight into that balance in behalf of equity? Will NOACA? Will ASPO? Will your own planning commission? Will you?

Thank you.

2) In its administrative complaints, Cleveland contended:

   a) that NOACA ignored HUD requirements to develop plans and programs related to low-income and minority groups in the area of housing, water and sewer development and other programs, and ignored low-income and minority group views in these areas (ref: P. 44, Par. 13, Sec. 4, Chapt. 4, Comprehensive Planning Assistance -- Handbook I -- Guidelines Leading to a Grant -- March 1969 -- A HUD Handbook MD 6041.1)

   b) that NOACA failed to comply with HUD Equal Employment Opportunity provisions (ref: P. 10, Par. 7(e) Sec. 1, and Appendix 2 MPD 6415.1A)

   c) that NOACA ignored the requirement for citizen participation in NOACA affairs (ref: P. 46, Sec. 20, Chapt. 4 and Pgs. 7-6 Sec. 3, Chapt. 1, A HUD Handbook and Circular 6415.1A, P. 20, Par. 16)

   d) that NOACA failed to meet the HUD Housing Element Requirements (ref: P. 44, Par. 12, Sec. 4, Chapt. 4 and Appendix 2A.........)

3) NOACA was decertified pursuant to HUD Circular MPD 6415.1A, Par. 7. With Cleveland out of NOACA the agency no longer met the requirement that its membership include central cities and other units representing at least 75 percent of the population of the planning area.