The Interstates and the Cities:

Highways, Housing, and the Freeway Revolt

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Contents:

1. Urban Expressways and the Central Cities
in Postwar America . . . 1

2. Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts
in American Cities . . . 51

Urban Expressways and the Central Cities In Postwar America

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American cities experienced dramatic change in the decades after the Second World War. These changes included the massive deconcentration of central city population, the shift of economic activities to the suburban periphery, the deindustrialization or redistribution of metropolitan manufacturing, and a racial turnover of population that left many of the largest American cities with a majority black population well before the end of the twentieth century. Various government policies contributed to these large-scale changes, such as tax and mortgage policies, public housing programs, and urban redevelopment schemes. Closely connected to these powerful urban transformations was the construction after 1956 of the national interstate highway system, a 42,500-mile network of high-speed, limited-access highways that linked cities across the country. When policy makers and highway engineers determined that the new interstate highway system should penetrate to the heart of the central cities, they made a fateful decision, but also a purposeful one. Indeed, the interstate system's urban expressways, or freeways, not only penetrated the cities but they ripped through residential neighborhoods and leveled wide swaths of urban territory, ostensibly to facilitate automobility. In retrospect, it now seems apparent that public officials and policy makers, especially at the state and local level, used expressway construction to destroy low-income and especially black neighborhoods in an effort to reshape the physical and racial landscapes of the postwar American city.

Few public policy initiatives have had as dramatic and lasting an impact on late twentieth-century urban America as the construction of the interstate highway system. Virtually completed over a fifteen year period between the late 1950s and the early 1970s, the new interstate highways had powerful and almost inevitable consequences. In metropolitan areas, the completion of urban

expressways led very quickly to a reorganization of urban and suburban space. The interstates linked central cities with sprawling postwar suburbs, facilitating automobile commuting while undermining what was left of inner-city mass transit. Wide ribbons of concrete and asphalt stimulated new downtown physical development, but soon spurred the growth of suburban shopping malls, office parks, and residential subdivisions as well. At the same time, urban expressways tore through long-established inner-city residential communities in their drive toward the city cores, destroying low-income housing on a vast and unprecedented scale. Huge expressway interchanges, cloverleafs, and access ramps created enormous areas of dead and useless space in the central cities. The bulldozer and the wrecker's ball went to work on urban America, paving the way for a wide range of public and private schemes for urban redevelopment. The new expressways, in short, permanently altered the urban and suburban landscape throughout the nation. The interstate system was a gigantic public works program, but it is now apparent that freeway construction had enormous and often negative consequences for the cities. As historian Mark I. Gelfand has noted: "No federal venture spent more funds in urban areas and returned fewer dividends to central cities than the national highway program."[1]

Highway promoters and builders envisioned the new interstate expressways as a means of clearing slum housing and blighted urban areas. These plans actually date to the late 1930s, but they were not fully implemented until the late 1950s and 1960s. Massive amounts of urban housing were destroyed in the process of building the urban sections of the interstate system. By the 1960s, federal highway construction was demolishing 37,000 urban housing units each year; urban renewal and redevelopment programs were destroying an equal number of mostly-low-income housing units annually. The amount of disruption, a report of the U.S. House Committee on Public Works conceded in 1965, was astoundingly large. As planning scholar Alan A. Altshuler has noted, by the mid-1960s, when interstate construction was well underway, it was generally believed that the new highway system would "displace a million people from their homes before it [was] completed."[2] A

large proportion of those dislocated were African Americans, and in most cities the expressways were routinely routed through black neighborhoods.

Dislocated urbanites had few advocates in the state and federal road-building agencies. The federal Bureau of Public Roads and the state highway departments believed that their business was to finance and build highways, and that the social consequences of highway construction were the responsibility of other agencies.[3] As one federal housing official stated with dismay in 1957: "It is my impression that regional personnel of the Bureau of Public Roads are not overly concerned with the problems of family relocation."[4] Indeed, during most of the expressway-building era, little was done to link the interstate highway program with public or private housing construction, or even with relocation assistance for displaced families, businesses, or community institutions such as churches and schools.

The victims of highway building tended to be overwhelmingly poor and black. A general pattern emerged, promoted by state and federal highway officials and by private agencies such as the Urban Land Institute, of using highway construction to eliminate blighted neighborhoods and redevelop valuable inner-city land. This was the position of Thomas H. MacDonald, director of the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) during the formative years of the interstate system. Combating blight with highways was also the policy of New York's influential builder of public works projects, Robert Moses. Highway builders were clearly conscious of the social consequences of interstate route location. It was quite obvious that neighborhoods and communities would be destroyed and people uprooted, but this was thought to be an acceptable cost of creating new transportation routes, facilitating economic development of the cities, and converting inner-city land to more acceptable or more productive uses. Highway builders and downtown redevelopers had a common interest in eliminating low-income housing and, as one redeveloper put it in 1959, freeing blighted areas "for higher and better uses."[5]

The federal government provided most of the funding for interstate highway construction, but

state highway departments working with local officials selected the actual interstate routes. The consequence of state and local route selection was that urban expressways could be used specifically to carry out local race, housing, and residential segregation agendas. In most cities, moreover, the forced relocation of people from central-city housing triggered a spatial reorganization of residential neighborhoods. Rising black population pressure on limited inner-city housing resources meant that dislocated blacks pressed into neighborhoods of transition, generally working-class white neighborhoods on the fringes of the black ghetto where low-cost housing predominated. These newer second ghettos were already forming after World War II, as whites began moving to the suburbs and as blacks migrated out of the South to the urban North. However, interstate expressway construction speeded up the process of second ghetto formation, helping to mold the sprawling, densely populated ghettos of the modern American city. Official housing and highway policies, taken together, have helped to produce the much more intensely concentrated and racially segregated landscapes of contemporary urban America.[6]

Thomas H. MacDonald and Early Expressway Planning

The linkage between inner-city expressways and the destruction of low-income housing actually originated in the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR), the federal agency established in 1919. Thomas H. MacDonald, a highway engineer from Iowa, headed the BPR from its founding until early 1953. As the United States entered the automobile era, MacDonald relentlessly promoted his agency's road-building agenda. However, over time MacDonald also developed a sophisticated conception of the relationship between urban highways and urban housing, and the relationship between these two elements and the needed modernization and reconstruction of the American city.[7]

Heading a federal agency that came to have significant power over the nation’s transportation system, MacDonald only gradually incorporated the city into his thinking. After all, as a former state highway engineer in Iowa, his first job had been to “get the farmer out of the mud” and build rural

roads to connect widely dispersed farmers with nearby towns and cities. But, increasingly an emerging American automobile culture – urban and rural -- demanded hard-surfaced roads. By the 1930s, urban mass transit was on the decline almost everywhere, as Americans seemingly preferred the convenience, flexibility, and privacy of automobile travel. On another level, the nation's railroads were on the decline by the 1930s, never to fully recover. Eyeing the enormous untapped urban market, the automobile industry had a major interest in express highways and in federal highway legislation. In particular, the extremely popular General Motors Futurama exhibit at the 1939 New York World's Fair, as historian Mark I. Foster noted, "stimulated public thinking in favor of massive urban freeway building." Norman Bel Geddes, the designer of the Futurama exhibit, also promoted the idea of a "national motorways system connecting all cities with populations of more than one hundred thousand."[8]

By the end of the 1930s, Thomas MacDonald and the BPR pushed for an interregional highway system linking the nation's largest metropolitan areas, an idea given initial form by President Franklin D. Roosevelt himself. According to Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace, at a 1938 meeting with MacDonald the President sketched out on a map "a system of east-west, north-south transcontinental highways," and then requested that MacDonald make a report on the possibilities of building such a highway system. The BPR's subsequent report, Toll Roads and Free Roads (largely written by MacDonald and his assistant H. S. Fairbanks), completed in 1939, represented the first comprehensive effort to conceptualize what later became the interstate highway system. Significantly, the report acknowledged the obvious link between express highways and urban reconstruction. It made a strong case that highway planning should take place within the context of an ongoing program of slum clearance and urban redevelopment.[9]

Wallace reported to Roosevelt that the BPR's plan established nothing less than the basis for the complete physical rebuilding of American cities. The big problem, Wallace noted, was not transcontinental automobile traffic, but automobile congestion in the cities themselves. If new express

highways penetrated and traversed the cities, traffic flow to the business center would be facilitated. More than that, careful routing of these arterial highways could cut through and clear out blighted housing areas: "There exists at present around the cores of the cities, particularly of the older ones, a wide border of decadent and dying property which has become, or is in fact becoming, a slum area." Land acquisition in these slum areas for highway construction and urban redevelopment would result in "the elimination of unsightly and unsanitary districts where land values are constantly depreciating." As Wallace portrayed the situation, the BPR's highway construction plan could become a central element in the reconstruction and revitalization of the central cities.[10]

A second major highway report, Interregional Highways, was completed in 1944. It was prepared by the National Interregional Highway Committee, appointed by President Roosevelt and headed by Thomas MacDonald. This report, which recommended an interregional highway system of 40,000 miles, actually mapped out a highway network that looks remarkably like the present interstate highway system. The 1944 report also made it clear that the new interregional or interstate highway system would penetrate the heart of metropolitan areas. Larger cities would be encircled by inner and outer beltways and traversed by radial expressways tying the urban system together. MacDonald believed these urban expressways essential to the future growth and development of the American city, especially modern slum clearance and urban reconstruction.[11]

Throughout the 1940s and into the early 1950s, MacDonald campaigned tirelessly for inner-city expressways that would clear out low-income housing and tenement districts, eliminating the "blighted districts contiguous to the very heart of the city." Dislocated urban residents, MacDonald suggested, could move to the new suburbs and commute to city jobs on new high-speed, multifunctional expressways.[12] In a 1947 speech to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Conference on Urban Problems, MacDonald whimsically dismissed the inevitable housing destruction that accompanied urban expressway building: "It is a happy circumstance that living conditions for the family can be re-established and permit the social as well as economic decay at the heart of the cities

to be converted to a public asset." New urban highways, MacDonald and others contended, would both revitalize the central city and permit better housing and living conditions in the suburbs.[13]

To his credit, MacDonald also pushed for local planning policies and Congressional legislation requiring new housing construction for those displaced from their homes by expressway building. In an important statement in 1947, he made the case for relocation housing: "No matter how urgently a highway improvement may be needed, the homes of people who have nowhere to go should not be destroyed. Before dwellings are razed, new housing facilities should be provided for the dispossessed occupants. This question of housing should be accepted as one of the major planning problems when a city decides that it needs and wants an expressway." Like most highwaymen, MacDonald fully understood that relocation issues loomed large in any urban highway project. Unlike most, however, he put the issue up front in his speeches and writings. Almost alone, he urged the necessity for highway and community planning that accommodated the relocation of those displaced by road construction.[14]

Essential to MacDonald's urban interstate vision was the necessity for integrating housing and highways in a wider program of urban and community planning to be conducted at the local level. During the 1940s, the BPR's Urban Road Division worked with planning, housing, and relocation agencies in New York, Chicago, and a few other cities to ease the social consequences of pre-interstate expressway construction. In New York, as early as 1939 the BPR's urban road people worked with the City Planning Commission in laying out "an appropriate network of express routes." Joseph Barnett, head of the Urban Roads Division, prepared and distributed a manual on "Relocation of Tenants" to city and state highway officials. It was clear to Barnett and MacDonald that cities paid little prior attention to the problems of housing demolition and relocation. In Chicago in the late 1940s, city officials estimated that several planned expressways would destroy over 8,100 housing units, but nothing had been done to provide alternative housing for displaced families or to assist with relocation problems. A BPR survey of state highway departments in 1947 revealed that most states

had done little or nothing to prepare for the relocation difficulties that inevitably accompanied major urban highway construction.[15]

After passage of the national Housing Act of 1949, which established procedures for slum clearance and urban redevelopment, the BPR connected with counterparts in the Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA), especially its relocation and redevelopment office. Both agencies were involved in land acquisition efforts and had a common interest in working cooperatively. The Housing Act that required local agencies find new housing for those displaced by urban redevelopment activities, but land taking for highways had no such requirement. Throughout the 1940s, MacDonald promoted a linkage between highways and housing, especially relocation housing, as well as the need for cooperative planning between state and local agencies prior to highway construction. These proposals, as historian Mark Gelfand has suggested, were part of a larger interagency battle, "an unsuccessful attempt by the Federal Works Agency [which administered the BPR] to wrest administration of the proposed urban redevelopment program away from HHFA."[16]

Ultimately, these efforts were unsuccessful. In 1949, President Harry S. Truman rejected the coordination of highway and housing programs, citing anticipated high costs and difficulty of Congressional passage. Federal involvement in comprehensive highway planning at the local and metropolitan level would have been a tough sell in Congress at that time. It would have jeopardized passage of the slum clearance, redevelopment, and public housing proposals that had a strong constituency among big-city mayors, downtown real estate interests, and public housing reformers. Also in 1949, as part of a reorganization of federal agencies, the BPR was shifted from the Federal Works Agency to the Department of Commerce. The BPR became somewhat marginalized as the urban policy programs of the Truman administration took off in new directions, focusing on slum clearance and redevelopment, programs that generally turned over condemned urban land to private redevelopers. The public housing provisions of the Housing Act of 1949 -- the authorization for 810,000 units of public housing over the next six years -- were never fully achieved. At that point,

historian Gelfand writes, the BPR seemingly "lost its interest in the broad implications of the highway in the city and concentrated its attention exclusively on making travel by automobile and truck quicker and less expensive." MacDonald gave up his speaking and writing crusade and, after President Dwight D. Eisenhower failed to reappoint him, he retired from the BPR in 1953 after serving as commissioner for thirty-four years. Highway engineers with their narrowly technical concerns were left in control of the agency. The broader conception promoted by MacDonald linking urban expressways with housing and redevelopment were dropped from public discussion, not to reappear until the 1960s when the impact of the highway in the city had become more powerfully apparent.[17]

Ike and the Interstates

Important political decision-making in the mid-1950s transformed the interstate highway idea into reality. Plans for interregional and interstate highways dated back to the 1920s. They were revived in the late 1930s and early 1940s, as reflected in the two major highway reports discussed earlier -- Toll Roads and Free Roads (1939) and Interregional Highways (1944). Larger cities actually began planning and building some urban expressways in the late 1940s and early 1950s, with some federal financial support provided under the then current 50/50 matching program administered by the Bureau of Public Roads. The Truman administration did little to advance the national highway network, making slum clearance and redevelopment the centerpiece of its urban policy, with some small attention to public housing as well (although in actual practice, public housing construction received short shrift compared to the emphasis on urban redevelopment). And, as noted, President Truman rejected the early efforts of Thomas MacDonald, the BPR, and the Federal Works Agency to link highways and housing in a more expansive urban policy. However, half-way through President Eisenhower's first term, changing circumstances brought neglected plans for building an interstate highway network back into the center of national policy debates.

Postwar urban and metropolitan growth stimulated new thinking about highway needs in the cities. By the mid-1950s, the full impact of postwar suburbanization had become apparent. According to President Eisenhower's Ad Hoc Interagency Committee on Metropolitan Area Problems and a separate Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, between 1940 and 1955 the nation's population was concentrating in urban/metropolitan areas "at an accelerated rate." Between 1940 and 1950, metropolitan areas -- that is, cities and their suburbs -- "absorbed 81 percent of the [nation's] population growth." The pattern speeded up between 1950 and 1955, when metropolitan areas absorbed 97 percent of the nation's population growth -- migration trends that were expected to continue into the foreseeable future. Most of the growth took place on the urban periphery. City residents, mostly white, were moving to the mushrooming suburbs in unprecedented numbers, an internal migration stimulated by massive new suburban housing developments, availability of federal mortgage insurance, income tax deductions for mortgage interest, rapidly rising automobile ownership, new highway links to the suburbs, and black migration into the central cities.[18]

The startling shift of urban population to the metropolitan fringes had several consequences. Huge numbers of new suburbanites still worked in the central cities, and by the 1950s their journeys to work created enormous traffic congestion on a limited number of arterial highways linking the cities and the suburbs, as well as inside the cities themselves. Coinciding with the mass exodus to suburbia, public transportation declined as automobile ownership and use increased. Auto sales were booming throughout the 1950s. Americans bought 7.4 million new cars in 1955, a new record for the automobile industry, and some 61 million vehicles clogged the nation's roadways. Meanwhile, public transportation ridership declined by over 50 percent between 1945 and 1955, dropping from 23.3 billion passenger rides to 11.5 billion. At the very time mass transit should have been in greater demand, American suburbanites generally preferred auto transportation, even if it meant they faced the daily commuter crush.[19]

As Eisenhower's Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations noted, solving the

emerging metropolitan transportation crisis was impeded by the maze of governmental jurisdictions that cut across urbanized areas: "The local government pattern in metropolitan areas is unbelievably complex. The number of local government units per metropolitan area averages around 96." In at least twenty-five cases, metropolitan areas spilled across state boundaries. The New York City metro area had 1,071 governmental units, Chicago 960, and Philadelphia 702. Only Miami-Dade County had established a true metropolitan-area governmental structure by the late 1950s. Few metropolitan areas had developed effective transportation or land-use planning agencies at the time. The urban/metropolitan transportation problem demanded a metropolitan solution, but regional transportation or planning approaches had not yet been developed. Under the circumstances, then, the idea of building interstate highways through the cities and connecting with distant suburbs seemed to offer a necessary solution to the mid-1950s transportation crisis. Paid for mostly by the federal government and administered by state highway departments, such a system seemed ideal for moving automobile traffic and overcoming the complexities of metropolitan area governmental jursdictions.[20]

The metropolitan transportation crisis demanded action and provided a mass base of support for a major government role in building interstate highways. In addition, a powerful highway lobby also promoted the interstate system -- a loose coalition of interest groups that included the auto companies and their suppliers, the oil companies, the trucking industry, construction companies, the trucking and construction unions, numerous auto-related trade associations, and dozens of other specific groups and organizations. The interstates would be good for business, provide tens of thousands of jobs, and boost the national economy. Big-city mayors, urban politicians, and their advocates in Congress pushed for the new highway program as well, hoping to solve the traffic crisis, rescue the declining central business district, and modernize the cities, all mostly at federal expense. Finally, state highway officials, collectively represented by the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO), found much to like in the building of the interstates, not least of which was that their members -- state highway engineers and administrators -- would be in control of locating, designing,

and building the highways. All of these interests came together in the mid-1950s in support of federal legislation on interstate highways that penetrated the cities, linked central city with suburb, and connected cities across the nation.[21]

Finally, President Eisenhower came to believe in the importance of federal highway legislation and provided the political leadership that led to Congressional passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 authorizing the interstates. Scholars have pointed to two sources of Eisenhower's interest in a national highway network. In a recent book, American Road: The Story of an Epic Transcontinental Journey at the Dawn of the Motor Age (2002), writer Pete Davies documented Eisenhower's participation in an early military caravan that traveled across the country in the days before hard-surfaced roads became commonplace in rural America. In 1919, some 81 military vehicles and 300 men left Washington, D.C. on a cross-country journey to demonstrate the need for paved roads, especially for military purposes. Two months later, after battling heat, dust, and breakdowns, the convoy arrived in San Francisco. Assigned to the convoy, Lieutenant Colonel Dwight Eisenhower was impressed by the impediments to travel posed by inadequate or non-existent highways. According to Davies, Eisenhower later stated that "the convoy got him thinking about the need for good two-lane highways." Other writers, such as Stephen E. Ambrose, have noted that during World War II, Eisenhower came to recognize the military significance of Germany's autobahns, built during Hitler's rule in the 1930s. In his memoir, Mandate for Change (1963), Eisenhower himself wrote that he "had seen the superlative system of German Autobahnen" and later recognized the pressing need for a similar national highway system in the United States.[22]

By the time he became president, Eisenhower had other reasons to support a gigantic federal highway program, aside from the essential transportation needs of the nation. First, he accepted the general view that such a transportation system would serve as a major impetus to national economic development while at the same time eliminating wasteful traffic slowdowns. Second, Eisenhower recognized that such a massive construction enterprise would put tens of thousands of people to work

and pump billions of dollars into the American economy over a decade and a half. On this subject, he followed the thinking of Arthur F. Burns, head of the President's Council of Economic Advisors (CEA), who argued in Cabinet meetings that highway building could be used by the government as "an important economic tool." Raymond J. Saulnier, a White House economic aide under Eisenhower and later Burns's successor at CEA, wrote in his memoir Constructive Years (1991) that the President supported the highway program as a countercyclical measure: "He viewed it from the beginning . . . as a program that could be used to help stabilize the economy." According to Saulnier, "it is doubtful that any president has made a more systematic and sustained effort than Eisenhower to plan and utilize public construction for countercyclical purposes." As Ambrose has suggested, opening or closing the federal financial spigot provided a mechanism for smoothing over "the peaks and valleys in unemployment" and keeping the American economy out of recessionary slowdowns or avoiding runaway inflation. Eisenhower was no New Dealer, but he came to perceive this sort of public works spending in much the way that President Franklin D. Roosevelt did during the Great Depression. Finally, in the midst of one of the more dangerous and unstable periods of the Cold War, Eisenhower was conscious of the need to improve evacuation routes from the major cities in case the nation was attacked with nuclear weapons. As Eisenhower noted in his memoir, "our roads ought to be avenues of escape for persons living in big cities threatened by aerial attack." In the final analysis, the President recognized the enormity of the highway program, the benefits and the changes that its completion would bring, and, as he wrote, "I wanted the job done."[23]

As it turned out, getting the "job done" was no easy task. Eisenhower's presidential advisory committee on highways, headed by General Lucius D. Clay, issued a report in early 1955 recommending that the planned interstate highway be given "top priority" by Congress. Despite the enormous influence of the "highway lobby," it took almost two years to navigate interstate highway legislation through Congress. The big dispute was over financing the system. Some favored tolls, others some sort of bond financing, still others a highway user tax on gasoline, diesel fuel, and tires;

some wanted the federal government to take charge of the construction project, others favored working through already well-established relationships with the state highway departments. Highway advocates haggled over the size of the excise taxes, or the tax differential between automobiles and trucks, or whether it would take 10 or 15 or more years to build the system. They debated whether the federal share of construction cost should be 50 percent or 90 percent, and whether states should be reimbursed for already built expressways that would become part of the interstate system. Within the administration, Eisenhower's close advisors disagreed on methods, goals, and financial mechanisms. Clay's highway report did not satisfy many in Congress. Eisenhower had initially supported highway tolls, but later agreed to Clay's bond financing plan for the interstates, both of which reflected his interest in a pay-as-you-build method of paying for a national highway system. Congress rejected interstate legislation in 1955, but, after hard negotiating in the House and Senate, Congress passed the Highway Act and a companion financing bill in June 1956. The legislation provided for a national highway system of 41,000 miles, financed through the mechanism of a Highway Trust Fund derived from excise taxes on fuel and tires. The federal government would provide 90 percent of the cost, with the states contributing the remaining 10 percent. The BPR would provide oversight and final approvals on interstate segments, but state highway departments would be responsible for determining the interstate routes and building the roads. The interstate system was expected to cost at least $27.5 billion (estimates soon to be increased dramatically) and be completed within thirteen years.[24]

Congress and the diverse elements of the highway lobby came together in support of interstate highway legislation after the invention of the Highway Trust Fund resolved the financing issue that had blocked earlier legislative efforts. As Daniel P. Moynihan noted in a critical article in The Reporter magazine in 1960, the interstate program had something for everybody." The auto industry, the truckers, and other elements of the highway lobby, once they accepted the compromises on highway user taxes, recognized the highly beneficial aspects of a modern, high-speed highway system.

Politicians loved the program because of the enormous amount of federal money that would be spread around their states and districts, and for which they could take credit in future election campaigns. Needless to say, state highway engineers found much to like in the new highway system and the large pot of federal money now available to build highways in their own bailiwicks. However, many urban planners and other urban experts took a different position. For instance, critics at a 1957 symposium on highways and cities perceived the interstate in problematic ways. They criticized the highway builders emphasis on traffic engineering to the exclusion of other forms of planning: "At present the design and location of highway facilities are treated as strictly engineering problems in which the only objective considered is that of keeping vehicles in rapid motion. There is no responsibility for relating highway construction to plans for the future of the city. The location and design of highways are not consciously used as means of promoting other purposes than those of moving traffic."[25]

Other critics were quick to find serious fault with the urban aspects of the interstate highway program. John Howard, an urban planning professor at MIT, complained about the highway act's failure to require any sort of comprehensive metropolitan planning, such as was required for urban renewal and that was fully incorporated in the 1944 BPR report on Interregional Highways. Highways, Howard wrote, "were "too important to leave to the highway engineers." Moreover, the highway program ignored other forms of transportation, especially mass transportation and rapid transit, which were essential for a balanced system. Equally important, the consequences of residential displacement were left unresolved by the highway act, a serious problem because displacement might "involve as much as 10 percent of the population in some central cities." All of this, Howard suggested, refelcted "evidence of a single-minded narrowness of vision, which may well result in the most and best highways built the quickest but will also probably result in too much spent for the wrong things in the wrong places." James Lister, a planner from Cleveland, echoed these views, adding that the exclusion of city planners from the highway-building process meant that "state highway engineers [would] push great motor corridors through our cities and urban counties, with

little or no regard for our best over-all future development. . . . They may solve the traffic problem -- but if they cut our cities and urban counties to shreds and tatters in the process, then we will be worse off than we were before." Louisville real estate writer Grady Clay worried that the interstate system would turn out to be "a monstrous dragon let loose upon the American landscape." By 1960, four years after congressional authorization for the interstate program, a sizeable body of criticism had emerged, especially focusing on the lack of attention to comprehensive planning, mass transit alternatives, and relocation issues.[26]

The 1956 highway act's failure to address the question of housing demolition and family relocation became one of the more troubling policy issues in subsequent years. Federal housing and urban renewal legislation in 1949 and 1954 required relocation assistance and alternative housing for those living in the path of the federal bulldozer. Although they pushed for urban expressways, knowledgeable highway men such as Thomas MacDonald and Robert Moses recognized the importance of relocation housing, both as a matter of simple justice and to counter potential neighborhood or local political opposition to building roads through heavily populated city centers. In his testimony to the House Committee on Public Works in 1955, Moses made a strong case for relocation payments to tenants. In the 1956 debate over the highway bill in the House of Representatives, congressmen from New York "made a hard fight" to include relocation costs in the interstate legislation. Actually, according to the legal scholar Gary T. Schwartz, "the bills considered by the House in 1955 and then approved by the House in 1956 would have rendered family relocation expenses includable within highway 'construction' costs for purposes of federal funding; for the Interstate program, this would have entailed a 90 percent federal share of payments made to relocatees." Subsequently, on the Senate side, the Senate Public Works Committee removed the relocation provision. New York Senator Herbert Lehman sought to restore the relocation language of the House version during Senate debate, but this was defeated. When the bill went to a conference committee, House conferees agreed with Senate counterparts to keep the funding for relocation out

of the final bill.[27]

The Eisenhower administration and Republican allies in the Senate rejected financial compensation for relocation because of anticipated excessive costs. Congressmen, BPR administrators, and state highway engineers knew that urban relocation problems would be difficult, perhaps involving the displacement of up to 90,000 people a year. Highway engineers had traditionally conceived of their job as one of building roads, while the human problems of housing relocation were thought to be the work of some other agency. This engineering mentality was reflected in the 1956 highway act. Urban mayors and business groups lobbied for urban expressways, but they believed that the removal of low-income housing and "blighted" neighborhoods would be good for their cities. The advocates of urban redevelopment and urban renewal operated on "the basic premise that slums were in essence a problem of deteriorated buildings, rather than a problem of the low income of those buldings' inhabitants." These conceptions carried over into considerations of how urban expressways would benefit the central cities. In the final analysis, until the 1960s, the urban poor whose neighborhoods were slated for expressway corridors had few lobbyists in Congress to make an effective case for relocation funding.[28]

It is also important to place the relocation issue and potential relocation costs into the context of the economic environment of the 1950s. The U.S. battled inflation and recession throughout the decade. President Eisenhower had campaigned on a platform of cutting federal spending, reducing taxes, and eliminating the budget deficit. He was interested in stabilizing government spending and in keeping federal expenditures in a steady ratio with rising national income. He wanted, he said in his memoir, to dissipate "the cloud of unwanted socialism." Congressional Republicans during the era traditionally adhered to fiscal conservatism. Many initially opposed the interstate highway system based on its enormous cost, but shifted to support the road program when the Highway Trust Fund mechanism took construction costs off the federal balance sheet. As Moynihan noted, "the device of the Trust Fund satisfied the administration's wish to keep the increased level of government

spending from showing up in the budget."[29]

In seeking to meet his economic goals, Eisenhower was advised by his Council of Economic Advisors (CEA), headed by the influential economist Arthur F. Burns. The CEA had "a highly influential role" in policy issues that affected the economy and government spending. The CEA weighed in on the highway relocation issue, especially its potential costs. For example, in August 1956, Burns wrote to the Bureau of the Budget about a housing bill currently being debated in the House, a bill that would have permitted more expansive operations by the Federal National Mortgage Association (FNMA). Burns had a number of objections to the bill, but one in particular dealt with relocation issues. The bill, Burns stated, authorized FNMA to "include in urban renewal grants the costs of relocation payments to individuals and business concerns displaced by an urban renewal project." Burns argued that local agencies, not the federal government, should cover such relocation payments. Burns went on to say: "The Council is also fearful that this principle of compensation may be extended in the future to the highway program and run up costs in the process." Burns's letter reveals quite early in the interstate process that officials at high levels in the Eisenhower administration recognized the large dimensions of the highway relocation problem, but callously rejected any assistance to those displaced because it would "run up costs." The inconsistency of providing such relocation assistance for urban renewal projects but not for the highway program did not seem to bother Burns.[30]

While Burns and the CEA rejected a more expansive federal role in relocation matters -- and in urban affairs generally -- another federal unit was inching forward in another direction. Robert E. Merriam, a political scientist, served as a Deputy Assistant to President Eisenhower, and also as chair of the Ad Hoc Interagency Committee on Metropolitan Area Problems. Established in 1957, the Ad Hoc Committee was one of several similar working committees addressing "interlevel problems," or relations between federal agencies and state and local governments. As the minutes of the first Ad Hoc Committee meeting in October 1957 noted, "the Federal Government has a real problem in

dealing with local governments," a problem that had created some "ill will" in the states and that concerned Eisenhower enough to serve as the subject of several presidential speeches. Discussion at the first meeting focused on perceived problem areas such as federal-local coordination of the urban renewal and interstate highway programs. Concerns were already being expressed in cities around the nation about the extent of housing demolitions, especially in low-income neigbhorhoods, and the absence of any financial suspport for relocation payments or moving assistance for those living in rental properties. However, when one committee member discussed the need "to establish a more formalized program for coordination, particularly with respect to the relocation problems caused by highway construction," White House staffer Howard Pyle rejected the idea, suggesting that state highway departments "used the Federal Government as an excuse for unpopular decisions affecting local communities."[31]

The Ad Hoc Committee moved slowly, holding only four meetings over four years, seemingly not accomplishing very much. But by 1960, after examining levels of intergovernmental coordination in such big programs as highways, housing, and urban renewal, the Committee began to assert the need for a greater degree of long-range planning in metropolitan areas. The multiplicity of governmental jurisdictions in urban America made planning a necessity. Achieving acceptable and uniform policies in such fields as housing and highways was impossible through local legislation, but it could be achieved through federally required comprehensive metropolitan planning. By the end of 1960, the Ad Hoc Committee recommended that the "workable program" comprehensive planning requirements of the urban renewal program be extended to other federal programs such as the interstate highway program. By imposing the planning requirement as "a statutory objective," the nation's urban communities would be forced to address "the problem of urban decay." The workable program for urban renewal, among other things, required plans for relocating families displaced by redevelopment activities. Merriam's committee recommended matching federal grants to state agencies to assist in local adoption of workable programs for federal activities such as the interstate highway program.

Around the same time, the Bureau of the Budget (BOB) similarly argued the necessity for a consistent federal policy on "reimbursement of relocation costs involved in all types of projects." Diametrically opposed to the earlier position of the CEA under Arthur F. Burns, the BOB and Ad Hoc Committee recommendations came at the very end of the Eisenhower administration, when there was not much time for discussion within the administration or of Congressional action. Several earlier Congressional bills for relocation assistance had been opposed by BPR and the Department of Commerce, and they never got very far in Congress. The final recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on planning and relocation were included in a "transition memorandum" sent by Merriam to his counterparts in the incoming Kennedy administration.[32]

Merriam's Ad Hoc Committee did not attack the interstate highway program directly. Rather, it moved slowly but deliberately toward more comprehensive planning and toward assumption of some financial responsibility toward those displaced by highway demolition. However, another executive branch unit directly challenged the BPR and the basic assumptions on which the interstate program was based. This assault on the expansive construction aims of the highway lobby was mounted by General John S. Bragdon, a special assistant to President Eisenhower who in 1955 was appointed as "Coordinator of Public Works Planning." An army engineer and a close associate of Eisenhower since their West Point days, Bragdon had a broad mandate from the President to review federal public works programs, initiate long-range planning, and identify public construction that could be accelerated in the event of a slowing economy. From the beginning, Bragdon and his staff of 25 in the Public Works Planning Unit targeted the federal highway program for attention. Bragdon focused especially on the need for integrating highway construction with comprehensive community planning. Indicting the direction of Bragdon's thinking, one staff memo in December 1955 suggested: "Amendment of existing Federal aid laws to include a provision, similar to that in the Housing Act of 1954 covering urban renewal, to the effect that granting of Federal aid for public work purposes is contingent upon an overall comprehensive master plan." Of course, urban renewal legislation

stipulated relocation assistance, but it is not clear from the documentation that Bragdon was interested in this aspect of urban renewal's "workable program" requirements. Bragdon's goal was efficiency and cost savings in government public works, which he believed could be achieved through long-range planning.[33]

In addition to advocating comprehensive, metropolitan-area planning, Bragdon's investigations raised other sticky highway issues. For example, despite the fact that the financing of the interstates had been resolved with the invention of the Highway Trust Fund, Bragdon constantly hammered away on the need to raise highway money through interstate tolls. Similarly, he annoyed highwaymen no end by noisily pushing mass transit alternatives for the cities. For Bragdon, tolls would provide necessary highway funding without affecting the national budget, while adequate mass transit would take the pressure off demands for more expensive urban expressways. On both issues, Bragdon found little support.[34]

Bragdon's main focus, however, was reserved for the urban interstates. Eliminating those enormously expensive inner-city expressways would produce potentially huge savings. The urban segments of the interstates were costing as much as $16 million per mile in congested city territory, as opposed to an average of $1 million per mile in intercity segments. Land-acquisition costs, the relocation of utilities, a larger number of interchanges, and more complex engineering and design problems drove up urban highway construction costs. These higher costs in urban areas led Bragdon to challenge one of the interstate program's basic assumptions -- that the interstates had always been planned to cut into and through the cities as well as circle them on interstate beltways. President Eisenhower himself, by some accounts, was said to be surprised when he discovered that the interstates were penetrating the central cities; supposedly, he thought they were simply linking up cities for long-distance travel but not solving the traffic woes of urban areas. If this was true, it would fit into the perception of Eisenhower as a rather detached president who delegated a lot of authority, who didn't want to be bothered with details, and whose decision making focused on broad

principles and goals rather than specific elements of a plan, program, or bill.[35]

After one of several meetings with Eisenhower on this subject, in November 1959 Bradgon wrote a "Memorandum for the Record." Bragdon reported that Eisenhower agreed with him on the city segments of the interstate: "On the question of routing in the cities, the President confirmed the fact that his idea had always been that the transcontinental network for interstate and intercity travel and the Defense significance are paramount and that routing within cities is primarily the responsibility of the cities. The President was forceful on this point." In fact, Bragdon did have the President's ear. Bragdon's constant harping on the possibility of eliminating the urban interstates, or a least leaving them to the cities to fund and build, had some impact. Earlier in 1959, in the midst of an economic recession that led to reduced tax collections and forced a slowdown in interstate construction, Eisenhower gave Bragdon a broad, new assignment: to review the federal highway program in all its aspects, especially to determine if it was achieving "national objectives" and to recommend methods to "minimize the Federal cost of the highway program." Neither Eisenhower nor Bragdon ever mentioned the need to deal with relocation issues, although earlier in the year Bragdon and his staff discussed the possibility of urging "that the States be encouraged to take initiative in providing for relocation costs." Both the President and his Public Works Advisor wanted to cut back on highway expenditures They knew about relocation problems for low-income urban residents, but they wanted nothing to do with the solution. Those displaced by demolition had few advocates at the highest levels of the Eisenhower administration.[36]

Following his new mandate, Bragdon and his public works team launched even deeper investigations, which led to conflicts with BPR people who didn't like Bragdon poking around in their highway business. At the Cabinet level, the Secretary of Commerce followed the President's lead and ordered the BPR to comply with Bragdon's requests for information, which the BPR did reluctantly. In addition, Federal Highway Administrator Bertram Tallamy (the Federal Highway Administration administered the interstate program within the BPR) wrote numerous memos to Bragdon and

Commerce Secretary Frederick Mueller reviewing the history of the interstate program, demonstrating that the urban segments had always been part of the highway plan dating back to the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944.[37] Another consequence of the Bragdon investigation stemmed from leaks that the administration was considering cutting back or even eliminating the urban segments of the Interstate because of the late 1950s recession. City advocates were alarmed, and mayors across the country deluged President Eisenhower with letters of protest. Bragdon and his public works team stirred up several political firestorms.[38]

After almost a year of internal squabbling over these matters, a showdown meeting involving Bragdon, the highway people, and President Eisenhower took place in the White House in April 1960. Bragdon began a lengthy presentation on the urban interstates, but he was soon interrupted by Eisenhower who asked Tallamy for his response. Reportedly, Tallamy pulled out a copy of the so-called "Yellow Book" -- the interstate highway manual produced by the BPR in 1955 that mapped all designted urban routes and that had been approved by Congress in the 1956 interstate highway legislation. What happened next is a matter of dispute. According to Tallamy's account of the meeting, after Bragdon agreed that the Yellow Book routes were the ones approved by Congress in 1956, Eisenhower said, "The meeting's over gentlemen. I'll let you know what I decide." According to Bragdon's account, the President noted that "the Yellow Book depicting routes in cities had sold the program to Congress," and then went on to say that "the matter of running Interstate routes through the congested parts of the cities was entirely against his concept and wishes." Regardless of whose memory is correct, from the President's perspective, the matter was seemingly settled and nothing more was done to short-circuit urban interstate construction. A few weeks later, Bragdon was appointed to a position on the Civil Aeronautics Board. His successor in the Public Works Planning Unit, Floyd Peterson, submitted a truncated report in the final days of the Eisenhower administration. By this time, the recession was over and no one wanted to talk about cutting back on the urban interstates.[39]

This review of the Eisenhower administration and the interstates suggests several conclusions. First, Eisenhower was not much interested in cities. Major urban lobby groups, such as the National League of Cities and the U.S. Conference of Mayors, had trouble promoting urban programs with Eisenhower people. One staffer with the U.S. Conference of Mayors stated that "under Ike, there was no sense in fighting; Ike was not inclined to pay attention to cities, and insisted he knew nothing about them."[40] Second, despite his anti-urban bias, Eisenhower was very interested in getting the interstates built. In speeches, formal messages, and news conferences, he consistently argued the need for the interstates. They were essential for the nation's economic development, for national defense, and even to eliminate congested auto traffic in cities (a point that contradicted his alleged later statement that he was unaware that the interstates would actually penetrate the cities).[41] Finally, Eisenhower and most others in his administration had little concern for the victims of the urban interstates -- those displaced by demolition. With very few exceptions, relocation assistance and moving expenses were non-issues, despite the acknowledged inconsistencies with the urban renewal program. As the statement by Arthur F. Burns of the President's Council of Economic Advisors suggested, people at the top knew about problem of housing demolition but rejected any relocation assistance because it would "run up costs."[42]

Saving the Central Business District

Shortly after passage of the landmark 1956 interstate highway legislation, noted urbanologist Lewis Mumford remarked, “When the American people, through their Congress, voted a little while ago for a twenty-six billion dollar highway program, the most charitable thing to assume about this action is that they hadn’t the faintest notion of what they were doing.” In the narrowest sense, Mumford may have been right, but many powerful interest groups were quick to recognize the implications of interstate highway construction at the cities' core. Those interested at the time in the future of the central city -- urban policy makers and planners, big-city mayors, urban real estate

interests, central city business groups -- all sought a general rebuilding of the central cities during the contemplated postwar reconstruction. Urban expressway building was considered a necessary component of such urban policy and planning. The absence of any official interest in rebuilding inner-city housing for those displaced meant that huge sections of central-city land could be cleared for other uses. Expressway building was seen as a way of saving the central city from the creeping blight of an older and deteriorating housing stock. Because such housing accommodated mostly poor and minority residents, expressway building often meant black removal from the central-city area. As early as 1949, one black housing official predicted -- quite correctly, as it turned out -- that "the real masters of urban redevelopment will be the forces intent on recapturing Negro living space for the right people."[43]

Among the interest groups seeking to save the central business district, few were more important than the Urban Land Institute (ULI). Founded in 1936 to serve the interests of downtown real estate owners and developers, the ULI consistently pushed for central-city redevelopment. From the 1930s, downtown landowners and realtors feared that suburbanization, and especially the decentralization of retailing, would ultimately sap the vitality of central-city economic activities. The automobile was largely to blame, experts contended, because it both facilitated suburban growth and clogged downtown traffic arteries. As the respected urban planner and architect Victor Gruen put it in the mid-1950s, "the rotting of the core has set in in most American cities, in some cases progressing to an alarming degree." In the decade following World War II, the ULI's Central Business District Council focused on freeways as "the salvation of the central district, the core of every city."[44]

In a stream of pamphlets, newsletters, and technical bulletins, the Urban Land Institute sought to pave the way for central-city expressways. For James W. Rouse, a Baltimore real estate developer involved with the Urban Land Institute in the 1950s and later well-known as a builder of new towns and festival marketplaces, the pattern of inner-city decay threatened the future of the central business district. According to Rouse, the solution for downtown America was clear: "Major expressways

must be ripped through to the central core" as an integral aspect of extensive redevelopment efforts. Another urban developer, James H. Scheuer, in a 1957 ULI publication, envisioned inner belt expressways inevitably slicing through "great areas of our nation's worst slums." The ULI's monthly newsletter, *Urban Land*, urged urban governments to survey the "extent to which blighted areas may provide suitable highway routes." ULI consultant James W. Follin saw the 1956 Interstate Highway Act providing "wide open opportunity" to eliminate blighted housing and recapture central-city land for redevelopment. For the ULI, expressways promised the salvation of the central business district.[45]

Using expressways for slum clearance and urban redevelopment excited representatives of other interest groups. The American Road Builders' Association (ARBA) served as the major trade association for the nation's highway construction firms. Writing to President Truman in 1949, the ARBA defended the use of highway construction in slum clearance. Urban express highways, the ARBA contended, were necessary to alleviate traffic congestion, but through proper right-of-way planning they also could "contribute in a substantial manner to the elimination of slum and deteriorated areas." The elimination of urban slums would stimulate downtown businesses, contribute to an appreciation of property values, and counter the threat posed by slum housing to "the public health, safety, morals, and welfare of the nation." Similarly, as early as 1943 the American Concrete Institute (ACI), which had an obvious interest in highway construction, championed the use of urban expressways in "the elimination of slums and blighted areas." Build highways through the city slums, urged the ARBA and the ACI, and solve the problems of urban America.[46]

The automobile lobby joined the chorus touting the role of expressways in rebuilding urban America. Typically, in a 1956 pamphlet entitled *What Freeways Mean to Your City*, the Automotive Safety Foundation assured readers that freeways were desirable, beneficial, and beautiful; they stimulated rising land value and prevented “the spread of blight and . . . slums." Forward-looking communities used "the transportation potential of freeways to speed redevelopment of run-down sections along sound lines and to prevent deterioration of desirable sections." Similarly, in a 1962

article, the Highway Research Board contended that interstate highways were "eating out slums" and "reclaiming blighted areas." The inner-city freeway, in short, represented a "positive social good," especially if it was routed through blighted slum neighborhoods that might be reclaimed for more productive civic uses.[47]

The downtown developers, the automobile lobby, highway officials and experts, and planners and politicians at every level shared the urban expressway dream. Echoing his boss Thomas MacDonald, BPR urban road division chief Joseph Barnett suggested as early as 1946 that properly located urban expressways would help immeasurably in "the stabilization of trade and values in the principal or central business district." New York's Robert Moses pushed such ideas vigorously. In a 1954 statement to the President's Advisory Committee on a National Highway Program (generally known as the Clay Committee), Moses argued that new urban expressways "must go right through cities and not around them" if they were to accomplish their purpose. As Moses once put it, “When you’re operating in an overbuilt metropolis you have to hack your way with a meat axe.” Expressways not only addressed urban traffic problems, but through proper coordination they could advance slum clearance plans and other aspects of urban redevelopment. Moses concluded somewhat prophetically that city expressway mileage would be "the hardest to locate, the most difficult to clear, the most expensive to acquire and build, and the most controversial from the point of view of selfish and shortsighted opposition." In other words, people whose homes would be taken for expressways represented a highway problem, not a housing problem.[48]

Like New York, Detroit in the 1940s found expressways an "essential step in slum clearance" that would "open up blighted areas and fit them for more productive uses." Detroit's depressed inner-city expressways, Mayor Albert E. Cobo told the Clay Committee in 1954, not only enhanced property values along their right-of-way, but they were positively "a picture of beauty." A writer in the *Western Construction News* in 1943 contended that urban expressways, "usually and best built through blighted areas," would solve traffic congestion, provide postwar employment, and revitalize

city centers through slum clearance. A 1950 plan for expressways in Cleveland predicated revitalization of the central business district on redevelopment of blighted central residential areas. In the early 1950s, Kansas City's city manager, L. P. Cookingham, stated that "no large city can hope for a real future" without expressways that cleared slums and preserved the central business district.[49]

Working within federal traffic engineering guidelines, but with few other constraints, highway builders at the state and local levels routed the new urban expressways in directions of their own choosing. Local agendas often dictated such decisions. In most cities, the result was to drive the interstates through black and poor neighborhoods. Urban blacks were heavily concentrated in areas with the oldest and most dilapidated housing, where land acquisition costs were relatively low, and where organized political opposition was weakest. Displaying a “two-birds-with-one stone" mentality, cities and states sought to route interstate expressways through slum neighborhoods, using federal highway money to reclaim downtown urban real estate. Inner-city slums could be cleared, blacks removed to more distant second-ghetto areas, central business districts redeveloped, and transportation woes solved all at the same time -- and mostly at federal expense.[50]

Thus, urban expressways were conceived of by many as more than just traffic arteries. To be sure, the highway engineers in the BPR and at the state level were interested in building highways that would move traffic efficiently, although most of them also shared the two-birds theory. But business interests and government officials in the cities conceived of expressways as part of a larger redevelopment plan for the city centers. This rebuilding of the central city in many cases came at the expense of African American communities in the inner cities, whose neighborhoods -- not just housing but churches, business districts, even entire urban renewal areas -- were destroyed in the process of expressway construction. In other instances, the highway builders routed urban interstates through white working-class ethnic neighborhoods, historic districts, and parks, but building an expressway through a black community was the most common choice, the ubiquitous experience of urban America in the expressway era of 1956 to the early 1970s.

The expressway era coincided with a massive migration of rural southern blacks to urban America. More than five million African Americans made that pilgrimage in the three decades after 1940. Many northern and midwestern cities already had sizable black populations, but those numbers rose rapidly during the war years and after. Between 1940 and 1960, for instance, the black population of New York increased by 137 percent, Philadelphia by 111 percent, Washington by 120 percent, Chicago by 193 percent, Cleveland by 197 percent, Newark by 200 percent, Detroit by 223 percent, Denver by 286 percent, Los Angeles by 425 percent, Oakland by 882 percent. The black populations of southern cities also rose substantially between 1940 and 1960. At a time when strict residential segregation prevailed everywhere, rising black population meant more intense overcrowding and consequent physical deterioration in the contained inner-city black ghettos. In many cities, neighborhood racial violence took place, as blacks began pushing out the boundaries of their restricted communities and into nearby white areas. Thus, plans for building expressways into the central cities took place at a time when the great black migrations had begun to reshape the racial landscapes of the postwar American city.[51]

Highway builders rarely mentioned African Americans specifically in their discussions about clearing out blight and slums. In fact, when these ideas first began to receive currency in the late 1930s the nation's largest cities had not yet received the full force of the massive wartime and postwar migration of southern blacks. But that changed dramatically in the 1940s and after. By that time, when the highwaymen talked about clearing out central-city blight, everyone knew what they meant. The intent, the goal, was clear to most, even if it was rarely stated directly. Their intentions were clear from their statements, actions, and policies -- and the visible consequences of the highways they built are the best evidence of their intended goals. As one former federal highway official conceded in a 1972 interview, the urban interstates gave city officials "a good opportunity to get rid of the local niggertown."[52]

Expressways and the Demolition of Inner-City Neighborhoods

From the late 1950s and well into the 1960s, urban expressway construction meant massive family dislocation and housing destruction. State highway engineers and consultants, usually working with local civic elites, determined the interstate routes into the central cities. The routes they chose were consistent with perceptions and policies of the past. Highway builders had traditionally made clearing out housing blight at the center of the cities one of their goals. By the mid-1950s, after a decade and a half of heavy black migration into urban areas, most of those inner-city areas targeted by the highway planners' maps were predominantly African American. Consequently, most American cities faced serious community disruption and racial strife as the interstate expressways ripped through urban neighborhoods and leveled wide swaths of inner-city housing. A few examples should serve to demonstrate the destructive impact of urban expressways.

In Miami, Florida, state highway planners and local officials deliberately routed Interstate-95 directly through the inner-city black community of Overtown. An alternative route utilizing an abandoned railroad corridor was rejected, as the highway planners noted, to provide "ample room for the future expansion of the central business district in a westerly direction," a goal of the local business elite since the 1930s. Even before the expressway was built, and in the absence of any relocation planning, some in Miami's white and black press asked: "What about the Negroes Uprooted by Expressway?" The question remained unanswered, and when the downtown leg of the expressway was completed in the mid-1960s, it tore through the center of Overtown, wiping out massive amounts of housing as well as Overtown's main business district, the commercial and cultural heart of black Miami. One massive expressway interchange took up twenty square blocks of densely settled land and destroyed the housing of about 10,000 people. By the end of the 1960s, Overtown had become an urban wasteland dominated by the physical presence of the expressway. Little remained of the neighborhood to recall its days as a thriving center of black community life, when it was known as the Harlem of the South.[53]

In Nashville, Tennessee, highway planners went out of their way to put a kink in the urban link of Interstate-40 as it passed through the city. The expressway route gouged a concrete swath through the North Nashville black community, destroying hundreds of homes and businesses and dividing what was left of the neighborhood. The decision for the I-40 route had been made quietly in 1957 at a nonpublic meeting of white business leaders and state highway officials. By 1967, after years of denying that the expressway would adversely affect the community, the state highway department began acquiring right-of-way, displacing residents, and bulldozing the route. Outraged blacks in Nashville organized the Nashville I-40 Steering Committee to mount an opposition campaign, charging that routing an interstate expressway through a black community could be legally classified as racial discrimination.[54]

The I-40 Steering Committee won a temporary restraining order in 1967, the first time a highway project had been halted by claims of racial discrimination. The Steering Committee's attorney alleged that "the highway was arbitrarily routed through the North Nashville ghetto solely because of the racial and low socio-economic character of the ghetto and its occupants without regard to the widespread adverse effects on the land uses adjoining the route." Ultimately, the I-40 Steering Committee lost its case in federal court, and the I-40 expressway was completed through Nashville's black community. However, the legal controversy in Nashville starkly revealed, if not a racial purpose, at least a racial outcome common to many urban interstate route locations. Ironically, in May 1968, U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) secretary Alan S. Boyd conceded in a letter to I-40 Steering Committee chairman Flournoy A. Coles that "In retrospect, it may well have been more desirable to locate the highway on a different line."[55] By that time, however, it was too late to save North Nashville from the highwaymen.

In New Orleans, enraged freeway opponents successfully waged a long battle against an eight-lane elevated expressway along the Mississippi River and through the edges of the city's historic French Quarter. The Riverfront Expressway originated in a 1946 plan proposed for New Orleans by New

York highway builder Robert Moses. The planned expressway was part of an inner-city beltway of the type that Moses favored and that the BPR had incorporated into its interstate planning. After several years of hot debate and controversy, historic preservationists succeeded in fighting off the Riverfront Expressway plan. In 1969, DOT secretary John A. Volpe terminated the I-10 loop through the Vieux Carre.[56]

However, while white New Orleans residents with vested interests were fending off the highway builders, nearby mid-city black communities were not nearly as successful. Highway builders there leveled a wide swath along North Claiborne Avenue in central New Orleans for Interstate-10. At the center of an old and stable black Creole community, boasting a long stretch of magnificent old oak trees, North Claiborne served a variety of community functions such as picnics, festivals, and parades. The highway builders rammed an elevated expressway through the neighborhood before anyone could organize or protest. Some of the preservationists who fought the Riverfront Expressway gladly suggested North Claiborne as an alternative. Stay off the riverfront, the *Vieux Carre Courier* urged in 1965, but Claiborne could "be developed to the limit, with at least two upper levels." By the 1970s, Interstate-10 in New Orleans rolled through a devastated black community, a concrete jungle left in the shadows by a massive elevated highway.[57]

Interstate construction in Montgomery, Alabama, also devastated a black community. In 1961, state highway officials recommended a route for Interstate-85 that traversed the city's major African American community. George W. Curry, a black minister and head of a Property Owners Committee, sent a petition with 1,150 signatures to local, state, and federal highway officials protesting that the expressway route would destroy an estimated 300 homes in black Montgomery and proposing an alternative route through mostly vacant land. At a public hearing, 650 people stood up to signify their opposition to the expressway. Curry argued that the route "was racially motivated to uproot a neighborhood of Negro leaders." A BPR internal memorandum spelled out the details:

Rev. Curry alleges that the routing of this highway will uproot a Negro community, which has no place to relocate, and two Negro churches. It is claimed that there is a nearby alternate route which would cost $30,000 less. Rev. Curry charges that the proposed routing of the highway is designed by State and local officials to purposely dislodge this Negro community where many of the leaders of the fight for desegregation in Montgomery reside. Rev. Curry said that in a recent conversation with a Mr. Sam Englehardt, Alabama's Highway Director, Mr. Englehardt stated that it was his intention to get Rev. Abernathy's church.

Ralph Abernathy, a close advisor of Martin Luther King in the Montgomery bus boycott of 1956 and in other desegregation struggles, also complained about the Interstate-85 route in a telegram to President John F. Kennedy in October 1961. Abernathy's home stood in the path of the highway project, obviously targeted by Alabama highway officials. A notorious racist, Alabama's state highway director Samuel Englehardt served simultaneously as a high level officer of the Alabama Ku Klux Klan and of the White Citizen's Council, which organized against school integration. Black opposition to the designated Interstate-85 route did slow construction, but only temporarily. Federal Highway Administrator Rex M. Whitton told Englehardt to "let the dust settle for about six months and then proceed with construction of the project."[58]

In Birmingham, Alabama, where three interstates intersected, a black citizen's committee complained to the Alabama state highway department and the BPR in 1960 that proposed interstate freeways "would almost completely wipe out two old Negro communities [in] eastern Birmingham with their 13 churches and three schools." Moreover, the public hearing held on the highway proposal had been segregated, and blacks were unable to present their grievances.[59] In 1963, as the start of expressway construction neared in Birmingham, opposition flared again in the city's black community. A resident, James Hutchinson, protested to Alabama Senator John Sparkman that the expressway (I-59) "bisects an exclusive colored residential area. In addition, it has a large interchange in the heart of this area." In the early days of the interstates, the racial routing of the Birmingham expressway noted by Hutchinson was rather typical. So was the response of Federal Highway Administrator Whitton to Senator Sparkman. The route had been chosen by the Alabama state highway department and approved by the Bureau of Public Roads, Whitton wrote, "based on

a thorough evaluation of all engineering, economic, and sociological factors involved." If that was the case, then it would seem that the destruction of the Birmingham black community was indeed a planned event.[60]

The expressway story was much the same in Columbia, South Carolina. In 1968, the South Carolina NAACP organized the Columbia black community in protest over the route of the Bull Street Expressway, an Interstate-20 link that penetrated the central city. Franchot Brown, a black community leader in Columbia, charged the South Carolina Highway Department with "a general pattern of racial discrimination" in attempting "to restrict the Negroes to the ghettos." Brown contended that expressway plans had not received a proper public hearing and that undeveloped land nearby provided an alternative route location. Brown appealed to federal highway officials to halt the Bull Street Expressway: "Your swift action may save our neighborhood and stop the age old practice of sparing a few white occupied homes at the expense of hundreds of Negro families and affecting thousands of Negro citizens." Nevertheless, the Bull Street Expressway was built as planned.[61]

A similar pattern of planned destruction took place in Camden, New Jersey, bisected in the 1960s by Interstate-95, with the usual consequences for low-income neighborhoods. In 1968, the Department of Housing and Urban Development sent a task force to Camden to study the impact of highway building and urban renewal. It found that minorities made up 85 percent of the families displaced by the North-South Freeway -- some 1,093 families of a total of 1,289 displaced families. For the five year period 1963 to 1967, about 3,000 low-income housing units were destroyed in Camden, but only about 100 new low-income housing units were built during that period.[62]

The Civil Rights Division of the New Jersey State Attorney General's Office prepared a second report on Camden. Entitled *Camden, New Jersey: A City in Crisis*, the report made a similar case for the racial implications of expressway construction in Camden. As the report stated: "It is obvious from a glance at the renewal and transit plans that an attempt is being made to eliminate the Negro

and Puerto Rican ghetto areas by two different methods. The first is building highways that benefit white suburbanites, facilitating their movement from the suburbs to work and back; the second is by means of urban renewal projects which produce middle and upper income housing and civic centers without providing adequate, decent, safe, and sanitary housing, as the law provides, at prices which the relocatee can afford." Like many other cities, Camden experienced the devastating social consequences of highway construction through low-income neighborhoods. The central argument of the New Jersey civil rights report was that this outcome was purposely planned and carried out.[63]

The experience of Camden during the expressway-building era of the late 1950s and 1960s was duplicated in cities throughout the nation. A Kansas City, Missouri, midtown freeway originally slated to pass through an affluent neighborhood was re-routed through a Model City area and a nearby integrated community, destroying 1,800 buildings and displacing several thousand people.[64] In Charlotte, North Carolina, Interstate-77 leveled an African American community, including four black schools that just happened to be in the path of the onrushing expressway.[65] Highway officials pushed ahead with a three-and-one-half mile inner-city expressway in Pittsburgh, even though it was expected to dislocate 5,800 people.[66] In St. Paul, Minnesota, Interstate-94 cut directly through the city's black community, displacing one-seventh of St. Paul's black population. As one critic put it, "very few blacks lived in Minnesota, but the road builders found them."[67] When Interstate-65 was built through Indianapolis, Indiana, state and federal highway officials worried about civil rights unrest as a consequence of massive "displacement of low income families, particularly Negroes."[68] Despite the fact that the planned Century Freeway in Los Angeles would dislocate 3,550 families, 117 businesses, and numerous parks, schools, and churches, mainly in black Watts and Willowbrook, the DOT approved the new expressway in 1968.[69] Freeway construction in Pasadena, California displaced over 4,000 black and Mexican-American residents, most of whom were forced back into inner-city Los Angeles ghettos. As one black Pasadena resident put it: "They put the freeways where the resistance and the power was the weakest, and now we have the biggest intersection in the world

where a lot of black families used to live."[70]

The story was much the same in other cities. In Florida, interstates in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Jacksonville, Orlando, and Pensacola routinely ripped through, divided, and dislocated black communities, or permanently walled them off from white neighborhoods.[71] In Columbus, Ohio, an inner-city expressway leveled an entire black community.[72] In Milwaukee, the North-South Expressway cleared a path through sixteen blocks in the city's black community, uprooting 600 families and ultimately intensifying patterns of racial segregation.[73] A network of expressways in Cleveland displaced some 19,000 people by the early 1970s.[74] In Chicago, the Dan Ryan Expressway effectively separated the Robert Taylor Homes, a massive black public housing project, from white ethnic neighborhoods to the west.[75] In Atlanta, according to historian Ronald H. Bayor, some highways were purposely planned and built "to sustain racial ghettos and control black migration" within the metropolitan area; others, according to social scientist Larry Keating, were designed to clear blacks out of the central city area to make way for business-related development.[76]

Far-reaching plans for inner-city expressways and consequent neighborhood destruction were not always fully carried out. A planned inner-loop beltway and six other expressways in the Washington, D.C. fell victim to freeway opposition, but if completed they would have destroyed, according to a recent article, an incredible 200,000 housing units, most of them in black areas.[77] In Baltimore, a city-wide interracial coalition against inner-city expressways called Movement Against Destruction (MAD) prevented the demolition of 28,000 housing units, saving numerous stable and historic neighborhoods from the federal bulldozer. MAD's actions also preserved for later development the city's waterfront and harbor district, originally slated for a massive downtown expressway interchange.[78] In Philadelphia, planners and politicians promoted a crosstown expressway to complete an inner-city highway loop around the central business district. More than 6,000 housing units, more than 90 percent of them in several different black communities, were targeted for destruction, but a citizens' movement in the late 1960s ultimately won enough political

support to kill the crosstown idea in 1970.[79]

African Americans were not alone in suffering the destructive consequences of urban expressway construction. In Chicago, a whole range of ethnic neighborhoods gave way to expressways as they headed south, southwest, west, and northwest out of the downtown Loop area.[80] In Boston, inner-city expressways and access ramps dislocated hundreds of downtown businesses and destroyed residential areas, including the Chinatown district and part of the city's Italian North End.[81] In Providence, Rhode Island, Interstate-95 cut through a low-income rooming house district where aged residents and small businesses were especially hard hit.[82] In New York City, the Cross Bronx Expressway ripped through a massive wall of apartment houses that stretched for miles, gouging a huge trench across a primarily working-class Jewish community. The Cross Bronx Expressway fulfilled a two-decade-old dream of New York highway builder Robert Moses, but it also triggered the rapid decline of the South Bronx, now a notorious urban wasteland of rubble-strewn lots and abandoned buildings.[83] As one transportation specialist has suggested: "Almost every major U.S. city bears the scars of communities split apart by the nearly impenetrable barrier of concrete."[84]

The devastating human and social consequences of urban expressway construction ultimately produced widespread opposition and citizen activism. Beginning in San Francisco in 1959, freeway revolts gradually spread throughout the country by the late 1960s.[85] Although state and federal highwaymen coldly accepted citizen opposition as one of the costs of building roads, by the mid-1960s Congress became more sensitive to the political backlash created by massive housing destruction and the difficulties of relocating displaced families. Political pressure on top staffers in the Federal Highway Administration and the new U.S. Department of Transportation (created in 1966) gradually led to a softening of the narrowly technocratic engineering mentality that had previously dominated the Bureau of Public Roads. As a result, some routes were altered to avoid neighborhood destruction, while other expressway projects were cancelled altogether. In addition, new Congressional legislation required that for highway projects after 1965, relocation housing had

to be provided in advance of construction. By that time, however, most of the urban expressways had already been put into place; most of the damage had already been done.[86]

Conclusion

The historical record has demonstrated that highways, slum clearance, and urban redevelopment were closely linked in postwar urban policy making. Early interstate advocates conceived of the new urban expressways as a means of rebuilding the central city by clearing away blighted housing. The Bureau of Public Roads advocated such ideas as early as the 1930s, and many of the pre-1956 urban expressways put those ideas into practice. After the landmark 1956 interstate highway legislation, highway officials implemented expressway plans that destroyed enormous amounts of low-income, inner-city housing, especially in black neighborhoods, where land acquisition costs were generally cheaper and where political opposition was minimal, particularly in southern cities. State highway officials and local elites often seized opportunities to carry out racial agendas. In every region of the nation, the expressways that penetrated the central cities and the inner beltways common in interstate planning found their easiest route through black communities.

Thus, postwar urban expressway building brought massive housing destruction and a subsequent racial restructuring of the central cities, as those displaced sought relocation housing. Some large-scale, high-rise public housing projects of the 1950s, such as the Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago or the Pruitt-Igoe Project in St. Louis, absorbed some dislocated families, but highways and urban renewal were destroying a great deal more housing than was being built. In some places, public housing construction slowed or ground to a halt in the politically reactionary 1950s, when such projects were considered by some a dangerous form of socialism. The new, lily-white suburbs that sprouted in the postwar automobile era were unwelcoming to blacks. Essentially, most uprooted African American families found new housing in nearby low- and middle-income white residential areas, which themselves were experiencing the transition from white to black. The forced relocation

of blacks from central-city areas triggered a massive spatial reorganization of urban residential space. The expressway building of the 1950s and 1960s, then, ultimately helped produce the much larger, more spatially isolated, and more intensely segregated second ghettos characteristic of the late twentieth century.

Notes

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9. Henry A. Wallace to Franklin D. Roosevelt, February 13, 1939, copy in Bureau of Public Roads Records (hereafter cited as BPR Records), RG 30, Classified Central Files, Box 4107, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland; "Report of the Chief of BPR on the Feasibility of a System of Superhighways," undated typescript [1939], BPR Records, RG 30, Classified Central Files, Box 1949; "Roads Report Does Not Favor Toll Supported Superhighway," U.S. Department of Agriculture, News Release, April 27, 1939, BPR Records, RG 30, Classified Central Files, Box 4108; U.S., Bureau of Public Roads, Toll Roads and Free Roads, U.S. House of Representatives, 76th Congress, 1st Session, 1939, House Document No. 272. The Department of Agriculture initially administered the Bureau of Public Roads, but in 1939 the BPR was transferred to the newly established Federal Works Agency. During the Truman administration, BPR was shifted again, this time to the Department of Commerce.

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Stop the Road:

Freeway Revolts in American Cities

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In the 1960s, the United States seemed to be a nation locked in turmoil. Political, social, and cultural conflict rocked the country year after year. The Vietnam War deeply divided the nation. College students in large numbers protested the draft and marched against the war. New left political action dominated university campuses and city streets. Racial conflict stirred passions, first in the civil rights movement, then followed by race riots in the urban ghettos and demands for black power. The divisive identity politics and alternative movements of the era shattered the seeming political and cultural consensus of the 1950s. The period was marked by the emergence of the women's movement, gay liberation, environmental protection, "brown power" and the farmworker movement, the Native American movement, calls for white ethnic power, and various other splinter or special-interest group activities. Drugs, sex, and rock and roll music absorbed the attention of young people and took on political overtones. The popular slogan of the day, "Power to the People," meant different things to different people and groups. Only in the early 1970s, after Watergate and the U.S. pullout from Vietnam, did the passionate movements of the Sixties seem to dissipate and run out of steam. However, most analyses of this turbulent period have ignored one powerful movement of the era that generated considerable heat and that spread from city to city -- the so-called Freeway Revolt.[1]

Beginning in the late 1950s, a nascent Freeway Revolt emerged in San Francisco. The movement accelerated nationally in the 1960s, as interstate highway construction began penetrating urban America and knocking down neighborhoods. Pushing expressways through the social and physical fabric of American cities inevitably resulted in housing demolition on a large scale, the destruction

of entire communities, severe relocation problems, and various negative environmental consequences. Once homeowners, business people, and community groups became aware of the "concrete monsters" rolling through the cities, demolishing everything in their paths, opposition movements sprang up to defend specific pieces of urban turf. The struggle pitted grass-roots citizen organizations against the state and federal highway engineers and administrators who made the final decisions on interstate routes. In some cities, freeway construction coincided with black political empowerment and the rising civil rights movement, developments that took on added significance when black neighborhoods were targeted for destruction by the highwaymen. In Washington, D.C., for instance, expressway issues became racialized by 1967, when a black militant group distributed flyers demanding "No more white highways through black bedrooms." In other cities, protecting parklands, schools and churches, historic districts, and sensitive environmental areas stimulated citizen movements to "Stop the Road. At some point in the 1960s, then, many Americans came to focus on the negative consequences of highway building, as opposed to the demonstrable advantages of modern, high-speed, express highways serving a nation addicted to automobiles and to mobility."[2]

The timing, progress, and outcome of the emerging Freeway Revolt differed from city to city. With the exception of San Francisco, in cities where the highway builders moved quickly in the late 1950s to build the urban interstates, the inner beltways and radials, opposition never materialized or was weakly expressed.[3] In southern cities, where blacks had little political leverage at the time, building a freeway through the black community was not only the most common choice, but the choice that generally had the support of the dominant white community. Where freeway construction was delayed into the 1960s, affected neighborhoods, institutions, and businesses had time to organize against the highwaymen. In some cases, they successfully forced the adoption of alternative routes, and they even shut down some specific interstate projects permanently. In many cities, freeway opponents targeted urban renewal programs as well: highway builders and urban redevelopers often worked together and divided up new city spaces acquired by eminent domain,

allocating some land for highways and the rest for redevelopment (usually not for housing, however). In their writings, influential urbanists such as Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, and others provided an intellectual critique of such urban redevelopment schemes. Their appeals for preservation of small-scale neighborhood life in the modern city resonated with the freeway fighters, buttressing the Freeway Revolt. Some early academic critics of the interstate system also surfaced by 1960, including urbanist Daniel P. Moynihan, who in an influential article in The Reporter criticized urban interstates for their lack of comprehensive planning and potentially damaging impact on urban life and metropolitan structure.[4]

As a collection of discrete, bottom-up movements beginning at the neighborhood level, the Freeway Revolt shares many aspects of Sixties counter-cultural and change-inducing activity. Typical of the time was rejection of top-down decision making, the normal practice of the highway establishment in routing and building highways. In a sense, the federal government itself had partially contributed to rejection of elite policy-making by promoting "community action" as an essential ingredient in the so-called War on Poverty, a contemporaneous Sixties undertaking of major proportions. Anti-freeway groups mirrored this sort of Sixties-style political action, but they also provided a model for the subsequent "backyard revolution" that increasingly came to shape urban politics and policy-making in the final decades of the twentieth century. In retrospect, the Freeway Revolt should be interpreted as an integral aspect of Sixties-era protest politics. "Power to the People" in this case meant citizen participation in important decision-making on expressway routes and urban policy. However, the citizen army of homeowners and neighborhood groups came up against an inflexible bureaucratic force of state and federal highway engineers and administrators reluctant to yield professional authority to popular protesters. Only when decision-making on controversial interstate routes became politicized and subject to litigation in the late 1960s and after did freeway revolters achieve a measure of success and satisfaction.[5]

When city people discovered that new expressways were bearing down on their homes and

neighborhoods, they had few alternatives. One such choice, increasingly common in big cities in the Sixties, was organization, opposition, and political coalition-building. But each city was unique in many respects, and the outcomes were not always the same. In Miami, despite enormous neighborhood destruction in the central city black community, expressway opposition initially remained muted, pushed only by a few housing reformers. In Baltimore, a major interracial, cross-class movement representing over thirty community groups successfully challenged multiple freeways that would have bisected dozens of neighborhoods. In New Orleans, white preservationists ultimately staved off a planned riverfront expressway that would have damaged the historic French Quarter, but they cared little about an alternate expressway a mile away that pushed a stable and long-established black neighborhood into quick decline. In other cities, the Freeway Revolt had still other outcomes.[6]

There were good reasons for such diverse outcomes. Successful Freeway Revolts generally had at least four commonalities. First, persistent neighborhood activism and extensive cross-city, cross-class, and interracial alliances were needed to bring a high level of attention to the freeway problem over a sustained period of time. Second, such movements needed strong support from at least some local politicians and from influential newspapers and journalists. Third, legal action over highway routing was a necessary ingredient; litigation sometimes delayed land acquisition and construction for years, but without such legal action state highway departments could move ahead with dispatch. And, in the final analysis, the freeway revolters often needed a final shut-down decision from the courts or from highest levels of the highway bureaucracy or, after the early 1970s, from state governors. Grass-roots, populist struggle against the urban interstates was crucial, of course, but without these other ingredients in the story there was a very good chance that the freeway would get built anyway.

The Freeway and the City

Passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act in 1956 set the stage for dramatic change in urban America. During the previous two decades or so, big-city mayors, civil engineers, urban planners, public works officials, and downtown business and real estate interests all envisioned new urban expressways that would revive the declining urban core. "Saving" the central business district became a primary goal of the urban elites by the 1940s. Similarly, over many years, state and federal highway engineers developed their own visions of technologically efficient freeways that would speed autos and trucks to their destinations, by-passing the monster traffic jams that increasingly clogged downtown streets. In the late 1930s, these conceptions of an urban freeway future coincided with new urban imagery inspired by the stunningly popular "Futurama" exhibit sponsored by General Motors at the 1939 New York World's Fair. Futurama portrayed the "Cities of Tomorrow" and featured modernized expressways speeding traffic through great skyscraper cities at one hundred miles per hour -- all part of a contemplated free-flowing "National Motorway System" connecting all cities with populations of more than one hundred thousand. Industrial designer Norman Bel Geddes used the Futurama exhibit and his subsequent book, Magic Motorways (1940), to promote the advance of technology and link the nation's urban future to the automobile and the freeway. Futurama seemingly had the desired effect. The GM exhibit, one scholar has suggested, "stimulated public thinking in favor of massive urban freeway building." Even Thomas H. MacDonald, director of the federal Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) adopted Futurama imagery in later years, often suggesting that "the future of America lies on the roadways of to-morrow."[7]

These varied freeway visions, and many others as well, anticipated that central cities would have to be at least partially restructured to accommodate the automobile and the now thought essential high-speed traffic arteries. Some suggested that cutting boldly through the urban fabric, as Baron Haussmann had done in late nineteenth-century Paris, was the only way to reorganize urban space for the modern era. Arguing this approach, the influential Swiss art historian Sigfred Giedion, in his

classic book, Space, Time and Architecture (1941) contended that "the anarchy of the motorcar" had led to "the unworkable disorder of today's giant cities." Giedion found inspiration in the work of Haussmann, who in transforming Paris "slashed into the body of the city . . . with saber strokes. Cleanly he drew the blade, cutting keen, straight thoroughfares through the congested districts, solving his traffic problem by single daring thrusts." In Giedion's admittedly romanticized vision, these new automobile arteries would help to rationally and efficiently restructure the modern city into its component parts, such as residential, business, industrial, and so on. It is not clear how much influence the idiosyncratic Giedion had on highway engineers at the time, but some of his ideas gradually filtered into the urban planning profession. In a 1950 speech, for instance, San Francisco planning director Paul Oppermann noted the importance of expressways to the city: they provided an essential urban "backbone" separating the city into "logical areas" such as residential neighborhoods and business districts, but they also linked more closely the different sections of the city. These views were not at all unusual at the time. By the early 1940s, professional dialogues in planning and highway circles routinely incorporated urban expressways into discussions about the shape and structure of the postwar city.[8]

The urban expressway idea was given concrete bureaucratic form in the 1944 report of the National Interregional Highway Committee, appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and headed by MacDonald of the BPR. Entitled Interregional Highways, the report built on earlier studies and mapped out a 40,000-mile interregional highway network not too different from the system that was actually built in the late 1950s and 1960s. Most significantly, perhaps, the 1944 report recommended that the new limited-access highways penetrate the heart of the nation's metropolitan areas. The plan also called for inner and outer beltways encircling the largest cities and radial expressways tying the urban system together and linking to the larger interregional system. Pushed by state highway officials, road builders, truckers, and other elements of the emerging highway lobby, Congress passed the Highway Act of 1944, incorporating much of the

Interregional Highways report.[9]

Wartime financial exigencies prevented any immediate efforts to fund and build the system. Meanwhile, MacDonald of the BPR and others, such as public works builder Robert Moses of New York, embarked on a long campaign promoting urban expressways. They also argued that building these new traffic arteries provided an opportunity to clear out central-city slum housing and rebuild the urban core according to modern standards. Big-city mayors and city managers, along with downtown developers and their advocacy organization, the Urban Land Institute (ULI), also championed the postwar dream of new downtowns and new high-speed traffic arteries criss-crossing the cities. Virtually all of the powerful interests involved in urban America shared these widely held views about the "reconstruction" of the postwar city.[10]

The visions and plans of urban expressway advocates often faltered at the implementation stage. As it turned out, rather than resuscitating the central cities, the new freeway systems ultimately speeded suburbanization, promoted the decentralization of manufacturing and retailing, and deepened postwar urban decline.[11] The concrete jungle of elevated and depressed expressways rammed through city neighborhoods never came close to matching the artistic designs of the futuristic and technological city beautiful, as depicted for instance in Bel Geddes's "Futurama" exhibit. Interestingly, the ever-practical Robert Moses dismissed Bel Geddes as a melodramatic dreamer: "The Futurama sold cars, but solved no highway problems and, if anything, made the task of the road builder tougher because the public was taught to expect magic." But even the more practical, nuts-and-bolts approach of public builders like Moses and highway engineers like MacDonald eventually ran into tough public opposition in many cities. The problem was that the freeway visions of the highway technocrats and urban elites never fully accommodated the widespread negative popular reaction to the massive demolition of the physical city. The destruction of densely populated residential neighborhoods to make way for freeways was a tough sell in the affected communities.[12]

The Highwaymen

Experienced highway builders expected public opposition when they began knocking down neighborhoods. In a 1954 statement to the President's Committee on a National Highway Program, generally known as the Clay Committee, Moses noted that the urban expressway segments of the interstate system would be "the hardest to locate, the most difficult to clear, the most expensive to acquire and build, and the most controversial from the point of view of selfish and shortsighted opposition." Moses was prophetic on this point. By the mid-1960s, citizen-led freeway revolts stalled urban interstate construction in a dozen or more major cities. Rather than negotiate or compromise on route location, most state and federal highway men initially sought to tough it out and aggressively forge ahead, the operative theory seemingly being to build the expressways quickly before the opposition coalesced and the politicians caved in to an outraged public.[13]

The nascent Freeway Revolt first found expression in San Francisco in 1959, when the city's Board of Supervisors withdrew support for any new freeway construction and then maintained that position into the 1960s. But trouble had been brewing since 1956, when public outrage mounted over construction of the massive double-decked Embarcadero Freeway, a pre-interstate freeway that ran along the city's historic waterfront, cut off the city from the bayfront harbor, and damaged aesthetic sensibilities. Plans to extend the Embarcadero and push additional freeways through the city's Golden Gate Park, upscale residential neighborhoods, and some outlying business districts, primarily for the benefit of central-city business interests and suburban commuters, stirred opposition at the neighborhood level. The multiple freeways planned by California state highway engineers and San Francisco city planners were sidetracked by a powerful coalition of neighborhood associations, by the locally oriented Board of Supervisors, and by the eventual commitment of the city's business and political elite to alternative forms of urban transit. Providing important support for the freeway fighters, the city's major newspapers conducted a long campaign against the planned highway system. However, one additional element, unique to California, contributed essentially

to the early success of San Francisco's Freeway Revolt. Under state law, no street or road could be closed until approved by local government authorities. Since freeway building involved multiple road closures, this provision gave the San Francisco Board of Supervisors veto power over the entire freeway system for the city.[14]

As it turned out, housing destruction was only one of several important issues underlying San Francisco's Freeway Revolt. However, housing and neighborhoods -- especially black housing and black neighborhoods -- assumed a more dominant role in most big-city freeway controversies. Highway engineers knew that housing and relocation issues might cause delays and bring political pressures, but the social costs were thought to be acceptable and even necessary if expressways were to be put where needed to accommodate growing traffic demands. Initially, the state highway departments and federal highway administrators in BPR adopted a uniform, hard-nosed, technocratic stance: their job was building highways; housing and relocation problems were the responsibility of other agencies. But it became increasingly more and more difficult for highway agencies to rigorously sustain this position as the reality of massive urban housing demolition began to hit the public consciousness. By the early 1960s, federal highway construction was forcing about 33,000 mostly urban families from their homes each year. Demolitions for urban renewal and new public housing displaced another 38,000 families annually. By 1967, the new U.S. Department of Transportation reported that over 56,000 families and businesses would be displaced annually as urban interstate construction pushed toward completion in the early 1970s. By 1969, federal highway construction was demolishing over 62,000 housing units annually – possibly as many as 200,000 people each year. The amount of housing destruction and family disruption, a report of the U.S. House Committee on Public Works conceded in 1965, was astoundingly large. And, as one urban planner noted: "Displacement will be particularly serious in the big city black ghettos where the supply of housing is inadequate and relocation beyond the confines of the ghetto is severely limited by racial segregation."[15]

By the early 1960s, state and federal highway engineers confronted a changing political environment. In the past, the highway builders were mostly responsible only to themselves. The Federal government put up 90 percent of the money for interstate highways, with the states contributing the remaining 10 percent. State highway departments were responsible for selecting the interstate routes and building the roads. A public hearing was required by law in every interstate locale, but the highway people considered these hearings information meetings only. One analyst suggested in 1973 that these public hearings primarily provided state highway officials with a "means for taking the political temperature of the locality and for selling the department's viewpoint." Many such hearings were packed with citizens outraged by interstate highway routings, but in reality the highwaymen had no obligation to act on citizen demands. As Federal Highway Administrator Rex M. Whitton wrote in 1965 to Lowell K. Bridwell, Deputy Undersecretary of Transportation in the Department of Commerce: "The objective of the public hearing is to provide a method whereby the State can furnish information to the pubic concerning the State's highway construction proposals . . . . The hearings are not intended to be popular referendums for determining the location or design of a proposed project by a majority vote of those present." As the new urban traffic arteries cut through neighborhoods and displaced families in large numbers in the early 1960s, rising citizen discontent eventually found many sympathetic ears in Congress.[16]

Passage of the federal Highway Act of 1962 represented a first tentative effort to curb the authority of state highway departments and bring other voices to the decision-making process on interstate routing. As interstate construction pushed into the cities, Congress responded to growing criticism of the invasive impact of urban expressways on neighborhoods and communities. Two provisions of the law were especially important. First, it required state highway departments to develop "a cooperative, comprehensive, and continuing urban transportation planning process, including coordination with plans for other modes of transportation and for local land development, with greater participation in planning by local government." This type of comprehensive planning

made its first appearance in the Housing Act of 1954, when it became a requirement for urban renewal projects. Applying the planning concept to transportation, however, was a new departure, especially the mandate to broaden the decision-making process to the local level and to consider mass transit alternatives. These mandates had the potential to challenge the power of state highway engineers. So also did a second important provision of the Highway Act of 1962 that for the first time required state highway departments to provide location assistance to displaced families and businesses. However, the new requirements for transportation planning and housing relocation did not take effect until July 1, 1965, undercutting the intent to protect urban communities from arbitrary highway decisions. Essentially, state highway departments had another three years to push ahead with their interstate projects, while they worked out methods of implementing planning and relocation requirements. Even after 1965, one Boston redevelopment official admitted, “there were little or no services or payments to thousands of households displaced” until passage of additional relocation legislation in 1968. Subsequent study also demonstrated that the Bureau of Public Roads, which worked with the state highway departments in building the interstates, developed a series of policies and procedures that for all practical purposes undermined and frustrated Congressional intentions as expressed in the 1962 Highway Act.[17]

Highwaymen stonewalled initial Congressional efforts to open up the interstate planning process to other voices. But the tide was turning for the BPR and the state highway departments, as reflected in several new initiatives in President Lyndon B. Johnson's "Great Society" years. For example, the 1964 Urban Mass Transportation Act, and subsequent amendments and acts, signaled a coming shift of funding from urban highways to mass transit alternatives. In the late 1960s, the Highway Trust Fund provided about five billion dollars annually for the interstates, while in 1968 Congress appropriated 148 million dollars for mass transit. The huge differential between financial support for mass transit and the interstates reflected the massive political power of the highway lobby in Washington. However, in the early 1970s, the Highway Trust Fund was opened up for such transit

solutions as subways, fixed rail, bus systems, even bicycle pathways, although highways still claimed the lion's share of Trust Fund dollars. The crucial breakthrough came with the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973, which for the first time permitted diversion of Highway Trust Fund dollars to mass transit.[18]

In another important move, in 1966 President Johnson, by executive order, authorized the secretary of the new Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to work with other agencies, including the Federal Highway Administration, in coordinating solutions to urban problems such as housing. In seizing this initiative, HUD secretary Robert C. Weaver further complicated the process of urban highway building in areas involving housing demolition. Early efforts in the 1940s by BPR director Thomas MacDonald to tie highway construction to housing replacement had been rejected at high levels of the Truman administration, primarily because of cost considerations and potential Congressional opposition. However, in the turbulent Sixties the two issues -- housing and highways -- increasingly came to be linked, creating a bureaucratic tangle that slowed some highway construction.[19]

One other Great Society initiative in the mid-1960s altered the politics of highway building in dramatic fashion. The massive reorganization of federal highway agencies into a new cabinet-level agency shifted the lines of power, authority, and decision-making for federal highway officials. After considerable debate, Congress in 1966 established the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), bringing together a number of formerly separate agencies involved in transportation, now reorganized as the Federal Aviation Administration, the Federal Railroad Administration, the National Transportation Safety Board, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and later the Urban Mass Transit Administration, among others. The Bureau of Public Roads (BPR), formerly within the Department of Commerce, now became a sub-agency within the DOT's Federal Highway Administration. Under this altered structural arrangement, the BPR reported to the Federal Highway Administrator and lost the final decision-making authority on interstate highway location to the DOT

Secretary. Within the Department of Commerce, the BPR essentially had a free hand, but now, under the DOT, the BPR was subjected to a level of administrative supervision and control it had never before experienced. A similar process was underway in the late 1960s and early 1970s at the state level, where state DOTs were replacing highway departments and where governors were taking control of state highway policy through appointment and funding powers.[20]

The DOT provided the start of something in new in federal highway policy -- an effort to provide a balanced, or "multimodal" transportation system. Moreover, the first DOT Secretary, Alan S. Boyd, was sympathetic to the public clamor over the damaging impact of the interstates in urban neighborhoods. Boyd had a varied career in several different state and federal transportation agencies, but he was not trained as professional highway engineer like most of those in BPR and the state highway departments. A native of Florida and a lawyer, Boyd served as counsel for the Florida Turnpike Authority and chaired Florida's Railroad and Public Utilities Commission. In 1959 he accepted appointment to the federal Civil Aeronautics Board, where he developed expertise on aviation policy issues. In 1965, President Johnson appointed Boyd as Undersecretary of Transportation in the Commerce Department. By reason of his diverse background, Boyd seemed willing to challenge basic BPR highway engineering strategy -- that is, that transportation policy simply meant more highways, which in turn meant pouring more concrete and worrying about the consequences later. In one of his early public statements as DOT secretary, Boyd asserted his belief that expressways must be "an integral part of the community, not a cement barrier or concrete river which threatens to inundate an urban area." BPR officials sometimes made similar statements in public hearings and annual reports, seemingly to save off public criticism of BPR policies, but it was always clear that the agency was mostly interested in building big highways regardless of opposition. However, Boyd appeared committed to changing highway policy, which ultimately led to interstate route decisions based on Boyd's often expressed concerns about community destruction and environmental damage.[21]

Within a year of taking office at the DOT, Boyd had seemingly become the most effective national spokesman for the Freeway Revolt. In a television interview in early 1968, Boyd sympathized with critics of the routing of Washington, D.C.'s North Central Freeway, which had been shifted from an upscale white residential corridor to a low-income black community. As Boyd stated at the time, "We're going to have to find a better way to do it than to say we're going to take the property of poor people and leave everybody else alone." Highway advocates soon began blaming Boyd for "inciting" Washington's freeway revolt. Similarly, in a speech in Louisville in May 1968, Boyd noted that the construction of urban interstates had slowed dramatically in many big cities. He went on to say: "The fact is that these city highways are not being built because in most American metropolitan areas the people have asked for a second look at the way we build urban highways. They have not been built because too many people question whether the merit of a transportation system can be judged solely by the speed of the journey it provides. They insist we take into account the noise it generates; the pollution it puts into the air; the number of neighborhoods it shakes up; the impact it has on the appearance of the city." The same month, BPR Director Francis C. Turner presented a defense of urban freeway construction at a highway safety seminar in Illinois. The highway builder, Turner insisted, was "no bull-dozing maniac in a black hat tearing everything apart just for the sport of it -- or out of sadism or just plain cussedness." Rather, urban highways were being built to satisfy "the demand for mobility which becomes greater every year." He went on to defend the automobile as the ideal form of transportation, attack the "new breed of amateur instant experts" opposed to highways, reject the idea of subways in Washington, D.C. as a "magic carpet" substitute for expressways, and complain about misguided inner-city black opposition to BPR highway plans. The disconnect between Boyd and Turner, and between DOT and BPR, was obvious to most highway insiders at the time.[22]

In a recent interview with urban historian Zachary Schrag, Boyd confirmed his basic disagreement with the technocratic thinking of the highway engineers. The highwaymen were

highly competent professionals, Boyd noted, but "their view of life was that God's greatest gift to America was concrete. They really believed that paving America was the greatest thing that could be done for America." Boyd was committed to completing the interstate system, but he also wanted highways that had community support and took into consideration the full range of urban political and social conditions. To achieve these goals, the new DOT secretary had to reign in the highway engineers, modify FHWA policies and procedures, mollify the freeway revolters, work persuasively with Congress, especially its Public Works committees, and make tough decisions on highway trouble spots.[23]

Trouble Spots and Policy Shifts

The DOT became operational in April 1967. By that time some 24,000 miles of interstate highway had been completed, a little more than half of the system's total projected mileage of 41,000 (later increased to 42,500 miles). Uncontroversial rural segments of the system comprised much of the remaining mileage. However, some of the toughest mileage that remained unbuilt -- probably less than 1,000 miles in all -- was slated to traverse heavily built up urban areas now rife with popular discontent and protest movements. By the fall of 1967, articles in major urban newspapers and popular magazines highlighted these unresolved interstate controversies. As the New York Times noted, "The storms that are currently raging in Cleveland, in New Orleans, in Nashville, in Cambridge, are only typical of a great many other cities, where highway construction has caused tremendous social and economic dislocations." In those and other cities, highway engineers planned interstates for dense urban neighborhoods, parks, historic districts, environmentally sensitive areas, even upper-crust white suburbs. The multiplying expressway controversies stimulated the U.S. Senate Public Works Committee to begin hearings on the issue, suggesting a new level of political concern over the highway builders' vision. Most often, the New York Times went on, "it is in the ghettos where the impact hits hardest," as the highway builders "have driven slum dwellers out of

the only habitations they had, with little or no effort to relocate them."[24]

Federal highway administrators in DOT worried about the hardline approach of the state highway departments in local expressway disputes. At a high-level meeting in July 1967, Cabinet members Boyd of DOT, Weaver of HUD, and Udall of the Department of the Interior discussed the advisability of a "review board" that might resolve these local expressway controversies. As it turned out, no decisions wee made on the review board proposal, "because they thought that the action should be taken at the local level rather than the Federal level." However, Federal Highway Administrator Lowell K. Bridwell subsequently noted that relying on local action would not work "because the main problem is to get the State highway departments to work closely with the cities and communities. . . . Unless there is real cooperation on the part of the State highway officials the effort never gets going enough to provide alternatives." Moreover, the BPR was considered "inflexible" on interstate routing, usually backing up the state highway departments and trying to ride out controversies while construction moved forward. But it was becoming more difficult to hold the line, as Turner confided to Bridwell in June 1967: "In the past, we expected opposition to disappear when a final location decision was made. This no longer is the case. Opponents to routings press for new decisions even after contracts are let."[25]

In mid-1967, faced with mounting local opposition to urban route locations, Boyd directed Bridwell to keep him informed of disputed highway situations as they developed and before any decisions were made. Boyd wanted "a continuing flow of information . . . on the status of controversial projects, whether or not a decision is imminent." Interestingly, Boyd directed that such reports include the "political implications" of the highway route and of any alternatives. Paul Sitton, the DOT deputy undersecretary who shared Boyd's views on freeways, coordinated the reporting process and developed systematic files for Boyd on the troubled interstate locations. The idea was that these files could be updated regularly, thus permitting Boyd and the DOT generally to react in a timely fashion and make effective, informed decisions before local controversies reached "crisis

stage."[26]

By October 1967, the BPR had set up such a file. According to BPR staffer Ben Kelley, "this turns out to be quite a project. There are at least 20 of these spots on the Interstate System involving location disputes." The first summary report from the BPR on controversial locations, based on data as of September 15, 1967, identified these unresolved disputes. Almost all of them involved local opposition to residential displacement and community destruction. For example, in Washington, D.C. expressway routing had stimulated "strong opposition because of displacements of people." In Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts, there was "strong local opposition due to displacements." In New York City, it was "local opposition caused by displacements and neighborhood disruption." Similar local opposition was listed for Philadelphia, Cleveland, Detroit, Baltimore, New Orleans, Chicago, Atlanta, San Francisco, and Elizabeth, New Jersey.[27]

By the end of 1967, FHWA regional administrators were sending in monthly reports on interstate "trouble spots" and "problem areas." Over the next year or so, these "trouble reports" revealed the extent of the problem and the almost uniform nature of the controversies surrounding urban interstate location. As requested, the trouble reports especially noted freeway projects that were to "pass through or are in proximity to minority group neighborhoods" and the representation, if any, of minority groups at the required public hearings. These reports were to be considered confidential and state highway departments were not to be informed that such studies were being conducted. Taken together, the trouble reports provide a remarkable account of an urban highway program in deep trouble, as the following excerpts suggest.[28]

November 1967: In the District of Columbia, the problems of the Three Sisters Bridge and the Inner Loop "are well known to you." In Baltimore, "the location of I-95 in the western city limits is currently being reviewed." In Cleveland, "the location of I-290 Shaker Heights through Cleveland has been with us for some time." In Philadelphia, the Crosstown Expressway "is plagued by many problems which involves many residents, a cemetery, and several school districts." In Pittsburgh,

"the construction of I-79 on the north side of the city will involve the displacement of all of the residents and businesses in a valley and could cause severe relocation problems." In the Midwest, in Indiana, Wisconsin, and Michigan, "major Interstate segments in urban areas continue to present problems."[29]

In the South, relocation and opposition problems cropped up in Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee. In Georgia, "I-485, which traverses a residential section in Atlanta is quiet at the moment. . . . However, there is still opposition, and this may very well erupt in court action when the State begins right-of-way acquisition along controversial sections." In Mississippi, "the Mississippi Branch of the NAACP has directed charges of discrimination against the State Highway Department. Apparently, Mr. Charles Evers, State NAACP Executive Secretary, is determined to have a showdown with State Agencies receiving Federal funds." In Tennessee, the highway problem centered on Interstate-40 in Nashville: "You are most familiar with this, and I need not elaborate on it." In Memphis, opponents of the I-40 route through Overton Park were waging "a vigorous campaign against the location."[30]

December 1967: In Tulsa, Oklahoma, the Maple Ridge community was "protesting location of Riverside Route, an urban freeway which has been in the approved master plan since 1961. Citizens complain it will split a neighborhood." In San Antonio, Texas, citizens filed suit against continued work on the North Expressway (I-281). In Mississippi, the regional FHWA administrator had discussed the NAACP complaints with state highway officials: "This is a most delicate matter, as you can imagine, and I shall handle it with all discretion." In Milwaukee, the state highway department was not handling relocation problems effectively, although the HUD regional office was giving "intensive attention" to the relocation situation in the city.[31]

January 1968: In Georgia, the State highway department's unwillingness to "stick to their guns" under public pressure was "causing considerable trouble." Also, "resistance of the Morningside group to the location of I-485, Atlanta, is flaring up again." Many families and businesses were

being displaced in Atlanta's minority areas, although there were no organized protests yet. In Macon, "the main concern here is the large number of Negro families who will be displaced and in need of replacement housing." In Memphis, Interstate-40 cut through minority group neighborhoods, but there was "no evidence of minority group opposition" yet. In Nashville, "the Negro communities, because of experiences with other public programs, seem particularly sensitive to being displaced." In Ft. Lauderdale and Pompano Beach, Florida, Interstate-95 was routed alongside black neighborhoods, stimulating "considerable opposition to the proposed location. . . . The opposition is alleging discrimination." In St. Petersburg, Florida, "I-4 will pass through a minority group community of very low class development and it is expected that there will be serious problems involving satisfactory replacement housing." In Alabama, interstates in Montgomery and Birmingham passed through black communities, causing significant dislocation, but "to date there have been no significant protests from organized minority groups."[32]

February 1968: In Columbia, South Carolina, "some organized minority group opposition to the proposed Bull Street extension may be developing." The South Carolina NAACP was organizing the black community in protest about this Interstate-20 spur that penetrated the central part of the city. In Florida, "the NAACP has published claims that a large number of Negroes will be displaced, without adequate available replacement housing, by I-4 in St. Petersburg." In Tennessee, "the racial situation in Nashville is potentially explosive. A movement is now being organized for minority groups to boycott downtown businesses."[33]

March 1968: Problems were developing in Vicksburg, Mississippi, where I-20 "will displace 75 minority families and a few small commercial establishments." In New York City, "strong local opposition groups" challenged the proposed Clearview Extension (I-78). The Lower Manhattan Expressway (I-78 and I-478) would soon become a problem, it was reported, since "it is expected that the displacement of people and businesses will be the major objection voiced against the project." In Seattle, the mayor requested some design changes to Interstate-90, eliminating a major

interchange, "because of the extensive right-of-way takings from a minority group residential area."[34]

May 1968: In Baltimore, "minority group activity in the highway location continue overly strong." In Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, serious relocation problems hampered interstate progress. As the FHWA regional administrator noted, "All of these are essentially 'people' problems. All involve densely occupied areas and the social, as well as economic factors warrant serious consideration." Minority group protests also continued in Columbia, South Carolina, but also developed in Charlotte, North Carolina.[35]

In Columbia, the leader of a black freeway opposition group charged the South Carolina Highway Department with "a general pattern of racial discrimination" in attempting "to restrict the Negroes to the ghettoes." Franchot Brown, the black community leader in Columbia, wrote to DOT secretary Boyd and FHWA officials to present the position of Columbia's African American community. The Bull Street expressway was planned without a proper public hearing and if constructed would slice through the black community and "seriously uproot many Negro families." Brown contended that there was a better alternative route through undeveloped land nearby and where little housing relocation would be necessary. However, "the local officials are aware of our proposed alternative route and have recently bought land along that route to use for housing units." Brown appealed for quick action: "Your swift action may save our neighborhood and stop the age old practice of sparing a few white occupied homes at the expense of hundreds of Negro families and affecting thousands of Negro citizens."[36]

In Charlotte, North Carolina, the North-South Expressway (I-77) tore through a black community, leveling several neighborhood schools in the process. As the Charlotte Observer noted in a 1968 editorial, "Oops, There Goes Another School": "Charlotte needs an expressway network, to be sure. But whether it needs it at the price of running over school sites, chopping out garden spots of beauty and tearing down homes occupied largely by Negroes is worth more than casual

attention." The public hearing on Charlotte's expressway, held in 1962, six years before any construction began, was labeled by the newspaper as "an absolute farce" that never accurately revealed the actual route of the highway. By 1968, however, the community learned that four black schools were in the path of the onrushing expressway, which would also "fragment neighborhoods surrounding the schools."[37]

In the spring of 1968, a new system of reporting for problem or troubled interstate segments was instituted, as "flash reports" replaced the earlier "trouble reports." These reports were to be prepared "within 48 hours of the manifestation of a problem" and sent directly to the FHWA administrator. Some examples of flash reports from May 1968 suggest the on-going nature of the Freeway Revolt around the nation.

Kansas City South Midtown Freeway: "Original proposed location was through affluent neighborhoods. Current proposed location for 10.2 mile freeway is through Model City area and integrated neighborhood. It is estimated that freeway will displace 1,800 buildings and several thousand people. There is fear that relocation will cause integrated area to become 100 percent Negro. Current proposed location approved by Missouri State Highway Department, City of Kansas, Missouri, and Metropolitan Planning Commission. It is opposed by major Negro political force."

Pittsburgh, I-79: "Construction of this 3.4 mile segment will affect 2,800 residents dislocating 5,800 people. There is mass resistance by the residents who want replacement housing, bonus payments for forced relocation. . . . Acquisition of right-or-way has reached an impasse. Steps are being taken to meet demands of complainants."

Philadelphia Crosstown Expressway: "Action on the Crosstown Expressway is being held up pending the development for the orderly relocation of affected residents."

Baltimore, I-70: "A citizen group in West Baltimore has threatened to block residential acquisition"

By June 1968, one month after institution of the new reporting system, some 123 flash report problems had been reported to the FHWA administrator, Lowell K. Bridwell. Most such problems involved land acquisition difficulties and citizen opposition in urban areas; only seven problems were reported resolved. These flash reports continued until June 1969, when they were discontinued by the Nixon administration's new DOT secretary John A. Volpe in favor of "a more orderly submission of narrative reports by field offices."[38]

The creation of the DOT coincided with the Freeway Revolt's high tide. Interstate location problems in the cities had reached crescendo stage. Boyd came to the DOT with an interest in promoting multiple transportation methods and a sympathetic attitude toward freeway opponents. Symptomatic of these positions, he hired a leading Washington, D.C. anti-freeway activist, Peter Craig, as a DOT litigation attorney. Lowell K. Bridwell, Boyd's choice to head the FHWA, was a former newspaperman who had worked with Boyd in the Department of Commerce and who could stand firm against the highway engineers in BPR. Bridwell was instrumental in pushing state road departments to move beyond sole reliance on engineering studies and traffic counts and to consider social and environmental impacts in the planning of new highways. As a Cabinet appointee, Boyd was also sensitive to shifting political currents and the need to work with congressmen of various persuasions. He was especially conscious of the racial and civil rights implications of pushing expressways through inner-city black neighborhoods. Following the mandate of the 1966 law creating DOT, he was also paying close attention to the environmental impacts of various disputed highway locations. At the same time, Boyd sought to carry out President's Johnson's commitment to getting the interstate system completed. Instituting the reporting system on trouble spots was one way of getting a handle on problematic projects and locations. But when the time came to cancel a troubled highway route, Boyd made the tough decision. One such instance involved the long-simmering controversy over the Three Sisters Bridge linking expressways across the Potomac River in Washington, D.C. In January 1969, in the final days of the Johnson administration, Boyd

removed the bridge and another D.C. freeway from the approved interstate list, effectively killing the project (although Boyd's successor and pro-highway congressmen tried almost immediately to revive it). The decision to cancel the Three Sisters Bridge was hailed nationally as a great victory for the Freeway Revolt.[39]

Boyd took other steps, as well, to manage the interstate crisis. Relocation issues dominated just about all the troubled urban sites. Consequently, Boyd pushed for important changes in highway policy. In 1968, the Federal Highway Administration issued a new policy and procedure manual requiring two public hearings on interstate routes -- one on highway corridor location and a second on more specific design issues. State highway officials, and many in the BPR, almost uniformly opposed the two-hearing regulation, but newspaper editorials around the nation praised the new policy. Local appeals to the FHWA challenging route decisions now delayed land acquisition or construction until final administrative review. Subsequent legal action could delay highway construction even further.[40]

The big problem was the mismatch of relocation housing demand and housing availability. Boyd continued to work with Weaver of HUD in adjusting highway route alignments through Model City areas, thus saving some housing from demolition. State highway plans favored big-city ghetto areas, with the result that public housing projects, urban renewal sites, and Model City neighborhoods often lay in the path of projected expressways. Boyd also pushed for higher levels of relocation assistance to families and businesses. The FHWA worked with the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO) in training relocation assistance officers in every state. In general, DOT encouraged state and local officials to work out agreements over the trouble spots and deal more sensitively with relocation issues.[41]

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1968 reflected changing political attitudes, as well as Congressional efforts to reconcile conflicts in highway and housing programs. The new law required that states provide decent, safe, and sanitary relocation housing prior to property acquisition

for highway routes. Under this legislation, considerable federal funding was made available to states for moving expenses, housing relocation, and housing and rent supplements. Each state was required to enact enabling legislation by July 1970 in order to qualify for additional federal highway funding. Thus, the Highway Act of 1968 and subsequent legislation, the Uniform Relocation Assistance Act of 1970, required more careful attention to relocation than ever before. This included complying with provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. However, by 1972 government highway relocation programs were coming under criticism as ineffective. Full implementation of the relocation acts, an article in the Yale Law Journal suggested, required that "the FHWA minimize the dislocating effects of highway displacement on the housing market by constructing new housing units to replace those demolished for highways." Needless to say, this was not a program the federal government was interested in pursuing on a large scale.[42]

Congressional initiatives on relocation coincided with a DOT administrative shakeup that accompanied the incoming Nixon administration. The new DOT secretary was John A. Volpe, a building contractor, former public works director and governor of Massachusetts, and a former Federal Highway administrator during the Eisenhower administration. Francis C. Turner, a professional highway engineer and former BPR director, became head of the Federal Highway Administration. Unlike Boyd and Bridwell, whom they replaced, one contemporary analyst wrote that "both men carried reputations as hard-line road builders." Typically, perhaps, while governor of Massachusetts Volpe urged Congress to increase interstate highway mileage by another 41,000 miles, effectively doubling the size of the interstate system by 1985 to accommodate anticipated traffic increased. Many critics expected that as DOT secretary Volpe would “pave the country” or drop a “concrete curtain” on urban America.[43]

Changing circumstances forced both men to moderate their positions. For example, in a March 1969 speech to midwestern state highway officials, Turner sounded a lot like Alan Boyd on relocation issues. The nationwide urban freeway revolt made housing relocation "a subject of

increasing concern in Congress." Turner committed the resources of the FHWA to assisting the states in complying with relocation provisions of the 1968 highway act. He suggested the need to work with HUD to annually determine housing demand. If demand exceeded supply, HUD would seek authority and funding to "bridge the gap." Turner also urged the states to develop their own plans for replacement housing. He ended his speech with a warning to state highway officials: "We have a problem here to solve, one of first-rate importance. Unless we solve it and do so quickly and adequately, we run the risk of having our highway program come to a halt, and I'm sure nobody wants that to happen." Turner, who had spent forty years in the BPR, wanted to keep the interstate program on track at all costs, even if it meant moderating somewhat the tough engineering approach that had always prevailed in the past.[44]

Volpe, too, soon adapted to shifting political winds, eventually recognizing the need for mass transit and a more environmentally sensitive highway program. In one his first speeches, Volpe uncharacteristically followed Alan Boyd's line of analysis by questioning "the survival of the automobile in the centers of our largest cities." The car and the highway, Volpe suggested, needed to be "tallied against other community and individual values – the need for elbow room, clean air, stable neighborhoods, more park land, and many others. So far, we have sought sheer mobility above every other consideration; other needs have been neglected, and the social equation is clearly out of balance." To advise on these now more compelling issues, Volpe appointed former Seattle mayor J. D. Braman as Assistant DOT Secretary for Urban Systems and Environment. A veteran of a big freeway fight in Seattle and an advocate of rapid rail transit, Braman was perceived as "a friend in court for the mayors who are fussy about roads cutting through their cities." Soon after taking office, Volpe confronted two highly publicized urban "trouble spots" on the interstate map, ending long-running disputes in 1969 by cancelling the New Orleans riverfront expressway and approving a costly restudy a contentious inner-loop highway in Boston. Braman was said to be influential in persuading Volpe to cancel the New Orleans expressway.[45]

By the end of the 1960s, interstate troubles had become political troubles, both locally and nationally. Freeway revolters took to the streets, noisily packed hearings and meetings, and forced highway issues onto the front pages of metropolitan newspapers and into House and Senate committee hearings. During the Johnson years, the appointment of a new breed of administrator in the transportation and highway agencies signaled greater receptivity to local concerns about housing demolition, relocation problems, environmental damage, and civil rights issues. The Freeway Revolt had a major impact in raising these issues to the national level. But the urban outcomes of the Freeway Revolt varied from city to city.

The Freeway Revolt grew out of local conditions. State highway departments determined the routing of interstates through the cities, routes often based on earlier local planning reports. State highwaymen brought city or county officials into the route-making process. Behind the scenes, local urban elites often were involved in early discussions on interstate routing in the cities. Concerned about the economic vitality of the central city, local officials and urban business elites generally accepted mid-century thinking about the necessity for new highways and their presumed economic benefits. In many cities, they also came to recognize that expressways might serve other purposes, such as restructuring the central business district, eliminating slum housing, or carrying out racial agendas.[46] However, until 1968 citizen involvement in highway decision-making was limited to a single public hearing, required by law but for information purposes only. In most cities, these public hearings on urban expressways came very early in the process. They generally attracted little notice and light attendance. Years later, when right-of-way acquisition and then construction began, people became outraged that such crucial decisions about their cities and neighborhoods had been made by outsiders with minimum community involvement. They protested the demolition of stable neighborhoods, the destruction of parks and historic districts, damage to sensitive environmental areas, and the use of riverfronts and waterfronts for automobiles rather than for people. The specific circumstances differed from city to city, but local Freeway Revolts had many common elements.

But there were also major differences, which often explained the varied outcomes of freeway protest campaigns. Case studies of freeways and protest movements illustrate how these differences played out in Miami and Baltimore.

Miami

Initial interstate planning for Miami called for a single north-south expressway that penetrated the central city. Given South Florida's unique geography, with the Atlantic Ocean to the east, the Everglades to the west, and no other major cities to the south, the Interstate-95 route simply terminated in downtown Miami. As in many other large cities, Miami city planners began mapping an urban expressway system even before the federal interstate highway legislation in 1956. A 1955 Miami expressway plan sliced into downtown Miami on the edges of residential neighborhoods, along an abandoned rail corridor, and through warehouse and "low-value" industrial areas. As the planners noted, these locations had been chosen "in order to preserve and help protect existing residential neighborhoods and promote an economically desirable use of land." A year later, after Congress created the Interstate System, Miami's professional city planners lost control of highway planning to the Florida State Road Department. State highwaymen hired their own consulting highway engineers, who in short order scrapped the 1955 expressway plan and quickly advanced a new route with substantial changes. Prepared by the consulting firm of Wilbur Smith and Associates, which designed interstate plans for many states and cities, the state's expressway plan shifted the downtown portion of the highway several blocks to the west in order, as the report noted, to provide "ample room for the future expansion of the central business district in a westerly direction." It also anticipated a massive midtown interchange with a planned east-west expressway stretching from Miami Beach to the western reaches of Dade County.[47]

Implementing the Florida Road Department's plan had dramatic consequences. Shifting the downtown expressway to the west now placed the route squarely through Miami's large black

residential district known as Overtown. The massive interchange, eventually taking up almost thirty square blocks, was slated to wipe out Overtown's business district, the heart of black Miami, often considered by virtue of its many nightclubs and music venues to be "the Harlem of the South." Thirty years of racially driven local politics lay behind the Wilbur Smith expressway plan.[48]

Miami had a relatively small, compact central business district. It was hemmed in on the north and west by Overtown, which had a population of about 40,000 in 1960. Biscayne Bay to the east and the Miami River to the south precluded expansion in those directions. As early as the 1930s, Miami civil and business leaders expressed concern about geographical constraints on downtown development. As New Deal programs emerged, Miami leaders seized upon the new public housing program as a potential solution. Federal funding permitted the Miami Housing Authority to build the Liberty Square public housing project in an undeveloped area outside Miami's municipal boundaries some five miles northwest of the CBD. Public discussions among politicians and planners at the time made it clear that Liberty Square was expected to become the nucleus of a new black community that would siphon off Overtown's population. The ultimate goal, one leading Miami planner stated, was "a complete slum clearance effectively removing every Negro family from the present city limits." Eventually, as a consequence of persisting patterns of racial zoning, the housing project did become the center of a sprawling new black district known as Liberty City, but the downtown dream of eliminating Overtown and making Miami white remained unfulfilled the 1950s.[49]

The interstate highway program provided Miami's civic elite with a new opportunity to achieve their racial goals and recapture central city space for business purposes. Florida consulting highway engineers worked with the Dade County Commission, the Miami City Commission, and the Miami-Dade Chamber of Commerce in developing the Miami expressway route. The Florida Road Department, the largest state agency, was heavily politicized, a patronage plum for the politicians. Wilbur E. Jones, the road department chairman, was a Miamian and close to the Miami civic elite.

The final routing of Miami's north-south expressway emerged from these connections and from meetings between state highwaymen and county politicos.[50]

No public hearings were held in the black community, a source of bitter complaint in later years. Construction of the downtown expressway was completed in 1968, resulting in the virtual destruction of Overtown as a viable community. The sweeping, four-level downtown interchange alone destroyed the housing of about 10,000 people. Simultaneous urban renewal projects in the area added to housing demolitions. Most of those dislocated ended up in Dade County's expanding second ghetto in and north of Liberty City. Over time, CBD functions expanded into the Overtown area: government office buildings, parking lots, upscale apartments, shopping centers, and a sports arena. By the end of the expressway-building era, little remained of Overtown to recall its days as a thriving center of black community life. Consequently, the traumatic evens of the interstate era have remained vividly etched in the historic memory of black Miami.[51]

Building Interstate-95 into downtown Miami created devastating consequences for the densely settled, inner-city black community. Nevertheless, the expressway generated strong support from many interest groups in metropolitan Miami, who saw its completion as essential for the area's continued economic progress. Businessmen in real estate and tourism found much to like in the new transportation plan, as did local politicians and newspapermen. Surprisingly, the Greater Miami Urban League, although concerned about coming relocation problems, issued an official statement in 1957 supporting the expressway as "necessary for the continued progress of our city." Similarly, the city's black newspaper, the Miami Times, worried about housing and relocation problems, but also editorialized in 1957 that "with the expansion and progress of a city, there is little you can do about it." Three years later, in discussing a local expressway bond issue, the paper once again emphasized the theme of progress: "We are living in a progressive state. We cannot afford to take a backward step." Black spokesmen quietly acceded to the expressway plan, but both the Urban League and the Miami Times urged the establishment of a relocation agency to assist thousands of

black Miamians in finding new homes. Florida road chairman Wilbur Jones appreciated black support and agreed that relocation plans deserved "serious study," but he affirmed that this was not the responsibility of the state road department. In 1957, Miami's civil rights movement had not yet developed, and black militancy would have to wait until the late 1960s. The Miami expressway route through Overtown was known long before it was actually built, but this knowledge did not stimulate a black opposition movement in the late 1950s.[52]

However, Miami freeway opposition did stir in some corners of the white community. At the state road department's public hearing in February 1957, former Miami mayor Abe Aronovitz spoke out against the expressway plan, portraying the elevated structure planned for downtown as "a monstrosity straddling the City of Miami" that would create new slums and destroy property values. In a telegram to Governor LeRoy Collins, Aronovitz stated that 500 citizens who attended the state road department's public hearing opposed an elevated expressway, but only ten approved. Aronovitz kept up his campaign for several months, eventually meeting with Governor Collins in person, but to no avail. Miamians sent numerous letters to the governor and the road department recommending small changes in the route or complaining about the expressway coming through their property. One woman from North Miami, for example, borrowed Aronovitz's imagery in suggesting that the expressway would "be a monstrosity which would arch like the back of a huge dinosaur over an area of the city, depreciating property and displacing homeowners." More importantly, perhaps, "it would cause dissatisfaction and dissension between the races here, because it would necessarily displace many of the Negro race. They would have to move into the outer fringe of white sections, with the accompanying flaring up of hatreds." In fact, displaced inner-city blacks did move to white transition areas, eventually transforming northwest Dade County into a massive second ghetto community.[53]

Initial opposition to the Miami expressway mostly died out within a few months of the February 1957 public hearing, with one exception. Elizabeth Virrick, a white, middle-class housing reformer

launched a one-woman campaign against the Miami expressway system that lasted a decade. Virrick had been involved in an interracial movement for slum clearance and public housing since the late 1940s, fighting mostly against Miami slumlords, rental agents, builders of black housing, and local politicians who failed to enforce housing codes. As the Miami expressway plans became public in 1956 and 1957, Virrick immediately recognized the devastating consequences for black Miami. Influenced by the San Francisco Freeway Revolt and the writings of Jane Jacobs, Virrick intensified her attack on the highway builders in the 1960s. In a series of hard-hitting articles in her monthly newsletter Ink: The Journal of Civic Affairs, Virrick painted a bleak picture of the consequences of expressway building in Miami. She went on to ask: "Hasn't anyone heard of San Francisco where the road program was stopped and replanned because an alert citizenry demanded it?" Virrick kept the expressway issue barely alive into the mid-1960s, when the final downtown leg through Overtown was completed. She was the closest thing Miami had to a Freeway Revolt, but a one-woman crusade was not enough to stop the highwaymen in Miami. The expressway system was completed by 1968 pretty much as originally designed by the highway engineers.[54]

Comparing Miami to San Francisco helps explain the weakness and failure of freeway opposition in the Florida city. San Francisco planned multiple freeways cutting through diverse neighborhoods and business areas, whereas Miami had a single expressway that did relatively little damage except in the heavily populated black central city. San Francisco had dozens of strong neighborhood organizations that built cross-city and cross-class alliances. Miami had few community organizations, most of them property owners' associations primarily interested in keeping blacks out of their neighborhoods. Although the city was undergoing demographic change with Jewish migration from the North and Cuban migration from the South, the city was still very southern in orientation in the 1950s and early 1960s, making interracial cooperation problematic. In the western city on the bay, politicians on the Board of Supervisors represented their constituents and spoke against freeways; simultaneously many influential journalists were attacking freeways in daily

newspaper columns, keeping a spotlight on the highway issue. In the eastern city on the bay, virtually all the local politicians and all the newspapers, even the black paper, supported the expressway. By virtue of a quirk in California law, San Francisco's Board of Supervisors had a virtual veto over expressway building, but in Miami the city council and the county commission had no such power; if they did, it is unlikely they would have used it to stop the interstate. Moreover, no citizen lawsuits challenged the highway builders in Miami. In addition, the entire Miami expressway system was either completed or under construction by 1965, when the first, very minimal federal curbs on interstate routing took effect. Thus, highwaymen in Miami never faced the requirements for community planning, relocation assistance, or environmental sensitivity, all of which were initiated by Congress in the mid-1960s and after. Finally, the Miami expressway system was virtually completed by the time Alan Boyd took the reins of the DOT in Washington. In expressway building, it appears, timing, power, and political culture usually determined outcomes.

Baltimore

Building Interstate-95 into downtown Miami was rather simple and uncomplicated, compared to what happened in Baltimore. The Baltimore expressway story is much more complex and drawn-out, with many different plans and players, a more expansive freeway system, many more levels of review, much more vocal and organized citizen opposition, and, ultimately, a much different outcome. Baltimore's leaders and citizens wrestled with no less than twelve different expressway plans between 1942 and the 1970s. The city's downtown business leaders began thinking about the need for expressways in the early 1940s. One of the largest cities in the nation at the time, Baltimore had high levels of automobile and truck through traffic, as well as significant local traffic generated by its own downtown, industrial, rail, and port activities. In 1942, engineers commissioned by the Baltimore City Planning Commission proposed two major east-west

expressways. One route traversed the city just north of the CBD along the so-called Franklin-Mulberry corridor linking U.S. 1, the main Washington to New York highway, with U.S. 40 entering Baltimore from the west. The second route was anticipated as a southern by-pass designed for through traffic and involved construction of a bay bridge or harbor tunnel. In 1943, the Baltimore Association of Commerce proposed a still more ambitious freeway plan to serve anticipated traffic needs and by which the central business district might be "rescued and redeemed." This plan projected an east-west freeway connecting with three north-south freeways. The business group noted approvingly that "a great many of the freeways would pass through blighted areas" or sections "approaching blighted conditions." Moreover, if the highway corridor was wide enough to provide space for linear parks and green spaces, "the freeway can be a thing of beauty and a real asset to nearby residences." In 1944, concerned about the cost of such an elaborate freeway network, the City Planning Commission recommended only the east-west expressway, prompting the mayor to appoint a special traffic committee to study the issue.[55]

The traffic committee hired the ubiquitous Robert Moses, a dominant national voice on urban expressways at the time. The 1944 Moses report minimized the amount of through traffic and promoted the Franklin-Mulberry east-west (or mid-city) expressway, primarily to serve downtown commuters. The Moses plan projected the displacement of some 19,000 people in the central city, mostly slums, Moses said, and "the more of them that are wiped out the healthier Baltimore will be in the long run." The Moses plan drew widespread opposition, primarily from people in the targeted neighborhoods, but also from respected Baltimoreans; journalist H.L. Mencken, for instance, labeled the Moses plan "a completely idiotic undertaking." Several members of the mayoral committee challenged the Moses plan on several grounds. The Moses report, one member of the Harbor Crossing-Freeway Committee suggested, was nothing more than a "sales brochure" that purposely obscured the true cost of the highways, glossed over serious relocation problems, and drew "illusory" conclusions about the positive impact of freeway on nearby neighborhoods. The Moses

plan, committee member Herbert M. Brune, Jr. wrote, “poses a mountain of human misery.” On the other hand, the Downtown Committee, representing Baltimore's business elite, was predisposed toward the mid-city expressway idea because it would "lend a powerful force toward restraining decentralization and rehabilitating blighted areas." The Franklin-Mulberry highway corridor bisected one of Baltimore's black ghetto neighborhoods. Many urban leaders at the time generally believed that expressways could save the central business district from the twin evils of blight and decentralization.[56]

Reflecting the disagreements among Baltimore’s civic elite, as well as concerns about the anticipated 40 to 50 million dollar cost, little was done at the time to implement the Moses expressway plan. Over the next twenty years, planners and highway engineers developed variations and expansions of the expressway concepts of the 1940s. In the mid-1950s, the city's Department of Public Works began work on a north-south city expressway along the Jones Falls corridor, the first leg into the city from the northern suburbs completed in 1960. The northern leg of the Jones Falls Expressway ran through a historic wilderness park laid out by Frederick Law Olmsted, but only later did freeway opponents recognize the aesthetic and environmental damage to the park. Interstate highway legislation in 1956 prompted still more ambitious highway planning in Baltimore, as did the completion of the Baltimore outer beltway (Interstate-695), a Baltimore County project with the state roads commission. Powerful downtown business groups such as the Greater Baltimore Committee pushed urban redevelopment schemes to revitalize the city center, now endangered by shopping malls and suburban growth along the outer beltway. A regional planning agency worked on one highway plan, the Baltimore Department of Planning worked on another, and the state roads commission hired Wilbur Smith and Associates to prepare still another Baltimore transportation and highway study. Among the city's political, business, and engineering elite, a new consensus expressway plan -- called the 10-D plan -- emerged from these varied engineering reports in the early 1960s.[57]

The 10-D plan consolidated several highway schemes into an ambitious expressway system: a cross-town, east-west expressway running just south of the CBD and through the white, working-class waterfront community of Fells Point; a "connector" to the western suburbs traversing the Franklin-Mulberry corridor and cutting through the black, middle-class Rosemont section; an extension of the Jones Falls Expressway into the city center; and a by-pass expressway south of the Inner Harbor carrying interstate through traffic. These plans anticipated a massive downtown interchange and a colossal fourteen-lane Inner Harbor bridge. Rosemont, Fells Point, and other stable, historic neighborhoods were seen as expendable, as the 10-D expressway plan would have demolished over 4,000 dwellings and many small businesses and bisected urban renewal areas. Like Robert Moses, the 10-D highway engineers suggested the advantages of expressways in clearing out blighted housing.[58]

Each new expressway plan produced angry opposition from the neighborhoods and from various interest groups. At public hearings on different sections of the system, business and political leaders spoke in support of expressways, but large crowds turned out to challenge, heckle, and shout down highway advocates. In 1962, some 1,300 people showed up at a public hearing on the 10-D east-west expressway, angry that the engineers and planners had declared their neighborhoods to be expendable slums. In 1965, the Baltimore Sun reported on another large public meeting held by the city council: "Last night's first hearing on an East-West expressway bill ended in a fashion similar to the city's entire expressway program -- a shambles." In the past, debate had raged over the exact location of expressways, but by the mid-1960s support seemed to be growing in the neighborhoods for no roads at all.[59]

Complicating and slowing progress on Baltimore's expressway system were two unique provisions of the city's home-rule charter. First, the city council possessed sole authority to initiate condemnation proceedings for public works or highway projects. Second, the city's planning commission had power to reject state highway plans that did not conform to the city's master plan,

although the mayor could over-rule the planning commission. These were slight variations from the San Francisco situation, whereas in most cities the state highway departments controlled the condemnation and land acquisition process and could move more quickly toward construction without worrying too much about public sentiment. Essentially, the Baltimore city council had a veto over any state highway plans within the city boundaries. Most of the nineteen members of Baltimore's city council were elected by district, thus sensitivity to neighborhood concerns led to numerous hearings and postponements as councilmen tested the extent of popular outrage. Nevertheless, by 1967 most of the necessary condemnations for the 10-D system had been completed. By that time, however, the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads (BPR), fed up with delays created by mixing "city hall politics" with highway building, refused to deal any longer with the city on interstate issues. The BPR was concerned about Baltimore's political in-fighting, as well as about the looming 1972 cut-off date for federal interstate highway funding. Consequently, the BPR orchestrated the creation of a new interstate administrative unit, the Maryland road commission's Baltimore Interstate Division, described by some freeway fighters as "a unique bureaucratic animal." Largely funded by the BPR, the new road department agency sought to work out disputes between city and state and to coordinate the engineering and construction of the city's interstates. The city still retained a veto over specific interstate routes, but the BPR controlled highway funding allocations, a major bargaining chip in Baltimore's complicated highway politics. Yet, ten years after passage of the 1956 federal highway legislation, concrete had yet to be poured for any of Baltimore's interstates.[60]

A deep undercurrent of discontent shaped public attitudes toward the 10-D system by the mid to late 1960s. As journalist Judson Gooding described the situation at the time, the "interstate highway network had hurtled up to Baltimore's borders at top speed: I-95 barreled up from the south and down from the northeast; I-83 bored downward from the north; and I-70N drilled in toward the city's center through the expanding western suburbs. The engineers were pressing to go ahead. The cars

were already there, honking and teeming. But many influential Baltimoreans saw the confluence of interstate highways as a massive, multipronged concrete shaft aimed straight as the city's heart." Average citizens increasingly recognized the interstate threat to the city and its neighborhoods -- attitudes that underlay an emerging Freeway Revolt.[61]

Responding to these concerns, as well as to the highway standoff between city and state, in 1966 architects in the Baltimore chapter of the American Institute of Architects took the lead in arguing for more aesthetic highways that blended with the natural environment and preserved the urban fabric. In particular, a respected Baltimore architect, Archibald Rogers, made the case to city and state officials for a restudy of the expressway network by an "urban design concept team" (UDCT) that would include not just highway and traffic engineers but also architects, design specialists, landscape architects, urban planners, environmental scientists, housing experts, economists, and sociologists. Rogers's ideas resonated with key Baltimore planning officials and council members looking for a way out of the expressway morass. Rogers then lobbied for the UDCT with friends in state and federal highway agencies. His suggestion that Nathaniel A. Owings, founding partner of the nationally famous architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM), head up the UDCT met approval all around. Owings accepted the challenge because, as he later wrote, "the question of how to lace tubes of traffic through vital parts without unduly disturbing the living organism of the city is symptomatic of a national problem and offers a pilot-study opportunity than can be available as a example for the whole country." Boyd and Bridwell of the DOT agreed to pay 90 percent of the cost of a two-year restudy of Baltimore's expressways, with the proviso that the team work within the already designated 10-D highway corridors. "Joint development" of expressway corridors for housing, parks, playgrounds, business uses, and the like became an important part of the design team's mission. The goal of UDCT, all the principals agreed at the beginning, was to link interstates 95, 83, and 70 in downtown Baltimore, but to do so in an aesthetic fashion that did not destroy the urban fabric.[62]

Given the changing circumstances of the late 1960s, it was an impossible task. Freeway critics jumped on the UDCT as "a desperation move by a city administration faced with citizen revolt and a stern dictum from Washington . . . to do something about it." Infighting continued over methods and goals, pitting highway builders against politicians, local engineers against outside consultants, engineers against architects, engineers against sociologists, and ultimately the UDCT against Baltimore's neighborhoods groups. UDCT inherited the 10-D expressway plan, but within a year began to doubt its efficacy. The Owings team eventually scrapped the east-west expressway along the southern edge of the CBD and Fells Point, recommending a shift of Interstate-95 to the south, where it ran through other historic neighborhoods. This decision also eliminated both the massive downtown interchange on the waterfront and the huge Inner Harbor bridge. Other elements of the old plan remained in modified form, including the north-south I-83 expressway (originally the Jones Falls Expressway) that would now terminate in the CDB without connecting to I-95. The I-70 route from the west linking with I-95 also remained. The route still cut through western parks, but swung slightly to the south to avoid the black Rosemont community, already in decline because of earlier condemnations. Under this new expressway design, the Franklin-Mulberry corridor, more than a mile and a half of which had already been leveled, was recommended for a spur expressway into mid-city Baltimore. Labeled the 3-A expressway system, the entire UDCT plan eventually was endorsed by the city's mayor and city council, as well as state and federal highway officials, all of whom wanted to get some expressways-- any expressways -- built in Baltimore. But the 3-A plan, like the earlier 10-D plan, faced tough opposition in the neighborhoods, now aroused by the continued arrogance and insensitivity of the highway engineers, planners, and politicians who wanted downtown expressways whatever the human and social cost.[63]

By the time the UDCT was established in 1966, Baltimore had experienced over twenty years of community opposition to new highways. These expressions of community outrage tended to be sporadic and poorly organized. They tended to crystalize around city council condemnation

proceedings or public hearings on highway routes, but interest dropped off once decisions had been made and condemnation ordinances enacted. Many small neighborhood groups participated in these early confrontations, but each was interested in its own small piece of urban turf. However, in 1966, the appearance of the Relocation Action Movement marked the beginning of a coordinated and more focused Freeway Revolt in Baltimore, and several similar neighborhood coalitions soon joined the battle to "Stop the Road."

In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, Baltimore's freeway fighters took on the so-called "highway hawks." Organized in November 1966, Relocation Action Movement (RAM) represented a coalition of middle-class black activists from Rosemont and militant working-class blacks in the Franklin-Mulberry corridor. Given patterns of previous highway and urban renewal projects, blacks in Baltimore had good reason to be concerned about the interstates: between 1951 and 1964, about 90 percent of all housing displacements took place in Baltimore's black neighborhoods. The RAM coalition in the mid-1960s reflected black outrage over the destruction of their neighborhoods to satisfy the needs of suburban commuters. "For too long, the history of Urban Renewal and Highway Clearance has been marked by repeated removal of black citizens," one RAM position statement asserted. "We have been asked to make sacrifice after sacrifice in the name of progress, and when that progress has been achieved we find it marked 'White Only.'" Black homeowners in Rosemont challenged the "market value" relocation payments they received from the state highway department. Because of prior condemnation of the highway corridor by the Baltimore city council, housing values had plummeted, leaving those displaced with minimal compensation payments insufficient to cover equivalent housing elsewhere. Relocation assistance to black renters in the Franklin-Mulberry corridor, required under the Highway Act of 1962, remained minimal to non-existent. With the assistance of Stuart Wechsler, a white civil rights activist with the Baltimore Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) who had contacts in Washington, RAM leaders met in Baltimore with Alan Boyd and Lowell Bridwell of the DOT. They received guarantees of

"replacement value" for condemned homes in Rosemont and promises of more substantial relocation assistance for renters in other areas, including moving expenses and rent supplements to cover higher cost apartments. Over the next few years, RAM continued to protest the "victimization" of black communities in the path of the interstate, which purposefully seemed designed to take "the heart out of one of the most stable communities in Baltimore." Facing the removal of 10,000 blacks who lived in the path of the east-west expressway, RAM activists challenged the highway engineers who "view people as just another obstacle, like a hill to be leveled or a valley to be bridged." One of the consequences of Baltimore's late start in pouring interstate concrete was that the highway builders ran up against the militant phase of the civil rights movement. Ghetto rioting in Baltimore in the wake of Martin Luther King's assassination intensified these issues dramatically.[64]

The Southeast Council Against the Road (SCAR) formed a another important component of Baltimore's Freeway Revolt. Formed in 1969, SCAR emerged to challenge the UDCT's proposal to shift the 10-D downtown expressway to the south side of the Inner Harbor, where it traversed working-class ethnic neighborhoods. Thomas M. Fiorello, a Catholic priest who played a leading role in SCAR, criticized the UDCT as the "Concrete Team," whose "concrete cancer will invade residential neighborhoods all over the city." Similarly, the Southwest Baltimore Citizens Planning Council, which served as a federation of neighborhood groups, fought the 3-A expressway route, hoping to prevent panic selling before condemnation proceedings undermined housing values. In the early 1970s, another anti-expressway umbrella group emerged in the area, the South-West Association of Community Organizations (SWACO). These South Baltimore organizations recognized that expressways would have a devastating impact not just on the highway corridor but on the entire community through which they passed.[65]

RAM, SCAR, SWACO, and other groups vigorously defended their neighborhoods against the incursions of the highway builders and the highway politicians, but beginning in the late 1960s

Movement Against Destruction (MAD) became the most influential anti-freeway voice in Baltimore. Founded in 1968 as a biracial coalition of 35 neighborhood groups, MAD engaged the energies of freeway fighters from across the city who persisted well into the late 1970s in a battle to prevent Baltimore from becoming a "motorized wasteland." CORE activist Stuart Wechsler served as MAD's first president, but the organization had a dedicated leadership group that attended weekly meetings for many years. One of the freeway activists involved with MAD was Barbara Mikulski, a social worker from a west side ethnic community who was elected to the Baltimore city council in 1971 and eventually became a U.S. senator from Maryland.[66]

At first MAD focused on the proposed east-west expressway, which cut through many distinct neighborhoods, but the coalition soon began challenging the need for any expressways inside the Baltimore beltway. A MAD position statement in 1968 posed the issue: "There is a growing realization that expressways are being built in cities not for the sake of the people who live there, but for the sake of cement, tire, oil, automobile, and other private interests." Over several years, MAD activists opposed the UDCT highway plan, packed public hearings, pushed mass transit, badgered officials with letters and position statements, conducted public information campaigns, met with state and federal highway officials, served as a watchdog over the Baltimore city council, and generally challenged the highway advocates at every turn. By necessity, MAD activists became experts on highway matters, refuted official highway statistics and data with hard evidence of their own, and confronted and confused highway engineers and local politicians with expert rebuttals at public hearings and council meetings. As MAD activist Carol Tyson noted in the early 1970s, at every opportunity, "MAD now counter-attacks."[67]

MAD activists also connected with freeway fighters in other cities. Minutes of MAD meetings reveal discussions of expressway battles in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and suburban Virginia. Washington freeway fighters from the Emergency Committee on the Transportation Crisis (ECTC) attended some MAD meetings to discuss anti-highway strategy. ECTC circulated a mimeographed

"Freeway Fighter's Primer" in 1971, suggesting various methods to stop freeway construction: "mainly it is a guerrilla war where you must work out your own strategy and tactics." MAD activists filled buses and traveled to Washington to picket and demonstrate with ECTC. In fact, by the early 1970s, the Freeway Revolt had become a national phenomenon, as highway and environmental activists around the nation networked and exchanged information. This trend was reflected in the creation of such groups as the National Coalition on the Transportation Crisis (NCTC), which held anti-freeway conferences and legal action workshops in Washington. The national environmental movement was deeply involved in this battle, as well. The national environmental lobby group Environmental Action spun off the Highway Action Coalition (HAC) in 1971 to stop freeway construction, combat suburban sprawl, and promote rail mass transit. HAC put out its own newsletter, The Concrete Opposition, and initiated litigation using federal environmental requirements "as its chief weapon" in the courts. "Bulldozer Blocking," a regular column in The Concrete Opposition, kept readers informed about the latest developments in the national Freeway Revolt. Helen Leavitt, author of a popular anti-freeway book, Superhighway–Superhoax (1970), followed up the book's success by publishing a monthly newsletter, Rational Transportation, that attacked highway building and advocated mass transit. By 1970, Baltimore groups such as RAM and MAD had become part of an informal nationwide network of freeway fighters that shared information and legal strategies.[68]

The emergence of a national anti-freeway network coincided with shifting legislative and legal circumstances in Washington. During the 1960s, even after the creation of the DOT, highway builders in Baltimore seemed to have the upper hand. Downtown businessmen, suburban commuters, the engineering community, and most of the city's politicians and planners supported some form of expressway system. Changes began, of course, with the DOT and the shifting positions of top DOT people such as Alan Boyd and Lowell Bridwell. However, new federal legislation, new state mandates, and new administrative procedures between 1966 and 1970

dramatically altered the highway-building environment at the local level. These included the original DOT legislation (1966) that required the protection of park land and historic sites, the relocation requirements of the Federal-Aid Highway Act (1968) and the Uniform Relocation Assistance Act (1970), the FHWA's "two-hearing" regulation (1969), the National Environmental Policy Act (1969), the Clean Air Act (1970), and the Freedom of Information Act (1966). Taken together, these laws, mandates, and regulations posed new hurdles for the highway builders, created administrative confusion and delay at the local level, provided new access to information for citizen groups, and opened new opportunities for litigating the Freeway Revolt.[69]

In Baltimore, MAD and several of its constituent organizations brought the highway battle into the courts. For instance, the Society for the Preservation of Fells Point, Montgomery Street, and Federal Hill, representing these three historic districts, won an injunction against highway construction in Fells Point. Another group, Volunteers Opposing Leakin Park Expressway, Inc. (with the playful acronym VOLPE), sought to protect the largest urban park in the U.S. from the east-west expressway and, along with the local chapter of the Sierra Club, successfully challenged the highway builders on the legality of a 1962 hearing and on environmental grounds. One resulting court case carried the title VOLPE v. Volpe, a neat bit of ridicule on the part of the freeway fighters. The Better Air Coalition initiated litigation to protect Baltimore's air quality. The Locust Point Civic Association went to court to protect historic Fort McHenry on the southern shore of the Inner Harbor from expressway bridges and tunnels. MAD filed a number of law suits challenging the entire Baltimore expressway system on both procedural and environmental grounds. Baltimore's Freeway Revolt, in short, came to rely on anti-highway litigation in the 1970s, court action made possible by changing federal policy on a range of issues affecting highway construction in the cities.[70]

Baltimore's interstate history provides a fascinating case study of how not to build expressways. The contrast with Miami is striking. Elite business and political interests groups did not come

together around a single expressway plan until long after passage of the federal interstate legislation in 1956. The engineering community was also divided about the proper routing of the highways. Political infighting in Baltimore, and between the city and the state muddied the waters for years. The City Council's control over highways through its condemnation powers actually complicated expressway planning, eventually providing an opening for expressway opponents pushing for community control. Mostly ambivalent on expressway plans, the Baltimore Sun nevertheless provided balanced reporting, thus publicizing the anti-highway arguments of MAD and other groups.[71]

Baltimore's major expressway plans -- 10-D and 3-A -- both anticipated a complex highway system that bisected numerous neighborhoods, black and white, and demolished thousands of homes. In response, rising militancy among highway opponents in the late 1960s set the stage for a true Freeway Revolt in Baltimore, led by the Movement Against Destruction. The cross-class and multiracial character of MAD took the organization beyond the parochial self-interest of smaller neighborhood groups and conveyed the sense that it spoke for the people against the interests. The emergence of MAD, RAM, SCAR, SWACO, VOLPE, and the other anti-highway organizations also coincided with major changes in federal highway policy and personnel. Miami's expressway system was virtually completed by the time Boyd and Bridwell came to the DOT and new federal guidelines on community planning, relocation housing, park protection, and environmental sensitivity became effective. However, in Baltimore, new laws, new rules, and new procedures made it possible for Baltimore's freeway fighters to challenge, litigate, delay, and ultimately defeat Baltimore's "road gang" on many interstate routes. Once again, timing and the shifting currents of policy, power, and culture determined the outcome of a freeway battle. In Baltimore, the result was a truncated expressway system and the preservation of many targeted neighborhoods. Only the Jones Falls Expressway (Interstate-83) penetrated the central city, while Interstate-95 was shifted south of the city. Ultimately, a two-mile freeway was built along the already cleared Franklin-Mulberry corridor,

but it emptied onto city streets at both ends. The long-debated east-west expressway through western parks, Rosemont, Fells Point, and the central city never got off the drawing boards. The remarkable later redevelopment of downtown Baltimore and the Inner Harbor area was made possible because the downtown expressways and the planned interchange and harbor bridge was never built.

The national Freeway Revolt, then, took place within the context of a changing legislative and administrative environment. In the early years of the interstates, the highway engineers reigned supreme. They possessed the professional expertise, controlled access to massive federal highway funding, and had support from local power elites who benefitted from inner-city expressways. San Francisco was an exception, but elsewhere when state road engineers and local politicians moved quickly after 1956, they faced few challenges to urban expressways. This was especially true in southern cities, including Miami, where state road builders had built up a powerful political base over time through patronage and contracting. In other cities, such as Baltimore, where expressway construction was delayed into the late 1960s, outcomes differed dramatically, as outlined above. By this time, as well, the counter-cultural energy of the 1960s began to change the highway-building climate. As one writer noted at the time, "the highway revolt is against the tyranny of the machine – the highway bulldozer and the political machine that drives it. Being helpless before the highway lobby is just one form of the powerlessness that Americans increasingly resent."[72] Citizen action against urban highway building – the effort to protect threatened homes and neighborhoods -- represented an increasingly common response to that sense of powerlessness. In Baltimore and several other cities facing the bulldozer, the wrecking ball, and the concrete trucks, "power to the people" meant stopping "The Road." However, it is important not to romanticize the freeway fighters. They were successful only to the extent that they used the tools provided by new legislative mandates and guidelines to challenge, confront, and litigate against the road builders.

Notes

1. For recent work on the 1960s, see Terry H. Anderson, The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in America from Greesboro to Wounded Knee (New York, 1995); Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s (New York, 2000); Stewart Burns, Social Movements of the 1960s: Searching for Democracy (New York, 1990); Howard Brick, Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture in the 1960s (Ithaca, 1998). Of these works, only the Anderson book mentioned the Freeway Revolt as part of the Sixties protest tradition. See Anderson, The Movement and the Sixties, 386-387. For a detailed and fully documented account of interstates in the cities, see Gary T. Schwartz, "Urban Freeways and the Interstate System," Southern California Law Review, 49 (March 1976), 406-513.

2. For the "concrete monster" reference, see Statement of John F. Shelley [Mayor of San Francisco], November 29, 1967, in Transcript of Hearings before the Subcommittee on Roads, Committee on Public Works, U.S. Senate (Washington, D.C., 1967), stenographic typescript, 276, in Federal Highway Administration Records (hereafter cited as FHWA Records), RG 406, Lowell K. Bridwell Files, Box 20, U.S. National Archives II, College Park, Maryland. On Washington, D.C. highways, see B. Drumond Ayers, Jr., "Washington: White Roads Through Black Bedrooms," New York Times, December 31, 1967. "Stop the Road" was the slogan used by a coalition of anti-freeway neighborhood groups in Baltimore called Movement Against Destruction, or MAD.

3. On the San Francisco Freeway Revolt, see William Issel, "'Land Values, Human Values, and the Preservation of the City's Treasured Appearance': Environmentalism, Politics, and the San Francisco Freeway Revolt," Pacific Historical Review, (1999), 611-646; Joseph A. Rodriguez, City Against Suburb: The Culture Wars in an American Metropolis (Westport, Conn., 1999), 21-46; William H. Lathrop, Jr., "The San Francisco Freeway Revolt," Transportation Engineering Journal: Proceedings of the American Society of Civil Engineers, 97 (February 1971), 133-143; Seymour Mark Adler, "The Political Economy of Transit in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1945-1963" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1980), 308-326; David W. Jones, California's Freeway Era in Historical Perspective, Research Report, Institute of Transportation Studies, University of California at Berkeley (Berkeley, 1989), 256-308.

4. Lewis Mumford, "The Highway and the City," Architectural Record, 123 (April 1958), 179-186; Lewis Mumford, The Urban Prospect (New York, 1968); Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (New York, 1961); Herbert Gans, The Urban Villagers (Glencoe, Ill., 1962); Scott Greer, Urban Renewal and American Cities: The Dilemma of Democratic Intervention (Indianapolis, 1965); Daniel P. Moynihan, "New Roads and Urban Chaos," The Reporter, 22 (April 14, 1960), 13-20. See also Joseph C. Hazen, "Highways and the City," American Highways, 36 (July 1957), 11-12.

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