

April 13, 1961

MEMORANDUM TO: Theodore C. Sorensen

FROM: Lee C. White

SUBJECT: Mass Transit Problems.

Basically this is a struggle between HHFA and Commerce over who is to have jurisdiction over any mass transit program of the Federal Government.

In brief the arguments in favor of HHFA are:

1. Mass transit is an integral part of urban development and cannot be separated.
2. A mass transit function would give greater breadth to HHFA functions and would properly be in the proposed Department of Housing and Urban Affairs.
3. The only transportation function the Commerce Department has is the Bureau of Public Roads, a very autonomous and inflexible group.
4. The Department of Commerce is traditionally a conservative body in comparison with HHFA.
5. Neither agency has mass transit specialists so the function should be placed where it belongs logically -- in HHFA where they have had great experience in lending programs similar to those suggested for the mass transit field.
6. The point is made that Commerce has just one jurisdictional battle in the area redevelopment field.

Points urged in support of giving the program to Commerce:

1. It is clearly within the general framework of transportation, a function vested in the department.



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2. Inasmuch as the Bureau of Public Roads is a constituent bureau and has a great impact on mass transportation, it is appropriate to centralize the functions under a single secretary.
3. A program oriented toward traditional transportation functions is more likely to receive Congressional support than one linked to "visionary planners".

It seems quite possible that the total program can be broken into two distinct segments: planning and operational program. With regard to the planning, there is no question but what HHFA should have the sole or dominant role. With regard to operations, it would seem to me that there is greater logic in having the same agency implement the program that integrates it with the total metropolitan development plan. Moreover, the fact that HHFA has great experience in lending programs whereas Commerce does not is significant. It may well be that if there is an impasse, the planning function can be assigned with a reservation of the final decision on operations pending the HHFA-Commerce study to be undertaken during the next few months. My recommendation would be to give the whole program to HHFA and if forced to, postpone the operation end of it until Fall.

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