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**PROCEEDINGS OF A PANEL
DISCUSSION
AUGUST 4, 1975**

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Federal Highway Administration
Office of Environmental Policy
Washington, D.C.

August 4, 1975

FOREWORD

The importance of community involvement in developing projects is widely recognized by highway officials. The progress of State highway agencies in the last 2 or 3 years in this area has been impressive. Even so, most highway officials would agree that we still have much to learn in making community involvement programs responsive to the public and at the same time an effective aid for decisionmaking.

This transcribed discussion presents the views of two men who have recently faced some unusually challenging assignments concerning community involvement. Their remarks help shed light on some of the questions that still have not been completely answered about this developing art. Lowell K. Bridwell, in his early experience, was a journalist with special interest in transportation affairs. He served as Federal Highway Administrator from 1967 to 1969. During that time, he was a strong advocate of public participation in highway affairs. Since 1969, he has been President of Systems Design Concepts, Inc., and has undertaken a number of studies having a special sensitivity to community involvement. His firm has been commissioned by New York State to direct a study of the West Side Highway project in New York City, involving an analysis of possible transportation improvement options on the lower west side of Manhattan Island. This project involves working with approximately 300 community groups and with an unusually large number of Federal, State and local government agencies. Mr. Bridwell was one of 10 panelists who, in January 1973, met in Washington, D.C., to discuss the philosophy and state-of-the-art of community involvement. An edited transcript of those proceedings can be found in the widely used booklet called Community Involvement in Highway Planning and Design. Copies are available through the Federal Highway Administration.

Walter Arensberg graduated from Harvard University, majoring in Political Science. He is currently enrolled in the Masters program of the Harvard Department of City and Regional Planning. From April 1972 to September 1973, Mr. Arensberg worked on the West Side Highway project under Lowell Bridwell, as Community Coordinator, and was responsible for mobilizing and guiding the West Side Highway project staff in its interactions with community groups. Currently, he is Participating Associate with the firm of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill.

The interviewers are George Duffy, Chief of the Community Involvement Section in the Federal Highway Administration's Office of Environmental Policy and Michael Lash, Director of Environmental Policy in the Federal Highway Administration.

MR. LASH: Lowell and Walter, the effort that was put into community involvement as part of the West Side Highway project was impressive. You faced a very complex and difficult assignment to achieve extensive and constructive community involvement. What are some of the most important lessons in community involvement that we can learn from the West Side Highway project?

MR. BRIDWELL: One of the most significant things, in my opinion, to get good community involvement on a project such as the West Side Highway is recognizing that there are many different publics that must be addressed. These publics include, at the very small scale, neighborhood groups and block associations; persons whose perspective is quite literally limited to a relatively few square blocks. Also, you have to recognize that in New York City there is an unusual institutional situation in which major sections of the city are organized into community boards, representing communities of up to 40,000 and 50,000 people. In addition, you have public interest groups that are either city-wide or metropolitan-wide in scale and usually oriented around a certain perspective, such as a scientific interest, or the improvement of air or noise quality. Others have interests in cultural or historic activities. And then, of course, there are the groups that are interested in business activities which ensure the economic viability of the Island. We have had to be aware of all these groups and to think in terms of their perspective towards the West Side Highway project.

MR. LASH: Walter, what would you consider to be some of the most important lessons to be learned from the West Side Highway project?

MR. ARENSBERG: Two lessons which I consider important have to do with the purposes for a community participation program. The first is to maintain access to, and to keep communication going with, the various publics to better shape design. It is not just an exercise. By learning what a specific interest group, community group, or civic organization might think should happen on the West Side Highway, the professionals on the project are better able to shape their own design and planning decisions. We are not involved in community relations for its own sake. Rather, it is a process for learning the interest groups' objectives and ideas and trying to incorporate them into the design process.
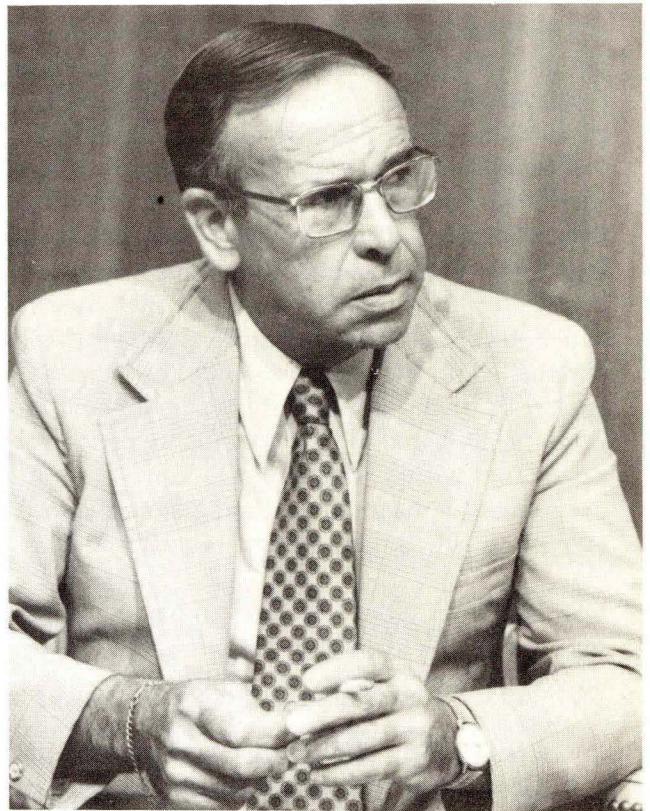

Lowell Bridwell

Michael Lash

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Another purpose of a community participation program is to maintain open channels of communication with the various groups. New York is certainly not a gentle place to be involved in community participation. New Yorkers are very vociferous and have very definite ideas as to what they want. By letting community people on every level know that whenever they came in the door of the West Side Highway project office they could go through the project files, and whenever they called on the telephone they could get an answer to their questions, it became possible to keep the style and temper of a highly controversial project within relatively civil human bounds. Consequently, negotiations and dialogue could take place with a minimum of temper and heat.

MR. DUFFY: When you have so many groups that need to be identified and worked with, how do you go about finding them all?

MR. BRIDWELL: Well it really isn't that difficult, George. Certain groups are obvious in starting any project. These include the whole range of civic, fraternal, and religious organizations that are easily identifiable, if by no other way than opening the yellow pages of the phone book. Quite literally, the start is the easiest part of all. During the course of meeting with these initial groups, almost without exception you will run into individuals or groups of individuals who have other kinds of associations, and they will lead you to other groups. I think it might be wise to point out that in the case of the West Side Highway project (and I don't want to concentrate all my comments on the West Side Highway project because it's been true in every project in which I've been involved), attempts to organize groups specifically for the purpose of dealing with the project are usually unsuccessful. It is much more productive if you can identify existing organizations and work through them since the groups are used to working with one another. I would recommend almost without exception that those who are involved in public participation seek out and identify existing groups and work with them. There is one other point I would like to make. It follows what Walter has said. Community participation is not a one-way communication in which you are explaining the project to the various organizations. Rather, it is an interactive mechanism in which you are learning from contact with these organizations or groups, and translating that information into either location
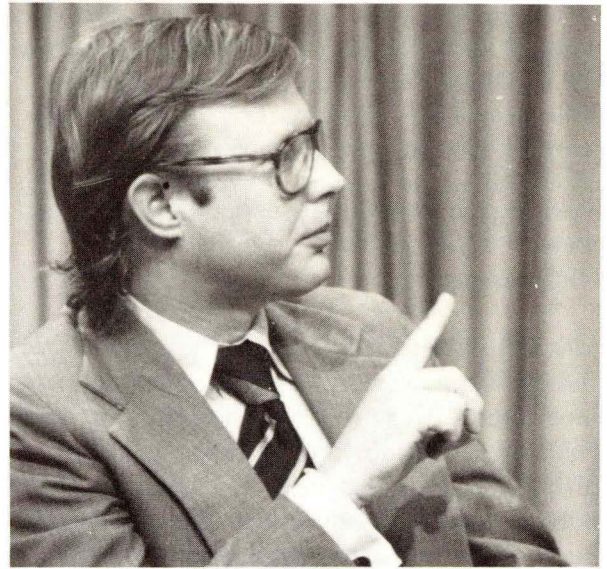
Walter Arensberg

George Duffy

or design activities. The fundamentals of community participation have to include a willingness to try to use what you have learned in terms of community goals, their particular objectives, and what they want to accomplish from the standpoint of the groups or organization.

MR. ARENSBERG: I would like to add to your earlier question, George, on how to start. It became a relatively simple proposition. Call it investigative reporting if you like. I started by getting a list from the city planning office of neighborhood groups with whom it had dealt. Then I went to some of these groups and obtained more names of more people. New York is a city that has local chambers of commerce. In Manhattan itself you will find businessmen's associations for a given avenue such as 5th Avenue or Broadway. I went to them and obtained additional names. So the question of starting is a relatively straight-forward proposition. I think you have to be willing to take a relatively passive role, and collect as much information as you can until a neighborhood and its organizations begin to define themselves. As you talk to more people you will begin to see what the structure of a given area is, whose name is mentioned most, and what group seems to be the most influential. Gradually, you can begin to paint a picture of how that particular community is structured.

MR. LASH: Ok, now you have successfully made contact with the interested groups; in your case, some 200 to 300 different groups with diverse interests. How do you deal with such a large number of groups in the way that you described a few minutes ago, where it's not a matter of explaining or giving information but a matter of interaction, communication, and negotiation? What sort of army did you mobilize to accomplish that task?

MR. BRIDWELL: Well, in terms of the West Side Highway project, Walter and one or two others worked on nearly a full-time basis. But one of the important factors here is that many other members of the staff worked on community participation in a variety of ways. People that were in charge of particular aspects of the study or in the planning of activities were also expected to go to community meetings, make explanations and enter into dialogues so that they got a flavor of what was going on. It was not just a case of Walter, or another, or myself

going to a community meeting and then trying to interpret the discussion back to the persons that were doing traffic studies, air quality studies, or design work. Each member of the staff who had responsibilities for these areas was expected to attend these meetings. Another point I would like to make concerns what we mean by interaction. You have to be careful to listen and interpret what the citizens are saying because quite frequently they will not come to you with a direct comment or a direct discussion. Rather, it will be peripheral and you have to be able to understand and relate that peripheral comment back to the major design or study activity you are trying to discuss.

MR. ARENSBERG: I think this is an aspect which dictates the kind of training or the kind of person that might be best suited for working in the community participation program. It seems to me that one of the main characteristics is the ability to listen in an open and unbiased way to what a community person is saying and not feel defensive. As we all know from working on highway projects, you are always under fire to a certain extent. It takes a certain amount of self control to resist the temptation to get defensive and argumentative with someone. It's important to listen and try to draw out through an objective line of questioning what that community person is trying to say and what interest he or she has.

MR. LASH: Lowell, you mentioned that you involved your own planners in public participation so they could take the input and use it in their work. Did you find that some of your people couldn't deal with public participation at all?

MR. BRIDWELL: Yes, Mike, we had some but not many. I think of one person in particular whom I took with me to community meetings. He would make a presentation on a particular engineering design, and from his standpoint it was a rational presentation on why configurations had to be constrained by physical limits of one sort or another. When someone questioned him, he got defensive and argumentative, rather than saying, "Ok, I understand your point, and it's a good point, but here are the problems with what you are trying to explain to me." The average person you encounter in citizen participation doesn't understand highway geometrics, and what's more, he or she doesn't intend to understand them. Degrees of curvature, grades,

elevation, etc., are of no consequence to them. So it takes a very careful explanation of what the limitations are within which you have to work. By the same token, if you can show through sketch design that you are trying to take their particular concern or problem into account, then you will get a very definite and heartening response. I think perhaps one of the most important things I can say to those who have to deal with community participation is you have to be believable. When you talk with the public, they must believe you are giving them a square shake. You have to get across that you are paying attention and trying, within the limits of what you have to work with, to do something about their concerns.

MR. DUFFY: It is also important to note here that the public has to know just how far the community involvement program can go and what the limitations are.

MR. BRIDWELL: Absolutely. If you can do something, you have to tell people you can do it. If it is beyond the scope of the community involvement program, then that has to be understood as well. Frequently, someone will make a point or ask for something that is beyond the range of the project. Such an example is a community group wanting to talk about better housing. A highway project can't do anything directly about the housing stock or the housing quality. You have to explain this to people. Here is what we can do something about and here is what we are willing to do something about.

MR. ARENSBERG: I want to make sure the concept of believability is not misunderstood. The person representing a project to the community has to convince the community he is honest and straightforward and will make every effort to answer the community's question. If he can't answer those questions himself, it seems to me that he has a certain amount of responsibility to try and help the community find an answer. In other words, if someone asks about housing, a community coordinator on a highway project can make an effort to assist the person in getting in touch with the local housing office. That raises another issue which is at the heart of being believable; that is, performing a service for people and trying to get information flowing both from and to the citizens.

MR. LASH: Both of you have made the important point that any agency operating a community involvement program needs to involve its technical personnel. How do you get engineers, planners, and other technical people involved so that they not only want to do this but will do it?

MR. BRIDWELL: Mike and George, what is important is attitude. It doesn't take special techniques. It's not a question of going to school or getting involved in some kind of technical training program. The staff must have the attitude that it is going out to give information and not to sell something. The technical people must keep in mind that the people they are addressing are not as knowledgeable nor as technically trained as they are, and the information given has to be translated into understandable terms. Questions which are asked have to be answered and not dismissed as irrelevant. The key is having the attitude that people interested enough to give their own time in evenings or at any other time are sufficiently interested in, and therefore, are due a response to whatever they have to say.

MR. ARENSBERG: It puts a considerable amount of responsibility upon the people managing the project. It requires that they tax themselves and invest a good deal of energy in going to meetings which they might not normally attend. If a project manager or someone in charge of an overall aspect of the project is willing to go to a block association meeting or a monthly meeting of a small community group in a church basement, his presence gradually builds up the community's confidence in the project and in the sensitivity of its director. I think it's also important that the people in charge of the project participate in the technical meetings which project personnel might have with the community. When the community group comes to the project office to review plans for the neighborhood, or to review a relocation program, or to go through certain aspects of the environmental impact studies, that group should not only meet with the junior members of the staff, but with the people directing the studies and the entire project. It is a good idea to have a third party involved in such meetings. If, for instance, you're meeting with a community group interested in learning about traffic counts, it's invaluable to have the expert in traffic studies there to give the

presentation and explain the specialized aspects of it. It's also a good idea to have someone more accustomed to working in the community (and with community groups) to moderate and help explain things that may have gone over the committee's heads, or conversely, over the technician's head.

MR. DUFFY: From what has been said thus far, we have placed a great deal of emphasis on meetings. What are some of the other methods with which you are familiar and which you have found successful to get the community involved?

MR. BRIDWELL: Person-to-person contact is absolutely essential in a successful community involvement program.

One of the things that was quite important to us, and I think tremendously successful in terms of community participation, was our willingness to put together information in a wide array of graphic forms in language understandable to the layman. It's very unusual in a community participation activity to find people who can read engineering drawings. They just don't know what they are looking at. We had a number of activities, such as special graphics, maps, charts, and drawings to try to put across our thoughts to the individuals. We used a number of slide presentations so that we could focus the presentation around the particular interests which a group might have. I guess the answer is that while there are all kinds of supplementary things that should be done such as written reports, progress reports, and graphic presentations, without question, person-to-person contact is the most important element in community involvement.

MR. ARENSBERG: That suggests a problem that I really hadn't thought about too much, so I'm not going to offer any kind of answers or suggestions. But, it does raise an issue of how to mount a community participation program on the regional or systems planning scale. If you're dealing with a project that already has its definite geographic location, it is easier to find in the neighborhood the groups who have some stake in what might happen in that particular corridor. On the regional or systems level, it's much more complicated You're trying to involve people who, by nature, are only interested once they see the possibility of some disruption or some effect on their neighborhood. Trying to get them involved in a much more amorphous program of system or regional planning raises very serious and thorny problems for transportation planners. In many cases, it's on that regional or systems level where the early decisions are being taken which later will affect specific projects.
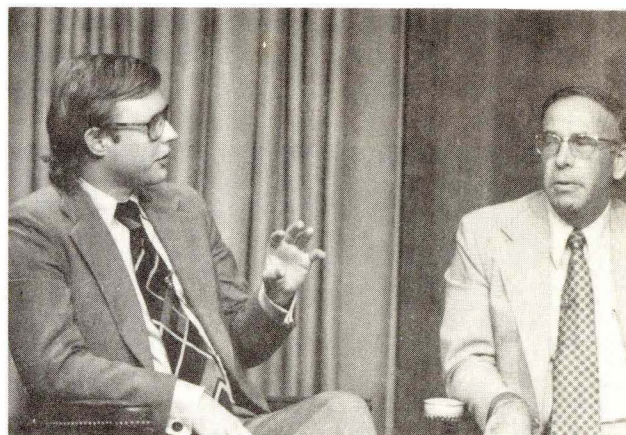
MR. BRIDWELL: I can think of a good example, and it gives us a chance to talk about something other than the West Side Highway--the Metro rapid rail system in Washington, D.C. From early in the planning at the systems level, through the years, there generally was agreement with the rail transit plan. It received wide support from many elements of the community. But the rail system in Washington, D.C., just like many individual highway projects in some cities throughout the country, has run into very substantial opposition as it gets down to the project or corridor level. I emphasize this because in my associations with highway people, they think no one suffers these kinds of problems except highway people.

This isn't true. It's also the case in almost any kind of public works projects. It involves urban renewal, housing, rail transit, highways, river and harbor improvements projects, all kinds of Corps of Engineer projects, etc. It isn't something that has an easy solution. It is, rather, the recognition that when you're working on the systems level or at the metropolitan scale, then you deal with certain kinds of public groups. When you get down to the corridor or the project level it's a much more narrow focus and you work with community groups accordingly.

MR. LASH: To emphasize that point, Lowell, even if you have an outstanding community involvement program at the systems stage and it has successfully carried out its community agreement on the broad outlines of the project, that doesn't mean the community involvement job is done. As soon as you start in the corridor you must begin addressing a new group of people interested on that scale.

MR. BRIDWELL: That is quite correct. Let me give you another example. In the Denver metropolitan area they had a very sucessful program of developing a metropolitan-scale transit system which was going to be an advanced system of personal rapid transit. Its success was shown when the people of the metropolitan area voted a tax upon themselves to support it. When the people will vote a tax upon themselves to support something, it is reasonable to conclude that it has public acceptance. What was not understood at all until the corridor stage of planning was that the system they voted for eventually would be a system involving cars moving on an elevated steel structure through their neighborhoods. The community was opposed to the system once it fully understood the implications of the plan. This is the same situation highway planners face.

MR. LASH: The community involvement job is never done until the project is completely built.

MR. BRIDWELL: Yes, and I want to emphasize that, Mike. I've seen it happen many times. Once the location or design decision has been made, everybody thinks that community involvement is all over and done. It isn't over. Community involvement must be maintained throughout a project, and particularly throughout the relocation phase which is the most difficult. It also goes through the construction phase because don't forget, the people are also concerned about the dirt, the noise, the disruption, and those kinds of things that are an essential part of any construction project.

We should understand this, plan for it, provide for it, and just consider it an essential, very costly element of a project, the same as buying steel, or asphalt, or concrete.

MR. ARENSBERG: Let's talk about this question of cost for a moment. When you commit yourself to involving the community in a design process, I think you are committing yourself to trying to structure that process so it has logical key decision points for you to reassess alternatives you are structuring. So it has implications for work programs which, in turn, have implications for time and money. You have to do a thorough job. If you just touch it lightly and hand out some brochures from time to time, you're probably in for some real trouble.

MR. LASH: Would you elaborate on what you mean by doing a thorough job?

MR. ARENSBERG: Approximately 50 percent of what the community first hears about a project is pure rumor, and a lot of the issues that arise are issues based on misinterpretations. So, one of the reasons why you have to keep a continuous and very thorough person-to-person contact going is to overcome the misconceptions. It takes a while. If you start a community participation program that is just trying to fulfill the narrowest interpretation of the law and involves nothing more than an occasional public information meeting, you may be propagating these misconceptions.

MR. DUFFY: You seem to be coming right back to the earlier point on believability. The whole process has to be believable and if it takes a long time, then that's what has to happen.
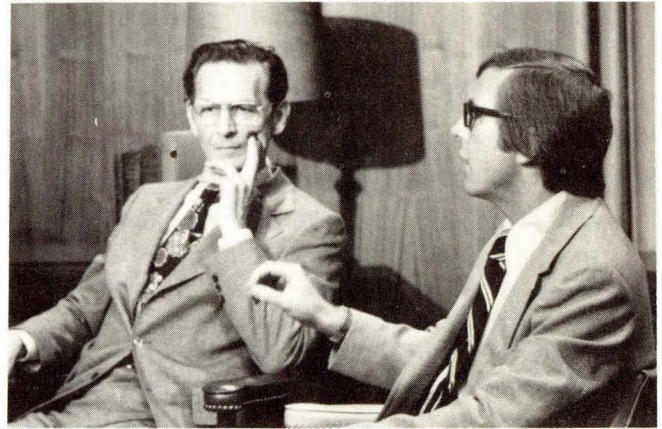
MR. BRIDWELL: Community participation will lengthen the time of any project planning activity. It takes additional time because being believable is being able to be patient in listening and in providing information. It sounds oversimplified, but it really is very important for the person or persons involved in community participation to put themselves in the place of the citizen actively engaged in this activity. This is really not that difficult to do. Attitude, a willingness to participate, and a willingness to go to extra lengths are needed to demonstrate to people that you're trying to take into account their expression of concern. It's just amazing the payoff in terms of credibility and acceptability when this is accomplished.

MR. LASH: Walter, you made a point earlier that one requisite for establishing a good rapport with community groups was to provide open access to your records and your files. You also implied, I thought, that your meetings were open for observation by outside group representatives. I would like to ask two questions. First, does having an open-access policy ever prove embarrassing to the project, and secondly, does it give a group whose main interest is to be disruptive an advantage?

MR. ARENSBERG: In my limited experience with the West Side Highway project it never proved "fundamentally embarrassing" to the project. I think it undoubtedly leaves the field open to a person who wants to be disruptive. The thing that was most interesting to me on the West Side Highway project was that throughout the project we maintained an open-file policy and open meetings, and yet you could probably count on your

fingers the number of people who actually started going through those files. People would come to meetings but generally they were people who were associated with a particular group.

MR. BRIDWELL: Mike, it has been my experience, and again not only on the West Side Highway project but on other projects, that letting the public know that your files and all aspects of the project are completely open to them for their inspection is very worthwhile. The difficulties it may cause with people coming to the office and wanting information is very small compared to the value you get out of it. If you have open files and open meetings, and really mean what you say, then people who have no intent other than to be disruptive certainly have the same access as anyone else. We ran into it in a number of our community meetings in New York. I think the importance of this is that the public groups who have a very definite and legitimate interest in the project are just as displeased about being interrupted by people that want to be disruptive as the project managers are. Frequently, at public meetings when people attempt to be deliberately disruptive, the challenge to their disruptiveness came from their colleagues. I don't regard it as anything more than just one of the normal things that has to be dealt with and overcome. But, do it in a quiet and completely comfortable manner. Don't get into a shouting match with a person who is deliberately trying to incite that kind of an atmosphere.

MR. LASH: In other words, project personnel aren't the only ones that are involved in controlling the problem. Group pressure generally takes care of that.
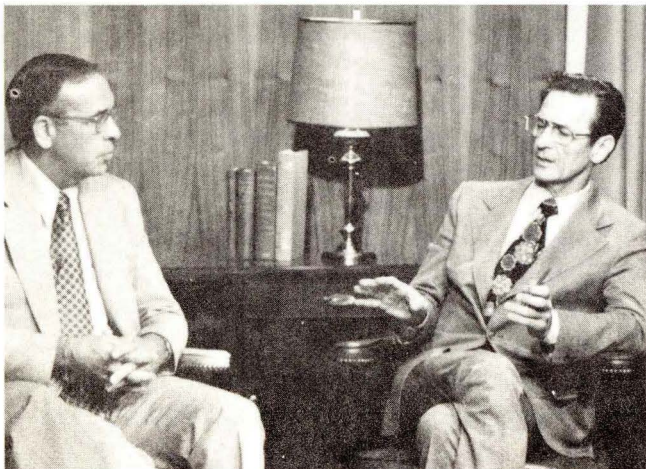
MR. BRIDWELL: Absolutely.

MR. LASH: So far in our discussion we haven't talked about the role of the elected official. How does he fit into the community involvement program?

MR. BRIDWELL: Elected public officials must be completely cognizant and regularly informed on the progress of the project, and the public should know that the official is being kept informed. I would not advise ever trying to get an elected public official committed to a project, or a particular location, or to a particular design well in advance of the conclusion of the project. You have to keep in mind his particular perspective. And his perspective is, "I don't want to pass upon this or render an opinion until the conclusion of the project." As a general rule, it is unwise to get a public official committed to a conclusion or a result before the project is completed.

It is also important to consider officials who are not elected, a number of whom may want to get deeply involved in the project. These are usually officials that head administrative agencies that have some direct or indirect interest in the project. If it is an urban project, for example, the people who are responsible for streets, traffic control, sewers, and water resources have a legitimate and necessary interest in the project. Specific provisions should be made for involving them through briefings, meetings, and so forth. They will be quite supportive if they feel confident that their particular responsibilities and services are being taken into account as part of the project planning activities.

MR. DUFFY: Once you have this public agency involved, how do you keep their interest in the project?

MR. BRIDWELL: Well, its usually easier to keep a public agency involved in a project than it is a citizens group, because in these complex projects the planning period can go on for several years. Usually an administrative agency will assign personnel to work with the project on a regular basis so it isn't particularly difficult to keep them involved over the course of the planning period.

MR. DUFFY: It is one thing for the transportation planner to make an effort to understand the perspective of the various groups. Isn't it also just as important for each of the groups to be willing to see each other's perspective? How do you go about getting them to interact with each other?

MR. BRIDWELL: Yes, quite frequently when you have groups of diverse interest and often conflicting interest, it is necessary to bring them together in a meeting in which you play the role of the moderator so the groups can express themselves to each other. And sometimes it is necessary to produce the conflict situations so that the citizen groups themselves can understand that there are others that have completely different values which have to be taken into account.

MR. LASH: Lowell, I would like to explore that point. It seems to me a very important one because, heretofore in this discussion, we have emphasized the desirability of working with groups, understanding their viewpoints and negotiating with individual groups. Now you bring out the importance of having interaction between the groups themselves so they can understand the various pressures being applied towards the solution of a particular point.

MR. BRIDWELL: It has to be dealt with subtly, Mike, because one of the things you don't want to occur is a situation in which you deliberately bring groups into conflict with each other, and consequently, it degenerates into a disruptive shouting match. You want a constructive atmosphere to be created from this conflict situation. It has to be done with some thought and care. But it is important, for example, that a group

which is thinking only in terms of an environmental aspect, such as air quality, to learn from another group which is clearly in favor of clean air but which has other things of value it wants to bring to bear in this process. You bring them together so that they can see there is a difference in values.

MR. LASH: Lowell and Walter, what in your opinions are the realistic goals that we can accomplish with public participation? How far can we take it? What can we expect from it? What are its limitations?

MR. ARENSBERG: Well, I think much of what we have been talking about today suggests that public participation is an absolutely necessary aspect of any project--necessary because of the very nature of planning and design. In trying to develop a solution to a large transportation problem, or any problem which might involve a major public work, you are, in effect, negotiating with all the various interests to arrive at some kind of agreement. That agreement might be that there is no solution or the kind of solution is not appropriate for the particular project. But, nevertheless, the objective is to negotiate a solution. A negotiated solution is based on a consensus either to go ahead, or to wait, or to stop. I think with that in mind, the goal of a community participation program is to expend the energy and resources necessary to identify the groups who should be involved and who want to be involved; to channel their interests and concerns into the technical design process; and to have the patience to continue to negotiate energetically, pushing for some kind of solution that does represent an equitable agreement. This is not a statement of what the goals or limits of community participation are. It is a statement of its necessity. But, I don't think that community participation is always going to produce community agreement.

MR. BRIDWELL: I think this is a very important point, Mike, for everyone to have quite clear. Several years ago, there was the thought that if everybody just came together in a room and talked it over, there would be unanimous agreement at the end. Not a chance. To anyone who still holds the idea that out of this community

participation process you can have everyone in agreement, the answer is no. I think, also, you have to keep in mind that community participation isn't a decisionmaking process. It is the mechanism by which a decisionmaker can make an informed decision. But it does not relieve a decisionmaker from his responsibility. It goes back to our whole conversation about believability, of being candid in informing the public of what you are trying to do, of making absolutely certain that you hear them, and that you try your best to do something constructive about their expressions of concern.

MR. LASH: The main emphasis you put on community involvement is that it is necessary, and that without community involvement it is difficult for a highway official to make an informed decision because there will be a lot of information he doesn't have.

MR. BRIDWELL: Mike, I think even if a highway official could plan a project and not run into any kind of difficulty, such as adverse public reaction or court suits, he still should undertake the community participation process to make a well-informed decision. There isn't a highway official in this country who would go out and undertake a major design project without a soil investigation. Soil investigation is a basic input into the design process. It is information that he must have to make a well-informed decision. I put community participation in exactly the same light. It's a basic part of information gathering for a well-informed decision.

MR. LASH: How about its utility for improving public confidence? As you both pointed out, community involvement may not eliminate controversy. Usually it does not. If you have controversy beforehand, you are likely to have it after community involvement. Assuming that is the case, what does a good community involvement program accomplish in terms of the attitude of the community towards the project?

MR. BRIDWELL: If it is done well, Mike, although it will not eliminate the controversy nor win over people that are in dedicated opposition to the project, it will demonstrate that the decisionmaker has taken full account of all the information that he has gathered and has attempted to build into the location or the design features that will lessen the disruptive nature or impact of the project. If he can accomplish that so that the public feels that it has gotten a square shake, then the level of disagreement, the intensity of the adversity will be, just by order of magnitude, less than it would have otherwise been.

MR. LASH: You are saying that even though you may still have controversy at the conclusion of studies, if you have a good community involvement program you are bound to have fewer controversies because in the process you have solved some of the problems.

MR. BRIDWELL: That's correct. It has been demonstrated that community groups will support the ultimate decision even though it may still have some adverse impacts because they have systematically gone through the process and understood all of the various things that are at stake, including the perspective of groups other than their own. And quite frequently, you will get support for a project even though it is less than an overwhelming and enthusiastic support. In any event, you lowered the level of controversy and mitigated opposition. Please recognize there are some groups, because they are so fundamentally dedicated in their opposition to a highway project, or a transit project, or a housing project, that they are unwilling to negotiate or pay attention to the perspective of other groups who may be in favor of it. So what I am really underscoring here is, I don't look for unanimity of agreement. But, what is a very real and very tangible product is a lessening of the controversy and, quite frequently, open and vociferous support for the conclusion.

MR. ARENSBERG: I think what people seem to fear most is uncertainty and potential disruption of a large and mysterious project that may alter their lives. One thing we haven't talked about is that it may be very difficult to get a community group itself to make a decision in favor of a project. And that suggests that one of the main things you need to do is to keep the communication going so the community group is well informed and feels that its concerns have been taken into account. To some extent, you may not want to ask a community group to vote in favor of one

asks a community group to vote in favor of one

thing or another. If fact, you may want to avoid
the notion of a vote. Go for votes and expression
of support and you are, in effect, disrupting some-
thing. You are forcing people to draw lines and
make distinctions that they may not want to make
or are incapable of making.

MR. LASH: As we conclude our discussion, I
would like to address this question to you Lowell.
You participated, as I mentioned earlier, in a
panel discussion on this subject in January 1973
and since then, you have had much first-hand
experience of a particularly challenging kind with
community involvement. Are your views on the
subject different today than they were then, and
if so, in what way?

MR. BRIDWELL: No, Mike, when we got to-
gether and talked about this interview, I reviewed
the panel discussion transcript and still consider
it a relevant document. I think it would be ex-
tremely useful for those who are involved in pro-
ject planning to read the document. I don't feel
any differently now than I did at the time. And
that is based upon almost 3 more years of experi-
ence in dealing with a very difficult subject.

MR. LASH: In other words, you have a chance
to test some of those things you talked about
then and they seem to work.

Walter, I would like to give you a chance for any
concluding remarks you may wish to make.

MR. ARENSBERG: Well, concluding remarks
always seem to be inadequate. I think the most
important thing to me, in relation to community
participation, is that the process is absolutely neces-
sary. In many ways, to question whether it is
necessary or not is irrelevant. We have to do it.
It is part of the normal process of trying to arrive
at a judicious and equitable decision. It is a way
of building confidence between public officials,
people responsible for public works projects, and
the community people who are involved.