

This approach to local government reorganization has been proposed in a number of cases but seldom adopted. Its distinguishing characteristics are found in the only existing multipurpose district in the United States—the municipality of Metropolitan Seattle—and in the recent serious proposals for setting up such districts, as in California and Minnesota. These characteristics are (1) the potential performance of more than one function, as distinguished from the limited-purpose district; and (2) vesting in the area affected the authority to take on the additional functions. Some of the proposals have provided for other features to be included, such as the appointment of members of the governing body by and from the governing bodies of the constituent local governments.

In the past a few metropolitan special districts have been given more than one function to perform. The Port of New York Authority and the Bi-State Development Agency (St. Louis, Mo.-East St. Louis, Ill.) are examples. Generally, however, they have been reluctant to assume new responsibilities, and have not viewed their purpose as that of providing a wide variety of functions.¹⁸ The multipurpose district, gradually taking on additional responsibilities pursuant to local consent, is thus a relatively new concept.

The municipality of Metropolitan Seattle was set up in 1958 under a 1957 State law enabling cities and towns of Washington to act jointly to meet common problems and obtain essential services not adequately provided by existing agencies of local government. It provides sewage disposal and water pollution control services in an area surrounding Lake Washington entirely within King County. Under the law local communities are empowered to add the following additional functions to the metropolitan municipal corporation: transportation, comprehensive planning, water, parks, and garbage disposal. The Seattle metropolitan municipality has not taken on any additional functions to date, however.

The district is governed by a metropolitan council of 16 members, consisting of 14 elected officials from component municipalities, one commissioner of King County, and one additional person (not an elected official) chosen by the remainder of the council to act as chairman. The district has no direct taxing powers. It may accept Federal grants and borrow from other local governments, as well as issue revenue bonds for capital purposes. Revenue to finance current operation, maintenance, and debt service comes from service charges imposed on a per-household basis. The district may also obtain "supplemental income" from each component city and county, based on the local share of the total assessed value of the district.¹⁹

The metropolitan multipurpose district, as established in Seattle and proposed elsewhere, has most of the strengths of the metropolitan limited-purpose district: adaptation to metropolitan scope, response to immediate public need, forestalling the creation of many small urban special districts. Moreover, the metropolitan multipurpose district has several additional advantages: (1) By requiring that the assumption of additional functions be subject to voter approval, it preserves sensitivity to local wishes, and controls the piecemeal approach to

¹⁸ Bollens, *Special District Governments in the United States*, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

¹⁹ *First Annual Report, Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle, 1959-60* (Seattle Metropolitan Council, July 1960).