

downturn. Before public facilities can be constructed, they must first be planned, and this planning should be related to some assessment of needs. A periodic assessment of aggregate public facility needs provides, then, a comprehensive picture of the growth potential of an important sector of the U.S. economy, useful to those who have to chart the future course of the economy.

B. PLAN OF THE STUDY

1. *General Considerations*

Initially, assembling the requisite mass of data on the public facilities capital plant in the Nation appeared a formidable, if not impossible, assignment, considering the diversity of ownership patterns and the variety of public facility categories. To confine the study of public facilities to those owned and operated by State and local public bodies would overlook the facilities owned by private, nonprofit organizations, including most of the Nation's hospitals, colleges, and neighborhood centers, and significant amounts of recreational or cultural facilities. On the other hand, the major alternative to State or local public ownership for such public facilities as electric power, gas distribution, airports, marine ports, or parking facilities is ownership and operation by a private, investor-owned company.

To obtain a comprehensive picture of all public facilities, irrespective of ownership, it seemed advisable to develop the study along functional lines; that is, to assemble a series of chapters, each dealing with a specific category of public facilities. Within the chapter appropriate delineations could be made regarding the ownership distribution of the existing capital plant, trend of capital outlays, and prospective capital requirements. The component data by ownership patterns, as well as the totals for each category of public facilities, could then be aggregated, such as is done in the next section of this chapter, or they could be cross-tabulated according to other needs of the user.

The decision to base the study on a series of chapters, each dealing with a specific category of public facilities, materially eased the problem of data assembly. For each public facility category there are groups, generally a Federal agency or a private trade association, that can avail themselves of a substantial amount of knowledge regarding the services rendered, the existing capital plant, costs and user charges, trends of capital outlays, and they are likely to be the most informed as to prospective needs and capital requirements. As evidenced by the chapters in this volume, such materials can be developed by these groups from reports already published, unpublished data in their files, from special surveys, or by informed estimates.

2. *Procedure*

Accordingly, arrangements were made with private associations or Federal agencies, which were believed to be best qualified, to prepare authoritative chapters on designated public facility categories. To assure uniform coverage, and to permit the tabulation of comparative data, each chapter writer was requested to follow a standard outline, set forth in questionnaire form, that was enclosed with the letter of request transmitted by the Chairman of the Joint Economic Committee. (See Supplementary data, pp. 20-21.)