

of public facilities and information on user charges. The cost data provide some basis for judging relative construction costs or, to put it another way, an indication of what \$1 million of capital outlay is likely to purchase for different categories of public facilities.

Table 6 analyzes the extent to which user charges are employed for each of the public facility categories. As will be noted, of the 42 public facility categories listed, user charges are employed either substantially or moderately in 33. For this purpose, "substantial" means that user charges are employed in all or most instances or, where they are employed, cover all or a substantial part (over 50 percent) of capital and operating costs. "Moderate" means that user charges are infrequently employed or that they cover only a small part (under 50 percent) of capital and operating costs.

User charges are employed for all categories of public facilities classified as basic community facilities and transportation facilities and for all but one of the categories within the groups classified as health facilities and recreational or cultural facilities. On the other hand, there are no user charges for public elementary and secondary schools, health research facilities, public libraries, and the facilities relating to public safety and administration [armories, jails and prisons, fire (and police) stations, residential group care for children, and public office and court buildings].

Inasmuch as most of the public facilities described in this volume have user charges that cover all or part of capital and operating costs, they are amenable to financing through long-term borrowing, so that the capital costs of the facilities can be prorated over several generations of users, each of which can pay all or part of the apportioned capital costs.²⁴ Financing through borrowing against future revenues, of course, enlarges the volume of capital outlays that can be accomplished during any specified period, as compared to capital outlays financed entirely out of current receipts.

D. EVALUATION OF DATA

1. *Data Quality*

Essentially, this volume is a data source book, full of facts, figures, and expert projections. Many of the chapters contain a wealth of information, sufficient to satisfy most users. However, in some chapters the information is scanty; and upon reading them, one might be inclined to question whether they reflect the ultimate possibility in conveying information about the subject.

Checking with other sources, one finds that in a number of instances the contents of these chapters are just about all we do know with respect to the kinds of data called for in the committee questionnaire. The paucity of information on capital outlays in the various chapters on health facilities, to cite one area, may be attributed to (a) the "programmatic" viewpoint of the Federal agencies concerned with such matters as health, which results in minimal interest in related activities carried on outside Federal assistance programs, (b) a lack of detail in the construction statistics compiled by the Bureau of the Census, and (c) limited efforts by the executive branch to take the

²⁴ The increasing concern regarding the adequacy of hospital charges paid by public welfare agencies on behalf of indigent patients and by private group medical plans on behalf of their members suggests that future hospital user charges may cover a larger proportion of hospital capital and operating costs.