

CHAPTER 13

Urban Mass Transit Facilities*

A. NATURE OF URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

1. DESCRIPTION OF FACILITIES

As U.S. cities have grown in size and number, urban mass transportation facilities have not grown with them. Unlike other public facilities such as water and sewage systems which lagged behind population growth and increasing concentration of population in urban centers, mass transportation facilities actually decreased in the years following World War II. This was due to several causes, the most important being a great increase in the number and use of private automobiles, coupled with a decline in mass transit service and an increase in its fares.

Urban mass transportation is defined in this chapter as the movement of people within urban areas by large-capacity vehicles operating as common carriers. Mass transportation facilities, therefore, consist of bus, trolley coach, rapid transit, and surface or elevated electric railway systems. Railway commuter service, although a vital part of urban mass transportation, especially in the larger metropolitan centers, is not included in this analysis because of the difficulty in separating it from the railroads' long-distance, intercity service.

Since urban areas vary so widely and there is no consensus on the ideal transportation system or the correct level of service, general standards of performance for mass transportation systems have not been set. The situation is not analyzed by reference to standards of performance but rather in terms of an urban transportation problem. In the 1966 edition of his book *The Metropolitan Transportation Problem*, Wilfred Owens of the Brookings Institution states:

Every metropolitan area in the United States is confronted by a transportation problem that seems destined to become more aggravated in the years ahead. Growth of population and expansion of the urban area, combined with rising national product and higher incomes, are continually increasing the volume of passenger and freight movement. At the same time, shifts from rail to road and from public to private transportation have added tremendous burdens to highway and street facilities. They have created what appear to be insuperable terminal and parking problems. Continuing economic growth and the certainty of further transport innovation threaten to widen the gap between present systems of transportation and satisfactory standards of service.

Manifestations of the transportation problem in urban areas include the mass movement between work and home and the cost that it represents in money, time, and wasted energy. The transit industry is experiencing rising costs and financial difficulties, while the rider is the victim of antiquated equipment and poor service * * *.

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