A MASTERS PROJECT

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

FOR

MAJOR TRANSPORTATION STUDIES

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P R E F A C E

This report addresses itself to the public participation procedure as adopted and included in a major transportation study presently underway in the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth. The general "state of the art" is examined with a critical commentary on the manner in which the public was involved in the aforementioned study. The report concludes with a prediction on the anticipated success of the public participation procedure adopted.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Public participation in all its various forms and approaches has been recognized by planners, politicians, and the public as an integral component of any major transportation study. Although it is acknowledged that public participation is not only restricted to transportation issues, this report will deal primarily with the role of public participation as it is related to public transportation issues.

The report is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the present "state-of-the-art" of public participation, commencing with a generally accepted definition of the public participation process. In this part, such issues as reasons for participation, methods applied, the acceptance and effects of public participation, usefulness, and implications will be addressed.

In the second part the public participation process utilized on a particular major transportation study in the Hamilton-Wentworth area is reviewed. The case in point is the Mountain East-West and North-South Corridor Study, sometimes referred to as the Red Hill Creek and the Mountain Freeway Study. The public involvement procedures utilized in the North-South/East-West Transportation Corridor Study which is

presently underway in the Region is outlined. An attempt is made to establish whether any true form of public participation is, in fact, being carried out and applied.

The third part of this paper deals with some conclusions and recommendations with respect to public participation on major transportation studies. Particularly, a critical view is taken with respect to the public involvement procedures adopted in the Mountain East-West and North-South Corridor Study.

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2. STATE OF THE ART IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

As a result of the emergence of public participation in the 1960's, many forms and procedures have been developed. Initially, transportation studies adopted some forms of public involvement merely to placate the public and satisfy the decision makers that the public was no longer being ignored. From this state, much more formal public procedures were adopted and included as an integral and very important part of any major transportation study.

A large amount of literature is available outlining many different approaches. This report will deal with that procedure which seems to incorporate the state of the art as presently practised by planners, engineers and other public transportation planning agencies.

2.1 Citizen Participation - General Discussion

Public participation with meaningful quality implies that the citizen is a creative contributor to the process and that he grows as a result of the experience. Effective participation is, thus, two dimensional; the individual occupies a creative role in a given situation and his activity contributes to his development as an autonomous citizen.[1]

Citizen participation as it relates to transport planning can be defined as the assessment of involvement of the opinions or reactions of private citizens in transportation plans. It can be latent or blatant, organized or disorganized, highly technical or overtly emotional, political or nonpolitical, representative of a concensus of opinion or representative of an opinion of a narrower social or economic group.[2]

Dr. H. Hossé of the University of Western Ontario contends that there is no such thing as true public participation.[3] It is his opinion that what is deemed by many to be public participation is, in fact, simply a reaction of the public to actions taken by the planners and politicians. He claims further that the planning process, in general, and the planning mechanisms employed by public agencies elicits and seeks out public reaction, rather than active participation and involvement of the electorate or persons directly or indirectly affected.

In 1964, Philip Converse concluded in a study that citizens were not capable of participation.[3] He suggested that only a small fraction of the people, that is, only 10% of those who had completed college, were capable of understanding the issues involved in planning matters. He further concluded that people become interested only when they have a vested interest which may become threatened. He contends that as a result of the amount of indifference and ignorance of the operation of political

government, the public is unable to provide input into planning matters, nor should the public be requested to provide advice and input. This view was entirely contradicted by Bernard Crick.[3] His belief was that if issues are dealt with on a neighbourhood basis, the public will be interested and become involved. It was also his opinion that the local knowledge of the immediate environment of the general public can be of great assistance to the immediate residents and, thus, lead to good public participation.

These two opposing views have been disputed widely and vehemently. Generally speaking, however, it has become apparent that public participation has been left to the local elected representatives (politicians). At one point in time, it was believed that once a politician was elected, the public should allow that politician to carry on as a representative of the people and not be interfered with. This was the view prior to the 1960's. However, since that time, this is no longer the case. The politician is now listening to the manner in which the people react to the political action and decisions made. This may lead to some form of public participation which may not always be beneficial to the public at large.

This reaction mechanism has lead to many detrimental consequences. Participation via reaction has resulted in considerable delays in the decision making process. Furthermore, it has resulted in the organization of vested interest groups.

The formation of these minority groups has resulted in an inordinate amount of influence on the decision makers, namely the politicians.

In addition to these concerns, the greatest difficulty in the public participation process has been the lack of continuity and lack of expertise of the public who become involved. The public is not given a blank sheet prior to the commencement of the project wherein they can make their preferences known. The public, in general, is not interested in providing such input unless certain information and issues are put before them. This information is provided by public agencies who place issues before the people and request a reaction to a specific issue. Unfortunately, the general public is not in a position to evaluate the various issues intelligently and systematically. This may be due to the lack of expertise, the time commitment and the financial commitment required. Thus, there is often a process of manipulation applied by the planning agency. This manipulation may be carried out by presenting to the public only that information they wish the public to have. This information may then be formulated in a manner such that the conclusions and reactions of the public are those that are anticipated and desired by the agency.

The result of this procedure has, in many cases, been public confrontation meetings, rather than public participation meetings. In order to "calm the waters" public agencies have often held public meetings wherein the public is informed of various alternatives and issues. Unfortunately, in this instance, very little input has been gained by the public who participate. Often, participation is very low and the meetings may be ill-attended. Those that do attend the meetings may have different concepts regarding the reason for the meeting. This is often the case on major transportation studies. In this type of study, the issues are often complicated and difficult to understand, even for the professional planner, and for those who are involved from the initial stages. It is, therefore, almost impossible for the general public to understand all the intricate technical procedures and issues involved. As a result, the reaction at a public meeting is often one of frustration and disillusionment. One alternative for the public in this instance is to engage their own experts to evaluate the work that has been carried out by the public agency. This, of course, is almost impossible in light of the financial commitments required.

Generally, such an approach leads to a breakdown of public involvement and a genuine mistrust by the public. The following quotation of George Bernard Shaw as it applies in this instance

may be very appropriate - "Every profession is a conspiracy against the laity." In these confrontation sessions, the legitimacy of the professionals is attacked. Confrontation rather than participation has resulted in a breakdown of the process of effective communication between the planning agency and the public. The professionals who make up the planning agencies may, themselves, be responsible for this present situation. In many instances, this situation may be attributed by the adoption of the following three principles.[4]

- Participation facilities are seen as capital investments, that is, physical plant, rather than a participation service.

- Function of the participation facilities are seen as connecting geographical places, rather than providing a connection for people.

- The primary test of goodness of one geographical network of facilities over another is based on least cost, that is, least input of resources, rather than the largest output of benefit.

The public hearing procedure has been the transitional testing form of many agencies which devote their energies in experimenting with some effective formats for public hearings.

Participation planners, like other professionals in government, have been trying hard to respond in responsible ways to the layman's attempt for higher shares and, thus, for active results in decision making.[4]

In an effort to adopt a more genuine attempt to involve the public, professional planners have adopted and recommended the formation of layman citizen study groups, public opinion polls controlled by samples, and other direct citizen action procedures.

It is inevitable that public agencies must address themselves more vigorously to including the public in transport studies.[5] The following are some of the reasons:

- The pressures for public participation will, undoubtedly, increase.
- As new government activities are established, people are affected more and more, and additional intensive involvement is needed to make the system work. Public participation broadens the perspective and knowledge of those participating.
- Promotes independence of the individual.
- Promotes a feeling of fellowship and a sense of continued involvement with others.
- Allows for understanding and sensitivity to the well-being of others.

- Public participation can remove power from the hands of the few and allow neglected groups to express themselves.
- If citizens participate and help in the formulation of policy and plans, they will more readily accept the results and make it work.
- Public participation can be cost effective and more efficient in that problems are encountered prior to implementation. That is, cost effectiveness through cost avoidance.

In addition to the above reasons for adopting a sound public participation program, there are a number of external forces at work which are creating pressures towards more public participation. Some of these are as follows:

- Rising levels of education.
- Increased public awareness through improved mass media communications.
- Increasing size of organization and complexity creating a desire to influence decision making.
- Increased development such as residential, commercial, and industrial.

In any transportation planning study which contends to involve participation of the public, one very important principle must be recognized and adopted by all parties involved. Neither

the planner nor the politician should be allowed to make value judgements for the people. The public must be granted this very important role to make these decisions for themselves.

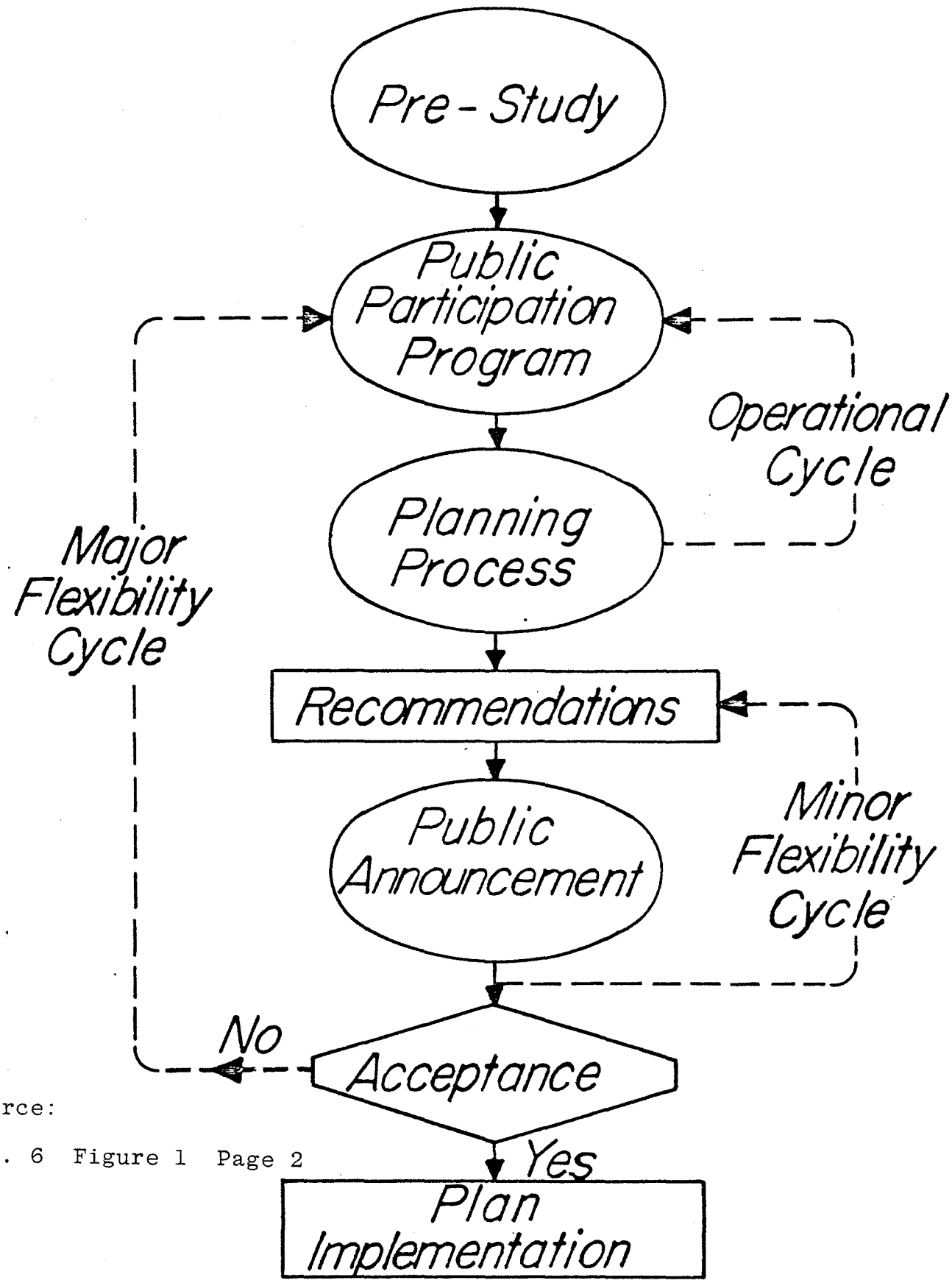
2.2 Public Participation Methods

Upon reviewing the abundant literature dealing with public participation, it becomes obvious that there are a wide variety of public participation techniques, each with its particular advantages and disadvantages. In view of its limited scope, this paper will only deal with a particular procedure which best represents the approaches generally employed.

There are basically two phases or levels involved in the public participation process. The first phase takes place within the realm of public forum and citizen advisory groups. This is normally referred to as the primary method. The second phase is a support function which provides the mechanism to prepare the way and overcome the basic shortcomings of the primary method. It is very important that the planners recognize that their community must be considered unique, therefore, in order to satisfy the specific needs of that community, an effective and meaningful program must be tailored to that particular situation. The various public participation or interaction methods become the interface between the planner and the public. Figure 1 outlines such interaction in more graphic form.[6]

Figure I

Public Participation



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2.2.1 The Primary Methods

Basically, the primary methods can be categorized into two parts, that is, the public forum and the citizen advisory group. The public forum method of public participation refers to the spectrum of participation techniques that are completely open to the public. This method speculates that all affected individuals are notified and permitted to attend and take part in the discussions concerning the particular transportation project.

The format for the public forum can vary from one municipality to another. Public involvement may vary from a relatively informal intimate drop-in centre, to a formal large scale public meeting. The drop-in centre may be best suited, since it provides the best vehicle for the dissemination of basic planning-related information. For this reason, this method is most applicable at the very early stages, such as, a feasibility study of a project. Other methods utilized in the public forum may be workshops, seminars, public meetings, and localized information booths.

There are both weaknesses and advantages to the public forum methods. The main weakness is vulnerability to abuse and over-control by strong groups who may have an "axe to grind". Often the public forum can develop into conflict situations

resulting in serious communication breakdowns. Since this method relies heavily on public meetings, the success and feed-back of information is very highly dependent on the capabilities of the organizers of a meeting and its chairman. Since the public is involved at large, the size of meetings and number in attendance cannot be controlled. This may result in attendance being so low as to be ineffective, or so high as to be unmanageable.

On the other hand, some of the advantages must be recognized. The method itself is an example of the open democratic process which allows any and all segments of the population to participate. It is an excellent method wherein information can be provided to all segments of the community at a very early stage. Since public feed-back is received at a very early stage by the planner, the planner is in a position to listen and become aware of the opinion of others prior to establishing decisions or his own opinions. The following quotation is very appropriate: "Wiring them into the system, making them a part of the guidance machinery of the society, is the most critical political task of the coming generation." Alvin Toffler, Future Shock.[7]

The prime purpose of public participation resulting in interaction between the public and the planner is to provide

for a mutual education process. If the public participation program does not provide this function, then it cannot be considered a success. It is most important that both the public and the planner consider the interaction as a process wherein additional knowledge and mutual education results. It is not enough that the planner merely provides information to the public. This assumes that the public is without knowledge, and only the planner knows what he is doing.

The second category of the primary method is the Citizen Advisory Group.[6] The Citizen Advisory Group is composed of representatives of all identifiable interest groups in the area including both the organized and unorganized. Ideally the group members are selected by those whom they will represent in a democratic manner. The role of the advisory group is threefold:

- It functions as a two-way communication link between the public and the planning team.
- It works directly with the planners in the formulation and the evaluation of alternatives.
- It provides the study with valuable information concerning local goals, attitudes, priorities, preferences, and opinions.

One of the major weaknesses of the citizen advisory group is that it requires the pre-existence or the formation of those groups in the area affected by the study. General Public apathy in a particular area may make it very difficult to form effective organized groups. On the other hand, groups may already be in existence as a result of previous confrontation with public agencies, thus, a certain amount of inherent militancy may be in existence. This militant attitude may make it difficult to provide the planner with relevant and appropriate methods of communications and dissemination of necessary information. Another difficulty of the advisory group is its strong reliance on the group leadership. The individual representative may bring varying degrees of personal bias into the study, i.e. he may be a poor reflector of his group's overall interest. The third disadvantage may be found in particularly large urban complex areas where it may be difficult to identify all pertinent interest groups.

Of course, there are a number of definite advantages of the advisory group as well. The planner or planning team works with a small group of interested and informed citizens. Because of the formal existence of a group, communications with the group can be direct and may be easily maintained. In theory, this technique can involve very large numbers of people, while dealing directly with only a few representative individuals. In order to set up such a mechanism, a great deal of contact

with people is involved, ensuring also that a cross-section of interests are represented. Organizational hierarchy and communication channels can be much more easily maintained with formally organized groups.

The citizen advisory group, by itself, is a good technique for citizen-to-planner education, however, the reverse process is less efficient and is difficult to assess. As is the public forum, both of these attributes can be improved through the effective employment of the following various support methods.

2.2.2 The Support Methods

The support methods can be subdivided into two broad categories: those incorporating direct contact with the people, and those which involve indirect contact.

By employing direct contact with the public through word of mouth communication, questions concerning policy will inevitably arise. It is very important that the planner react to the questions in a proper manner. The so-called encounter sessions may be planned on an ad hoc basis, or on a specifically preplanned basis. The ad hoc encounter can occur between a planning team, or the planning staff, and the concerned individual or group at any point in the participation program.

This form of contact requires the public to respond on a continuous basis. This may be difficult because of the demand on the individual and thus may be limited to only the most involved and interested citizens or groups.

These types of contacts are particularly useful in assessing such factors as the scope of interest the program is likely to generate, and providing the study with background information on the local situation. Major constraints on the face-to-face interaction methods described above is the limitations on time of the staff and the willingness of the public to give, which requires private time.

Indirect contact with the individuals may be carried out by telephone and by letter. High cost and limited coverage with this method are the major disadvantages. Another indirect method is by statistical means, such as surveys, opinion polls, questionnaires, etc. The advantages here are that the opinion of a large group can be obtained by direct contact with a minimum number by means of statistical means. The major difficulty in this method, however, is the structuring of the questionnaires and surveys. It is often very difficult to design a questionnaire for a particular survey which will be universally and readily understood. The design of the questionnaire is crucial, since the individual's response can be biased by the form in which the question is asked.

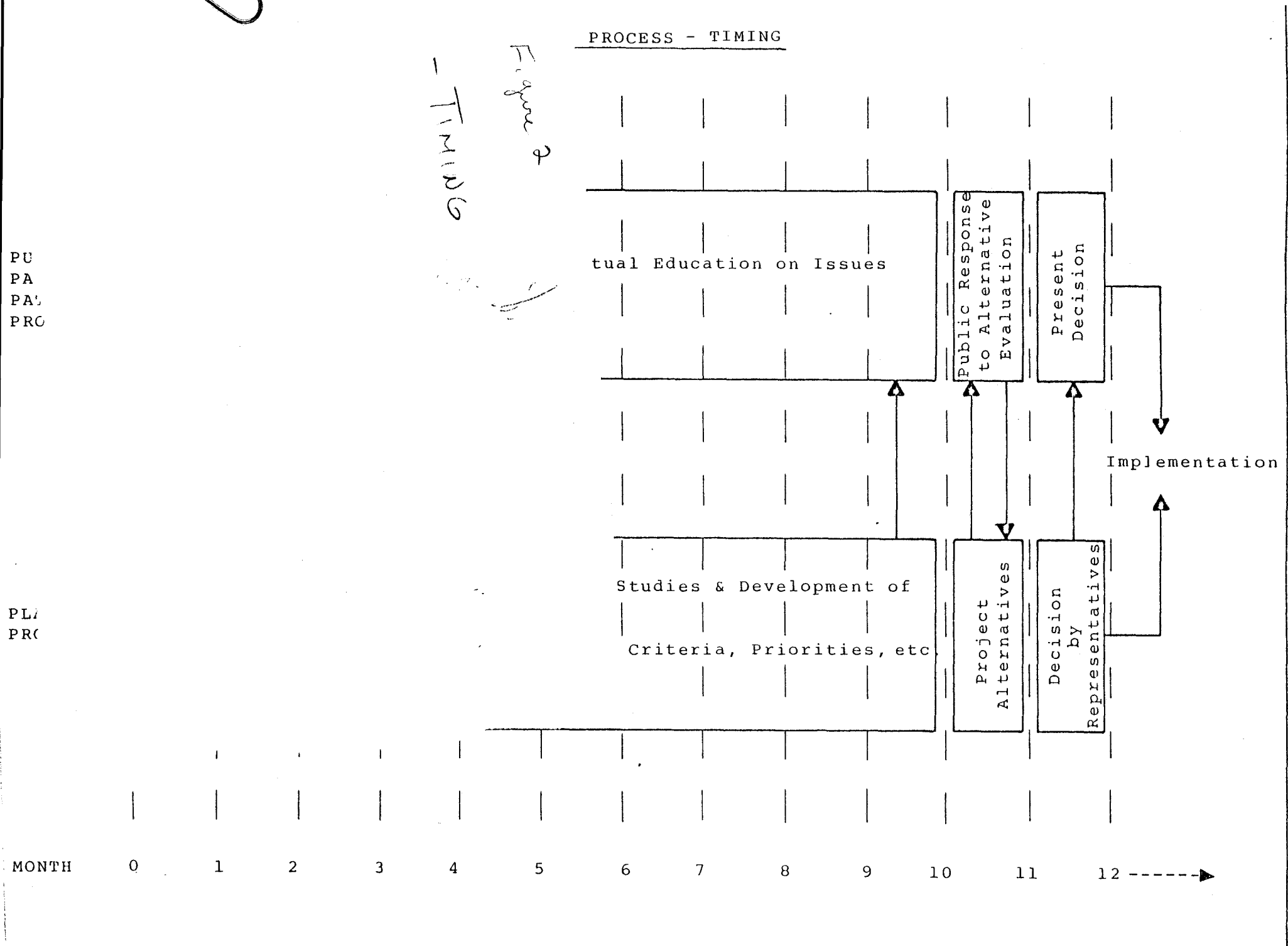
Another indirect method of contact is via the mass-media, such as newspaper, T.V., radio, etc., and through distribution of resource material. Dissemination of information by this method can be very effective and give excellent coverage, however, it may not be as effective in creating awareness or reaching uninvolved or apathetic citizens. With the deluge of information from all directions competing for the attention of the citizen of today, it is almost impossible to catch the imagination, interest and attention of all citizens, particularly on such matters as transportation issues.

2.3 Public Participation Program

The public participation program must be based upon knowledge of the area, its people, and, as in any responsive program, is subject to revision as new information is obtained and new developments occur, especially the technical side of the planning process. Two main ingredients in any program required to carry out the program effectively are timing and staff requirements.

2.3.1 Timing

A typical program for public participation over a twelve month period is outlined in Figure 2.8 The following is a more


PROCESS - TIMING
PU
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PA
PRO
tual Education on Issues
Public Response to Alternative Evaluation
Present Decision
Implementation
PL
PR
Studies & Development of
Criteria, Priorities, etc.
Project Alternatives
Decision by Representatives
MONTH
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12

detailed description of the various steps shown:[8]

Step 1 - Introduction and start-up phase (1 month)

Recruit, select and orient field staff. Prepare introductory brochure for mailing and use with initial contacts.

Step 2 - Initial data collection (3 months)

Field staff contact key people and organizations to discover the character of the communities, citizens' goals and their implications for the project, local issues, and knowledge of study. Subjects important to later decisions.

(Note - where possible, meetings needed would be called under the sponsorship of an appropriate local organization. Committee members would be informed of these meetings and, with the concurrence of the sponsoring organization, would be able to attend as resource persons or observers.)

Step 3 - Mutual Education (6 months)

Following a preview by the Committee and a briefing for elected representatives and their quests, this phase would commence.

Background data on study subjects assembled by the research team, together with several known alternatives,

would be summarized in a 4 - 8 page tabloid newspaper supplement distributed through the local press. Assistance would be given to radio and television stations to foster complete coverage including some preliminary advertising to alert citizens to the forthcoming publication.

Contents would include the purpose of the study, background data on core subjects, e.g. population, land use, etc. On the final page, readers would be invited to:

(a) place priorities on a list of criteria identified by field staff at local meetings, which respondents feel should be employed in deciding the best use of the area;

(b) suggest alternative solutions either individually or through their local organizations preparing a written proposal;

(c) note their name and location.

An incubation period of up to two weeks would be given before the deadline for mailing individual responses; a further four weeks would be allowed for group presentations.

To reduce demands on the study office, some kits of basic background material would be provided to interest

groups and placed in portable reference centres located in local body offices and public libraries. Responses, individual and group, would be tabulated by areas, summarized, passed to the planning team, previewed by the Committee and shared with the public through the media. The constructive discussion of the results between various organizations would be fostered according to the issues raised and the parties interested.

Step 4 - Response to Alternatives (1 month)

When the research and planning teams have defined some technically viable alternative solutions, together with descriptive data on each, this material would be previewed and published in a manner similar to Step 3 above. In this case, readers could be given a simple matrix showing the criteria (plus the average weights they allocated to them earlier) and the alternatives. They would be invited to either simply mark their first, second, etc. preferences or to do so after working through the matrix (in Ottawa recently, over 3,000 completed the matrix while over 5,000 simply gave their preferences, despite poor typography). After a two-week incubation period again, individual responses would be mailed in, tabulated by area, summarized and the results passed on to the Committee and the public through the media.

Step 5 - Decision (1 month)

Technical and public preference data would be provided for each viable alternative solution, so that the client and other decision making organizations would be assisted in discharging their responsibilities and the results communicated to the public.

2.3.2 Staff Requirements

The success or failure of any public participation program is to a large degree dependent on the competence of the planning staff involved. It is important that the staff approach the public participation program with the proper professional attitude. The staff must recognize and adjust to the attitudes of the public which it encounters. Staff must realize that public participation in the true sense, is a mutual education program. The prime reason for the failures for many public participation programs is due to the fact that the staff, in many instances, attempts to manipulate public responses by judicious dissemination of certain information. In many cases, conclusions may have already been reached subconsciously or otherwise by the planner, and the public participation program is designed to elicit concurrence from the public. It is very important that the staff approach the program without any

predetermined conclusions. A planner must be prepared to recognize the ability and capability of the public at large with whom he is dealing, at the same time however, he must recognize and establish the reliability and usefulness of information received from certain dissident groups. Acceptance and rejection of certain information must be carried out in a very judicious manner.

The most important element in a public participation program is the need for staff to gain both the respect and confidence of the public that are being addressed. This can be a most difficult and demanding task. A very appropriate example of the importance of attitudes of both the public and the planning staff is revealed in the public participation program carried out during the preparation of secondary neighbourhood plans for the City of Hamilton. In this project, the City of Hamilton carried out a series of public participation programs in the various neighbourhoods. It was found in those neighbourhoods where the staff and the public reached a certain level of mutual confidence and respect, the programs were successful. In those areas where those prime ingredients were lacking, the programs were deemed to be a failure.

It must be recognized that neither planners nor politicians should be allowed to make value judgements for the people. Very few planners are able to appraise the problems of an area

correctly. Planning cannot be fully accomplished by planners alone. Rick Straza, in his paper "Task Force on Citizen Participation"[5] stated that it was not the fact that the people in certain areas did not want to participate with the Planning Department of the City, but that they were given the run-around, kept ignorant of the facts, or completely discredited as minority groups. (This opinion relates to the neighbourhoods where the public participation program was not a success.) In the report "Changing the Roadway Environment in an Existing Community - An Experience" K. G. McLean reached the following similar conclusions with respect to the necessity of proper attitude of the staff:[9]

> "It is important that the staff be dedicated to the objectives of the project. The action - reaction situation of the past is outdated and leads to frustration and little or no progress. Public participation must be on a community level with a group that truly represents the community priorities to be effective."

2.4 "True" Public Participation

It is the writer's opinion that "true" public participation consists of a program which is initiated from within the public sphere. Traditionally, the main actors included in the public

participation program are the planner, the politician, and the public at large. Public participation with these three ingredients generally leads to involvement and expenditure of a large number of technical staff, funds, time and energy. Cynics have often contended that work in the public participation program and planning activities required provide job opportunities for planners graduating from our schools.

An example of true public participation, in my opinion, is the one wherein the prime participants are the public. This was exemplified by a case in a small community, Beacon Hill, a suburb of Ottawa, which undertook to provide its own public transportation system.[10] Several very interested and public-minded citizens undertook to create a public transit system on a non-profit basis.

Beacon Hill is a dormitory suburb of the City of Ottawa, outside the city's boundary and some 10 miles from downtown. The suburb is new, having been started in 1968-69, and at that time, the residents had no public transit. Being in the middle income class, this was not of serious consequence to them, but when the community association was formed and became active, transport was an obvious item of study.

By early 1971, the local municipality had negotiated an agreement with the Ottawa Transportation Commission for an extension of an existing adjacent route into the suburb, a solution not considered attractive by the residents, especially as it would have required a tax levy to meet the expected deficit. In 5 weeks, a special sub-group of the community association conducted a community wide transport demand service, approached and negotiated with local carriers regarding charter arrangements and costs, checked and met regulatory requirements, and then established a community-run express bus to the downtown area using school buses. In the week of July 5, 1971, one bus making two trips in each direction in the peak hours carried 63 passengers per day. Eleven months later, on June 1, 1972, when the management of the services was given over to the bus operator, 10 buses making 14 trips in the peak hours were carrying over 600 passengers a day in each direction and in addition, a basic off-peak service had been established.

These services are still growing, still profitable and are attracting interest across the country as simple, efficient and cheaper ways of meeting peak hour problems in certain types of commuting situations.

The program was initiated by individuals and gained momentum by spirited public participation program involvement and resulted in a transportation system which served the needs of the particular

community directly. It seemed, in this case, that the only difficulties encountered by the public were as a result of the interference of the Municipal staff and the politicians who raised all kinds of demands with respect to compliance with local planning rules and regulations. In the end, however, those objections and difficulties were overcome and set aside once it was recognized that the public good was the only and prime objective of the residents.

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3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN A MAJOR TRANSPORTATION STUDY

This section of the report deals with the public participation process included in the Mountain East-West and North-South Corridor Study. For the purpose of this report, this study will be referred to as the Corridor Study.

The method and extent of public participation utilized will be examined in light of the general procedures and state of the art outlined in the previous sections of this report.

3.1 History and Background

The Corridor Study is a combination of two transportation projects, the Mountain East-West Freeway and what has commonly been referred to as the Red Hill Creek Freeway (North-South). The general study area is shown on Figure 3.

Both transportation projects have been under consideration by planners of the City and by Council for a considerable length of time. In particular, the Red Hill Creek Freeway has caused the greatest amount of controversy and has been under particularly heated debate by the politicians. Approximately 10 years ago, the City of Hamilton had designated in their Official Plan, a north-south freeway to be located in the Red Hill Creek area.

As a result of continued opposition, controversy and political debate, the City of Hamilton, in 1975, amended their Official Plan by removing the freeway designation in the Red Hill Creek area. Numerous feasibility and planning studies have been carried out by City staff, Regional staff, and the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, in an effort to resolve the question of need and location of the proposed transportation facilities. In spite of the numerous studies and reviews, no proposals for any transportation facility in these locations were adopted either by the Regional Council or the City of Hamilton. In an effort to finally resolve this matter, the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth, in conjunction with the City of Hamilton, and the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, agreed to carry out a major transportation study. A Technical Advisory Committee also referred to as the Working Committee, appointed by Regional Council, established the Terms of Reference, and in early 1978, appointed a consultant to carry out the Mountain East-West and North-South Corridor Study.

Although the transportation planners recognized the need for a major transportation facility, and also recognized that the best location for such a facility on the mountain would be parallel to and close to Limeridge Road, and the best location for the North-South facility would be along the Red Hill Creek,

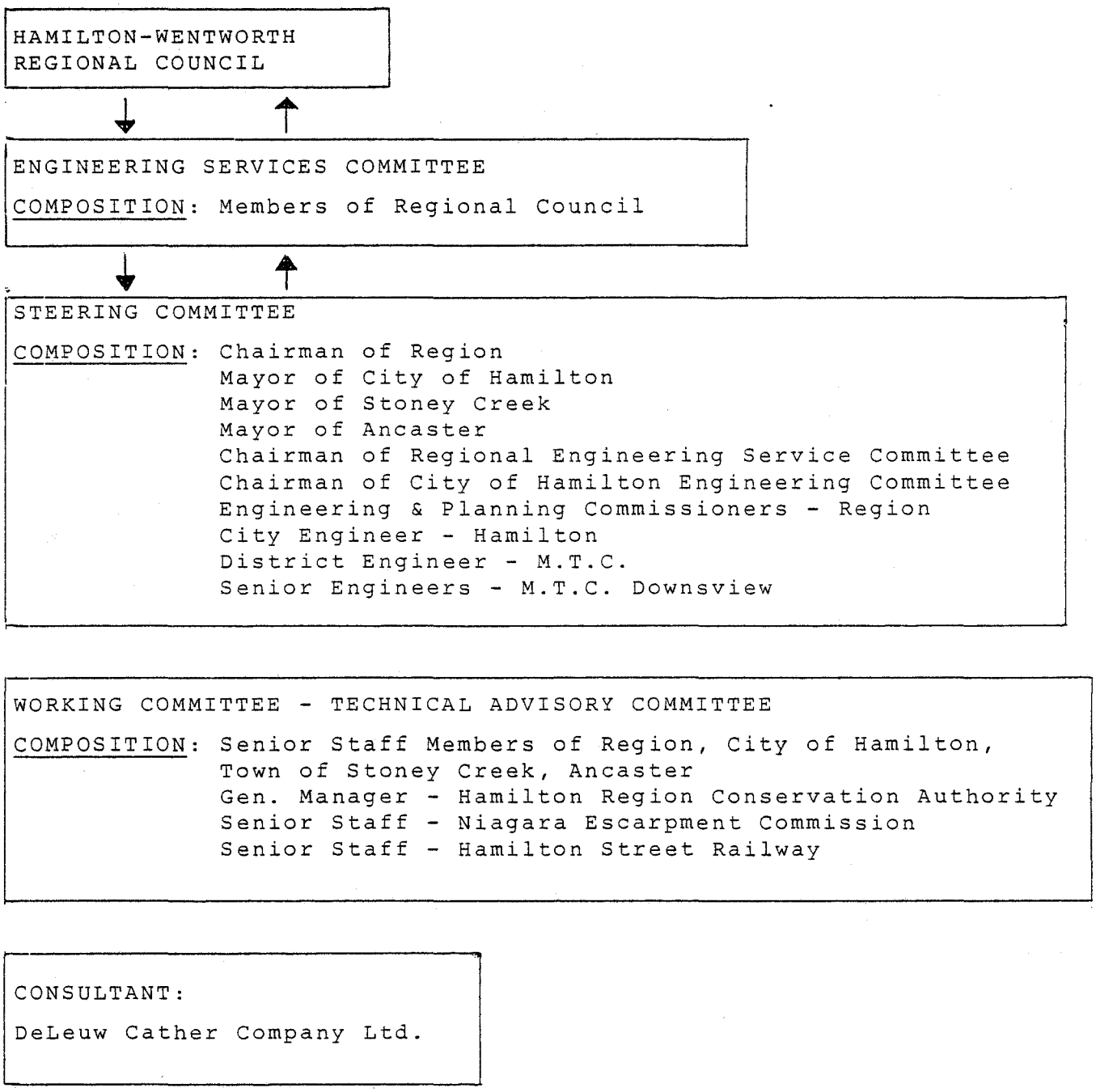
nevertheless, the Committee set as its prime goal to investigate all possible alternatives. The Consultant was directed to include in the study a detailed program of public participation. However, in an effort to reduce costs and to complete the study within the limited time frame, the politicians directed the Technical Advisory Committee to limit the public participation program. On this basis, the Consultant prepared his plan of action. It should be noted that by 1978, various environmental groups and such agencies as the Conservation Authority and the Niagara Escarpment Commission had already very firmly made known their points of view with respect to any proposals of a freeway along the Red Hill Creek. In order to assist the study team towards this end, representatives of the Conservation Authority and the Niagara Escarpment Commission were included on the Technical Advisory Committee; Figure 4 outlines the set-up of this Council, Technical Advisory Committee and the Consultant and the respective participants.

The Consultant also included on his study team experts in the field of environmental matters. It was recognized by both the politicians and the Technical Advisory Committee that the environmental aspects which were of concern to the public must be fully and completely addressed in the study.

In conjunction with the environmental aspects of the study, the Consultant prepared an outline and course of action for a

FIGURE 4.

CORRIDOR STUDY TEAM - POLITICAL & TECHNICAL



public participation program within the guidelines as set out by the politicians.

The public involvement program was based on the following principles:[11]

- to provide the public with the opportunity to be informed of the procedures and considerations used in the evaluation of viable alternatives.
- to assemble information in a clear, concise format to assist the public in understanding the analysis.
- To integrate the public involvement program throughout all phases of the project.
- to provide a format which will allow direct contact between the public and the project staff on a continuing basis.
- to allow sufficient flexibility to meet inquiries from individuals and groups over the duration of the investigation.
- to design a public involvement program with effective cost controls.

The major component of the program was to be in the form of a series of drop-in centres geographically distributed throughout the study area. This would ensure the investigation

staff of accessability to the public. However, it would be the responsibility of the residents to take advantage of the opportunity offered.

The following were the tasks to be carried out by the Consultants in the public participation program:

(1) Preparation of media announcements:

The media announcements would be in the form of a press release which would include such items as:

- purpose of investigation
- the major phases of the project
- the opportunity provided for the public to be involved in the process
- the media release to be distributed to the local papers, radio, T.V. outlets, etc.

In conjunction with the invitations to the general public, interviews would be held with representatives of special interest groups which would be able to assist in establishing the issues and concerns when explaining the roadway in the study area. These groups would include:

- the elected representatives of the area municipalities
- representatives of industry, commercial, and industrial organizations
- local ratepayers associations
- the Boards of Education

(2) Organization of the first series of public meetings:
Brochures to be prepared outlining the project purpose, timing, and procedures. Suitable drawings outlining the proposals would also be prepared.

(3) Organization of first series of drop-in centres:
A news release outlining the timing and location of the two drop-in centres.

(4) Public meetings for organized interest groups.

(5) The second series of public meetings.

(6) The second series of drop-in centres.

(7) Public Meetings for organized public interest groups.

(8) Organize the third series of public meetings.

(9) Presentation of the preferred options:
The preferred alternative is to be designated and the major implementation to be highlighted in a brochure. This would be available in sufficient quantity for distribution to the public.

At the time of writing of this paper, the first two phases of the E-W & N-S Freeway Study had been completed by the Consultant, and the following public involvement element had already been completed.

(1) First series of information centres had been established. The purpose of this first series of public meetings was to explain the existing and proposed developments within the region.

- Estimated transportation demand forecast for the years 1986 - 2001,
- The projected deficiencies of the existing and minor "road network".
- The various environmental, social, economic, financial, and engineering features affecting the development of optional roadway systems.

(2) Two public information centres were provided. The information centres were well advertized in the media, public brochures were distributed to 200 groups and individuals, and were available in the major public buildings in the Region. The brochures outlined the dates, the study program and the purpose of the meetings. A copy of the brochure distributed is included in the Appendix of this paper.

In summary, the first series of information centres were successful and the Consultant recommended that the same format be continued for the next series of meetings at the end of Phase 3 of the Study. However, it was noted that the turn-out was reliatively small. This can be explained by the fact that no roadway alternatives were designated for the public to react to. The Consultants, however, anticipate a greater attendance at the future meetings, at which time the following options evaluated will be displayed.

3.2 Comments on the Public Participation Program

Public involvement during any phase of the Corridor Study has been limited to a formal information program. At no point was the public asked to provide and recommend alternatives for alignment locations. As noted previously in this report, the first meetings with the public resulted in a small turn-out. This was probably due to the fact that no specific proposals were presented to the public for a reaction. Also, the public may not have been in a position to suggest any reasonable alternatives in view of the lack of more detailed information and also the opinion that any recommendations would not be given any serious consideration.

It should be noted that the Consultant seemed to favour a public participation program wherein public reaction is solicited to specific alternatives. The public, therefore, is not expected to provide any real input until such time as firm alternatives have been developed by the Consultants and the Study Team.

In the initial two phases of the study, fifteen (15) different alternatives were established. The Consultants, in conjunction with the Technical Advisory Committee, reduced this number down to six (6) alternatives to be more rigorously evaluated in the third phase. At no time was the public involved in establishing the fifteen (15) alternatives, nor in the reduction of these alternatives to six (6). However, the public will be informed of the six (6) alternatives to be evaluated. They will also be requested to submit their comments with respect to these alternatives. It is expected that a reasonable amount of public input (reaction) will be received. Again, formal public information meetings will be arranged; in addition, media announcements, through the press and television will be carried out.

Following this phase of the participation program, the Consultants, in conjunction with the Technical Advisory Committee will complete a detailed evaluation of the six (6) alternatives. Following this evaluation procedure, one

alternative will be selected for adoption by the Regional Council. The last phase of the study will consist of preparing a preliminary design of the recommended alternative. Again, the public will be informed of the final findings and recommendations.

It can be easily seen that the public participation program has been relegated to a less than elaborate information program only.

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4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The following comments can be made with respect to the degree and nature of public involvement in the major transportation study, that is, the N-S & E-W Corridor Study presently underway.

- Public participation in the true sense of the word is not being implemented. As discussed earlier, public participation has been limited to the provision of information to the public by the Consultants and Technical Advisory Committee. It is therefore to be expected that the public will participate more on a reaction basis than on an advisory basis.

- The question of whether the freeway should be built or should not be built, and the question of the location of a freeway has become a controversial political matter. It could, therefore, be anticipated that the decision to proceed with the project will be made on a political basis. These decisions will not necessarily be made on what the public may want, nor what the planners or engineers recommend, but on political expediency. This is primarily due to the fact that the proper public participation procedure is not being followed in the study.

The excuse of the politicians for the limited public participation are: lack of time, and lack of funds.

- Since the public was not given the opportunity to participate at the early stages of the study, the general apathy and lack of interest will be compounded. The public has not been given the opportunity to understand the complexities of such a major transportation study. Even for the technical and political people involved on a continuous basis of this project, the complexities are difficult to understand, and the project, thus, becomes difficult to understand fully.

- It is anticipated that the final recommendations and conclusions of this costly and time-consuming study will be made by reactionary groups. The study will be dismissed as, again, another whitewashing of the public and the issues and if any action is taken on the study, it will have to be done primarily on a political basis.

There is one redeeming factor, however, in that representatives of the Conservation Authority and the Niagara Escarpment Commission are involved through all phases of the Corridor Study. The Public can, therefore, be assured that the environmental aspects will be given full and complete consideration.

The public participation program must become and be an integral part of any major transportation study. The degree of participation must be established immediately at the outset and must be strictly adhered to through the entire study. Public participation must not be utilized merely as a public relations program, but must become an integral part of any major transportation planning project. The ultimate success or failure of any major transportation study is dependent on true public participation.

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