

Transportation Advocacy Planning in Winnipeg: The Case of C.O.S.T.

**by Terry J. Partridge
1973**

The Institute of Urban Studies





THE UNIVERSITY OF
WINNIPEG

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TRANSPORTATION ADVOCACY PLANNING IN WINNIPEG:
THE CASE OF C.O.S.T.

A Staff Report

by

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November 1973

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report describes the emergence of a new political force in the transport planning process in Winnipeg. Responding to neighbourhood disruption, threatened by major railway and freeway plans, a citizen organization known as C.O.S.T. (Coalition On Sensible Transport) was formed in January 1973. Production of numerous technical critiques and an active campaign of public debate followed for the next six months, which concluded in a significant reversal of city policy.

But the C.O.S.T. activity was only one factor in a large number of competing pressures and historical events. Chapters two and three provide the context, tracing the planning process through a period of growing centralization from the post war period to the late nineteen sixties, when pressures for a more diversified approach began to emerge. The adversary function performed by C.O.S.T. was one means of providing this diversity. The actual role of the group, as described in Chapter four, was very similar in kind, though not in magnitude, to that of the Spadina protesters in Toronto and the Boston inner beltway critics of the late sixties.¹ An assessment of this role in the context of planning theory is attempted in Chapter five, where a parallel is drawn with the concept of advocacy planning first outlined by an American planner, Paul Davidoff, in 1965.²

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1. Lupo, Colcord, Fowler, "Rites of Way: The Politics of Transportation in Boston and the U.S. City", Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1971.
 2. Davidoff, Paul, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning", Journal of the American Institute of Planners, Volume XXXI, No. 4, November 1965.

2. CENTRALIZATION AND TECHNOCRACY 1946-1968

The post war period was a time of dramatic change in transport planning in the Winnipeg area. For two decades a growing trend towards centralization took place in planning technology and institutions. Many of the transformations closely paralleled events taking place elsewhere, sometimes leading, sometimes following, but always pushed by increasing pressures of population growing steadily towards the big city mark of half a million.

2.1 Nineteen Separate Governments

In 1946 some nineteen separate municipal governments made up the Winnipeg area. Special regional bodies existed to administer waterworks, sewage, mosquito abatement, and airport services, but transport planning on an area-wide basis was virtually non-existent. Streets and bridges were planned and paid for by the municipalities in which they were built, in spite of the fact that they were freely used by all residents of Greater Winnipeg.³

The population at this time was, however, only 318,000. With only 29,000 registered automobiles in the area, the privately operated transit system was profitably carrying 105 million passengers a year, more than double the business of five years earlier.⁴ In the absence of congestion, the chief transport problem involved linking different municipalities with bridges and road extensions rather than increasing capacity.

3. Axworthy, Tom, "The Politics of Innovation", in the Future City Report No. 2, Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg, 1972.

4. Smith, Wilbur and Associates, "Report on Traffic, Transit Parking, Metropolitan Winnipeg", New Haven, Connecticut, 1957.

2.2 The Planning Commission and the Smith Report

In response to the need for greater co-ordination, the Metropolitan Planning Commission of Greater Winnipeg was formed in 1948. The Commission, with representation from the Province and twelve member municipalities, was responsible for preparing plans and advising the municipalities, but had no power to implement. Under the auspices of this body, a Master Plan was prepared by a town planner named Earl Mills. The plan included a number of suggestions for rationalizing the street system and building new thoroughfares.⁵

But conditions had already begun to change dramatically. The automobile era that was sweeping North America had come to Winnipeg and was cutting into transit patronage, thus creating pressures for government reorganization.

In 1953 the private transit company passed into public ownership under a special area-wide body called the Greater Winnipeg Transit Commission. Some modernization, rationalization and extension of services followed, but the enterprise was continued on a self-supporting basis despite the large loss of business that had occurred.⁶

By 1956 the population of the Greater Winnipeg Area had risen to 410,000, expanding into rapidly growing suburbs. Auto registrations had almost tripled from a decade earlier, the number of annual and transit rides had plummeted to 71 million revenue passengers from the 1946 peak.⁷

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

About the same time, faced with similar problems throughout the States, the U.S. Congress passed a bill expanding the interstate highway system to make major connecting routes through urban areas eligible for ninety percent federal funding.⁸ This bill was to have far-reaching effects on the field of urban transport planning by creating demands for increasingly sophisticated techniques of area-wide planning, and a market for a new breed of transportation consultants.

In Winnipeg, the Planning Commission, concerned about the prospects of the trends continuing, appointed an American consulting firm, Wilbur Smith and Associates, to prepare a transport plan and outline programs to meet the present, intermediate and long-term needs of the area.⁹

Smith conducted surveys to determine the origins and destinations of existing traffic travelling into and out of the downtown area. He included surveys of transit usage, parking, and also traffic counts and travel time studies on several major arteries. This information was assembled and used as the basis for a series of recommendations on traffic management, parking policy, and transit routing procedures.

Although the surveys indicated only a few streets to be near free-flow capacity in the rush hour periods, the object of the study had also been very much to provide forecasts of future problems, and to make recommendations for programs to handle them. Using newly developed techniques of long-range planning, the survey information was factored up to account for an expanding population, and to reflect observed trends of increasing car ownership and falling transit patronage.

8. Lupo, Colcord, Fowler, op.cit.

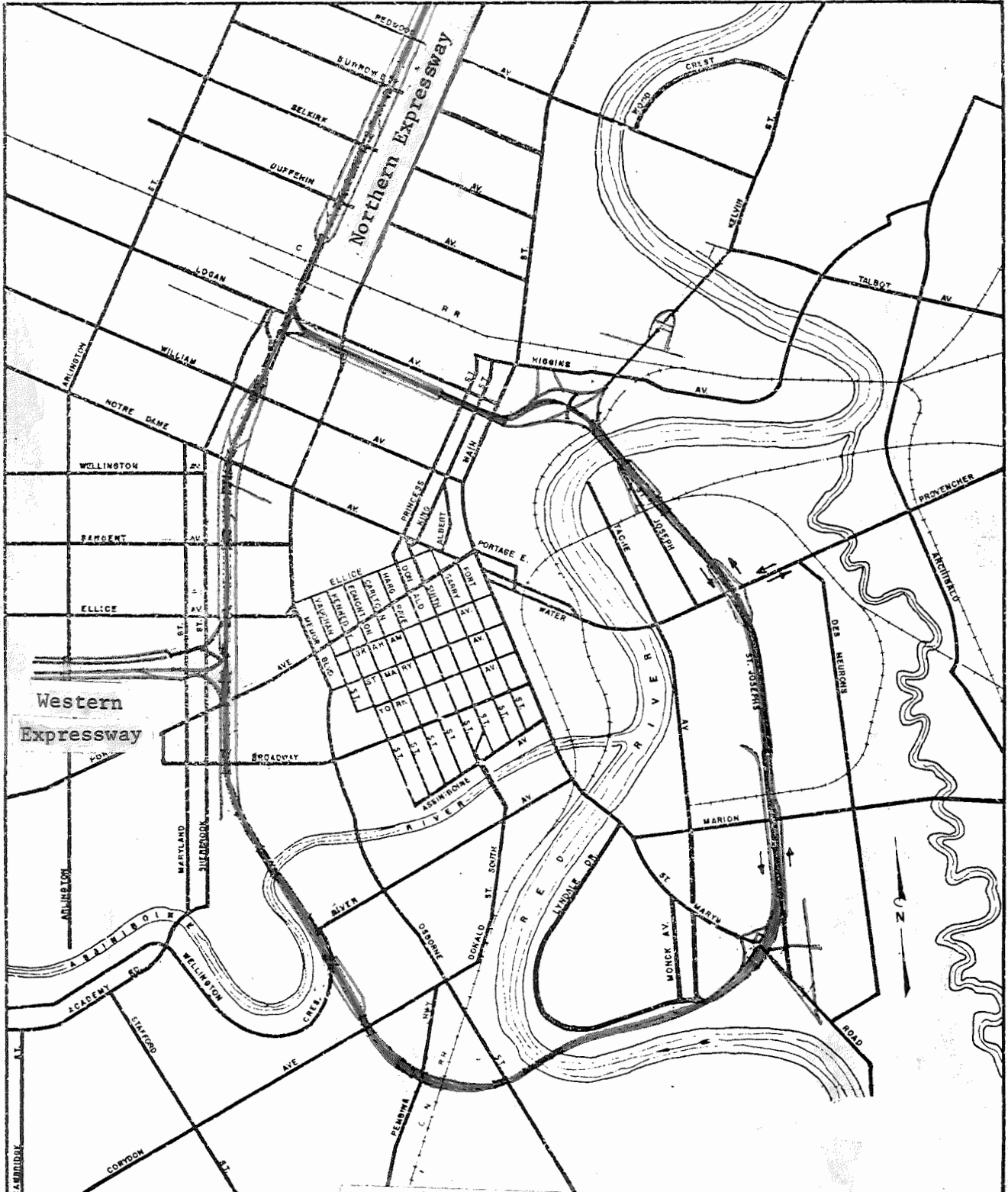
9. Smith, Wilbur and Associates, op.cit.

Based on these traffic forecasts, intermediate and more long-run investment projects were proposed. A number of the thoroughfares and bridge recommendations made by Earl Mills in the Master Plan were incorporated to form a base road arterial system. For the longer term, in order to meet the newly anticipated problem of congestion, several roads were proposed to increase the capacity of the existing system. Partly due to the downtown-oriented surveys, and to the growth projections of downtown through traffic, a loop expressway was planned to by-pass the downtown area.* Coming into this was a radial expressway from the West, and another from the North designed to meet expected increases from expanding suburbs. Another circumferential route of arterial standard about five miles from the city centre, later to be known as the suburban beltway, was also proposed.

The study was published December 15, 1957, and included, besides the above, a strong recommendation that a regional government structure with sufficient spending power would be necessary to implement the costly plans. It is interesting to reflect on the techniques and philosophy behind this report because, although it was soon to be superceded by yet another study, it was, nonetheless, to provide a continuing and important influence through the succeeding decade.

A number of thoroughfare and bridge projects contained in the plan were implemented, and property acquisition was, in fact, begun along the suburban circumferential route in the period prior to completion of the next report in 1968. In addition, the beltway concept plus the Northern and Western freeways were incorporated into the later report, all

* See Diagram I.



CENTRAL DISTRICT EXPRESSWAY LOOP.

SCALE IN FEET
 1000 0 1000 2000

DIAGRAM I

CENTRAL AREA
 WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

with high-priority ranking in the proposed implementation program. The Northern freeway was altered, but the concept of a new bridge crossing the C.P.R. railyards in north-central Winnipeg was retained, and was later to become a focus and catalyst for much of the emerging transport debate of later years.

Technically, while a considerable advance from the earlier ad hoc approach, the study was quite primitive compared to present day methods. The surveys were incomplete, accounting primarily for those trips which pass through the downtown cordon, and missing travel between districts outside the downtown. Forecasting relied on crude projections of existing trends with little effort to determine underlying causes. For instance, the rapid decline in transit patronage from 105 million rides in 1946 to 71 million in 1956 was assumed to continue at the same rate, resulting in 43 million rides by 1970, and 40 million by 1981. As it happens, the decline ended in 1962, and levelled off at around 60 million for the rest of the sixties, despite a far lower population growth than Smith had projected.¹⁰ Finally, little effort was made to relate the capacity of the proposed new roads in any explicit way to the forecast increases in traffic, or to predict the effect the new roads might have on travel times and speeds.

While techniques had not then been developed to do this in a more systematic way, the report was nonetheless symptomatic of the prevailing philosophy of the time. It gives the impression of a purely technical

10. Canadian Good Roads Association, "Urban Transportation Developments in Eleven Canadian Metropolitan Areas", Ottawa, Canadian Good Roads Association, 1966.

view of planning, with an underlying bias in favour of the automobile. The trend towards the private car was assumed inevitable, and the proposal was to accommodate it at any cost. The study proposed one policy, without comparing it to alternatives. No attempt was made to cost the program, or to suggest any real measure of benefits. With the technical problem solved, all that was then needed was an institutional framework having appropriate financial powers to effect the implementation.

2.3 Regional Government and W.A.T.S.

Moves toward a regional government structure were in fact already under way. The Provincial Government had appointed the Greater Winnipeg Investigating Commission back in 1955 to look into the question of local government reorganization. The commission completed its report in 1959, and on November 1, 1960, a new metropolitan form of government took office by virtue of a Provincial Act.¹¹

It was a two-tier structure that retained the nineteen area municipalities, but with reduced responsibilities of a local nature. The Metropolitan Council had ten members directly elected from pie-shaped districts especially chosen to encourage an area-wide rather than local approach. The Metro Council had sole authority over planning and zoning. It took over most of the regional special bodies, and it was charged with preparing a development plan including a long-term plan for transport. The programs were to be financed by direct levies on the municipalities. Early in its term, the Metropolitan Corporation formed a joint Streets and Transit Division that was unique in North America, and reflected advanced

11. Axworthy, Tom, op.cit.

notions of urban organizational theory. Integration was now in effect geographically and functionally.

Throughout the sixties, the transportation division was very active. In 1962, data collection began for phase I of the Winnipeg Area Transportation Study (W.A.T.S.).¹² A firm of private consultants known as Traffic Research Corporation from Toronto who had pioneered several developments in land-use transport study techniques, was retained to do the analytical work. For the next six years new and more sophisticated methods were to occupy the planners before publication of the third and final phase. And this time they would report to a client with the authority to implement rather than simply advise.

In 1962, Metro also paid its first subsidy to the transit system, beginning a decade of increasing subsidies and a commitment to view transit as a public service and an integral part of the overall transport plan, rather than just another business left to live or die on its market performance. This action undoubtedly helped assist the decline in transit use that had been occurring, and in so doing, eased growing pressures on the road system. It was progressive thinking for those times, and may have been due in part to the functional integration of streets and transit as a single institution.

But new institutions and new methods aside, the long-range transport planners were still heavily favouring the automobile. On July 8, 1964, before the data collection had been completed or even analyzed, a progress report on W.A.T.S. was presented to Metro Council. Getting somewhat ahead

12. Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg, "The Winnipeg Area Transportation Study", Three Volumes, September 1968.

of itself, the report predicted that the final study might show a need for a suburban beltway plus eight radial freeways coming into the downtown at a total estimated cost of 250 million dollars.

By this time, the area population was approaching the half million mark, and several programs were not waiting for the study's completion. Property acquisition was beginning along the proposed beltway route and a number of thoroughfare and bridge projects outlined in the Smith study were being constructed. Extensions of a new Osborne Bridge over the Red River and the Disraeli Bridge through residential areas were creating some local protest. In 1964 Metro had begun to negotiate with the Canadian National Railways about the possible removal of some increasingly obsolescent tracks at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, and possible creation of a scenic drive along the Red if the mainline were to go. By 1966 discussions had also begun with senior governments concerning a new bridge over the C.P.R. tracks in north central Winnipeg, called the Sherbrook-McGregor Overpass. Both issues were to feature importantly in the debate of the early seventies.

In April 1965 the data collection phase of the W.A.T.S. was completed and, although the forecasting and comparison of alternatives had hardly begun, the planners were now happily predicting the need for a road program with five radial freeways. Volumes one and two of the W.A.T.S., which dealt with data collection and with analysis of the existing situation, were not even published until February and July of 1966. The third and final volume of W.A.T.S. published in September 1968 after an extensive process of analysis did, in fact, recommend a plan with five radial freeways very similar to the plan described three years earlier.*

* See Diagram II.

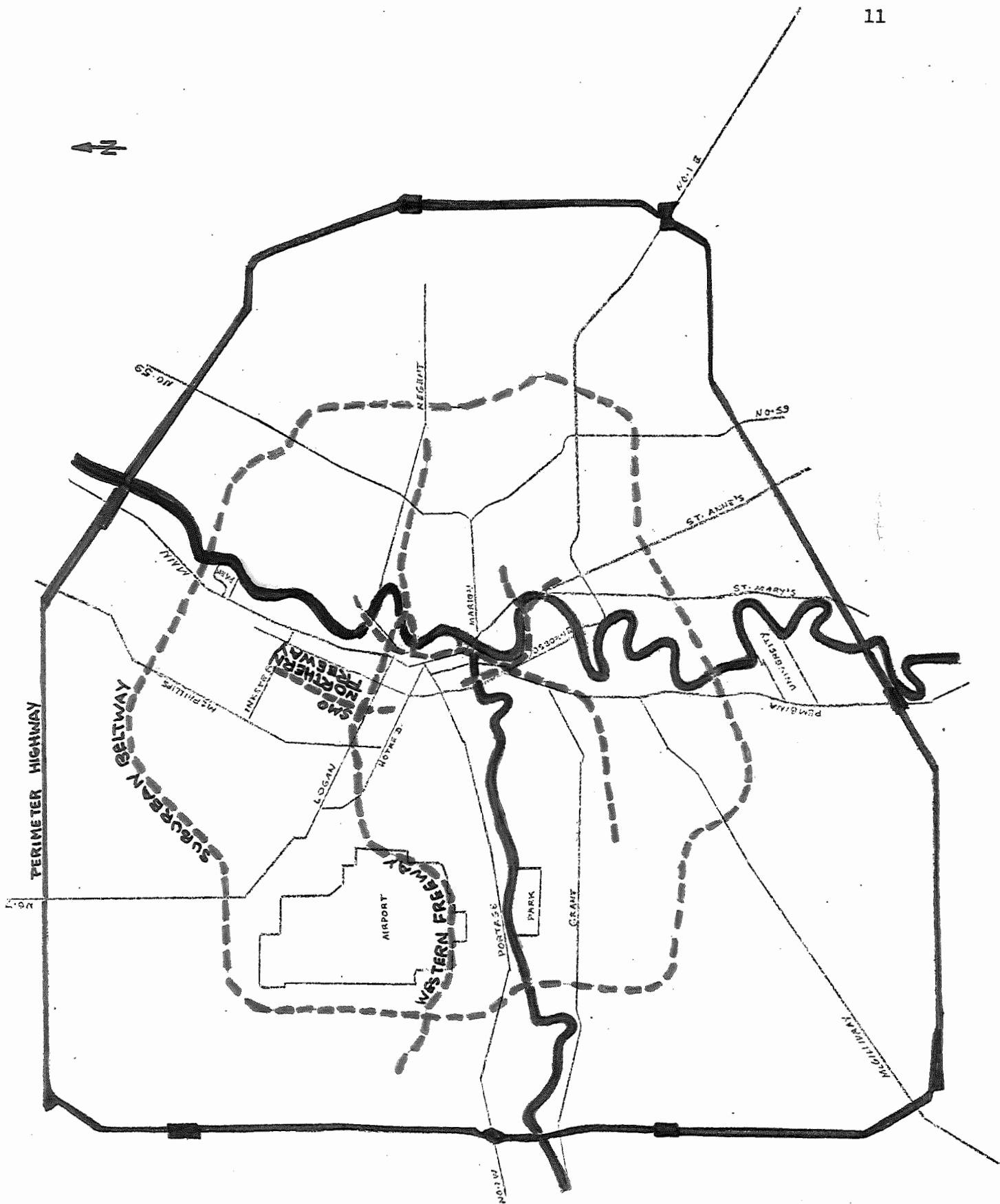


DIAGRAM II

THE WINNIPEG AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
FREEWAY NETWORK RECOMMENDED IN 1968

The W.A.T.S. was technically far superior to its predecessor, incorporating many of the theoretical advances that had been encouraged by the U.S. Federal commitment to urban transport of the fifties. Surveys were conducted at all area households rather than on those cars that happened to pass into and out of the downtown, thus providing a more comprehensive trip coverage although still limited to the work journey.

Instead of the simple trend analysis of travel habits used in the Smith report, an attempt was made to discover from survey data the reasons for trip-making of various sorts, and to project the probable future condition of these reasons before forecasting final trips.

Five alternative investment schemes with varying mixes of public and private transport were tested. For each of the networks, the effects on trip-making, travel times and modal choice were estimated. Finally, the networks were each priced, giving a comparison between costs and performance in terms of travel time and congestion relief. From the five schemes tested, the study team recommended one scheme costing 767 million dollars over a twenty-four-year period. The scheme included the five radial freeways and the Smith circumferential route, upgraded to freeway standard and named the "suburban beltway". The ingredients for sound decision-making seemed to be at hand.

In January of 1969 there were some releases of the study findings to the media, and a presentation was made to the Manitoba Transportation Conference. The high cost of the scheme and the need for Provincial and Federal support was quickly established, soon after which Metro began formal approaches to the Province about cost sharing. On February 27, 1969, the W.A.T.S. report was formally presented to Metro Council. There were

detailed newspaper reports describing the recommendations, some opposition from Councillor Art Coulter concerning the destructive effects of the Western Freeway, and then Council proceeded to characteristically discuss the matter behind closed doors.

For the rest of that year little was heard of W.A.T.S. There were newspaper reports about continuing expropriations along the beltway route, and as early as April expropriation had begun on Whittier Park on the Eastern Freeway route. This was bitterly contested by the owner, but little other reaction was heard or connection drawn with the rest of the program.

Towards the end of the year a controversy developed between the newly elected Provincial Highways Minister, Joe Borowski, and Metro over the expropriation on the beltway route. The arguments centered around charges of profiteering in land sales, but little was said about the pros and cons of the project itself.

With little further public discussion, the Metro councillors emerged from behind their closed doors, and approved the recommended scheme as official policy on May 14, 1970. What went on behind the doors is anyone's guess. It can only be assumed that the councillors were sold by the sophisticated and convincing arguments of the planners, who in the absence of public debate had a virtual monopoly on expertise. The policy was approved with the single dissenting vote of Councillor Staines. It was loudly applauded by the Chairman of Metro's Streets and Transit Committee, Councillor Lorne Leach of St. Vital, who urged priority for the Sherbrook-McGregor Overpass and a St. Vital-Fort Garry bridge crossing the Red River on the beltway route.

It appeared that the regional structure urged by Wilbur Smith had finally created and approved a comprehensive long-range transport plan to guide the future development of the city in an efficient and rational way. The plan was based on a study that incorporated many recent technical advances and seemed, on the surface at least, to have corrected the philosophical deficiencies of the Smith work by comparing a range of alternatives with estimates of cost and performance for each.

But much of this information was never really used. The traditional non-political, non-partisan approach to local government, and the continued belief that planning was a technical matter not concerned with finance, led Council to approve a plan costing three times the price estimated in 1964, and well beyond their ability to impose local taxes without creating a revolt. It relied on persuasion of senior governments to foot the bill.

3. TRANSITION 1969-1971

The purely technical approach to planning was naive to say the least, and featured importantly in a number of events that dominated the next two years and helped to uproot and re-orient the planning system once again.

3.1 Local-Regional Conflict

Throughout the sixties, and almost since its inception, Metro had been under attack. Much of this involved bitter infighting with the City of Winnipeg, but there was a general complaint from area municipalities that, together with education, Metro levies took up to seventy-five percent of their budgets, while they had no direct representation on Metro Council. Local neighbourhood services were getting short shrift. Commissions were set up with little effect in 1962 and 1966 to investigate the problems, but the June 1969 election of the N.D.P., pledged to alter the structure, put the writing firmly on the wall.¹³

During 1969 and 1970, the W.A.T.S. program became an important part of this debate, with the City of Winnipeg questioning the overall cost, how it was to be financed, and asking what sociological and economic studies had been done in relation to the plan. The Chairman of Metro's Planning Committee, Councillor John W. McGurran, teamed the questions stupid and stated that influence would have to be applied to the Province for financial assistance, but in the meantime the plans would have to be slowed but should not be abandoned.

13. Axworthy, Tom, op.cit.

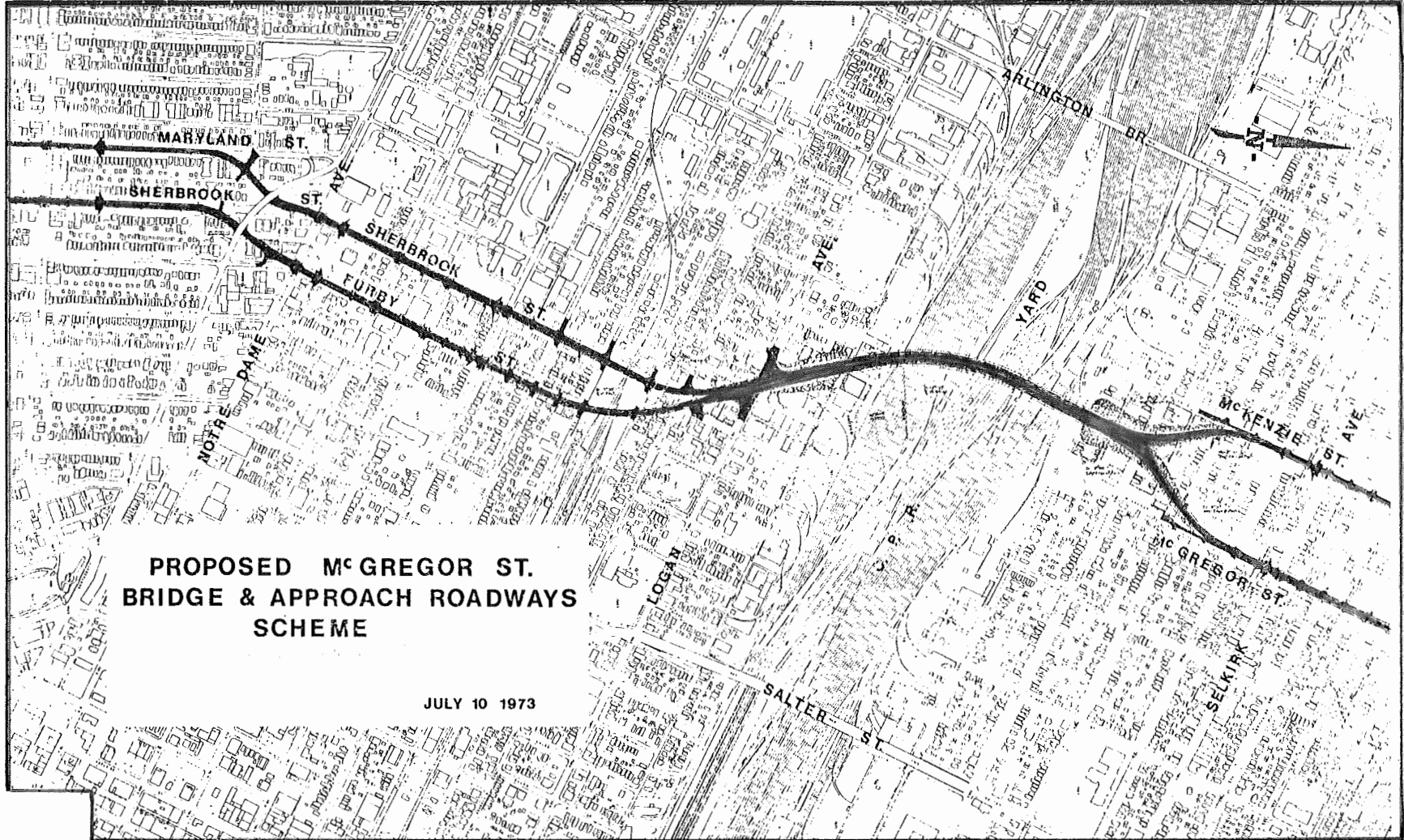
3.2 Sherbrook-McGregor, The Railway Study, and W.A.T.S.

Adherence to the grand plan, but at a slowed rate, had in fact already begun to produce the first grit in the smoothly oiled planning machine. The Sherbrook-McGregor Overpass over the north-central C.P.R. yards, first conceived in the 1957 Smith report, had become an integral and high-priority item in the master freeway plan.* Imminent closure for safety reasons of the ageing Arlington Bridge over the same tracks made the project a matter of urgency. As a railway crossing, the Sherbrook-McGregor Overpass fell under federal responsibility, so cost sharing talks involved the Federal, Provincial and Metro governments. Discussions that had begun in 1966 were reconvened in earnest in 1969, but the high cost of 12.5 million dollars for the freeway standard crossing was too rich a pastry for the participants to swallow.

Since Metro and the two railways had in September 1969 already begun talks on railway rationalization in the Greater Winnipeg Area, the Federal Government suggested that a study should be done to see whether the expense of a bridge crossing could be avoided or reduced by removing the yards and mainline tracks. The Federal Government was contemplating legislation that would allow federal contributions towards rail relocation costs, and Winnipeg was selected as a location for a pilot study. On April 30, 1970, Metro approved in principle the establishment of a joint committee of Metro, the Provincial and Federal Governments, C.N.R. and C.P.R. to do a rail rationalization study. Consultants Damas and Smith were appointed in October 1970 to do the work.¹⁴

14. City of Winnipeg, "Railway Study Technical Report", Damas and Smith Ltd., May 1972.

* See Diagram III.



But the rail study that had a scope broad enough to include rationalization of facilities for the whole Winnipeg area was going to take some time, and the city engineers were predicting closure of Arlington Bridge by spring of 1971. It was therefore decided to go ahead in June with necessary land purchases for the original Sherbrook-McGregor Overpass bridge approaches in order to keep options open. The land take involved purchasing the homes of six hundred local residents, and approval for cost sharing with the Provincial Government was obtained. As a final decision on the overpass had not been made, Metro policy was to buy properties as they came available on the market, but not to expropriate.

While these events transpired, Winnipeg Mayor Steve Juba approached C.P.R. about moving only its central yards and leaving the mainline in place. This he felt would expedite matters and reduce the high cost of the Sherbrook-McGregor Overpass. He was roundly criticized by Railway Study Committee Chairman Wolfe for interfering in a process already under investigation. At the same time, residents on the route of the bridge approaches were beginning to feel nervous, and uncertainty was causing neighbourhood deterioration and loss of property values. Metro Transport Director, Harry Burns, said residents hadn't been contacted yet because a decision hadn't been made, and he felt there wasn't anything to worry about. Nonetheless, a community organizer from the Neighbourhood Services Centre, Tim Maloney, had begun working with the residents to help argue their case.

In February 1971, the rail study consultants were asked to investigate the costs and feasibility of repairing Arlington Bridge, and by July 1, 1971, Metro approved \$480,000 to repair the bridge and give it an extended life of five more years. This took the heat off an immediate

Sherbrook-McGregor Overpass decision, delayed possible expropriation proceedings and left uncertainty and the problems of neighbourhood deterioration. The North End Bridge Group, representing residents, immediately opposed the delay, feeling any decision was better than none since the latter left them trapped in a declining neighbourhood unable to sell or be expropriated at a price sufficient to buy comparable housing elsewhere.

The rail consultants, however, presented a fifty page interim report in August 1971, stating that C.P.R. would be unlikely to move on their own and that it would be imprudent to make a decision on the Sherbrook-McGregor Overpass at that time which could be affected by proposals of the full rail study.

Through 1970 and 1971 the Metro-Borowski debate on the beltway continued, with Borowski saying that money would be better spent on public transport. Metro responded by asking for more provincial aid for public transit but denied that this would affect the need for freeways.

Finally, in November 1971, the Provincial Advisory Committee on Transportation (P.A.C.T.) that had been appointed by the province to look into W.A.T.S. produced a report attacking the entire recommended plan rather than specific local parts of it.¹⁵ For the first time, a group of professionals debated the technical basis of the plan which they felt unduly favoured the automobile. But the criticism was less of the technical work than of the recommendation that followed. Five alternatives had been compared, and one was selected that was clearly beyond existing or fore-

15. Provincial Advisory Committee on Transportation, "Interim Report on Evaluation of W.A.T. Study", unpublished, November 25, 1971.

seeable future financial means. The reasons for this choice were obscure and amounted to selecting a plan which, it was hoped, would almost totally eliminate congestion. The selection of alternatives was also attacked with the claim that balanced public and private transport schemes of lower total cost were not examined. The Provincial Government reserved judgement at the time but the writing was on the wall.

3.3 Unicity

The next step in the debate was, however, to be left to a new urban government. On December 23, 1970, the Provincial Government had published a white paper recommending amalgamation of Metro and the municipalities into a single unified government composed of fifty electoral wards grouped into thirteen community committees which would reflect local interests and encourage public participation.¹⁶ Councillors were to sit as members of both their own community committee and the central body. Each community committee was to have a Resident Advisory Group (R.A.G.), composed of non-paid citizens elected by those present at an annual community committee meeting. The purpose was to encourage more local participation.

A political battle raged over the proposal throughout the spring, and finally Bill 36 was enacted by the Legislature on July 24, 1971. The local elections that followed in October were contested chiefly by a slate of N.D.P. candidates and a group calling itself the Independent Citizens Election Committee (I.C.E.C.). The chief issue was whether or not there

16. Axworthy, Tom, op.cit.

should be party politics in local government. The major planning studies and issues were scarcely mentioned.

The newly elected council, overwhelmingly I.C.E.C., took office on January 1, 1972, starting the area on the verge of a new phase in its history.

4. PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION 1972-1973

The year of 1972 was one of growing debate on urban issues and, in particular, transport, as the Unicity council began to feel its way under the new system. A number of events set in motion under previous administrations were swiftly closing in and required immediate action. Much of the activity and the problems were to be brought to a head and highlighted by the Winnipeg Railway Study.

4.1 Suburban Protest

A summary of the Rail Study technical report was published on May 15, 1972 and a preliminary recommendation was made public on June 22, 1972.¹⁷ The full 400 page report was presented to Council on June 28. The report itself outlined and compared four alternative proposals for rail relocation. On the basis of the comparisons, the study team favoured one particular proposal known as Scheme 3. This would relocate the C.N.R. mainline from its existing route through the centre of the city to a new corridor following an electricity transmission line, and the proposed beltway route through the southern suburbs of St. Vital and Fort Garry. The C.P.R. mainline would similarly be moved from its path through north-central Winnipeg to a new location just inside the perimeter highway on the northern extremity of the city. New yards would be situated inside the perimeter on the westerly end of the new line.*

In July, with little time to absorb the study, Council went on record as favouring relocation in principle, but did not endorse any

17. City of Winnipeg, "Winnipeg Railway Study" (short form), Damas and Smith Ltd., May 1972.

* See Diagrams IV and V.

particular plan. In October the Federal Minister of Urban Affairs announced that the government would be increasing funds available for railway relocations, thereby giving the Winnipeg study greater impetus.

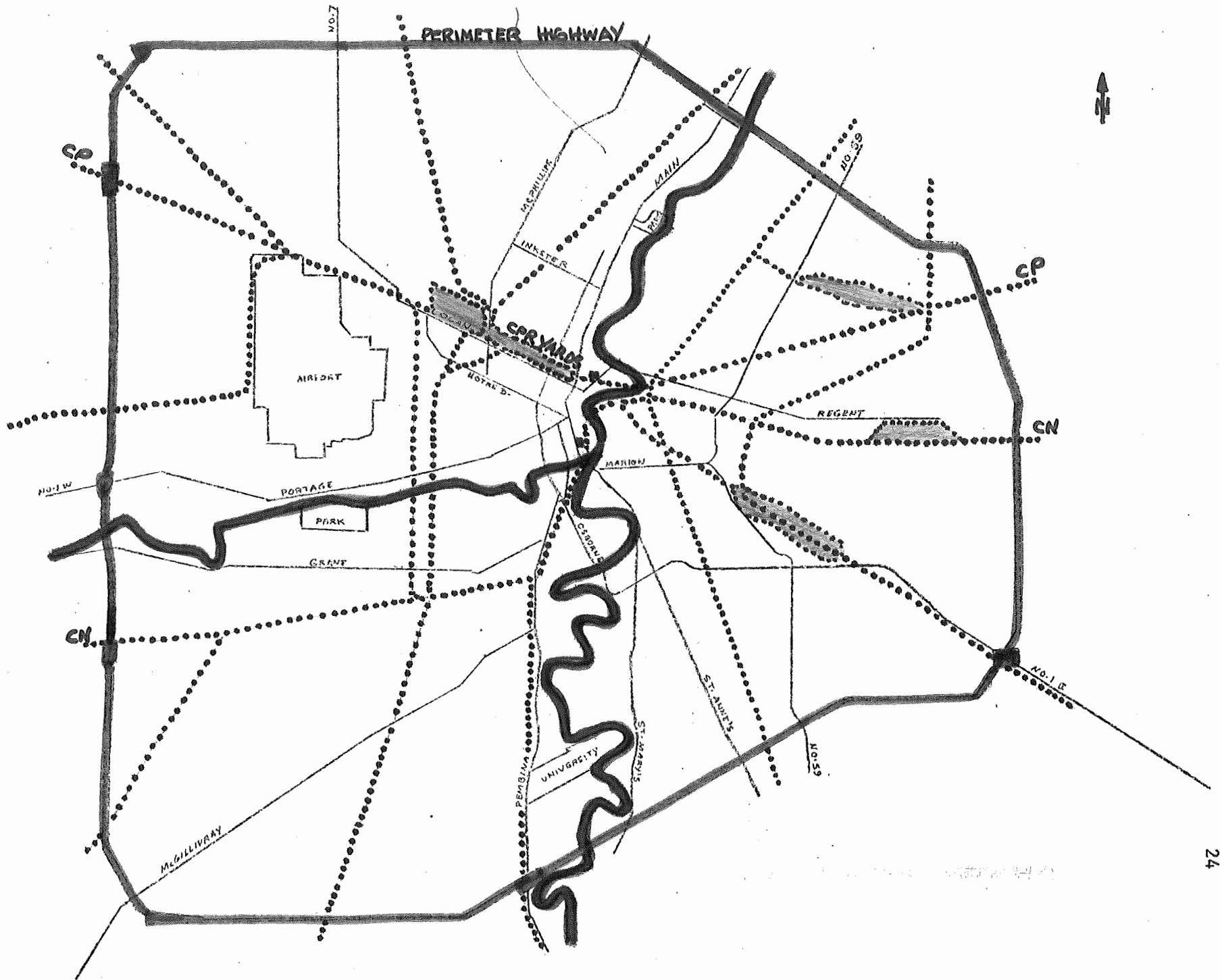
In November public meetings were held in the Fort Garry and St. Vital Community Committee areas where the effects of relocation were expected to cause the most disruption. The four proposals were outlined and Scheme 3 met with strong opposition from one hundred residents in Fort Garry and two hundred in St. Vital who were not anxious to have core areas of the city rejuvenated at their own expense. The protests in these areas gave rise to a group calling themselves People First, and signalled the first stirrings of organized opposition to the city plans.

During the same month Rail Study Chairman, Bernie Wolfe, in a speech to the Building Owners and Managers Association, called for quick action in moving the C.P.R. yards and mainline on the grounds that this portion of the plan was objectionable to noone. He further urged early selection of a single plan followed by a phase of public participation to develop this plan in specific detail. At the same time, Mayor Juba criticized the lack of concern for people in the suburbs, and cited 150 protest letters he had received as evidence.

Finally, on November 29, 1972, the Rail Study Committee made an informal presentation to City Council, again explaining the four proposals and outlining a modified Scheme 3 that they hoped would reduce some of the earlier complaints. But this was not to be. The People First group arrived at the meeting four hundred strong, and presentations criticizing the proposals were made by spokesmen for the group. It was the largest turnout in the history of the Civic Centre.

DIAGRAM IV

EXISTING RAILWAY NETWORK



Following this meeting, the C.N.R. Vice-President issued a statement saying that C.N.R. had no real desire to relocate, but would be willing to co-operate for the benefit of the city if asked to. Shortly thereafter, Winnipeg's Executive Policy Committee of Council passed a resolution asking Council to hold some public meetings, to select one scheme in general outline, and then to give its approval for the detailed phase two of the study by February 1973. Local people wanted to participate before the main decision had been made, not just at the detailed stage, but time was beginning to close in. One final meeting in 1972 of an "informational" type was held in Windsor Park suburb and was sparsely attended by about twenty residents. The informational formula, which then became the format for some later meetings, was used to portray the Technical Study Committee in a neutral, purely technical, role. The presentations were made by Technical Study Chairman Harry Burns who had no political responsibility and was, therefore, not to be portrayed as a villain. As many of the issues were indeed political, the format of restricting responses of residents to purely technical questions served to stifle citizen views and virtually eliminate any real participation.

4.2 Plans Progress

While public attention was focused on the Railway Study, the civic administration progressed with plans to implement the W.A.T.S. proposals. With unification, existing policies inherited from Metro were to be continued until such time as the new council made its own policies. Environment Committee of Council had in fact been instructed to arrange a spring seminar for councillors to become acquainted with the major studies and form their

own policies, but in the meantime it was business as usual for the administration.

A newspaper article on September 16 revealed that most of the arterial projects included in the first phase of the W.A.T.S. plan had already been implemented. Many of these roads involved minimum community disruption and were quite compatible with the more modest alternatives tested in the W.A.T.S. study. But property acquisitions were also continuing on the more controversial freeway routes, and the next phase in the recommended implementation program would begin taking Winnipeg into the high speed era. Indeed, in December 1972, the 1973 Capital Estimates released by the administration's Board of Commissioners included one-quarter million dollars for engineering design studies of the Western Freeway and the Grant Avenue extension, and both items passed their first scrutiny through the Works Committee of Council. What had been a distant fantasy or planner's dream was now on the threshold of reality. In fact, the forward projections of road expenditures, revealed in the five-year capital budget estimates, indicated a massive expenditure increase on roads, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the total budget. This should, if anything, have illustrated the real significance of the selected W.A.T.S. plan, but instead received little attention.

4.3 Central Area Frustration

While the rail relocation proposals were causing concern in the suburbs, the central area was caught in the cross-fire of roads and rails. Some of the community organizations which had been working with the North End Bridge Group sensed the frustration of a small local group trying to

respond to a massive city-wide plan. Back in December 1971 they had initiated a three-month research project, funded by the Company of Young Canadians, to determine the feelings of local people and to plot a course of future action. As a result of this, the Winnipeg Citizen Transit Committee (W.C.T.C.) had been formed to take a more comprehensive approach to participation. The W.C.T.C. was a non-profit organization of citizens and professionals interested in supporting public transport as an alternative to ever-increasing roads. Their objective was to assist local neighbourhood groups as an information clearing house, exchanging ideas and pressuring City Hall. They hoped, in addition, to initiate a dial-a-bus experiment.

By the end of 1972 the railway study had moved to the forefront of public discussion. The connections with the Sherbrook-McGregor Overpass were obvious and it appeared that events were moving quickly. A number of community organizations in the central area were being asked questions by concerned local residents, but they had little information to go on.

4.4 Organization

Responding to the need for more information, Neighbourhood Service Centre (N.S.C.) called a meeting of about a dozen social agencies and interested community groups for December 20, 1972. Each group reported its concerns and knowledge of the railway and road plans. Various individuals undertook to circulate information they had available before a further meeting called for January 17, 1973. The Institute of Urban Studies (I.U.S.) was to be publishing a special newspaper on Transport Planning in Winnipeg on January 12, and this would be distributed.¹⁸

18. Institute of Urban Studies, Urban Issues, Special Edition on Transport Planning, University of Winnipeg, January 1973.

On January 9, members of I.U.S. and the University of Manitoba School of Social Work appeared on a television panel show to discuss transport problems and to introduce the I.U.S. publication. This began a media campaign to promote public awareness of the issues. On January 12, the newspaper itself was released, beginning a direct mail phase of the campaign. After the initial mailing to resident advisors, community groups, and municipal, provincial and federal politicians and administrators, the response from others quickly depleted all available copies.

By the time of the second N.S.C. meeting, the material had been digested by the participating groups, and discussion quickly got down to the issues. Did those attending really feel there was a problem and, if so, what role could or should they play? Although reactions were very ad hoc, there was a growing consensus that the link between W.A.T.S. and Railway Relocation was the key issue. At these initial meetings there were no suburban representatives present, and views on removing the central yards and tracks were quite neutral, although it was felt that local people should have a say in planning the re-use of any lands released. The chief concern was that released land would be used for freeways, creating a greater degree of blight than existed at present. The first goal was to point out this danger and, if possible, to remove the W.A.T.S. threat.

The discussion then turned to the question of action. Representatives from the Community Welfare Planning Council (C.W.P.C.) suggested holding some form of well-advertised public panel discussion or forum, with the aim of attracting media coverage and stimulating public debate. A subcommittee of the main group was formed to pursue this idea, with C.W.P.C. undertaking to act as co-ordinator. A meeting was then called for the following week

to discuss content and approach. It was also decided to invite representation from Resident Advisory Groups (R.A.G.) and suburban communities to participate in the planning, as the issues were area-wide and a broadly based approach would be more effective.

In the week before the first forum meeting, two events transpired that helped to crystallize the action plan. First of all, a series of articles on rail relocation by Val Werier in the Winnipeg Tribune explained the proposals, the advantages argued by the planners, and the problems outlined by the critics. He interviewed the planners about the charge that freeway routes were the basis for the rail relocation proposals and reported their denials that this was the case.

Second, the city held the first of its public meetings on rail relocation since the November presentation to Council. The meeting was held at R.B. Russell School on January 22, and was sponsored by four central area Community Committees. Advertised at public expense, the meeting drew a capacity crowd of 175 people. In this community, where rails were to be removed, the study committee expected quite a different response from that in the suburbs. As it was, the meeting was quite subdued, debate was stifled, and little was said to ease the frustration of many present.

The chairman of the meeting kept to the informational format. The initial presentation by the Rail Study Committee took two hours, with the four alternative plans being presented in tedious confusion. Neighbourhood benefits were described at length, but roads were never mentioned. The response to questions from critics was to dismiss freeways as only one remote possibility in a wide range of options for re-use, and one which would not take much land in any case. The Rail Committee urged that a

decision on railways should be made first, and then consideration of road needs could follow. The presentation using slides was, however, very professional and served as a powerful propoganda technique.

4.5 Developing Strategy

By the time of the first N.S.C. subcommittee meeting on January 24 to discuss forums some opinions and ideas had begun to take shape. First, the city's meetings were too well controlled and the public had too little initial information on which to base their questions. The Rail Study Committee presentations were stressing the positive aspects and selling the package they felt was worthwhile. They would be contacting residents throughout the city in a series of meetings. The alternative, a couple of large forum meetings, would have a one-shot effect rather than a continuous impact. The group felt it would be better to plug into the city meetings, if possible, and generate debate by posing well prepared questions.

If this could be done, it had several advantages. It would give the group greater exposure; it would present the public with two points of view at the same time, with an opportunity to cross-examine either party; and it would be easier to get people out to one rather than two meetings. Besides, it would be organizationally and financially preferable to take advantage of the city's advertising and hall arrangements.

It was also obvious that, if this were to be done, the group's contributions would have to be kept short to allow time for questions and for full expression of citizen views. It would be necessary to concentrate on basic issues and to have clear, sophisticated and well substantiated arguments to counter the carefully prepared slide show of the Railway Committee.

It was therefore decided that the group would prepare their own slide show. After several modifications, agreement was reached on an outline prepared by I.U.S. which illustrated the connection between released railway mainlines and the proposed radial freeways of the W.A.T.S. plan.

Finally, the subcommittee turned to an immediate problem. The Executive Policy Committee would be presenting a resolution to City Council that same evening asking for approval to appoint consultants to conduct a series of public rail meetings at all thirteen Community Committees. The expressed purpose was to give the subject a full airing, after which a decision would be made to adopt the most acceptable program or modified program and then proceed to design and implementation phases of the study. The group was concerned, based on the R.B. Russell School experience, that this would not result in a full discussion of community views and that, with consultants in control, they would be frozen out.

That afternoon, several members of the group phoned their councillors and expressed these concerns. As it happened, some councillors who had attended the earlier meeting were of the same view and that night Council adopted instead a resolution calling for the Community Committees to arrange their own meetings, and for the city administration to make staff resources available on request. A deadline of May 1 was set for the meetings to be completed. The door was open, but time was running short.

The following week, a meeting of the main group was called at N.S.C. for progress reports. General agreement was reached on the forum strategy. Other members would provide feedback of residents' responses and notify the forum planners of questions that people wanted investigated.

4.6 Preparation

February was a hectic month of preparation on two fronts, with I.U.S. and Pollution Probe developing the content of the slide presentation and the Community Welfare Planning Council (C.W.P.C.) refining and directing the organizational strategy.

Events were changing quickly, and with new information becoming available almost daily, attempts were made to incorporate these into the group's presentation. Val Werier of the Tribune, continuing his series of articles on the railway issue, reported that the C.N.R. could vacate the massive East Yard area at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers without moving the mainlines. In earlier Rail Committee presentations, it was argued that the release of this area would result from rail relocation and this was presented as a major benefit of the program. The critics could now argue that this benefit could be achieved without moving the mainlines.

Elsewhere, a report by D. I. MacDonald, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, urging a decision on the beltway by March 31, an Environment Committee recommendation to proceed with the original Sherbrook-McGregor Overpass design construction, and inclusion of one million dollars by the Works Committee in the Capital Estimates for the overpass land purchases, convinced the group of the urgency and importance of making their objections about W.A.T.S. clear immediately. It appeared obvious that the freeway plan was being pushed hard and that it was far from the remote possibility it was being made out to be. Unless it was debated before the rails were removed, it would be a virtual fait accompli.

On February 15, a meeting of the forum subcommittee was held, with several members of the parent group in attendance, as well as R.A.G. members from a few Community Committees, and representatives of A.C.T., an embryo central association of the R.A.G. groups. The aim agreed upon was to be included on the program at each of the Community Committee rail meetings. The desired format would include presentations by the city and the forum group, considerable time for questions and expression of views by local residents, and an independent chairman such as the chairman of the Community Committee. It was suggested that this could be achieved through official channels, beginning with the R.A.G.s, which had been incorporated into the new Unicity structure, largely with the idea of creating a vehicle for local participation.

The idea was to approach the R.A.G.s, explain the aims of the forum group, and ask them to adopt a resolution calling for the Community Committee to hold public rail meetings of the form suggested prior to the May 1 deadline set by Council. They would **also** be asked to assist in publicizing the meetings to get the widest possible participation. Ultimately, success would depend on whether the Community Committee councillors accepted the R.A.G. resolutions.

This general approach was agreed upon, with some flexibility, depending on the situations in different Community Committees. In some cases the newly formed R.A.G.s were heavily involved with detailed work passed down to them by the councillors, and would not feel like taking the responsibility for such an initiative themselves. Other groups hardly existed, and in some cases the R.A.G.s would simply not be interested. For

these reasons, and partly because of the tight time schedule, it was agreed that the forum subcommittee would, where necessary, approach the Community Committee chairman either directly or through the R.A.G. chairman, or would appear as delegations at Community Committee meetings. In the end all of the approaches were tried in different areas.

Some members of the parent group who had not been involved in the forum subcommittee were concerned that the whole action program was being put together far too quickly, allowing too little time for a wider degree of public participation in its planning. With a May 1 deadline there seemed little alternative and it was decided to proceed nonetheless, with the hope that the groups' contribution would at least give local people a point of reference from which to begin.

In order to establish initial contact, A.C.T. sent a letter to the chairmen of all the R.A.G. groups, introducing the advocates and describing their aims. The task of contacting R.A.G.s and Community Committees was then divided among several members of the group, and over the next couple of weeks a number of contacts were made and the process set in motion. During this period no firm dates or agreements on approach were reached, although there was evidence of interest and a few tentative meetings were scheduled.

On February 27, a final meeting of the forum group was called to wind up the month of preparation before launching into the public campaign. The slide show had been completed and was presented to the group for the first time by members of I.U.S. and Pollution Probe. It received enthusiastic support, some suggestions for changes, and general agreement that it should remain as objective as possible, concentrating on the main issues decided on earlier.

Finally, members who had been contacting the Community Committees reported various experiences and degrees of success. It had become obvious that some name would be necessary to identify the group, and this had been specifically requested by some Community Committees for the purpose of advertising meetings. After some discussion, the name Coalition On Sensible Transport was decided on as a reflection of the group's composition and the subject. The monogram, C.O.S.T., aptly illustrated a major and important concern. A letterhead was designed on the spot and arrangements were made to have stationery printed. The group was now formally in business.

4.7 Advocacy Action

During the February preparations, things had been fairly quiet elsewhere, except for one railway meeting in East St. Paul, where one hundred residents turned out to protest relocation through their area. A few suburban candidates, getting an early start for the anticipated provincial elections, had also begun to voice opposition.

On March 1, the C.O.S.T. presentation received its first public airing at a Manitoba Environment Council seminar. The sparsely attended meeting nonetheless received widespread coverage in the major newspapers and on radio the following day. Later that week, the C.O.S.T. presentation was shown at a panel discussion of the Central Area Council and by the Winnipeg Citizens Transit Committee at a public meeting in St. James. On March 26 the Railway Study Committee had their say before the Manitoba Environment Council, and a different approach to that at R. B. Russell was taken. This time the consultants stated quite openly that the railway study had assumed that the freeway plan would be implemented. Although the presentation was limited to the Railway Committee, a representative of

C.O.S.T. was allowed a few minutes to make a statement from the floor. Although the C.O.S.T. objective to share a platform with the Railway Committee had still not been achieved, the meeting did stir considerable discussion, and again the C.O.S.T. issues received newspaper coverage.

While these meetings were taking place, work continued on the main strategy, bolstered somewhat by a letter to the R.A.G. chairman from the Community Planning Association of Canada, endorsing the C.O.S.T. presentation. In East Kildonan an appearance of a C.O.S.T. delegate to a regular Community Committee meeting, explaining the case, was sufficient to elicit an invitation to appear on the railway panel, and a date was set for the public meeting. In Fort Rouge and Lord Selkirk communities, presentations of the full slide show were made to the R.A.G.s prior to their deciding whether to recommend having C.O.S.T. appear at their public rail meetings. In the case of Fort Rouge, the R.A.G. proposal was accepted by the Community Committee and two public meetings were eventually held, although the format was not as planned. Only two of all the community meetings followed through exactly as intended, although the process helped develop a growing body of public contact and participation.

Attendance at meetings was limited, but media coverage had expanded the audience well beyond the local, interested parties who attended. The Manitoba Environment Council meetings had been well covered in the city papers and radio, and community newspapers had carried lengthy reports on the R.A.G.-C.O.S.T. meeting in Fort Rouge. Ecospk and Prairie Dog Press had also published newspapers on transportation and city planning issues, broadening the scope still further.

19. Ecospk, Vol. 4 Issue 1, Winnipeg Pollution Probe Inc., March 1973; and Prairie Dog Press, Winnipeg, February 2, 1973.

The main point of the C.O.S.T. presentation linking the freeway and railway plans was being well made, and was picked up by some councillors who had seen the presentation. The railway consultants were freely acknowledging the connection. But from the line of questioning that was emerging, it was becoming apparent that C.O.S.T. would have to go the next step and question whether the freeways were necessary in the first place. Council had just approved \$450,000 for unspecified road design studies and, based on past performance, these funds seemed slated for freeway plans.

The long-awaited councillors' seminar was now planned for April 2 and 3. The interrelationships between all the major plans would be discussed, after which Council would be asked to formulate policy guidelines. Faced with forceful recommendations from the city's transportation planners, councillors would need to be given clearly reasoned arguments if the C.O.S.T. position were to prevail. With this in mind, I.U.S. had already begun a technical critique of the W.A.T.S. recommendations. The critique attempted to explain the rationale behind the initial decision by interpreting the technical language implied in the W.A.T.S. report. It included, in addition, a cost benefit analysis of the plan that had not been done before, and also a number of alternative points of view.

The original idea had been to ask for an opportunity to present this paper, entitled "Why W.A.T.S.", at the councillors' seminar.²⁰ As things turned out, the schedule was full and there was little or no provision made

20. Partridge, Terry, "Why W.A.T.S.", Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg, March 1973.

for outsiders. The paper was, nonetheless, mailed directly to the councillors, the planners, and various other interested groups. Furthermore, the author attended the meeting as an observer which provided the opportunity to discuss the paper privately with some councillors.

4.8 Growing Debate: the Councillors' Seminar, Environment Committee, and Community Meetings

The councillors' seminar shed less light than hoped for from the critics, but it did help to focus attention on major issues and begin the development of a policy line. The administrators voiced frustration at the lack of direction. They had prepared a development plan, a major transport plan (W.A.T.S.), a downtown development plan, and the railway study. They wanted decisions to be made regarding implementation. Council was not in fact giving direction. Positions had not been taken in public debate during the election because that was not the nature of the supposedly non-partisan city politics.

The administrators made presentations regarding all the plans, confirming quite clearly that the railway study had assumed W.A.T.S. as a base.²¹ A strong defence of the freeway plans was made, and approval for implementation was asked. But the planners also seemed to want to keep the real issues out of planning. Chief Commissioner D. I. MacDonald reiterated the age-old philosophy of the Smith report, by asking Council to stop letting financial considerations interfere with the planning process. H. F. Burns, Director of Transportation, echoed this position saying that it had probably

21. City of Winnipeg, "Background Material For Seminar April 2nd and 3rd, 1973", unpublished.

been a mistake putting a 767 million dollar price tag on implementation of the transportation study.

The administration's influence on policy was enormous. They had a monopoly control of the plans and the technical reasons that supported the plans. Council relied solely on them for advice. One councillor in a Freudian slip even referred to the administrators as "policy makers". Another councillor complained that the administrators were giving sales pitches for the development plans and were not presenting Council with alternatives.

Nonetheless, an attempt was made to determine the views of councillors on various aspects of the plans in order to develop a statement of principle for later, formal debate by the full Council. Among other things, a majority of councillors present for the polling voiced disapproval of freeways, favouring instead increased support for public transit and the development of arterial roads.

While no arrangements were made for outsiders to make presentations to the seminar, the City Environment Committee had agreed instead to hear a brief from I.U.S. at their regular committee meetings. A brief was prepared and presented to the committee on April 16.²² It began from the observation made at the seminar that the Council and administration held opposite positions on the subject of freeways and thereby created a stalemate. The general theme of the brief was that perhaps the problem could be straightened out if everyone understood the reasons behind the

22. Axworthy, L. and Partridge, T., Presentation on Transportation Planning to Environment Committee, City of Winnipeg, Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg, unpublished report, April 16, 1973.

opposing views. Public hearings with a form of cross-examination were suggested. By way of example, the brief included a condensation of some of the more important points from "Why W.A.T.S.", presenting the reasons why the administration thought freeways were necessary and why I.U.S. felt that these reasons were faulty. The brief went on to reiterate the railway-freeway connection, and this time suggested that an alternative rail rationalization scheme be studied involving removal of yards but not main-lines. This was a solution that might be satisfactory to suburban and central city residents alike. It would not provide routes for radial freeways, but if the freeway plan was scrapped the routes would not be needed.

The committee did not accept the stand on public hearings, but did pass a resolution recommending to Executive Policy Committee almost every point contained in the brief on urban transport and rail policy. The proposals were tabled, changed, and re-introduced on two or three occasions throughout the spring, finally culminating in recommendations to Council in mid-summer.

Meanwhile, public discussion and debate was accelerating on several fronts. Val Werier had written an article explaining the basic critique of "Why W.A.T.S.", and asking if the taxpayer could afford it. C.O.S.T. presentations to organizations such as A.L.C.A.P. (Alliance of Churches, Agencies and Parishes) and Kiwanis continued and the main points received further newspaper coverage. Councillor Wolfe, speaking to the Rotary Club, lashed back at the rail critics, claiming negativism and misinformation, and posed the threat of no action whatever unless agreement were reached on the options proposed by the Rail Study Committee.

Shortly after this, hoax letters from an organization calling itself Western Ontario Land Founding Enterprises (W.O.L.F.E.) were sent to residents on Waverly Street in River Heights and to residents in the Lord Selkirk community. The letters claimed that their streets would be turned into major thoroughfares, and the company offered to purchase their property before values fell too far. Initially the residents were up in arms, until the hoax was revealed. The originators of this claimed in a newspaper interview that the purpose had been to make the implication of long-term W.A.T.S. plans immediate and thereby stimulate interest and debate before it was too late.

About this time, Guidelines For The Seventies was published by the Provincial Government, calling for a revised urban transport plan, and finally, during the election, the New Democratic Party came out in support of public transport and in opposition to freeways.²³

During this period, the main campaign of community rail meetings had begun. Much of the new information and events were incorporated into the C.O.S.T. presentation requiring constant revisions and updating. It was no longer necessary to demonstrate so strongly that the rail proposals had assumed the freeways as a base, but simply to state that this was the case, and was a matter of public record. The point was then made that many councillors and others were opposed to freeways, and therefore other rail schemes should be investigated as it would no longer be necessary to provide radial freeway routes.

23. Manitoba Government, "Regional Perspectives", Guidelines For The Seventies, Vol. 3, April 1973.

The first of the series of organized community rail meetings was held in the Fort Rouge area at Churchill High School on April 24. Somehow wires were crossed and the city representatives failed to show. C.O.S.T. made a presentation and tried to fill in some of the gaps they had expected the city to do. About forty people attended, including some local councillors.

The second meeting was held at Grant Park High School for residents in the West End of Fort Rouge and in the Assiniboine Community Committee area. There was a fair turnout of about eighty people, sparked partly by the hoax W.O.L.F.E. letter that had appeared the day before. This time presentations were made by the city and by C.O.S.T. The city representative, apparently unaware of the scheduled format, was not prepared to debate. It was agreed instead that he would make his presentation and answer questions first before leaving the platform to C.O.S.T. While the planned debate did not materialize, it was nonetheless the first time that the two presentations and points of view were heard at one meeting.

The next two meetings went more or less according to format. In Fort Garry on May 7, the railway committee was represented by the consultants Damas Smith. Presentations by Smith and C.O.S.T. sparked a lively and informative debate. The well attended meeting proved very satisfactory to many present including members of the People First group who had launched the first suburban revolt. On May 15 a meeting in the Midland Community heard presentations from C.O.S.T. and city representatives, and again a lively debate ensued.

During the April-May period there had been considerable difficulty getting some of the meetings organized. Several were cancelled or postponed, and C.O.S.T. was forced to keep revising plans throughout. There were rumblings that city technical staff were not pleased at the prospect of entering a political debate, or of defending plans that were officially a product of the five party consortium, even though they had played a major role in preparing them.

Early in June C.O.S.T. discovered that a fresh round of meetings were to be organized, this time going back to the original idea of contracting the job out to the consultants. All of the Community Committees were to be included in five regional groups. The meetings were to begin the following week and be completed ten days later.

A C.O.S.T. meeting was promptly called on June 8. As the C.O.S.T. presentation was no longer included on the public meeting agendas, it was decided to distribute a handout at the door outlining the C.O.S.T. position instead.

As the public meetings had been arranged with indecent haste, and little apparent publicity, it was decided to boost attendance with a C.O.S.T. press release sent to all media. The release stated who was holding the meetings, the place and the time. It announced the reasons why C.O.S.T. wanted a good turnout and included a copy of the handout entitled, "Concerns of C.O.S.T.". This last sheet covered most of the main points made in earlier presentations, plus the new information that the historic site at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers might not be released for parkland after all, as C.N.R. and Great West Life Company were negotiating about a new office building there.

The first public meeting of the new round took place two days later for the Centennial and Midland Communities. Members of C.O.S.T. arrived to distribute the handbill. Following the official presentation, a motion was put from the floor asking to see the C.O.S.T. presentation. The motion was passed almost unanimously by the people present and the show went on. A good debate followed similar to the Fort Garry meeting. The next day, the meeting and the C.O.S.T. viewpoint received good coverage on radio, television and both city papers, prompted largely by the C.O.S.T. press release.

The remaining four meetings were attended by C.O.S.T. solely in a watching capacity without further presentations. "Concerns of C.O.S.T." was circulated at each, and the points raised were often picked up by the people. In addition, the C.O.S.T. points were covered by the community newspapers with the Fort Lance reprinting the sheet almost verbatim. An editorial in the Leisure section of the Free Press also gave C.O.S.T. and its concerns good play. The final meeting of the series signalled also the end of C.O.S.T. activities for the summer.

4.9 Resolution

On July 18, 1973, the new Unicity council produced its first general policy statement on the major city plans.²⁴ This was a culmination of the process officially set in motion by the councillors' seminar back in April. Many of the resolutions were vague, and the voting roll went unrecorded. Nonetheless, in an important statement of principle, Council

24. City of Winnipeg, Minutes, Council Chamber, Winnipeg, July 18, 1973.

decided to reject freeways in favour of an expanded arterial street system, with increased emphasis on public transport. This reversed the position taken by the former Metro Council, and in so doing, realized one of the principle aims of C.O.S.T.

But, even as the resolution was being reached, an old battlefront was opening once again. At the same meeting a proposal to proceed with the Sherbrook-McGregor Overpass was sent back pending receipt of an environmental impact study as called for in the City of Winnipeg Act. This action was prompted by a large turnout of people known as the McKenzie Residents Group, who opposed the creation of a major thoroughfare down their quiet residential street as a result of the planned overpass. The conflict that had set many other events in motion was still alive, but this time a better policy framework existed for its solution.

At a further meeting on August 1, Council refused to endorse rail relocation in principle, but after consideration of the consultants' report on the community meetings, asked for a further study of a "Do Nothing" option.²⁵ This option would essentially leave it to the railways as to whether they wished to move their yards or not for commercial reasons. The consultants' report that had accurately summarized the prevalence of suburban protesters at meetings, had ignored the C.O.S.T. compromise calling for study of positive action on yard removal, leaving the mainlines where they are. They were opting instead for an all or nothing approach which threatened to put centre against suburb, now that the common interest brought on by the freeways was no longer at hand. It was left to await results of the further study.

25. City of Winnipeg, Minutes, Council Chamber, Winnipeg, July 18, 1973.

5. PERSPECTIVE

The contribution of C.O.S.T. to the events of 1973 constituted but one element in a complex planning process characterized by changing institutions, technologies and political debate. While organized action by community interest groups on planning issues is by no means new to Winnipeg, the degree of organization on an area-wide basis, the use of professionals, and the level of technical debate did represent a novel dimension.

The amount of exposure was quite extensive in relation to the effort although it did, nonetheless, involve a considerable amount of time by a number of individuals. The motivating force was provided by voluntary concerned citizens. It was facilitated in large measure by the existence of several publicly funded organizations able to provide manpower on a part-time basis for the various technical, organizational, informational, and clerical tasks.

The future of this form of activity may, therefore, depend on the judgement of voluntary participants and public funding bodies as to the effectiveness and value of this form of involvement, and on the need arising from social and economic forces demanding change.

Judgement on the principle of advocacy is likely to be based on the strength of theoretical arguments, both for and against, concerning its role in the planning process, and on experience of it in practice.

Local government in Winnipeg and elsewhere in North America has traditionally been viewed as a non-political but democratic institution,

charged with the efficient management of local services and evaluated by the public, through elections, on its soundness of judgement. The continuing prevalence of this view was aptly demonstrated in the 1971 Unicity election by the lack of debate on issues and by the charge that politics would interfere with good management. In a similar manner, planning has been regarded as a difficult but non-political activity, requiring only technical co-ordination and foresight to insure efficient and orderly development. Organized opposition and debate in this regard is seen as time-consuming, obstructive, short-sighted and costly.

Against these views are the theoretical arguments in favour of advocacy advanced by Paul Davidoff in 1965.²⁶ Describing the process, he says,

"The idealized political process in a democracy serves the search for truth in much the same manner as due process in law. Fair notice and hearings, production of supporting evidence, cross-examination, reasoned decision are all means to arrive at relative truth: a just decision. Due process relies heavily upon strong advocacy by a professional. The advocate represents an individual, group or organization. He affirms their position in language understandable to his client and the decision makers he seeks to convince."²⁷

He feels the advocate can play a useful role by,

"making more apparent the values underlying plans and making definitions of social costs and benefits more explicit."²⁸

26. Davidoff, Paul, op.cit.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

He also feels that the advocate can play a useful role in developing alternative plans that,

"represent the deep-seated convictions of their proponents, and not just the mental exercises of rational planners seeking to portray the range of choice."²⁹

The advantages he sees in this particular approach to planning are:

1. A means of better informing the public of the alternative choices open to them.
2. Forcing the public agency to compete with other groups to win political support, and to thereby improve the quality of their work.
3. Forcing the critics to produce superior plans.

The arguments advanced by Davidoff have a fairly general application. The concept may, however, be taking on a growing importance in the context of the transport history described in previous chapters. In the pre-war period transport decisions were taken at a fairly local level, to handle local traffic problems, and were based on quite unsophisticated arguments. Under these conditions, a form of pluralism involving local interest groups was a reasonably valid possibility. With the increasing geographic and functional centralization that took place for the next thirty years, and the increasing technical sophistication of planning methods on an area-wide basis, the opportunity for expression of local points of view has diminished.

Much of this centralization and consolidation was a valid response to developing problems and kept well in time with advances in planning

29. Ibid.

theory. The concept of advocacy planning could well be the next stage in the progression, preserving the positive comprehensive features of the earlier changes, but introducing a form of pluralism on a geographically centralized basis.

C.O.S.T. did not, however, emerge from some calculated progression in planning theory. It grew rather from an ad hoc, spontaneous reaction to an immediate problem. There were, nonetheless, striking similarities in terms of the group composition and strategies to the theoretical concept described by Davidoff and also to actual experience elsewhere, in Toronto and Boston.³⁰

The experience confirmed the effectiveness of technical briefs, slide shows, direct mailings, handouts, and press releases in presenting a position and in obtaining wide media coverage of the issues. Operating through the new Community Committee structure by way of Resident Advisory Groups was an avenue not available in Toronto and Boston. Although this approach had a mixed success, it was an interesting application for the newly convened groups who were themselves still trying to establish a role. Some of the problems were in any case, beyond their control.

The effectiveness of the C.O.S.T. effort cannot, however, ultimately be gauged in terms of inches of newsprint or radio and television network time. In terms of actual attendance at meetings, less than one thousand people viewed the presentations. While it is likely that a fair number of councillors were exposed to the C.O.S.T. line at one time or another, it is impossible to estimate how many of the general public were

30. Lupo, Colcord, Fowler, op.cit.

actually reached by the media coverage. More importantly, there is little evidence, beyond the circumstantial coincidence of decisions, to suggest that the coverage helped to clarify issues or had an important effect on the judgements of either councillors or the public.

The value of the debate in terms of the quality of decision-making is yet more difficult to ascertain. Perhaps the best that could be done would be to measure the effectiveness, as described by Davidoff, in providing the ingredients "to arrive at relative truth".³¹

The future of the advocacy role in the planning process will depend upon a number of factors. As Winnipeg moves closer to the big city leagues, the pressures of growth and the efforts of the planners to accommodate it are likely to produce increasing strains, conflict, and the emergence of more organizations like the Sherbrook-McGregor Overpass Group (S.M.O.G.) and the McKenzie Residents Group, and a consequent demand for technical advice.

If groups like these are provided with institutionalized channels for dissent in the form of public hearings, with provision for submission of evidence and cross-examination of technical witnesses, then the advocacy role would be greatly aided and a basis could be established for more informed decisions. In addition, greater public accessibility to technical city planning reports would assist the advocates and lead to more informed debate. The availability of advocates is likely in the long run, however, to depend on the provision of funding. The existence of I.U.S. and Pollution Probe in this case provided a ready avenue for technical support.

31. Davidoff, Paul, op.cit.

In the future, various organizations such as political parties, chambers of commerce, social agencies and ad hoc protest associations may be interested in performing an advocacy role. Some will have internal funds, but others may need support from foundations, and perhaps the Federal or Provincial Governments, so that professional advocates can be drawn from a variety of places.

In the meantime, the embryo C.O.S.T. maintains a watchful eye on city plans.

NOTE: Many of the references to events and dates mentioned in this report were gathered from newspaper articles in the Winnipeg Free Press and the Winnipeg Tribune, and from the author's personal experience as the I.U.S. member on C.O.S.T.