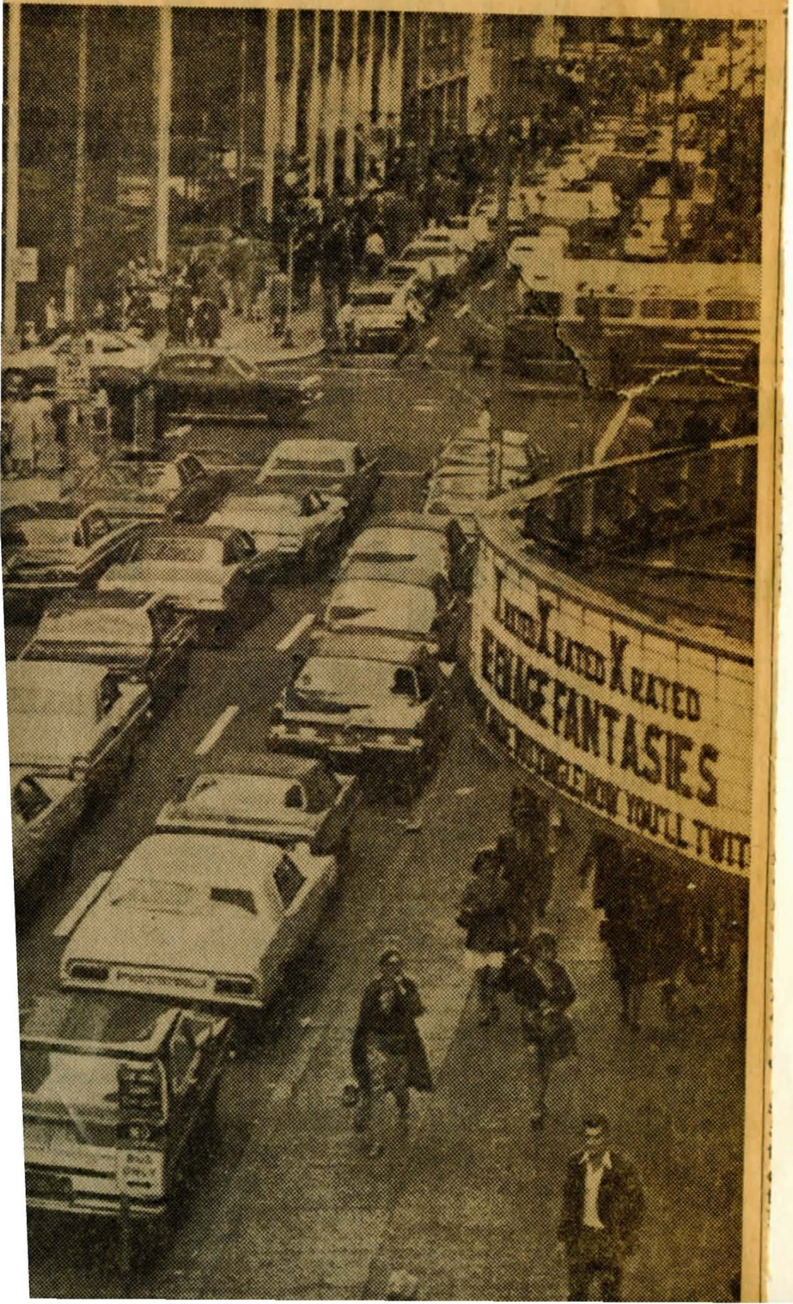
Clippings

Record 10/30/72

Nation's Mass Transit Bad and Getting Worse



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Survey Finds Nation's Mass T

Editor's Note: The following, first of a three-part series from The AP Special Assignment Team, examines the current state of mass transportation.

By DONALD M. ROTHBERG
(Associated Press Writer)

Washington (AP) — Whatever agony you endure getting to work each day—a freeway traffic jam, a subway car older than most of its riders, an off-schedule train—depend on it getting worse.

An Associated Press survey of cities, large and small, across the nation found that despite the beginning of a federal aid program, most transit systems are fighting a losing battle to recover from years of neglect, underfinancing, and poor planning.

Principal victims of the grim financial state of public transportation are the dwindling number of riders, abused by antiquated equipment and forced to pay a sharply rising double charge, part into the fare box, the rest in taxes levied for transit subsidies.

And what of those millions who were forced by declining service and rising fares to commute by automobile?

They now find themselves no better off as traffic jams grow worse and environmentalists advocate restricting automobile access to cities as an answer to air pollution.

When it comes to federal aid, public transportation is no match for highways.

For a moment, late in 1927, it appeared that Congress might authorize tapping the multibillion-dollar Highway Trust Fund for transit projects. But the proposal, which passed the Senate, died in the rush to election-year adjournment.

What money there is available for mass transit is offered by the federal government on terms far less attractive than those for highway funds.

FASTER ON FOOT THAN BY WHEELS — Pedestrians make better time on Philadelphia's Chestnut Street as do motorists who move along at an average speed of four miles an hour. This view looks east on Chestnut Street, with the main Broad Street intersecting at top center. (AP Wirephoto)

"Suppose the city has ten bucks and it wants to get some money for moving people," said James McConnon who runs the Philadelphia transit system, which he acknowledges is one of the worst in the country.

"With that ten bucks it can get $100 of highway money and it can only get $30 of mass-transit money. Now, how are the cities going to invest their money? I mean, there's no contest."

So Philadelphians who use the subway ride in scarred, 43-year-old cars which they board at dirty, dimly lit stations.

Most Philadelphians drive to ... n Chestnut Street, a main ... fare which is both his- ... d narrow, automobiles ... four miles an hour. So ... pedestrians.

Those cars are a reason why Philadelphia was one of six cities that the federal Environmental Protection Agency singled out for a warning that restrictions of automobiles may be

aid has gone to construction projects on $250,741 miles of primary, secondary and urban roads.

Still there are signs of life in public transportation as money becomes available for projects their backers hope will prove that rapid, efficient transit systems can compete with automobiles. The projects include San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit-BART-system and a $3-billion subway under construction in Washington.

But most new projects are for big cities. What, for example, of the 1,000 or so private bus companies serving medium-sized and smaller cities?

Their plight was summed up for a congressional committee by D. J. Giacoma, chairman of American Transit Corp., which

convinced us that we are in a serious and precarious financial position.

"It is only a question of time—a short time—until the private company can no longer operate under the present circumstances."

Cochran told the hearing that private bus systems have received less than one per cent of the federal aid to the transit industry.

"It is especially ironic that they should be victims of discrimination in the application of the transit aid program because they pay taxes that help to finance that program," he said.

Atlanta had one of the last of the privately owned bus systems serving a large city. It was regarded as a good system providing widespread service in

"We are certainly not unique when it comes to the problems facing transit systems throughout the nation. We are all in the same bus. For the past 16 years we have operated on Barely a break-even basis despite 11 increases in fare."

Within months area voters approved a sales-tax increase to finance public purchase of the system.

Deficits are climbing for many transit systems at a rate that raises questions where the money to meet them will come from. In New York City, transit labor eats up $1.08 for every $1 collected in the fare box.

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, serving Boston and 78 surrounding communities, deals with 27 unions.

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Those cars are a reason why Philadelphia was one of six cities that the federal Environmental Protection Agency singled out for a warning that restrictions of automobiles may be necessary to meet air-pollution standards set in recent federal laws. The other five were Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, New York and Washington, D. C.

Suppose cars are restricted? The nation's public-transit systems seem ill-prepared to take up the slack.

Carmack Cochran, president of the Nashville, Tenn., Transit Co., spoke as an official of the American Transit Association when he told Congress early in 1972 that the industry suffered from "a vicious and self-defeating cycle of higher costs, higher fares and fewer riders."

He offered these statistics:

—Operating costs up nearly 50 per cent since 1960, but operating revenue up only 20 per cent during the same period;

—Since 1963, 100 transit bus systems stopped operating and nearly 100 more went from private to public ownership;

—More than twice as many people used public transportation in 1950 as use it today.

And where have all those commuters gone? Said Cochran:

"Most of them are riding in from suburbia—one to a car—and sitting bumper to bumper on the most magnificent highways money can buy.

Eight years before Cochran spoke, Congress passed the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 and declared that "federal financial assistance for the development of efficient, coordinated mass-transportation systems is essential."

Six years later, Congress issued another ringing statement and passed another mass-transit bill, this time authorizing $3.1 billion over a five-year period and promsing $10 billion over 12 years.

Congress appropriated $1 billion in each of the first two fiscal years under the new act. The total was more than had been appropriated for the previous six years.

But one third of it was caught in a Nixon administration budget freeze and never spent.

The money was strictly for capital equipment. The Nixon administration has steadfastly refused to support a program for federal aid for operating costs.

Meanwhile, the 42,500-mile interstate highway program goes ahead at what is expected to be a total federal cost of $68.3 billion. In addition, since July 1, 1956, $23.74 billion in federal aid has gone to construction projects on $250,741 miles of primary, secondary and urban roads.

Still there are signs of life in public transportation as money becomes available for projects their backers hope will prove that rapid, efficient transit systems can compete with automobiles. The projects include San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit-BART-system and a $3-billion subway under construction in Washington.

But most new projects are for big cities. What, for example, of the 1,000 or so private bus companies serving medium-sized and smaller cities?

Their plight was summed up for a congressional committee by D. J. Giacoma, chairman of American Transit Corp., which operates bus lines in 14 states:

"The inflationary period we have experienced in the past few years . . . coupled with our continuing loss of patronage, has convinced us that we are in a serious and precarious financial position.

"It is only a question of time—a short time—until the private company can no longer operate under the present circumstances."

Cochran told the hearing that private bus systems have received less than one per cent of the federal aid to the transit industry.

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Atlanta had one of the last of the privately owned bus systems serving a large city. It was regarded as a good system providing widespread service in comfortable equipment.

But early in 1972, William P. Maynard, president of the Atlanta Transit System, brought this warning to Congress:

"We are certainly not unique when it comes to the problems facing transit systems throughout the nation. We are all in the same bus. For the past 16 years we have operated on Barely a break-even basis despite 11 increases in fare."

Within months area voters approved a sales-tax increase to finance public purchase of the system.

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The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, serving Boston and 78 surrounding communities, deals with 27 unions. Henry S. Lodge, MBTA board chairman, said that without the unions operating costs could be lowered 15 per cent.

The unions have agreed to drop some particularly crippling work rules and "it no longer takes four men to change a windshield wiper," he said. But a bus driver cannot pump fuel into his vehicle.

Some transit operators argue that systems are public services that can no longer be expected to run at a profit. "I don't know what the police deficit is, or the garbage deficit is, but they're substantial," said a spokesman for the New York Transit Authority.

With six rapid transit lines and 135 bus routes, the highly regarded Chicago Transit Authority gives excellent coverage to the city, but its deficit is expected to reach $50 million this year. And much of its equipment is badly in need of replacement.

In Los Angeles most people choose only between driving to work and staying home.

The city does have a system which operates 1,500 buses over a service area of 2,280 square miles, larger than the state of Delaware.

But in the words of Paul Fowler of the Automobile Club of Southern California:

"Los Angeles has mass transportation, but it's by private vehicle." He questioned whether money spent on transit improvements attracts new riders:

"Improvements in public transit usually do not draw many people not already using it . . . A look at New York shows that even with their subways people still have the desire for an automobile."

Some transit advocates prefer not to talk about New York City.

"We make the argument on a national program that the main objective justifying an operating subsidy is increased ridership," said Fred Burke, a Washington-based transportation consultant.

"Well, you go to a guy in New York. He sits in the meeting and he says, 'I don't want any more riders. I can't handle what I've got.' "

Next: The Biggest System

Neither did ...

Sanitary Authority and State Officials to Meet November 1

Secondary treatment of sewage, a subject which has produced an apparent "Mexican standoff" between Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority and various Federal officials in recent weeks, returned to the spotlight this week with disclosures that:

State representatives are scheduled to meet November 1 with Sanitary Authority board members to discuss the situation as it now exists.

The U. S. Economic Development Agency, which had quaranteed financing of an engineering study to determine secondary treatment feasibility, has not entered into a contract with a consulting engineer to perform the necessary work and will not do so at least until after the November 1 meeting.

And, also, that representatives of several Federal agencies met during the last week to discuss ways, means and costs of expanding the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority's present service area and projected future requirements.

For approximately two months, Federal agencies working on disaster relief in Wyoming Valley area have been putting pressure on the sanitary authority to adopt a schedule for upgrading its system to a secondary treatment capability, pointing out that upwards of $200,000,000 in Federal disaster-relief funds are being held up until the schedule is adopted.

The sanitary authority, however, has steadfastly refused to adopt the schedule which the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency says it requires before it can issue certificates of adequacy for the various local projects now being held in a "limbo" state.

In what had been billed as a "preliminary step" toward clearing the way for release of the Federal funds, the Sanitary Authority earlier this month authorized the secondary treatment feasibility study at EDA expense. EDA was authorized to enter into a contract for the study with one of the engineering firms with which it has "open-end" contracts.

Some of the Federal officials working here voiced optimism that this initial act by the sanitary authority would pave the way for adoption of a schedule for upgrading the system to secondary treatment capability. It was pointed out that the schedule could be adopted subject to amendment and that the first amendment could be made, if necessary, when the feasibility study is completed.

The schedule was not adopted, however, and Henry Levi, executive director of the sanitary authority, said the board was not expected to take such action at least until the feasibility study has been completed.

As a result, it now appears that EDA officials in Washington may be reluctant to fund the engineering study — at a cost roughly estimated at $100,000 — un til the agency has some sort of assurance that the project will result in some useful purpose, principally adoption of the secondary treatment schedule.

Representatives of Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources have been kept fully informed of developments locally since, even before the Tropical Storm Agnes disaster, the State had instituted legal action against the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority for its failure to abide by on order to upgrade treatment to secondary levels.

The State's role in the situation, like that of various concerned local groups or individuals, had been more or less in the background since the tussle between the Federal agencies and the sanitary authority broke into the open.

The agenda for the November 1 meeting between the State officials and the sanitary authority board has not yet been made public, but there were indications that the secondary treatment issue will be foremost among the matters discussed.

Those cars are a reason why | companies serving medium-sized | nance that program," he said | eats up $1.08 for every $1 col-

Ride FREE until October 19th

After that it's only 15¢

ANYWHERE!

Free emergency transportation ends after Wednesday, October 18. But on Thursday, October 19 you can ride the Wilkes-Barre and White Transit buses anywhere* for only 15¢. Truly a bargain rate!!

*Not to Los Angeles, Please

Go Bus . . . The Best Way to Get There

LUZERNE COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

W B Record 10/3/72

County Forms New Transit Authority

9 Directors Named To Supplant Free Bus Service Oct. 19

10/2/73

The Luzerne County Commissioners Monday morning passed a resolution creating a Luzerne County Transportation Authority and naming nine members to the board of directors.

The resolution passed with modifications injected by Commissioner Frank Crossin with the consent and approval of County Solicitor Ralph Johnston. Commissioner Chairman E. C. Wideman and Mrs. Ethel Price joined with Crossin in voting to establish the authority, which all agreed is an "absolute must for the area."

Wideman said that the "free" bus service in the flood area, provided by Wilkes-Barre Transit Company and White Transit Company under funding by the Office of Economic Preparedness, is scheduled to end Oct 19. The new operation will then go into effect.

Crossin pointed out that the resolution called for establishment of a transit authority which would service the entire county. He said that the figures and other data used in the study for creation of an authority were those supplied for the service furnished in the "flood plaint area" only and not the entire county.

When Crossin moved adoption of the resolution with amendments, Attorney Johnston stated that an amendment could be made to one section of the resolution.

Commissioners Incorporate

The resolution signified the intention of the county to organize a Municipal Authority under the Municipality Authorities Act of 1945, as amended, "authorizing the execution of articles of incorporation for such an authority in setting for the form of articles; directing notice of the substance of this resolution and the articles to be published in the manner provided in said act; directing the filing of said articles; determining the initial project to be undertaken by said authority and providing that this resolution shall take effect immediately and appoint the members of said authority."

The incorporators are the three county commissioners. Wideman said that "this is an historical occasion in that we are going from the oldest transit company in the country to the newest transit company in the country. The average age of the equipment is now 21 years. We will have 43 new pieces of equipment."

To Serve on Authority

Those named to serve on the authority and terms are as follows: Edward Schecter, Shavertown RD 5, to Decmeber 31, 1977; Thomas R. McGeehan, Mountaintop, December 31, 1976; James Conahan, Wilkes-Barre, December 31, 1976; Russell W. Lackie, Kingston, December 31, 1975; ~~Leo Bergsmann, Kingston, December 31, 1975~~; Robert Miscavage, Wilkes-Barre, December 31, 1974; Robert Leonardi, Kingston, December 31, 1974; Joseph O'Karma, Glen Lyon, December 31, 1973, and Edward Heiselberg, Mountaintop, currently director of the Luzerne County Planning Commission, December 31, 1973.

Members of the special committee which conducted the transit study were: Mr. Schecter, chairman; Jack Conyngham, Frank Henry, Jack Holt, and Julius Landau. Mr. Schecter is president of Stressteel Corporation while Mr. Conyngham is vice president of Eastern Pennsylvania Supply Company. Mr Landau is a Wilkes-Barre merchant. Frank Henry is president of White Transit Company while Mr. Holt is general manager of the Wilkes-Barre Transit Company.

dowcrest mother, the Meadow- it is just an impossible way ...

10/17/72

Transit Authority Gets $1,500,000 For 21-Mo. Demonstration Project

The new Luzerne County Transportation Authority on Monday received a $1,500,000 grant from the Federal and State governments for a 21-month demonstration mass transit project.

The grant insures that buses will continue running Friday, the day after an Office of Emergency Preparedness subsidy ends. OEP had been paying approximately $6,000 per day since July to provide free bus service for local residents.

As of Friday, the local authority-operated bus system will charge 15 cents per ride.

Announcement of the grant was made at the Monday news conference of Frank Carlucci, Federal flood relief coordinator. Also on hand were Jacob Kassab, State Secretary of Transportation; County Commissioner E. C. Wideman, Jr.; Wilkes-Barre Councilmen Joseph Williams and Rev. William Reid; Atty. Joseph Quinn, counsel to the LCTA, and William S. Allison, deputy administrator of the U. S. Urban Mass Transportation Administration.

At the outset of the new system, the authority will lease equipment from Wilkes-Barre Transit Corporation and White Transit Company. Atty. Quinn said new buses should be in use within six to nine months.

Atty. Quinn said the two local bus companies will be responsible to the nine-man transportation authority. The authority, headed by Robert Leonardi, Kingston, as chairman, will advertise this week for an executive director, Quinn said.

The ability to keep the fare at 15 cents will depend on the support of the citizenry, Atty. Quinn said. Both Kassab and Allison urged continued public use of the buses, with Kassab noting that the entire nation will be watching to see the outcome of this demonstration project.

Preliminary plans call for a hike in the fare to 20 cents after seven months, Atty. Quinn said, but the fare could be kept at 15 cents if patronage is high.

The demonstration project is a combination of grants from both the federal and state governments. The components are a $500,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, a $450,000 grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and a $300,000 grant from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration of the U. S. Department of Transportation and a $285,000 grant from the President's Office of Emergency Preparedness.

10/17/72

VALLEY EDITION TIMES-LEADER, EVENING NEWS

Hard Material Defies Pilings for 2 Piers At North St. Bridge

Contractor for the new temporary bridge at North Street has run into a problem trying to sink pilings for two piers.

Four piers are substantially completed, but for the last several days the contractor has been unable to remove material on the bed of the river obstructing the pilings.

Raymond R. Radomski, liaison engineer with Pennsylvania Department of Transporation, Scranton District, said two attempts have been made by the contractor, H. A. and F. C. Wagman, Inc., of York, to break the obstructing material by blasting, and both were unsuccessful. Blasting will be tried a third time, possibly Tuesday or Wednesday, he said. If this doesn't work, it may be necessary to redesign, it was explained.

It is not known definitely what the material is, but whatever it is could not be budged by a crane capable of lifting 100 tons. Radomski reported. It is believed to be parts of old piers which collapsed when the river was cresting in the June 23 flood. Rock bed lies 50 feet beneath the bed of the river.

Charges used in the blasting are set through a pipe, which is driven into dirt and rock placed over the obstructing material.

Meantime, work is going forward on the four piers already set and on other phases of construction. Target date for completion is January 15.

10/19/72

Editorial Comment

Transit Subsidy Holds Promise

The announcement this week that Luzerne County Transportation Authority has received a $1.5 million grant from State and federal government agencies is a sign of hope that the traffic congestion, which was commonplace even before the North Street bridge was destroyed, may in time be curbed and perhaps ended. It may also be an important step in the direction of a revitalized central city, now shunned by many because of congestion, high bus fares, and infrequent service.

Whether or not any of this comes to pass, indeed, whether the fifteen cent fare can be retained depends entirely upon residents of Greater Wilkes-Barre. If they use the buses, there is a good possibility that the fare can be held down. If they do not use them, the fare will surely rise and the project may fail, for experience shows that every fare increase leads to a decline in the number of riders.

Since July, buses of Wilkes-Barre Transit Company and White Transit Company have been kept running under a $6,000-a-day subsidy from the Office of Emergency Preparedness, which provided free service. The subsidy ended yesterday, but thanks to the grant the buses will continue to roll, although passengers must be prepared to pay the modest fare.

The decline of mass transportation in Greater Wilkes-Barre, as elsewhere, is due to the increased use of private automobiles that began in earnest following World War II. Since that time, 75 per cent of government spending for transportation has gone for highway construction. Only one per cent has gone for urban mass transit. As a result, we can speed with ease between Wilkes-Barre and other major cities on the Interstate system, but find it slow and trying to get to or from central city and the suburbs.

There is approximately one car for every two persons in the United States and the Bureau of Roads estimates there will be 200 million automobiles on the road by the year 2000. The problem, therefore, will get much worse unless a serious effort to solve it is made.

Additional highways and downtown parking lots are clearly not the answer. They have been tried and failed. The truth is that highways increase congestion while additional parking space merely invites a greater number of automobiles to converge on a limited area. Mass transit, on the other hand, decreases congestion. A highway lane filled with cars carries 3,600 passengers per hour. The same lane filled with buses, carries 60,000 persons per hour. Apply those figures to Public Square and West Market street during rush hour and imagine the difference that would be made.

In that vein, we are pleased to note that one aim of the newly founded project will be a study of the feasibility of exclusive bus lanes. That concept has been tried and proved successful in other areas where public transit had been ailing, and holds promise for this locality.

The solution to traffic congestion clearly lies in less use of private automobiles, especially in core city areas, and greater reliance on buses and other forms of mass transportation. In the interest of rebuilding a better and more attractive community, the activities of Luzerne County Transportation Authority must have broad public support.

Sanitary Authority Inactivity Jeopardizes $200 Million Aid

Sun. Rec.

By JOE SINNOTT
Staff Writer

The amount of Federal flood-recovery money being jeopardized by the inaction of the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority zoomed upwards during the week —hitting a maximum mark in the neighborhood of $200,000,000—with disclosure that urban renewal funds from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Renewal will not be forthcoming until the adequacy of sewage treatment is assured.

Last week, the Sunday Edition reported that between $2,000,000 and $3,000,000 in Economic Development grants, principally for industrial development and municipal sewer projects, were being threatened by the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority's failure to adopt a schedule for upgrading its system.

During the intervening week, however, the Sunday Edition learned from Federal sources that up to $200,000,000 in HUD funds for flood-related urban renewal projects and for water and sewer projects locally were also being held up by the Sanitary Authority's failure to take a preliminary action required by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency.

One HUD representative, commenting on the hold-up of funds for area water and sewer projects, said several applications were "being favorably considered" but that final action on release of funds could not be taken until a certificate of adequacy for each of the proposed undertakings was received from the Environmental Protection Agency.

The amount of money involved in this aspect of HUD's community assistance role is dwarfed by the total anticipated outlay for urban renewal work, but still totals in the millions of dollars. It was noted, for instance, that one community sewer project in the amount of $1.5 million had been approved, but that actual funding was "not moving." Two other applications submitted to the HUD regional office "could have been funded" if a certificate of sewage treatment adequacy on each other had been received from the Environmental Protection Agency, it was stated. The latter two projects carry a total price tag of roughly $1 million. In all three cases, it was pointed out, the communities in which the projects were proposed are associated with the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority.

Federal officials pointed out once again that the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority is not being asked or required to extend, improve or upgrade its system immediately. What is required of the Authority, it was stated, is a "commitment" to upgrading the system and providing for secondary treatment of effluent which is discharged into the Susquehanna River.

The millions of dollars in Federal funds will not be released to finance proposed projects in the Wyoming Valley area until the Enviromental Protection Agency confirms and approves the adequacy of the local sewage and waste disposal facilities. Before EPA gives its "okay", however, the Sanitary Authority must "commit" itself to future action by adopting a resolution establishing a schedule for upgrading its system.

The Economic Development Administration, as reported earlier, is still prepared to finance preliminary engineering work associated with upgrading of the Sanitary Authority's system. This work could be done either by an engineer selected by the Sanitary Authority or by one of the several engineering firms under "open end" contracts with EDA.

It was also learned during the week, through, that there is a "good possibility" the entire cost or at least the bulk of upgrading the Sanitary Authority's system to a secondary treatment capability could be borne by various Federal and State agencies, with minimal or no cost to the authority or its subscribers.

Figures on the cost of providing secondary treatment of sewage had been estimated some time ago to be anywhere between $10,000,000 and $20,000,000. During the past week, however, an official of one Federal agency working in the Wyoming Valley area said an engineering firm familiar with the existing system had drawn up plans for a secondary treatment plant which carried a total estimated price tag of only $6,000,000.

The Sanitary Authority's present $27,500,000 primary treatment plant in the Breslau section of Hanover Township was designed by the engineering firm of Albright and Friel which has since been acquired by Betz Environmental Engineers, Inc., of Plymouth Meeting. Late in 1971, however, the Sanitary Authority let a $10,000,000 contract for development of a secondary treatment plant to Middle Atlantic States Engineering, Inc. The Middle Atlantic firm's contract was subsequently vacated and Luzerne County Court Judge Bernard Podcasy signed an order banning secondary treatment planning until August 8 of this year. In June, Tropical Storm Agnes caused about $3,000,000 damage to the Sanitary Authority's system and massive Federal and State aid was asked for repair of this damage.

Mass Transit Unit Will Be Established

Sun. Rec. 10/1

A new, nine-member Luzerne County Transportation Authority for the Flood Plain will be established at a special meeting of the county commissioners tomorrow morning at 10 in the courthouse.

The authority, which by law must be established before funds for a demonstration project grant can be requested, will consist of Edward Schechter, president of the Stressteel Corporation, Wilkes-Barre; Edward Heiselberg, executive director of the Luzerne County Planning Commission; Russel W. Lackie of the Wilkes-Barre Merchants Association; Joseph O'Karma, Nanticoke automobile dealer; Leo Bergsmann, controller of the Triangle Shoe Company; Robert Miscavage, executive director of the Wilkes-Barre Model Cities Agency; James Conahan, member of the Wilkes-Barre Parking Authority; Thomas McGeehan, vice president of Consolidated Transportation Service, and Robert Leonardi, Boot and Shoe Workers' Union official.

County Commissioner E. C. Wideman, Jr., said it is hoped that the new authority will have a transportation demonstration grant by October 19, the date on which the free bus service being funded through the President's Office of Emergency Preparedness is scheduled to end.

Earlier this week, Mr. Heiselberg announced that present plans call for the leased use of Wilkes-Barre Transit Corporation and White Transit Company buses for a 21-month period. He also indicated that demonstration grant monies being sought include $300,000 from the Federal government's Urban Mass Transit Administration; $450,000 from the Model Cities Program; $285,000 from the Office of Emergency Preparedness; $500,000 from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and $75,000 from the U. S. Economic Development Administration.

It was learned that the money, in addition to funding the authority's operations during the 21-month demonstration project period, would also be used to provide 23 buses for the benefit of flood victims, people residing in the flood plain, and those residing in the emergency housing sites established in the wake of the June flood.

Commissioner Wideman said plans for initial mass transit operations by the newly-formed authority call for an initially-minimum passenger fee which would eventually be increased but which, probably, would still be lower than the fees charged in pre-flood days. Unofficial reports indicate the initial fee would be about 15 cents, with this amount being raised to about 25 cents at some future date.

More specific details will be announced by Jacob Kassab, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, when the various necessary agreements are formalized, it was stated.

Commissioner Wideman was high in his praise of Mr. Schechter, Mr. Heiselberg, Secretary Kassab and various officials of the Federal agencies working in the disaster area who, he said, did "yeoman service" on planning for the mass transit authority in the flood plain area.