

HOW WE GOT HERE:

**TEN YEARS OF THE METROPOLITAN CONFERENCE
ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH**

1986 – 1995

MCPTR



HOW WE GOT HERE: TEN YEARS OF THE MCPTR

by

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A "TRB for the home-town team." "The annual chance to meet my colleagues in other agencies and discuss the work we have done in the past year." These are two of the descriptions that have been used to describe the annual gathering of Chicago area public transportation professionals, academics and other interested parties. The onset of warm weather in early June sees sailors take to the Lake, crowds to the ballparks, and the Chicago planning community to South Halsted Street.

In 1995 the Metropolitan Conference on Public Transportation Research (MCPTR) celebrates its tenth anniversary. The first conference was held at the University of Chicago (U of C) on Thursday, June 19, 1986. Since that time the MCPTR matured under the protective custody of two universities to become a not-for-profit corporation in 1992. What has not changed is the mission. It is still organized by a volunteer committee with the sole objective of providing a one-day conference.

This paper traces the history of the MCPTR. It is drawn from published proceedings, internal records and oral history. The author has attended the conference since number six (1991) and has been a steering committee member since then, latterly serving as vice-president and then treasurer. I am grateful to all the people who shared reminiscences with me and apologize to anyone who feels that my own particular interpretation of history has played "fast and loose" with the truth. I also apologize that I have included some minutiae, but I felt it was important to set this down for the benefit of the person who will write the corresponding paper to this one when the MCPTR comes of age in 2006.

1. Historical Overview

The MCPTR was the brainchild of Larry Anderson. Larry had been a 1983 master's graduate and then a research fellow of the Center for Urban Studies at the U of C. He then joined the Illinois Department of Transportation - Division of Public Transportation (IDOT) and later the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA). He and some other younger professionals were concerned that they could never get the funding to attend the national annual Transportation Research Board (TRB) meetings in Washington, D.C., and thought that it would be a good idea to hold a local equivalent.

He felt that a link to a university was vital to the success of the conference. The conference could also tie into the proposed Illinois Universities Transportation Research Consortium. So, he approached Pastora Cafferty of the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) board and a faculty member in the School of Social Service Administration at the U of C. The two of them along with George Tolley, an economics professor and Larry's thesis advisor, had a meeting with Laurence Lynn, the director of the newly formed Center for Urban Research and Policy Studies (CURPS) in late 1985. The objective, as stated in the first proceedings, was that:

"the northeastern Illinois region will benefit greatly from the continuous exchange of ideas and experiences between the research institutions and the transportation operators and providers."

CURPS agreed to sponsor and organize a transportation conference. A ten-person steering committee was drawn from the Chicago transportation community. Administration was undertaken by the staff of CURPS under the leadership of Julie Montague, the administrative director. Committee member Jim Jarzab, then of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) and later of Pace Suburban Bus Service suggested the name. The first conference was also sponsored by the Academy of Information and Planning, a now moribund but then fairly robust association of midwestern data professionals, who were represented on the committee by Jim Jarzab and Deborah Stone of the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC).

The committee felt that it was essential to reach a critical mass at the first conference. The goal was to have about thirty papers, but without compromising standards. The conference was held on Thursday, June 19, 1986, in Swift Hall on the U of C campus. Swift Hall was chosen to give an aura of respectability to the initial conference and, since it was not air conditioned and the conference was held on one of the hottest days of the year, a distinct aroma as well. Thirty-seven papers were presented along with two keynote presentations and a closing panel session. The committee would have settled for sixty attendees, with a hundred hoped for. The actual audience was about 150.

The first conference was so successful that the steering committee reported in the proceedings that "we hope that future conferences will serve as a forum for understanding the problems and issues in public transportation." The conference was repeated under the auspices of CURPS in 1987 and 1988.

Unfortunately, after the 1988 conference the activities of CURPS were severely curtailed by the U of C. The Center lost all of its administrative staff and research associates. CURPS still continues to exist in a much-reduced form. Its major current activity is an annual "Chicago Assembly," a joint venture with the MPC. The Assembly invites 80 local leaders to discuss public policy issues of critical importance to the Chicago region. In the years since 1989 they have considered issues of jobs, health care, affordable housing, crime and local taxation.

Despite the loss of the sponsorship, administrative support, and financial security of CURPS, several strong members of the committee refused to let the MCPTR die. A search was conducted for an alternative venue. The facilities of various downtown hotels were investigated. Finally, Siim Sööt offered a home and sponsorship by the Department of Geography of the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). The move to UIC was concurrent with the expansion of the Urban Transportation Center at UIC. Committee member Richard Michaels of UIC encouraged the conference to move to UIC as the focus of the Illinois Universities Transportation Research Consortium also moved to UIC. He observed that "this little ship might turn into something big." So the Urban Transportation Center also became a cosponsor along with the School of Urban Planning and Policy, and the Department of Civil Engineering, Mechanics and Metallurgy.

The MCPTR has remained at the UIC's Chicago Circle Center since 1989. However, there has been an evolution in the organizational structure. On January 31, 1993, the MCPTR became incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation in the State of Illinois. The MCPTR also became a 501c(3) federal tax exempt educational research organization. From the 1991 conference the link to UIC was changed from "sponsored by" to "hosted by." Even that designation was dropped in 1993. However, the UIC connection remains strong. Alternative locations in downtown hotels, clubs and other universities were investigated in the summer of 1992. However, UIC won out on the basis of value, location and the desire of the committee to maintain an academic feel to the conference. Indeed, the logistics of the facilities at UIC are superior to those at U of C where luncheon was three blocks from the meeting rooms.

The bylaws of the corporation adopted on May 21, 1992, give the following purposes for the MCPTR:

- (i) Foster relationships between the academic community and practitioners of the public and private sector which help to establish academic and non-academic research agendas.
- (ii) Encourage members of the transportation community to prepare or discuss papers and current topics on transportation research.
- (iii) Foster dissemination of information regarding local transportation policy, planning, and programs.

2. Conference Program

The format of the conference has been remarkably consistent over the years. The conference has always been a one-day event. The first one was held on a Thursday but moved to Fridays from 1987. The move to Friday was prompted by the availability of air-conditioned classrooms in the School of Social Service Administration on a Friday. The conference usually opens with a keynote speaker in a plenary session. Two sets of concurrent sessions are held in the morning prior to another keynote address over

luncheon. In recent years the opening speaker has tended to be an academic while the lunchtime speaker is a practitioner addressing a policy issue. A further set of concurrent sessions precedes a closing plenary session, usually of a panel discussion nature. The day ends with a reception.

In the early days of the MCPTR there is evidence that Larry Anderson and his close compatriots on the committee, Karen Richter of the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) and Elizabeth Amburn of IDOT, had a somewhat grander vision of potential activities. In 1986/7 there were a series of "First Friday" breakfast meetings at the former "Little Corporal" restaurant on Wacker Drive just east of State Street. There was also an ultimate objective of becoming an affiliate of TRB. However, since the departure of Larry Anderson from the committee after the 1987 conference, the activities of the MCPTR have focused solely on the annual conference. There have been discussions over the years of expanding to a multi-day conference or broadening the geographical scope to the whole upper Midwest. However, the steering committee has concluded that we have a winning formula in a one-day conference.

Table 1 shows the program of the MCPTR over the past ten years. From 1990 the MCPTR has taken a catchy title for each year's conference. Titles were first adopted both as a way of focusing the conference and as a marketing tool. The 1990 committee wanted to attract viewpoints that had not been heard at previous conferences and choose to promote a theme of transit's role in influencing the growing suburbanization of the Chicago region. The "theme" approach reached its highpoint in 1992 and 1993 when the committee directly solicited many papers to provide a unified theme to the conference. The theme in both years of these years was deliberately provocative: whether transit has a future, and the effects of suburbanization. In 1994 the conference returned to a more eclectic nature.

The MCPTR has always been able to attract the biggest names in the academic community, politics, and transit management as keynote speakers. Both the Chairpersons of the local service boards and their Executive Directors have been regular speakers at the MCPTR. Leading transportation managers from New York, Boston and Baltimore have addressed the conference. A State Representative and the Secretary of IDOT have given keynote addresses.

The closing panel session has usually generated much discussion. Three panels provided attendees an opportunity to discuss the future of transit in the region with senior management. The very first conference featured a discussion on "downtown distribution." This subject has returned many times over the years as the circulator project moved closer to reality. The 1991 conference featured a very lively session on Personal Rapid Transit. This panel probably provided the widest press coverage the MCPTR has ever received.

TABLE 1: CONFERENCE PROGRAM

		TITLE	MORNING SPEAKER	LUNCH SPEAKER	CLOSING PANEL SESSION	CONCURRENT SESSIONS D=Demographics/Census, GIS=Computer/GIS, DM=Planning/Demand Modelling, MR=Market Research, F=Fares Policy, M=Marketing, CAA=Clean Air/ECO/CMAQ, P=Privatization, DC=Downtown Circulator, C=Road Congestion, LU=Land-Use & Joint Development											
						D	GIS	D M	M R	F	M	CA A	P	D C	C	L U	OTHER
1986	U of C		Bernard Ford (CTA)	David Young (Tribune)	Downtown Distributor		*	*	*	*	*		*	*			Regional Economics, gas prices, RTA Strategic Plan
1987	U of C		David Gunn (NYCTA)	Harold Hirsch (CTA)	Transit Managers	*	*	*		*			*	*	*	*	Crime
1988	U of C		Al Ronan (IL Rep)		Future Trends	*		*	*	*					*		Cost-Control
1989	UIC		Joel Ettinger (UMTA)	Dave Schulz (Milwaukee)	Privatization				*					*	*		Grade Crossings
1990	UIC	Transit's Role in Land Use & Econ Development	James O'Leary (MBTA)	Al Savage (CTA)	"Field of Dreams"	*	*	*					*		*		
1991	UIC	Transit 2000: Envisioning the Future	Vukan Vuchic (U Penn)	Kirk Brown (IL DOT)	Personal Rapid Transit		*	*	*				*		*		Fare Technology
1992	UIC	Can Transit be Saved?	Marty Wachs (UCLA)	Ron Hartman (Maryland MTA)	Service Board Chairpersons	*		*			*	*	*		*		ADA, Community groups, Quality
1993	UIC	Transportation Wars: The City vs the Suburbs	Robert Cervero (UC Berkeley)	Larry Christmas (NIPC)	Service Board Exec. Directors	*			*	*		*	*		*		Regional Funding, Capital programs
1994	UIC	Mobility in the Mature Metropolis	Don Pickrell (US DOT)	Elmer Johnson	Journalists		*	*	*			*					Economics, Technologies
1995	UIC	Asking for Directions: From Here to 2020	Robert Bruegmann (UIC)	Frank Kruesi (US DOT)	Anton Nelessen			*	*		*	*		*	*		2020 Plan, Customer service, Technology, Intelligent Transpnt Systems, Regional Policy

In 1994 popular radio host Ken Davis moderated a sobering discussion on the future of transit with three journalists who report on transportation and urban planning issues in Chicago. This panel included the *Chicago Tribune's* David Young who was the keynote speaker at the very first conference.

A strong point of the MCPTR has always been sessions on demand modelling and market research results. NIPC is usually on hand to present the latest census results and analysis of demographic changes. As early as 1987 a session was held on Geographic Information Systems (GIS). That session was reported to be sparsely attended! The same year had a computer workshop and demonstration session with apocalyptic paper titles such as "Anatomy of an Office Automation System" and "Personal Computers as a Model Calibration Tool." Today computers are firmly established in the profession, and papers now report on applications of GIS and computerized travel-demand models.

An interesting feature of the early conferences was the great concern about cost containment and possible privatization. There were very explicit discussions at the first two conferences, and a session at the third on how private sector involvement could lead to cost containment. Aside from a session in 1992, this subject appears now to be in abeyance.

Early conferences also considered planning models that would facilitate setting of fares and fares structures. In recent years the focus of these sessions has turned from fares to marketing in general. The role of community groups in transportation planning has been discussed.

Suburbanization has been a continuing theme, with entire conferences devoted to the subject in 1990 and 1993. Members of the early committees report that suburban road congestion was a issue of considerable concern. The subject of transit-oriented joint development has been popular in recent years. With the enactment of the Clean Air Act, conferences since 1992 have had a discussion of congestion mitigation and the evolution of the Employee Commute Options program. The 1995 conference had a session on road pricing. The consequences of the formation of "edge cities" on the vitality of the traditional city and the financial support of transit operators and their infrastructure appears to pervade many sessions and keynote addresses.

Early conferences had sessions on transit crime, and grade crossings. There has been a continuing series of discussions on technology, especially fare collection technology. In recent years the onward march of technology has led to the use of intelligent transportation systems and vehicle location technology. The operating consequences of the Americans with Disabilities Act were discussed in 1992. In 1995 a session was held on customer service.

Two major innovations were made in 1994. The first was the initiation of a student paper competition. Two awards are made to the best papers on an urban transportation related theme by students at Chicago area higher education institutions. The contest is intended to not only reward the best Ph.D. style esoteric paper, but also to encourage

students at a non-technical level who have shown insights into the existing literature or demonstrated professional development as a result of the paper. The winner in the first year used GIS techniques for the site of intermodal freight yards, while the runners up were using the CATS database on personal travel.

The second innovation was the establishment of an exhibits area. Vendors, consultants and professional organizations could display their wares and services to attendees. The exhibits area was intended to be on a fairly small scale but proved to be appreciated by attendees and exhibitors alike.

All speakers are encouraged to prepare a written paper of their presentations. Bound proceedings of the MCPTR have been produced every year and distributed to all participants. The involvement of Pace Suburban Bus Service in this task is gratefully acknowledged. Copies are also lodged at eleven major city, transit agency and university libraries in the city, and also in the transportation libraries at Northwestern University, the University of California at Berkeley and the federal Department of Transportation. In 1993 the MCPTR reprinted some of the early *Proceedings* to ensure that each library had a full set.

3. Audience

The first five conferences attracted about 150-170 people. Attendance took a leap in 1991 to 200. The number has exceeded 220 since then with the record attendance of 240 at the 1993 suburbanization conference. Based on the responses to the annual surveys, about 55% of attendees in a given year also attended the previous year. A considerable part of the explanation for the expanded attendance is the improved mailing lists that were built up.

Table 2 considers the composition of the MCPTR both in terms of attendees and presenters. There is some support here for the notion that the MCPTR has moved away from its academic roots. Almost half of the papers at the early conferences were by academics. That proportion had fallen to a quarter or less in recent years. The difference has been made up by CATS papers. The first year that a full attendance list survives for is 1990. A comparison of 1990 and 1994 shows very little difference, except perhaps for less representation by government. In comparing 1990 and 1994 it should be borne in mind that the actual number of attendees increased by 40% from 158 to 225.

Some of the changes in the composition of papers and attendees can be explained by subtle changes in the interests of the conference committee. The first committees had a bias towards research by transit implementors and operators. It was not by chance that the MCPTR has the words "public transportation" in its title. The early committee had to solicit papers and it reflected the engineering and management bias of committee. CATS which works in long-range multimodal planning encouraged broader participation during the presidency of Kermit Wies. The heart of the MCPTR's audience and presenters then

became the planning community. In recent years the steering committee has tried to broaden the appeal and solicit papers to appeal to the operating side of the business.

TABLE 2: CONFERENCE ATTENDEES

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION	ATTENDEES		PAPERS	
	1990	1994	1986	1994
Operators / RTA	43%	44%	23%	23%
Government	16%	9%	3%	6%
Planning Organizations (NIPC, CATS)	16%	13%	14%	32%
Non-Governmental Organizations	3%	4%	3%	3%
Academics	13%	16%	46%	23%
Consultants	4%	5%	6%	3%
Vendors	0%	4%		
Journalists	2%	2%	3%	3%
Others	3%	2%	3%	6%

The decline in the academic participation can probably be explained by the considerable difficulty in securing senior academics to take strong leadership positions in the MCPTR. In contrast the early conferences were administered through an academic unit and had a committee composed of people just out of graduate school.

A group that has been growing in recent years are non-governmental organizations and public interest groups. It has been speculated that the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 made many civic activists aware of the potential of transit solutions to the problems in our cities.

4. Organization

In the early days of the MCPTR the administration and finances were undertaken by the Administrative Director of CURPS at the U of C: Julie Montague in 1986 and 1987, and Peter Carlson in 1988. The program was coordinated by a volunteer committee drawn from both inside and outside the university. The first committee was chaired by U of C economics professor George Tolley, and he was joined by eight representatives from Metra, Pace, the RTA, CATS, IDOT, and MPC.

In 1987 and 1988 the committee was chaired by founding members Larry Anderson (CTA) and David Phillip Beal (Metra) respectively. Reports suggest that the

early years were marked by intense, and lengthy, debate because all decisions had to be made by consensus. A measure of the informality and equal status accorded to all members of the committee is that the proceedings of 1987 through 1990 did not identify which committee member was the chairperson.

TABLE 3: MCPTR OFFICERS

	CHAIR / PRESIDENT	VICE-PRESIDENT	SECRETARY	TREASURER
1986	George Tolley		Julie Montague	
1987	Larry Anderson			
1988	David Phillip Beal		Peter Carlson	
1989	Kermit Wies		Nina Savar	
1990	Bill Reynolds			
1991	Nina Savar			
1992	John Paquet	Ken Dallmeyer	Luann Hamilton	Elisa Hoekwater
1993				Richard Cook
1994	Brad Thompson	Ian Savage	Bruce Whitten	
1995	Ken Dallmeyer	Joe Schwieterman	Linda Fuller	Ian Savage

It is also reported that the early committees were very insular. Vacancies on the committee were filled by personal recommendation, and there was considerable competition to join. Unlike today, there was little support from agencies to their staff participating on the committee. In recent years a certain amount of "arm twisting" has been necessary to obtain new committee members. However, it should be noted that there are enough volunteers for the committee to grow to an unprecedented size in recent years. There is still the tradition that outgoing committee members find a successor from their own agency. This minimizes the chance of a cataclysmic turnover of the committee as occurred in 1990. Appendix A shows the committee members over the past ten years and their affiliations.

The need for a formal structure emerged after the separation from CURPS after the 1988 conference. Kermit Wies of CATS built on the example of David Phillip Beal to establish a strong leadership role for the chairperson. Decisions were made by voting rather than by consensus. However, it should be said that since this author joined the committee in 1991 there has never been an issue that was divisive enough to require a vote, secret or otherwise. Nina Savar of NIPC took the minutes and handled the finances from 1989 to 1991. The latter role was decided because registrations were handled at

NIPC who are noted for having an exceptionally efficient mailroom. Indeed, the MCPTR mailing list was maintained at NIPC until 1994.

The initiation of moves to form a corporation required more formal structure for the committee and a change of titles. The Chairperson became the President. The Treasurer also became the Registered Agent for the corporation. The new bylaws of May 1992 also required a Vice President and Secretary. Gradually the duties of these two latter posts were defined. From 1994 the Vice President became responsible for receiving abstracts and working on the intellectual content of the MCPTR. After five years of minute taking revolving around the committee, this task became established as the Secretary's duties from 1995.

The early 1990s saw strong leadership from Pace Suburban Bus Service. This organization has always been most generous and supportive of the MCPTR. Their print shop has provided our printing needs. Senior management has encouraged employees to volunteer for the committee and recognized the time commitments required of the MCPTR President. Bill Reynolds (1990) and Brad Thompson (1994) flanked the two-year term of John Paquet (1992 and 1993).

Vision and hard work from John Paquet, Nina Savar, Elisa Hoekwater (NIPC), Ken Dallmeyer (CTA), Luann Hamilton (City of Chicago) and Bruce Whitten (CATS) were instrumental in incorporation and federal tax exemption.

The heavy workload on Presidents Nina Savar and John Paquet persuaded the committee that more delegation of responsibility was required. Currently there are seven committee posts in addition to the officers. These are listed in appendix B and cover site liaison, registration, the student paper competition, the exhibits room, press relations, publications and on-the-day customer service.

5. A Year in the Life of the MCPTR

John Paquet can be credited with institutionalizing a printed timetable of items to be accomplished for each month of the year. This was based on his observations during the presidency of Nina Savar. This document has become the essential guide to all subsequent committees. The steering committee meets approximately monthly at 4:30 pm. The meetings were held at various downtown locations in 1986/7, moved to Metra in 1988, to CATS in 1989, to NIPC from 1990 to 1993 and then back to CATS.

In August the committee from the previous year meets to review feedback from the conference questionnaire, to appoint new officers and to discuss potential people to fill committee vacancies. The members remaining on the committee plus new members meet in September to begin considering a theme for the upcoming conference and arrange for distribution of the proceedings from the past conference.

This process continues in October and November along with a discussion of possible keynote speakers. Keynote speakers are then approached and are usually signed up by Christmas. A call for papers is issued in mid-January which also reveals the chosen conference title. A special call for papers is also issued for the student paper competition.

Proposed abstracts have to be submitted by early March. The most important committee meeting of the year is then held on a Saturday morning in the third week of March to review abstracts and set the conference program. Acceptance letters are sent to authors in the first week of April. At this time a registration brochure is designed and mailed. Solicitation letters are also sent out for the exhibits area.

Committee meetings at this time of year become somewhat more frequent and deal with many of the practicalities of the day of the conference. Individual committee members accept responsibility to be the moderators of specific sessions. Apart from moderating the sessions, moderators are the principal contact with the speakers in their sessions. They monitor progress of authors in preparing abstracts and full papers and hold a meeting with authors to coordinate the running of the session and ensure speakers understand the standards for visual aids and length of presentations.

Registrations forms are returned, and the registrar prepares attendance lists and name tags. Registration was handled at NIPC from 1989 to 1991, at IDOT in 1992, and then at CATS since 1993.

In early May a sub-committee meets to review full papers submitted by student paper competitors. Recommendations are made for prizes. Other authors have to submit their camera-ready papers by the day of the conference for the production of the proceedings.

The night before the conference sees the entire committee stuffing the conference folders with maps, programs, abstract books, survey forms and the like. The registrar ensures that all name pages are prepared. Then off to bed early so as to be at the conference site by 6:30 am. There is then eight hours spent in a complete blur dealing with recalcitrant overhead projectors, late-appearing speakers, welcoming of keynote speakers, and worrying about time keeping. At 4:30 pm. when the first beer is cracked open at the reception it is all over for another year. The committee disperses into the humid early evening air of Halsted Street.

6. Finance

For the first three years of the MCPTR the money handling and accounts were dealt with at CURPS. At the separation from CURPS the fledgling MCPTR was handed a check for \$2,000 which represented the combined surplus on the first three years. An account was opened at the UIC Credit Union (a subsidiary of Credit Union 1 of Rantoul, Illinois). With the incorporation of the MCPTR a corporate account was opened at the

Madison Bank and Trust. Excessive fees led to a move six months later to our present home, Bell Federal Savings and Loan.

An objective of the committee in the early 1990s was to build up a modest reserve. Committee members from the time report that they were acutely aware of the loss of the financial security provided by CURPS sponsorship. This was a constraint on the ability to secure the best out-of-town keynote speakers. In addition, the attainment of corporation status meant that the MCPTR officers would be responsible for any liabilities.

Most of the potential audience for the conference comes from organizations that have a tight budget for conference attendance. Therefore, the MCPTR has always had a pricing philosophy that the fees should be kept as low as possible. To achieve this objective the committee has adopted a rule that everybody, including all speakers and the committee, pays the admission price. No exceptions. The price for the conference including a breakfast, luncheon and reception was \$30 in 1986-91. It rose to \$35 in 1992, to \$40 in 1993 and 1994, and was reduced to \$35 for 1995. Students enjoy a 50% price reduction.

The MCPTR has a turnover of about \$9,000 a year. The only income the MCPTR receives, aside from interest on the reserve, is registration fees. On June 2, 1993, the MCPTR was ruled to be exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The tax-exempt status is based on the MCPTR filing as a charitable organization for the advancement of education or science. The approval was backdated to the date of incorporation, January 31, 1992. The MCPTR also requested to be classified as a Public Charity under Section 509(a)(2) rather than a Private Foundation. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) will make a formal determination of this in the early months of 1997.

TABLE 4: EXPENSES AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL COSTS

Room and Equipment Hire	9%
Catering	54%
Keynote Speaker Honorariums and Expenses	16%
Student Paper Competition Prizes	4%
Printing and Postage	10%
Supplies	6%
Bank and Corporate Fees	1%

An analysis of expenditures for the 1994 conference in table 4 indicates why the conference is such good value: attendees eat 55% of their fees. The MCPTR pays a

modest honorarium to the keynote speakers and pays their travel and hotel expenses. However, in keeping with the generally frugal philosophy of the MCPTR, usually one of the speakers has to only travel from the Loop. The next largest items are the room and equipment hire, and postage. In 1994 the MCPTR decided to institute cash prizes for the best student papers.

7. The Effects of the MCPTR

This section is of necessity far more speculative and could be seen as self-serving. The facts that the organization has survived for ten years, continues to attract a volunteer committee, and senior management allows hundreds of employees to take a day away from their desks suggest added value.

There have also been at least three occasions when the MCPTR could have closed down: when Larry Anderson left the committee, when CURPS sponsorship was removed a year later, and when almost the entire committee retired after the 1990 conference. Yet the organization endures and flourishes despite these changes of personalities and sponsorship.

The audience is also expanding. The number of attendees has grown by 40% since the turn of the decade. In both 1994 and 1995 the number of abstracts received as a result of the *Call for Papers* exceeded the number of presentation slots available, whereas in earlier days papers had to be actively solicited and relatively few were declined. In 1995 the conference scheduled a record twelve concurrent sessions.

Some of the benefits can be gleaned from survey response forms and casual conversations. There is undoubtedly a benefit from encouraging transportation planners to develop their writing and presentation capabilities. It surely encourages some to present their work at the national Transportation Research Board or the Institute of Transportation Engineers. The conference provides a place where fellow professionals can challenge the work of their peers. For while there may be friction between agencies on a political level, at the staff level there is the trust and respect for learning from interchange of ideas.

The conference is also the largest inter-agency event in the city. The morning coffee break has been extended to thirty minutes to permit social interaction. For many attendees this is the only occasion of the year to meet many of their compatriots from other agencies. This is particularly true for Pace, whose offices are located far from the Loop.

For this author, service on the committee has opened up a large number of contacts throughout the Chicago transportation community and introduced me to the finer points of many of the contemporary issues. While it would not be true to say that it has influenced my research, my knowledge and understanding of the complexity of modern metropolitan issues has certainly increased.

The conference showcases some of the unique talents available at the various agencies. The conference themes allow people to break away from the details of their individual jobs to consider the "big picture" issues such as suburbanization. Departmental managers report that they send their newer employees and interns to the conference to show them that there is a transportation community in Chicago larger than their own agency.

The conference also has presented people with unprecedented opportunities to ask questions directly to their Chairpersons and Executive Directors. The conference is also able to secure the biggest names in politics, academia and transit management to come to Chicago.

I was personally struck by the comments of 1994 keynote speaker Don Pickrell of the U.S. Department of Transportation who commended Chicago as the only city he knew that had such a regular and extensive interchange of research methodology and findings. It is conceivable that similar organizations could exist in New York, Boston or Philadelphia, but the fact is they do not. Possible reasons for success in Chicago are four-fold: first the initial vision and energy of Larry Anderson and his friends; second the fragmentation of transit and planning agencies in Chicago which engenders a need for a forum for transportation professionals to share their work; third the concentration of universities offering good transportation programs in the city; and finally, the great pride that people take in our city.

Over the past ten years a series of strong personalities has transformed a university-based conference into a not-for-profit corporation which assists in maintaining Chicago's reputation as the transportation center of the nation.

APPENDIX A: STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 1986-1995

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
CTA		L. Anderson	K. Hunt-Rhymes	K. Hunt-Rhymes	K. Hunt-Rhymes	K. Dallmeyer	K. Dallmeyer R. Cook	K. Dallmeyer R. Cook	K. Dallmeyer R. Cook M. Dederling	K. Dallmeyer M. Dederling
Metra	D.P. Beal G. Foyle	D.P. Beal	D.P. Beal	J. Henneman	C. Abraham	A. Jones	A. Jones	C. Janikowski		D. Soeldner
Pace	J. Jarzab	W. Reynolds	W. Reynolds	W. Reynolds	W. Reynolds	J. Paquet	J. Paquet B. Thompson	J. Paquet B. Thompson	M. Kuzmich B. Thompson	J. Ciavarella B. Thompson
Circulator										K. Rohrer B. Weeks
RTA	S. Weseman		J. Sugrue	G. Arrieta		M. Ahlheim			R. Lee	J. Moriarty
City			C. Krueger	C. Krueger	L. Hamilton	L. Hamilton	L. Hamilton	L. Hamilton	L. Fuller	L. Fuller
IDOT	E. Amburn L. Anderson	E. Amburn	W. Lenski	W. Lenski	W. Lenski	D. Wilch	M. Erickson	M. Erickson	M. Erickson	
IEPA										B. Urbaszewski
CATS	K. Richter	K. Richter	K. Wies	K. Wies	J. Henneman M. Aguayo	J. Reilly	O. Anderson R. Kandalam	B. Whitten	B. Whitten T. Murtha A. Smoliak	T. Murtha A. Smoliak
NIPC		J. Paige	N. Savar	N. Savar	N. Savar	N. Savar L. Heringa E. Hoekwater	N. Savar E. Hoekwater	P. Prendergast	P. Prendergast	
MPC	D. Stone		D. Stone							D. Urbanczyk
DePaul									J. Schwieterman	J. Schwieterman
NU							I. Savage	I. Savage	I. Savage	I. Savage
U of C	J. Montague G. Tolley	J. Montague	P. Carlson							
UIC		R. Michaels	R. Michaels	S. Sööt	S. Sööt	D. Boyce	J. Hicks	A. Smoliak	M. Mathes	M. Mathes
President	G. Tolley	L. Anderson	D.P. Beal	K. Wies	W. Reynolds	N. Savar	J. Paquet	J. Paquet	B. Thompson	K. Dallmeyer
Number	10	8	11	9	9	11	13	11	15	16

APPENDIX B: LISTING OF CURRENT COMMITTEE POSTS

President: Overall coordination of conference. Lead contact with major speakers.

Vice President: Works with President to coordinate conference, leads coordination of papers and sessions, receives initial abstracts and prepares them for committee consideration.

Secretary: Undertakes official correspondence, writes letters of acceptance and rejection to authors, and takes minutes of meetings.

Treasurer: Manages bank account, prepares budgets and advises committee on financial matters. Is the Registered Agent for the company and maintains correspondence with the IRS and the State of Illinois.

Customer Care & Evaluation Form Coordinator: Designs and prepares evaluation form and tabulates responses. On the day of the conference deals with any problems that attendees have.

Exhibits Coordinator: Prepares and mails solicitation for exhibits, registers exhibits, and manages exhibit room on day of conference.

Press Coordinator: Invites press and is principal contact and host for them.

Publicity and Publications Coordinator: Designs and prepares call for papers announcement and registration form. Receives accepted abstracts and assembles and designs day-of-conference book. Receives completed papers and assembles and designs proceedings. Coordinates mailing of above with Registration Coordinator

Registration Coordinator: Maintains list for publicity mailings. Receives completed registration forms and prepares name badges. Supervises day-of-conference registration.

Site Liaison & Day-of-Conference Coordinator: Principal contact with UIC regarding facilities and works with the Treasurer in ordering catering. On the day of the conference ensures that all rooms are set-up as planned, and audio-visual equipment is available and working, and is the principal contact with UIC maintenance and management staff.

Student Paper Competition Coordinator: Prepares and mails competition announcement. Receives full papers for sub-committee consideration and chairs the judging sub-committee.