

Robert C. Weaver Oral History Interview –JFK #2, 6/16/1964
Administrative Information

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Weaver, Robert C.; Administrator, Housing and Home Finance Agency (1961-1966). Weaver discusses housing and transportation legislation, Congress and their opposition to the bills discussed, as well as grant and loan money negotiations, among other issues.

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Robert C. Weaver – JFK #2

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2ND INTERVIEW - REEL #1
WITH ROBERT C. WEAVER
by Daniel P. Moynihan
June 16, 1964

WEAVER

Are you ready now?

MOYNIHAN

Move it back a little more where it sets.

WEAVER

Let's see how it works now.

MOYNIHAN

This is Daniel P. Moynihan speaking. I am conducting -- we are conducting the second in the series of interviews with Dr. Robert C. Weaver for the Kennedy Library oral history. We are talking in Dr. Weaver's home. It is the 16th of June 1964.

Bob, we ended up our first session with you having just been confirmed the -- you discussed, I think, briefly some of the ways in which you were left to pick your own staff in a big and complicated and probably the classic agency in Washington for being divided among legally separate and institutionally separate agencies. I wonder if you could talk a

little bit about just how -- what the problem of the Administration¹⁰ coming into office under the Kennedy Administration, 1961, was and how you handled yourself and what you think worked for you and what didn't.

WEAVER

Well, I think the first thing, of course, is that anytime you come into a new agency with a change of Administration, there's a lot of testing both by the permanent bureaucracy and by those who are the public with which you come in contact. I think people, more or less wait around to see just what sort of a posture you are going to acquire and how effective or ineffective you are going to be. And having been in this position before, notably in New York State -- the Harriman Administration --- this was not exactly new to me. As I said earlier, I was fortunate in having selected people in whom I had confidence either because I had known them and worked with them before or because I checked them out and had a pretty good idea that we had similar objectives for the most part.

And it is true, of course, that there is always a problem in an agency such as the Housing and Home Finance Agency, and I imagine it's

true in most agencies and most Departments of the Government -- something of a power struggle between the front office and the operating offices. The staffs of constituent agencies which operate the program like to have the maximum degree of autonomy and are constantly putting pressure on their commissioners to assert their independence and also to perpetuate the policies of the past.

I suppose the biggest thing that faced me and faced -- I'm sure -- all of the other persons who came into the new Administration was to try to effect certain changes that we wanted. At the same time, we were trying not to disrupt the organization of the agency so that it was so demoralized that you got nothing done. And I think here was the question of timing and of technique. As far as the timing was concerned, it was obvious that you don't turn a large agency -- whether it's Government, or education or business -- around immediately or too quickly. At the same time, you have to evidence in some way, by example, the fact that changes are to be made.

The first thing that we did, of course, was to prepare the legislation for 1961. This was a job which was done with the new commissioners

who had then been selected -- with Mort Schussheim whom I had brought down from New York, with Saul Klayman who had been lent to me by the National Association of Mutual Savings Banks, by Neal Hardy who was the Commissioner selected for FHA, and by two or three of the people who had been in the Agency such as John Frantz, Budget Officer, and Carter McFarland who had been the de facto Program Policy Director previously and had been long with the Agency, myself, and one or two others. There was one great advantage of this activity that doesn't last, and that is that few of us knew all of the intricacies of the organization. Those who had been in it a long time did, but they were more or less the technicians rather than the innovators. And because of this lack of knowledge, we were perhaps a little bolder than we might have been if we had had the experience behind us which makes you say -- "well, I don't know whether this will work or not" -- you take a lot of chances and you believe a lot of things will work when you haven't stubbed your toes on the opposition and the problems. Thus we were able to have a very interesting and I think a creative period at this time. And the results were very favorable. We got most of what we wanted. We got acceptance of our

proposals by the Administration. We got concurrence for the draft of the President's message with very few changes, practically none as a matter of fact, from the White House -- and the legislative battle was on. This was a very interesting thing to observe.

One of the other persons who worked with us was Milton Semer whom I selected as the General Counsel and who had been on the Hill for a long time in the Senate Banking and Currency Committee and knew the techniques in the Congress extremely well.

MOYNIHAN

Can I just interrupt now -- just a second. One of the -- some of the facts of the Kennedy Administration is that the -- I guess the first major legislation to pass the Congress under President Kennedy was the Housing Act of 1961. Isn't that right?

WEAVER

I think it was among the first major legislation.

MOYNIHAN

Yes. Well, how come? How did that happen? Why not many --

that was not the sort of thing that he went around the country talking about in the campaign. It was there, but it wasn't the thing that, well, you would immediately suppose to be priority number one.

WEAVER

I don't frankly know. My guess would be that one of the reasons that it happened was because we were able to develop our proposals early. And they got over to the White House early; they got over before the line was pretty well congested with other competing things. And I think that the message came out earlier than it had been scheduled because it was earlier prepared. With the messages being prepared, we also had a very, very fortunate thing and this is one thing which I think the average person does not appreciate -- and that is the fact that we had in many parts of our Agency, extremely good permanent civil servants. This was particularly true in our program policy, this is the idea branch, the research branch, the branch where the economists are concentrated and in the legal branch. And the man -- the three top men in the legal branch who had been there for years were experts at drafting legislation.

They could get an idea -- they knew all of the problems of the past -- they knew the legislative history -- they knew which things had been defeated before, which things had been proposed before and which things could mesh into the existing law. So that we were able to produce very quickly both because we had a team which began to work together rather efficiently early and because of the technical backup that this permanent bureaucracy gave us. I think this had a great deal to do with it.

Also, we were extremely fortunate in that there were two real pros at the head of the Housing Subcommittee in the Banking and Currency Committee in Congressman Rains in the House and Senator Sparkman in the Senate. Both of these men had long history in guiding Housing legislation through the different Houses. They had very good staffs -- staffs that were on very good terms both with Milton Semer who was the General Counsel of the Agency on the one hand and also with the people -- the Civil Service employees who were writing the legislation. There had been a working relationship between these people over a long period of years

at the staff level. I think I said before, but I'll reiterate it, that one of the things that I was very much struck by in comparing or contrasting State Government in New York with the Federal Government here was the quality of the staffing on the congressional committees both in the number of people that they had and certainly in the ability of the people that they had. And this I think did a great deal to help.

MOYNIHAN

Let me ask you. When you came in the -- not the presumptions of one of the problems involving the Department you ran into was that they did not have a Civil Service that had been much attuned to the New Frontier.

On the other hand, your Department kind of incorporates some of -- some liberal notions and not much legislation was passed under Eisenhower; I don't think, or am I wrong there? But anyway, how did you find them politically in terms of the sympathies or the lack of sympathies, and what problem did you have with wrenching -- or you say moving slowly the ideas of the bureaucracy around? Were they waiting for you to arrive? Did they say thank God the Democrats are back or did

they say God help us the Democrats are back?

WEAVER

One of the first things that I established, and I established it as best I could with all of the emphasis that I could and I was supported a hundred percent by the White House and also by the Congressional Committees, was the fact that legislation emanated only from the Office of the Administrator, that there was not to be retailing. I don't mean to say that there wasn't some retailing, but such as it was -- was sub rosa -- it was in the minor details and not a question of five different legislative proposals going up through the backdoor to the Congress.

The legislative proposals that came out from the Administration -- were the Administration's proposals number one -- and they were officially the Housing Agency's proposals and I would say that they were fairly well unencumbered by competition by any major competing activity in this regard.

MOYNIHAN

Had that been a problem under Eisenhower?

WEAVER

This I do not know, but I didn't even make any inquiry about it. I know it had been and still is a problem in some of the Departments. And I made sure that it would not be in mine, and I think one of the reasons for this was the thing that I mentioned before: the fact that these men who were appointed were people who came in first through me. They came in with our discussing our general philosophy at the beginning and with certain ground rules having been established.

I might say that the fortunate thing that I faced was that most of the key people in the operating Civil Service staff of the Housing Agency had been people who had been there before the Eisenhower Administration. Some of them felt that they had been quite frustrated during the Eisenhower Administration because, as you know, very little housing legislation was passed at that time and such programs as were initiated were initiated not primarily through the Executive but through the Legislative branch of the Government where the Congress would greatly expand the proposals of the Administration and add new ones. And I think they

were quite happy to reassert a role which they thought was theirs -- to take the initiative in the legislative process.

The other thing was that, as I mentioned before, the first thing I did was to fire all of the Schedule C people whom I had inherited. They were persons who had been a part of and reflected the administrative proposals of the past Administration. And that meant that the people who came in -- came in with a New Frontier exposure. This, however, was not something that went all the way down to the bottom because when we got to the execution stages here you found people who resisted some of the new ideas -- not so much the new programs, but new techniques of doing them, and became protective as anybody does who has been in a job of authority for some time. Change was a threat to their security, to their ego and sometimes just that "they're agin'" it because it's new. But on the legislative front, I encountered very little difficulty of this sort.

MOYNIHAN

Can I ask you -- would you describe how the bill went through? Do -- would you say that there was a sort of a backlog of legislative

pressure for some new -- a new move in Housing legislation that eight years of talking and hearings and so forth had built up and you were ready to go or was -- or was this the product of five weeks or five months of rather intensive thinking on the part of the Kennedy group?

WEAVER

I would say it was both probably more the former than the latter, but I don't think that without the one the other would have been entirely successful. I don't think that there's any question but that many of the liberal congressmen of both parties, particularly the Democratic Congressmen and the Senators who had time and time again objected to the parsimony of the Eisenhower Administration in the field of Housing and Community Development, were ready for some bold and for some new and for some expanded activity in this field. In addition to that, of course, in the campaign this was an issue that was raised -- while not a major one -- but one that was raised rather consistently. So there was a commitment to this and I think there was in the Congress a sort of a readiness for action in this field. I think, however, that if there

had not been a program presented, we might have had legislation but it would have been a different type of legislation. It might not have been as coordinated as this was or it might have been much more than this was. I don't know, but I think there would have been some legislation in this field which would have gone further than the previous Administration and I feel that if we hadn't presented a bill that the Congress felt it could live with, it would have written its own bill in this field. And what that would have been, I haven't the slightest idea.

MOYNIHAN

Could you describe getting the bill through which you did in amazing speed. There was some questions about 40 year mortgages and things like that. What were some of your problems and who were some of your friends and who were some of your enemies and how did you do it?

WEAVER

Well, I think again this would have to be divided into two major categories. I would say that the contribution that I made to this was doing my homework and being prepared and ready when the time came to

testify concerning the bill at the hearings before the Committees of both Houses of the Congress. Here there were some rather difficult problems. The long term mortgage was one, and on this I think that I found myself caught really between two edges of a scissor as it were. There were those who from the extreme conservative point of view felt that this was an immoral thing to do. That such long term mortgages were just not the right thing to do. Then there were people who, like Paul Douglas --

MOYNIHAN

By not the right thing -- people shouldn't owe money that long --

WEAVER

Yes.

MOYNIHAN

-- or you were getting too much interest out of people?

WEAVER

No. It was just that it was immoral to have a thirty-year mortgage and it was abominable to have one as long as forty years. This was a sort of a puritanical economics which felt that a man before he bought

a home should have had savings, and if he hadn't been provident enough to save a great deal of money he didn't deserve home ownership.

Then there was a much more sophisticated opposition with which I had great sympathy. And that was the opposition presented by Paul Douglas, formerly a Professor of Economics, as you know -- who said, 'Well, Mr. Administrator, this is really not home ownership is it?' And here my response was one of absolute candor and honesty as far as I was capable. I agreed a hundred percent that this wasn't home ownership as he and I had known it. I recalled in my own experience as a youth my family bought a home, and then when my brother and I went to college, they mortgaged it and then they paid it off. I think they bought it and paid it off three times in the span of their life time. Under the proposals of long-term mortgages many people would never get a clear title to a home. But I finally said that really what these people were buying was dignity, and the security of knowing that they had a place with which they could identify rather than buying a title as we once conceived of in home ownership.

As time went on and the hearings really got rough, mathematics

began to be used. And, of course, with a thirty-year and certainly a forty-year loan the amount of interest is much more than the amount of principal. And you total it up and I think it comes something like, for \$15,000 home, some forty thousand dollars was what the man ultimately paid.

This, of course, was used for two purposes by those who opposed it -- as being unfair to the homeowner, and I indicated that nobody forced him to buy it. And the second one was that this was not good economics and with that I had to have partial agreement.

But I then retorted by saying what were the alternatives? That if he had paid rent all of this period of time, he would have only rent receipts. Whereas under the proposal he would have some equity after a few years, and he would be better off. This was not Utopia, but the question of choice is between possible worlds in which we live.

And then finally, I took sides with Senator Douglas' proposals for truth-in-lending. And I volunteered that I would agree with him and that we would institute -- in fact I made this commitment without even

checking with FHA -- that FHA would publish and give to each homeowner a table showing exactly how much interest he paid, how much principal he paid, so that he would be fully informed. And this secured, at least, Senator Douglas' acquiescence, if not enthusiastic support of the legislation.

MOYNIHAN

That -- that's very quaint (a fair point). What happened? How did it handle? It seems -- it was just powering through -- kind of naive.

WEAVER

After the committee activity had been finished, my real contribution to the passage of the bill, except for talks with some of the people in the Congress whom I knew personally, was substantially over. Because from then on the passage of the bill was the result of the work of Milt Semer, of Jack Conway who was my Deputy, and of the legislative staff at the White House -- Larry O'Brien and his associates. These were the people who actually did the political maneuvering to get the

bill through. I have a great belief that you can have only one cook in any broth and when you get to the matter of getting legislation through you better use the pros rather than the amateurs; so I was back-up man rather than the front man on this. The matter of the head counts, the matter of any pressures that were used to encourage voting for the bill were things which I did not participate in except as a party to be informed of what was going on. But these other men were the men who did that.

MOYNIHAN

It came through pretty unscathed.

WEAVER

Yes. We had only one -- really one major loss. We had proposed something similar to a land bank -- a land proposal which would have permitted us to facilitate local governments' buying land to be held for future development. And Senator Dirksen ruined that by making one of his speeches and with flowery language and really ridiculed it to death.

The other minor change was that on the middle income -- the moderate income program called the 221 (d)(3) which is a below the market rate

of interest insured mortgage program, with Fannie Mae take-out which really means that the government is putting up the funds. Although it's not a direct loan program it operates through FHA. And this is restricted to non-profit, limited-profit, cooperative and rental units.

We had proposed variable rates of interest but the Congress used the same formula that was provided for the College Housing bill and some of our other legislation such as the direct loan program for the elderly to wit -- the average cost of money to the Federal Government. So that it was 3 and 3/8 percent and it's now gone up -- it will go up the first of July, I regret to say, to 3 and 7/8 percent because interest rates have risen. And this proved to be very fortuitous because subsequently Albert Thomas, in particular, and one or two others created legislative history to the effect that this is no subsidy. And I have acquiesced in his economics as far as this is concerned. So that, also boxes me in with groups which want to change 221 (d)(3). I insist that we leave this alone and we institute a new program, but we don't begin to fiddle with the interest rates since this is accepted as a nonsubsidized program.

One of the most effective legislative techniques that was used was that employed in the House. (It is always harder to get a housing bill through the House than it is through the Senate.) And this was Mr. Rains' proposal for public facility loans -- five-hundred million dollars to be used primarily in the smaller communities. And this of course got representatives from certain communities which were not interested in the urban-oriented aspect of the legislation to go along with the bill. I think without this we would have been in real difficulty in the House. This was not a part of the Administration's program

--

MOYNIHAN

That was something Albert Rains --

WEAVER

This was added by Albert Rains after the hearing and during the debate.

MOYNIHAN

During the count.

WEAVER

Right.

MOYNIHAN

What do you -- what did the President have to say to you about all of this? Anything much or what did you say to him?

WEAVER

Well, let us go back a little. When the message was formulated (the message, of course, outlined the content of the legislation), Ted Sorensen read it and said it was either a damn good speech or else he was awful tired because he didn't change it very much. And then we went in -- he and Lee White and, I think, Larry O'Brien and myself. I'm not sure Larry was there -- I guess Larry was there. We outlined to the President what was in the message, we talked about the various points and the various major legislative proposals that would be involved. And he said well it sounded good to him and he thought it was all right and he would be ready to send the message up. As to whether or not he ever read the message before it went up -- word for

word -- this I don't know. I'm sure he did, but the decision that it would go up was based upon the resumé that was given at that time to him. And it was complete resumé. The only difference was language and not of content. This was when the basic decision was made.

MOYNIHAN

February.

WEAVER

Yes, this was in February. And then when the bill was passed and we went over for the signing, he said that he felt that a very good job had been done; it was a good bill. And he congratulated us on it, and wrote me a very nice little note. And that was it.

WEAVER

After our experience, you'd better try this one out just to save time and be sure. I think it's going to work, don't you?

MOYNIHAN

Well, I'm getting to be very optimistic about it.

This is Daniel P. Moynihan speaking on the second reel of the second interview with Dr. Robert C. Weaver in his home for the oral history of the Kennedy Library. It is the 16th of June, 1964.

Bob, we have just been talking about the passage of the Housing Act of 1961 which was the first great piece of legislation the Administration got through, and it was a -- it was quite an event. And the interesting thing in some ways it started -- is how one of the first instances of the pace the Administration was gonna' set was the way in which this major bill passing the Congress was followed -- if I'm not mistaken in April wasn't it -- by the proposal to establish a Department of Urban Affairs.

WEAVER

Yes, of course, this had been talked about during the campaign, and then I'm not sure about the date, but earlier in that year the President indicated that he would be asking for the creation of a Department of Urban Affairs.

MOYNIHAN

Had you talked with him about this when you discussed the terms on which you would come work?

WEAVER

Yes, I only mentioned it this way. I think I spoke of this development before. I asked the President two questions when he talked to me about this job. The first one was whether or not there would be an Executive Order banning discrimination in publicly assisted housing. And he assured me that there would, indicating, as he always did subsequently, that this was a commitment but the timing would be something that he would decide. And obviously this was his prerogative. And the second issue I raised in this way: I said to him, I understand that you're committed to a Department of Urban Affairs and I want to know

what would be my position. Would I be considered as the Secretary?

And he said I would be a logical contender. And this was about all I could ask at that time, also --

MOYNIHAN

Question -- just for the -- for history which is what we are here for. Where does this idea come from? You're part of that world.

WEAVER

Well, I think it really started once the Urban Renewal program got under way. As Urban Redevelopment became a vital force and a vital part in the economic, social and physical life of the cities, there was a feeling that there needed to be more continuity to the program on the one hand, and secondly there had to be more symbolism so that the idea of the Federal Government's helping cities would be just as respectable as the long tradition of the Federal Government's helping farms and farmers.

And with this, there were several notions involved. First, that there would be a place in the Federal Government where the cities would

come to get any type and all types of assistance. I think this was a rather all-out concept without too much realism.

MOYNIHAN

The one-stop notion.

WEAVER

Yes. Because obviously if everything that went to cities had to go through one Department, that Department would darn near swallow up all of the Government -- education, welfare, even a lot of the Treasury Department's activities, certainly a lot of the Commerce Department's activities.

MOYNIHAN

You actually made the point that you wouldn't be hiring five more people or something like that to create the Department.

WEAVER

Yes. Yes.

MOYNIHAN

You really did not contemplate any immediate expansion?

WEAVER

No. And the more that I looked at it the more I was convinced -- and I still am convinced -- that the important thing in this area, as in most areas, is not so much who carries out the program, but what programs are carried out. So that the planning function really becomes the important thing. Today, for example -- and this was an innovation largely of the Kennedy Administration: one of its great contributions I think little understood -- we are working very closely with HEW in our public housing projects in meeting some of the social needs of the families -- a very neglected and a very difficult field.

Well, there were two ways of doing this. You could have created a brand new bureaucracy in our Agency which would have duplicated the bureaucracy in HEW. You would have had confusion and conflict in the Administration and deadly conflict in the appropriations process, because anytime this happens each congressional committee -- each appropriation subcommittee -- will say, no that's in the other Agency's budget. And by the time it comes out it's in no Agency's budget.

Secondly, the programs of public assistance, the federal programs for most of the welfare measures, social security, and any forthcoming and any existing Federal aid to education, all are funneled through the States, whereas our activities are largely funneled directly through to the cities. You would have had no end of confusion if you'd had one Agency coming in and dealing with physical programs directly through the cities, and handling social programs through the States. You would have had the cities trying to short-circuit the States in order to get to you -- you'd have the States trying to use the social program to keep you from going directly to the cities. So that administratively it would have been difficult. What we did, however, in this instance, was to plan jointly both first in Washington and subsequently at the local level with HEW and its representatives and then turn over the administration of the social program to HEW. And it's worked out very well so far.

I think this is going to be the pattern that's going to have to be used because you're not going to get all of these functions consolidated.

Some of them you couldn't. You couldn't separate where the rural and the urban started and ended. And finally, I had had an experience in my first tour of duty here in Washington when I was with Secretary Ickes. And I know what these jurisdictional disputes can do. They can take a heck of a lot of time and they end up by getting nowhere in my opinion. And if there's one thing that one bureaucrat dislikes, it's another bureaucrat taking a function away from him. So all you'd do is to create confusion. You create enemies and you create particularly enemies in the Congress because they have their particular committees. If you're taking a function out of the Labor and Education Committee and putting it into the Banking and Currency Committee, there is a probability that the first group will object. And this again will end up in the function's suffering while the disputes are going on. So it just didn't make sense from where I sat. And I think this was not original with me. I think this was fairly well understood by most of the people who talked about this and thought about this in the Administration.

MOYNIHAN

Bob, the idea of an Urban -- a Department of Urban Affairs -- would

you associate any names with it ?

WEAVER

No, you know it was talked about really in the fifties. And it, I think, came out with the new group of the local administrators of Urban Redevelopment -- Urban Renewal on the one hand and with the mayors on the other hand. And I would say that its greatest proponents, most vocal proponents, would be such agencies as the American Municipal Association, the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, the National Housing Conference -- the professional organizations which reflect the interests of the urban-oriented people and professionals.

I couldn't say where it started. I think it sort of was one of the things that just evolved like Topsy and "just naturally grewed". Once you discussed the problem, the notion became a rather natural solution. And it was talked of a great deal during the fifties. I think at times possibly over-emphasized as a cure-all as so often happens, you know. You set up a Department and that will solve all of the problems.

I think there was another thing and this was one of the things and -- since this is history and not going to be used in the next discussion of Department of Urban Affairs, I can say without damaging the cause -- I think one of the main reasons why this was advocated was because of the very nature of the Housing and Home Finance Agency. The fact, for example, that until 1961 there was very little cooperation, effective cooperation, between Urban Renewal Administration and FHA. And yet the projects that were to be built -- residential projects in urban renewal areas -- had to be insured by FHA. But the FHA officials weren't brought in until all the planning, site selection, and preliminary development had been completed. At the same time, it must be recognized that, for the most part, the majority of FHA officers were opposed to the building of the downtown area. And the Urban Renewal people were constantly frustrated by this lack of enthusiasm on the part of FHA which had been traditionally oriented to the suburbs and new communities and felt that the urban environment was a bad environment and an uneconomic environment. One of the reasons that this idea of a Department of Urban Affairs got so much support from the operators

in the cities and from the mayors of the cities was they felt that this would be the way of overcoming the situation I have just described.

I might say, I think that we've effected a remarkable degree of cooperation between FHA and URA in the last three years. It's generally admitted that the situation, while not perfect, is much improved and there has been a growing degree of effective cooperation. We still need to get more. And this has been cited as a basis for lessening the need for a department.

I might answer to that. I think it's an honest one. The cooperation has been achieved without any legal basis and it may not be on any permanent basis. It's simply been done because certain personalities have been able to work together and have worked out a modus operandi. But if you get a change of personalities, you could revert back to the situation that existed before with little fiefdoms and a feudal system. And you would still have no basis in law to support someone who wanted to turn the agency around. So that I think that need for cooperation between the constituents is still a valid argument. But it is not as impressive an argument, and as pressing an argument today as it was

prior to the Kennedy Administration.

MOYNIHAN

Bob, the Housing Act of 1961 was certainly a great victory. The Urban Department -- the Department of Urban Affairs was a pretty public defeat. How'd it go sour? Or how much chance had it? And if you had to do it over again, how would you do it? And let me ask you this question, if you were President Kennedy, and had to do it over again would you have announced that he were going to name you to the job?

WEAVER

Well, I think I have to go back a little on that. There's no question that the Administration had no choice. The Administration was committed to the Department. The Administration had made a very definite statement of this, had campaigned very vigorously for it in the urban areas of the country. And therefore, the President had to come out for a Department. The timing is always something like the Monday morning quarterback situation. By the time this was up for action several things had occurred. The honeymoon between the new President and Congress was over. This was one of the reasons why we tried to get

there "fustest with the mostest" as far as our Housing Bill was concerned.

MOYNIHAN

You really knew that when your Housing Bill -- you were consciously aware -- that all over town people were doing things.

WEAVER

Oh, yes. We were trying to get there early so as to get the blush of the enthusiasm of a new Administration, and to get this before the lines began to become solidified and before defection began.

Well, by the time that Urban Affairs was before the Congress the situation had deteriorated as between the Executive and the Legislative branch. Secondly, there had been a certain amount of the 'must' legislation achieved. And there was so much less pressure on the Congress to pass this or any other thing in particular. Also, the situation here was a part of a much bigger issue which incidentally was discussed only today in the papers -- or yesterday really. It was part-and-parcel of the rural vs urban interests in the Nation. I think the

real turning point is this latest Supreme Court decision because the real opposition to a Department is and was rural indifference or opposition to urban interests.

The possibility of getting such a bill passed under a Congress as it was constituted at that time -- and that was even before the decision in Tennessee was the first major decision affecting rural domination of state and federal legislatures. It was very, very slight in the House. Let me say, I think the bill would have -- could have passed the Senate under other circumstances to which I will refer a little later. But I think the votes were there.

It was defeated in the Senate, not on the basic issue itself, but purely on the issue that an attempt was made to take it out of the McClellan Committee. And a lot of people ducked voting on the issue, saying that pulling it out from the Committee before the Chairman had a chance to go through all the "rigamorole" was what they were voting against. But in the House the number of Congressmen from rural areas, from small towns etc., and the number from the South who would vote against this because of my being involved was a pretty formidable

adverse combination from the very beginning.

Now as far as my being injected in the picture, I don't think the President had too much choice. He could have done three things. He could have said "no, I will not appoint Mr. Weaver". And that, I think, would have been politically undesirable from his point of view, the point of view of the Democratic Party. And this would have been a very negative thing. I don't think it would have gotten the bill through and it certainly would have alienated a lot of voters who are important to the Democratic Party. The second thing he could have done was to have said nothing, which was what he started to do until the issue became a very sharp one. And thirdly, he could have done what he did.

MOYNIHAN

Did eventually. Did you say he started -- but how did the issue become a sharp one?

WEAVER

Well, the issue became a sharp one when the question of my name came up. And the Republicans attempted to take the very high ground that this had nothing to do with their opposition, that they were pure

as driven snow on this and that they were opposed to the matter philosophically. A very interesting thing occurred. Mr. Keating -- Senator Keating got me on his TV show and said - now you don't think that this is going to be considered a racial issue if this bill is defeated, do you? I said, well I think a large number of the electorate will so interpret it. This, then, led the New York Times to accuse me of injecting the race issue into the matter. They were entirely mistaken. The Senator had injected it, but in a rather subtle way. And I wasn't going to let him get away with this thing so that he could quote me as saying that race was not an issue. Because it was an issue by that time.

One of the problems here was that we never had a clear-cut majority in the House for the bill. In addition to that, the day before the final vote was taken the Speaker stated that the bill would not pass. And I think -- I know this lost many votes some of which would have been half votes -- people who had been committed not to vote against the bill who would go fishing, and also some who were not too anxious to vote for it, but after the Speaker said what he did, had a very good

excuse not to; saying, what was the use it wasn't going to pass any-
how.

On the other hand, I don't believe that the bill was defeated purely
and simply because I was injected or the race issue was injected into
the discussion. I think that the bill was defeated because there
weren't enough votes for the bill. I think this was true largely because
of the geographic distribution of the power in the House of Representa-
tives. The fact that you had a Congress which was not urban-oriented
primarily. And I think the only way that the bill could have been
passed was the way that the stamp -- food stamp was passed this last
time. That would have been if the urban boys had said to the rural
boys all right you want an agricultural bill you vote for this and we'll
vote for that. I think this was the only way it could have been passed.
This is just my own opinion.

But I will say now what I said before although I'll have to change
it in form. When I was asked about the Department of Urban Affairs
before the President's assassination, I always answered that I expected
that it would be passed in one of the two Kennedy Administrations. And

I still think that it's going to be passed and that it's only a matter of time. What I couldn't say, but again I believe, is that the decision that the Supreme Court made in these cases affecting the make-up and the apportionment of districts -- in the State legislatures on the one hand, and the Federal legislature on the other, are just hand writing -- hand writing on the wall.

MOYNIHAN

Bob, you said something about the Senate situation in the McClellan Committee.

WEAVER

Well, this -- the bill was theoretically under jurisdiction of this Committee, and they --

MOYNIHAN

McClellan Committee on --

WEAVER

-- on Government Operations. And, of course, the Senator was sitting on the bill and this I think was purely -- primarily a matter of

race as far as he was concerned.

MOYNIHAN

Race!

WEAVER

Yes. I don't think there's any question about it.

MOYNIHAN

Correct! Race meaning you or --

WEAVER

Yes.

MOYNIHAN

-- race meaning meeting the problem of the Urban Department?

WEAVER

No, race meaning me.

MOYNIHAN

Race meaning you?

WEAVER

Yes. And I think that the issue of the method of getting the bill

out from under the Committee was a technicality which he was able to use and others were able to use to get votes against the Department without voting against the bill, but by voting for the establishment and for orderly procedures, etc.

MOYNIHAN

Could you explain that?

WEAVER

I've forgotten the detail now, I'd have to check it out. Turn it off a minute and I'll check it out.

MOYNIHAN

What's going on and relates to society.

WEAVER

The issue here was the matter of jurisdiction of the congressional committees. As I said before, the Senate Resolution on the Reorganization Plan was in the Committee on Government Operations headed by Senator McClellan of Arkansas. He was the foe of the project and a stickler for orderly procedures. He refused to speed the committee action and

the technique here was to get action out of the Senate early you see, in order to influence the House.

Mike Mansfield, the Senate Democratic leader, moved to discharge McClellan's Committee from further consideration of the Resolution -- a device that would have forced it to the Senate floor for a vote. This set off a bit of protest. Republican Senator Leverett Saltonstall who ordinarily would -- we would have assumed would probably have voted for the bill said that a rough riding President, according to the papers, was trying to abuse Senatorial tradition for political purposes. And Senator Bush also opposed it on similar grounds. Then two-fifths of the Senate -- thirty-five Republicans joined twenty-six Democrats, of course including the eighteen southern Democrats, in defeating the motion to discharge the bill, fifty-eight to forty-two.

MOYNIHAN

Could I ask you at this point, did that about kill it in the House?

WEAVER

Yes, yes. That was the end of the bill.

MOYNIHAN

Why did -- why did Mansfield move that way? Discharge tradition, don't --

WEAVER

It looked like the bill was having trouble in the House. And the theory behind this, as I recall, was that if you got it out of the Senate, then this would put pressure on in getting it out of the House.

MOYNIHAN

Was this one of the -- if I recall it correctly apart from the Bay of Pigs which had not happened then, this was one of the first occasions which the President really got beat in the Congress.

WEAVER

Yes, I think this was one of the first, and also it was a defeat on legislative maneuvering as contrasted to a defeat on the substantive issue.

MOYNIHAN

First point.

WEAVER

And I think this is very interesting. Not, that the substantive issue might not have been defeated. I'm not trying to imply that but the way it was defeated was that it was defeated on these grounds which also was an attempt, I think, on the part of the Republicans in particular to dull the political advantage that the President felt that he had established, I think he had established. The issue was one involving naming me as the potential person to head up the Department. And once this occurred, and it looked as though it might be defeated, the Republicans wanted to say they defeated it on other grounds. And in the Senate the grounds was this procedural matter, which of course -- again I think was a secondary issue.

MOYNIHAN

Can I ask you though -- this is the first time the -- not the first necessarily, but this is one of the first conspicuous times when that great Kennedy machinery began not to work so unflinchingly. What do you think of the way the bill was handled for you?

WEAVER

Well, I --

MOYNIHAN

Did you play the same sort of withdrawn role here that you did under the Housing bill?

WEAVER

I felt very strongly -- and in this I was supported by the White House tacticians and by the Bureau of the Budget -- that I was not to testify on this bill even when it was hinted that I might be named. Certainly, it would have been a major tactical mistake had I, as the events turned out. Because then instead of testifying on an issue I would be testifying on a job for myself which is not a good position, I think, for a person to occupy when he's testifying. I would think that certainly in retrospect the great tactical mistake that was made was in trying to go around that Committee and get the discharge.

MOYNIHAN

You might have got it out of the McClellan Committee in due time.

WEAVER

Yes, yes, and I think if we had -- and I am convinced if we had -- we would have won in the Senate because I think we had the votes there. And this doesn't mean that we would have gotten it out of the House. But it would not have been the resounding political defeat it was. And I say political defeat, I mean more legislative defeat than political, because I'm not too sure that it was a political defeat. I think that politically the President didn't suffer from this because I think that --

MOYNIHAN

No, but it turned out that --

WEAVER

But it turned out that he didn't get what he wanted which was the legislation. And also it was a bad political maneuver in the sense that it was a resounding legislative defeat. And a resounding legislative defeat -- no matter what -- is at least, in part, a political defeat no matter what the sequence of events.

MOYNIHAN

Who helped you on the bill? Who was with you? Was it a popular issue? Did you have any feeling for popular sentiment on it?

WEAVER

Well, there was a great deal of support for it from the liberal groups in the community, from labor, from the mayors, from the large city populations. There was a great deal of support for it in the Senate from the Senators from the more populous states.

There was a complete confusion of the issues in the press outside of the larger urban areas, however. The interpretation was that this was a grab for power. This meant that it was going to do away with local governments. And the Republicans charged that this would have meant a great increase in budget. Of course, the thing that I constantly pointed out was that the only way you can increase the expenditures in this government is by the appropriations of Congress. So that if there were an increase in expenditure it would be Congressional action and not Executive action.

I might say that I was much more active in this particular campaign than I was in the Housing bill because this had to be an issue that had to be explained. And I did a lot of speaking on it -- on the television, on radio and making speeches elsewhere. At that time, I was hot, as far as the press was concerned. So my big job was not to get on television or radio too much not to get overexposed. And I still had a lot of exposure at the time.

MOYNIHAN

What -- where did the bill end up? I mean you put in the second year ---- I'm sorry, where was it at the end of that time?

WEAVER

Well, I think that the -- there was no question as far as the Administration was concerned that putting it in subsequent legislative programs was a gesture. I don't think there was ever any intent of attempting to get it out at that time.

MOYNIHAN

The second time around?

WEAVER

Yes.

MOYNIHAN

The next -- the second Kennedy Administration, what would have been your prognosis?

WEAVER

Well, I would have -- I would have thought that about midway the Administration, if the legislative climate was favorable it would have gone through. I would think now, that if there is a very resounding victory for President Johnson I'm going to try to do with this what we did with the Housing bill. I'm going to be ready there real early with it.

MOYNIHAN

I'll have to stop right there because that comes under the history -- comes under the subject of the future.

WEAVER

Let's see if you can't put that on --

Shall we test this for the sake of it because we may be wasting our time.

MOYNIHAN

Yes. We'll say what you can.

This is Daniel P. Moynihan interviewing Robert -- Dr. Robert C. Weaver for the oral history project of the Kennedy Library. It is the 16th of June, 1964. We are in Dr. Weaver's home in Washington.

Bob, we were on the question of Urban Affairs and one of the -- and the failure of that particular campaign. One of the other most -- one of the most pressing of the Urban Affairs was the question of urban transportation -- mass transportation.

During the Eisenhower Administration, the government moved ahead to the most massive subsidy of automobile transportation in the history of the country. The largest public works program in history was begun

under Eisenhower -- under an Administration pretty close to the General Motors and the automobile industry generally. And the imbalance was, if not evident by 1961, was envisioned, extant as you say.

And one of the moves that the President made was to try to get some more competent planning on mass transit, trying to get some legislation passed, and trying to get some Administration program. This involved two agencies as it turned out. It involved the Department of Commerce which is where you have the Under Secretary of Transportation, and, if I'm not mistaken, a particularly incompetent Under Secretary of Transportation in Mr. "Decent" Dan Martin as Larry O'Brien had always called him -- "Decent Dan". "Decent" Dan Martin, or Under Secretary Martin was a Los Angeles Cadillac dealer, and as far as Commerce was concerned, it certainly did not improve. In some ways the Under Secretary of Transportation under previous Administrations had been a more competent man.

In any event, a major campaign was made and it has not yet succeeded, I think we would say. But in a more important way perhaps,

like the Urban Affairs Department, the question was raised. I wonder if you would like to talk about that.

WEAVER

Yes, you know in the Housing Bill of 1961, we came out for a program in mass transit. And we got enacted the beginning of a first mass transit program which had two parts. First, loans at low interest rates. And secondly, a demonstration program of \$25,000,000.

This was simply to get something going, but there are really two basic issues here which probably are not as well understood as they might be. The first one is the matter of the timing -- of when you were going to get mass transit legislation. And the second was the jurisdictional question as to whether or not it would be under the Department of Commerce, if it were done at all, or whether it would be in the Housing and Home Finance Agency.

I think that something that probably is not well known is that there is one man and one man alone who is responsible for the fact that we moved as quickly as we did in the mass transit field. And that man

is Senator Harrison Williams, Jr. of New Jersey.

Pete Williams came up with an enormous program for mass transit early in the Kennedy Administration. And the question that faced us immediately was what this program would be, and how it would work, what budgetary impact it would have.

Well, as a result of this, the issue which might have been not raised quite so quickly, that of a permanent long-term transit bill -- as contrasted to the first bit in that direction, was before us. Frankly, at the beginning what we had thought of was that we would start slowly, have the demonstration program, and as a result of the demonstration program, then come back with a long-range approach.

This is like many other areas in the field in which I operate. It's more than simply spending money. You have to know what you're going to spend the money for and how you're going to do it because we don't know the answers to a lot of these things. Well, as a result --

MOYNIHAN

Could I interrupt to say --

WEAVER

Yes.

MOYNIHAN

What you're suggesting is that the Administration was faced with the prospect that if it didn't do something -- the ideas -- at least the idea of a big program would be out there from the Congress. And the President actually wanted to get his initiative.

WEAVER

Yes. I think that there was no question in the Administration that we had to move in mass transit. There was no question in my mind; no question in the President's mind that there had to be a mass transit program.

We were all committed to a mass transit program, but timing, however, was one in which the Administration's hands were somewhat forced by Pete Williams' program of going in that year, '61, and then going in '62 again with an enormous program for mass transit. In order to

prevent this from happening, we stepped up our planning in the mass transit field, and accelerated it at a faster rate than we might otherwise have done. And I'll get to how we did that in a minute.

Well, once we faced this issue, and it was perfectly clear that we were either going to have to have an immediate program of planning for mass transit legislation or else we were going to be placed in the very embarrassing position of having a bill for mass transit introduced which technically we could not support. But to oppose would have placed both the Administration and myself in a position of being against mass transit. And this was an eventuality which we just could not have happen.

The people in this, really the principals in this were: Lee White who by this time had emerged in the White House as the person who handled Urban Affairs as the liaison between the White House and our Agency; the Bureau of the Budget, and Dave Bell himself was involved in this one; and my Agency, largely myself; and the Department of Commerce,

Because immediately the question came up, since we had to move in this field, we have to find out who would take the ball and where it would go.

Dan Martin felt very strongly that it should be in the Office of Transportation in the Department of Commerce. I think Mr. Hodges also felt that it should be in the Department of Commerce, but I don't think with the single-mindedness that Mr. Martin had in this matter. I felt that it should be in Housing and Home Finance Agency. And we had a series of meetings in the White House with the Bureau of the Budget, with the White House staff; and it was finally decided, and modestly -- rightfully -- that it should be in the Housing and Home Finance Agency.

I think the way we won that argument was the position that I took to the effect that mass transit was not a matter simply of moving people and goods, but it was a part of the whole total planning for the urban complex. And if you separated it out of the development of the urban

community you would have an ineffectual mass transit approach. Because where you put your highways, where you put your transportation, has a lot to do with where your housing goes. And by the same token where your housing goes has a lot to do with where your mass transportation ought to go, once you get your housing.

So it was decided that this was a rational approach and that HHFA was where mass transit should be, as a part of our total overall planning because we had a planning program in our Urban Renewal, our 701 Planning, where we financed a significant part of the planning in the areas around our cities.

MOYNIHAN

You had -- a leg up by the planning money and the act confirmed that.

WEAVER

Right.

MOYNIHAN

There -- was there a factor, maybe this isn't quite fair to ask you, but there was a factor of competence involved, wasn't there? The

Department of Commerce was just -- just not that strong in its leadership.

WEAVER

Well, that I don't know. I really don't know what happened. But the situation was certainly improved, from my point of view, by the appointment of Rex Whitton as the Commissioner of Public Roads. And interestingly enough, once Whitton came in, and I appointed John Kohl to head up mass transit -- a man who was a civil engineer from the University of Michigan who knew all of the transportation engineers because he was one himself, all of the public road people had great respect for him.

Immediately the Bureau of Public Roads and our HHFA mass transit staff worked cooperatively. We testified for their bills; they testified for our bills. There hasn't been a mass transit proposal yet that Rex Whitton hasn't supported. And only day before yesterday, I got a letter which he had written to somebody asking something about transportation in which he gave a three page resume of our proposed legislation

and endorsed it without even being asked to do so. This is the sort of cooperation that has developed. And this has meant that the Administration has been able to present a picture of a total urban transportation approach rather than roads versus mass transit or rubber versus steel. I think this has been quite fortunate. And we've had the support of Secretary Hodges in this -- at least his acquiescence -- but I think his support. We haven't had the support of Mr. Martin. Mr. Martin still feels that the mass transit bill will never get through, but --

MOYNIHAN

Now you say -- is that because it's not in the Department of Commerce or it's just not got the votes?

WEAVER

I don't know. I don't know.

MOYNIHAN

How did the bill emerge and how -- tell us about it?

WEAVER

This was a very interesting situation. Once this jurisdictional problem came up, the first thing that the President decided to do, even before the issue was solved, was that the Department of Commerce and HHFA would have a study made by an independent agency. And this was done by Lyle Fitch of the Institute for Governmental Research I think -- for Public Administration.

Dr. Fitch did an exhaustive analysis of the mass transit needs in the country and came out with series of proposals which really came down to this; that the fare box would never provide enough revenue to pay for the capital equipment that's needed to provide adequate mass transit. In other words, there would have to be a program of capital assistance to the mass transit systems to provide them with decent cars, with a decent schedule and so forth, to attract enough riders to make them at all economically viable.

And on the basis of that, we developed mass transit legislation -- legislation for mass transit which the President proposed and which

was passed by the Senate last year, and is going to be considered by the House next week. This bill in brief as the Administration proposed it, would provide for \$500,000,000 in capital grants to local transit authorities to permit mass transit systems, be they public or private, to purchase capital equipment and to make capital improvements in the systems. It would also continue our demonstration program and provide money for research.

The hearings on this were very rough. I had a particularly rough time with Senator Lausche of Ohio who was vehemently opposed to this and who tried to change the bill around to rely exclusively upon loans. Well, loans are generally ineffective. In the first place we have a loan program now of \$50,000,000 and we've made one loan to date. We approved another loan and the Chicago Transit Authority, once we approved the loan, was able to get the private money.

The reason for this is that many of the cities where there are public agencies have a debt limit which is established by the states, and they can't exceed it. Or more important, if they've got any sort

of a credit rating and they don't have a debt ceiling, they can get tax exempt loans which are at a lower rate of interest than Federal loans at three and a half, or three and seven-eighths percent. Their bonds are almost always under three percent -- providing at least a one percent differential. And the only loans that would be left would be in those few communities which don't have a debt ceiling and whose credit was so bad that they shouldn't be lent money to anyhow. So that advocacy of loans rather than grants was really a means of sabotaging the total bill on the basis of economy.

The attack that was made upon this was that passage of the Administration bill would open Pandora's box. It was said that mass transit legislation would cost nine billion dollars because Lyle Fitch had indicated that the local transit systems had a need for nine billion dollars worth of capital equipment.

I had a lot of fun in that hearing and we came out of it very well. We won the majority of the -- a good majority -- of the members of the committee. It's a branch of the Commerce Committee and Strom Thurmond,

the Senator from South Carolina, was the Chairman of the subcommittee.

Interestingly enough for history, after the hearing was all over and in the privacy of the hallway -- nobody was able to hear him -- he told me that he thought that I had done a magnificent job in testifying. He added that I was brilliant in my presentation. And he was very careful to see that nobody heard it. I would like to have had a recording. I might have been able to have used it. But in any event the bill passed the Senate.

MOYNIHAN

Can I ask, did you have any automobile opposition?

WEAVER

Oh, I am sure that there was. I know, for example, that the AAA has been opposed to mass transit legislation. And I have been told that there has been a great deal of opposition on the part of many other interests -- highway interests in the states on the, I think, mistaken assumption that if the mass transit bill goes through it'll take money away from the highway program.

But I must observe again that the leadership of the Bureau of Public Roads has been absolutely honest and straight forward and has never wavered from the position that it is not an "either/or" but it's a composite approach -- that you have to have both highways and mass transit.

And let me go back a little because I think there's a very significant thing in this legislation. It was first enunciated in the Housing Bill of 1961 with our loan program. And here we, I think, plowed some very new ground and very significant ground because in that legislation and in the legislation that passed the Senate and is now before the House, there is a requirement that in order for a loan to be approved -- or in the pending legislation -- a grant to be made there has to be an area-wide transit plan for the obvious reason that you can't have a transit system that stops at the city boundaries or one that doesn't come into the city and is uncoordinated.

Well, this is a new break-through in planning which is the first time that this type of requirement was conditional to a bill this large

-- we have it too in our open space program that's a much smaller program -- has been made. I think it is the beginning of a trend which will become increasingly evident in our legislation from now on. I might say that also with the Bureau of Public Roads we have now in many many states a program whereby for planning purposes -- because they have planning money too -- we comingle the money and get planning which includes both highways and mass transit in one package.

And this is done -- this is again a shining example, I think, of one of the outstanding achievements of this Administration of the cooperation between governmental agencies. So that instead of having a locality come in or a district come in and get their planning money for highways from the Bureau of Roads and then get money for transportation planning from us. We put the two together and get a joint approach.

It's economical and also it results in better planning.

MOYNIHAN

Bob, I take it you -- you felt -- Rex Whitton has been -- is somebody you hold in pretty high regard.

WEAVER

Yes.

MOYNIHAN

That's quite an improvement in that Department.

WEAVER

Oh yes.

MOYNIHAN

My impression then -- the fifties was -- they were just barbarians.

WEAVER

Oh, in the fifties you know, there was a situation where you might have an Urban Renewal project outlined and planned and maybe in execution, and the public roads people would take a highway right through the middle of it and bisect it. Beginning in the latter years of the Eisenhower Administration there were agreements worked out between the two programs. After about four years they began to talk to each other -- that is the Bureau of Public Roads and HHFA people in Urban Renewal.

There was an agreement worked out whereby they would exchange information. This has been solidified. Under the present Administration we have Regional Committees wherein we sit down on a definite schedule; where if ever there is an Urban Renewal project the Public Roads people are informed, wherever there is a highway project we are informed. And the problem now is not between the two Federal agencies, in Washington or in the regional offices. The problem is very often the highway peoples' getting their state highway officials, who are still stand-offish on this. But Mr. Whitton has now required, and it is required in law at the Department of Commerce Advocacy, that by 1965 in order to qualify for these highway funds there has to be the type of planning I'm talking about in process or else the community won't be eligible for federal assistance. So they will be operating on a planning program again tied into their operations just as we are doing in our mass transit.

MOYNIHAN

But what would you say to my proposition that this is wonderful but too late -- that the interstate highway program has already evis-

cerated the centers of the thirty most important cities in America --
except somehow New York City.

WEAVER

Well, I think that it's never too late to mend. It could be much worse. I think it would have been a heck of a lot better if it had been early. It's not as effective as it should have been. One of the things I think I should indicate for the record here is the fact that the mass transit bill as it finally passed by the Senate provides a lesser amount of money than we asked for. As I recall, it was either 350 or 375 million dollars. And it also provides funds for loans as well as for grants.

The bill that is now being considered in the House and that will be debated in the House next week is the Administration's bill of five hundred million dollars for grants. And even if we do get a loan provision, as long as it's permissive, it won't make any difference because there won't be many loans under it anyhow.

MOYNIHAN

There won't be many loans.

Bob, how much was the President involved in this? The issue of the American cities is as good an issue of what's wrong with the Twentieth Century as any I know, and yet -- yet the President -- well, never had the feeling that this was close to any passion of the President. It was just something that he would naturally be for the right thing without being over upset if he didn't get it.

WEAVER

Well, I would say the first thing is that President Kennedy, of course, understood these issues. You didn't have to go in and explain why you needed a mass transit system. You didn't have to explain why you needed a Housing or Urban Development either. You didn't have to plead for a Department of Urban Affairs.

These were things that he accepted just like he accepted the notion that cultural values were important. I would say that his interest in this was one of about second priority. I wouldn't put this as top

priority of his. I think that his feeling on these things was that we had to do them, but maybe there were other things that had to be done first. And if you had to sacrifice something you could delay mass transit. But I don't think he ever felt that you would just forget about it.

In no instance, where we proposed any of these urban improvements that I've talked about did he fail to cooperate nor did he try to cut them out. The only time that he tried to delay was in the mass transit situation with Senator Williams. And I must admit, I don't know whether he did it first or I did it first because I felt exactly the same way about it. I just felt we couldn't go into this thing head-first without knowing where we were going. And remember there were, and there are, very very few experts in this country on mass transit. And there was little agreement on how best to solve the problems.

MOYNIHAN

Yes.

WEAVER

I must say that these two and a half -- three -- years of demonstration projects have given us much more knowledge. And I feel a great deal more secure in what we are proposing now than I did before these demonstrations began --

MOYNIHAN

This has worked.

WEAVER

Because we have now some twenty or twenty-five of these projects going. And just to give you one illustration of what happened. In the Boston area with the Massachusetts Transit Authority we have a series of demonstrations which fall into one category. We are, in certain of the basic transit lines coming into Boston, increasing the service, decreasing the fare, coordinating the schedules for the railroads and the subways with the feeder-buses, providing additional parking space. Everytime we lower the fares, we get more traffic, and we get a larger

amount of revenue. We're now trying to find out what is the optimum.

In other words, how far do you keep increasing the service and how far do you reduce the funds so as to cut down the deficit that is there.

There's no doubt that this is a means of cutting it down. We've yet to get the quantitative determinations here.

We've got another very interesting demonstration project where -- I think it's Memphis, Tennessee -- two suburbs are involved. One is already fully occupied and the other is in the process of being occupied. We've put in the same mass transit facilities in both on the hypothesis that if you provide a good mass transit system even before the area is totally populated; and you run it at a deficit at the beginning, you'll get people to become dependent upon it and they won't get in the habit of using automobile. The results will indicate whether or not that hypothesis is true.

MOYNIHAN

This is experimenting --

WEAVER

This is experimenting. We've got a very interesting technological break-through proposed in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, where they would use a series of small cars which hold about twenty people. They're light weight which means that if they are elevated they don't have to have great big structural support and can be put upon a pedestal which can be attractive. They can be run on the surface or in a subway. They can be largely automated, and the beauty of this is that in rush hour you put twenty of them together or in the off hours run just one car, but you run them every ten minutes. And you'll have continuous service. It gives you flexibility. This we think is going to be a very significant thing.

MOYNIHAN

The Allegheny County --

WEAVER

That's at Pittsburgh. In the Pittsburgh area. And we're just about to build a mile -- I think it is -- trial line.

In San Francisco where they're doing, as you know, a big mass transit program through their own bonds and looking to us for help, we have a demonstration program of engineering new types of cars for comfort and trying out different types to see which are the most economical and which are the most comfortable. And we've already, for example, experimented with AC and DC current, seeing which one of these is going to work.

Everybody has thought that everything had to be AC or DC, I've forgotten which, and some of the engineers have come up and said this is all wrong. Well, nobody knows. We're going to find out. This the type of thing that a demonstration program can deal with.

So that by the time we get the bill passed, and I think we're going to get it this session of Congress, we will know better what to do with the money. And the localities will know what to do with it much better.

MOYNIHAN

Thank you, sir.


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Robert C. Weaver
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