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FEDERAL-AID POLICY GUIDE
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CHAPTER 4 URBAN AREA BOUNDARIES

OPI: HEP-12

1 PURPOSE To prescribe guidelines for the establishment, submission, and approval of urban area boundaries.

2 AUTHORITY 23 U.S.C. 101(a).

3 BACKGROUND

a. Section 105 of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973 modifies Section 101(a) of title 23, U.S.C., and allows the fixing of urban area boundaries in a manner which will provide increased flexibility to various federally aided highway and transit programs.

b. An urban area is either:

(1) an urban place as designated by the Bureau of the Census having a population of 5,000 or more and not within any urbanized area; or

(2) an urbanized area as designed by the Bureau of the Census.

c. In areas where paragraph 3b(1) is applicable, the boundaries of the area shall encompass the entire urban place as designated by the Bureau of the Census plus that adjacent area as agreed upon by local officials in cooperation with the State. It should be noted that for Federal-aid purposes an urban place, as designated by the Bureau of the Census, must have a population of at least 5,000 persons.

d. In areas where paragraph 3b(2) is applicable, the boundaries of the area shall encompass the entire urbanized area within a State as designated by the Bureau of the Census plus that adjacent area as agreed upon by local officials in cooperation with the State. A list of urbanized areas is given in Table 34 of the U.S. Summary of 1980 Census of Population. A tabulation of urbanized areas compiled from this table is shown in the Attachment.

e. The legislation requires that new urban area boundaries shall be fixed by responsible State and local officials in cooperation with each other.

(1) In urbanized areas, the term "responsible local officials" means the principal elected officials of general purpose local governments acting through the metropolitan planning organization. The State shall cooperate with these officials and with local public transit operators, where appropriate, in establishing the boundary locations for urbanized areas.

(2) In nonurbanized urban areas, the term "responsible local officials" means the principal elected officials of general purpose local governments. The State shall cooperate with these officials and with local public transit operators, where appropriate, in establishing the boundary locations for nonurbanized urban areas.

4 FIXING OF BOUNDARIES

a. Boundaries should be fixed so as to smooth out irregularities, maintain administrative continuity of peripheral routes, and encompass fringe areas having residential, commercial, industrial, and/or national defense significance. Transportation terminals serving the area such as airports and seaports should also be included within the redefined area if they lie within a reasonable distance of the urban area boundary that would otherwise be selected. Careful consideration should be given to the selection of boundary locations which will include logical control points for transportation linkages such as interchanges, major cross roads, etc., where the inclusion of such areas will not unduly distort the urban area as would otherwise be selected. Boundaries should not, however, be modified to accommodate a single project.

b. Urban area and urbanized area boundary determinations should also consider the service areas of transit operations. Such considerations are particularly important if boundaries are to determine eligibility of capital projects, e.g. commuter railroad lines and stations, and rail transit and bus lines.

c. Urban area boundaries are fixed primarily for capital project funding and are not to be confused with boundaries established for the comprehensive, cooperative and continuing urban transportation planning process.

d. In cases where a single urban area extends across State borders, the contiguous States are encouraged to agree on the proposed boundary locations at the State line and avoid irregularities.

5 SUBMISSION AND APPROVAL

a. The boundary location should be delineated on maps of a scale necessary to show all prominent highways and streets, all fixed transit right-of-way facilities, all major bus routes, corporate limits, township lines, etc., as well as the new limits of the urban area. The maps, together with any supporting documentation, should be submitted to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) division office for

approval. The submission should indicate the formal approval of the responsible State and local officials.

b. Before giving approval to the proposed boundary locations in urbanized areas of over 200,000, the FHWA approving official should secure the concurrence of the regional representative of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA). In addition, in areas under 200,000 where the designation of urban boundaries has significant transit implications, UMTA concurrence should also be sought before formal approval is given to the proposed boundary locations. In areas where UMTA approval is necessary, the FHWA Division Administrator shall secure such concurrence from UMTA.

c. FHWA approval shall be indicated by signature of the Division Administrator on the maps in the space provided.