DOWNTOWN AUTO RESTRAINT POLICIES

Adopting and Implementing Urban Transport Innovations

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Urban transport planners in a number of countries have recommended policies (e.g., auto restricted zones, controls on parking supply, increased tolls or parking charges, and area licensing or permit schemes) that would reduce the use of cars in the central areas of large cities. The analysis of Boston presented in the preceding paper (Gómez-Ibáñez and Fauth, 1980) parallels other studies in concluding that the benefits from imposing such restraints would substantially exceed their costs.

Despite these findings, proposed restrictions have frequently evoked strong opposition from policy-makers (especially elected officials), various interest groups, and the general public. With some notable exceptions such as the Singapore area licensing experiment, those measures actually implemented have been modest in scope. Why, it may be asked, if auto restraint policies are as beneficial as many transport planners believe, are such measures so intensely resisted?

This apparent anomaly is well illustrated by experience in the United States, where not only transport planners and economists, but several federal government agencies, have encouraged auto restrictions. To improve the quality of urban air, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has sought to impose transport controls on more than two dozen metropolitan areas. The Department of Transportation (DOT), faced with intense political resistance to contruction of more urban highways and with the immense costs of building rail rapid transit systems, now requires metropolitan areas to develop Transportation System Management plans proposing low-capital-cost policies, including auto restrictions, that would use existing facilities more efficiently. Within DOT, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) has provided technical assistance and demonstration grants to cities willing to experiment with various restraint measures. Most recently, the Department of Energy has investigated the role of auto restrictions in reducing gasoline consumption.

Notwithstanding strong professional interest and government encouragement,

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however, few American cities have adopted and implemented even the more limited forms of restraint. Most city and state governments have been uninterested; and, where such innovations have been proposed, controversy has usually flared up. EPA’s transport control plans evoked storms of protest from state and local officials, business interests, and the general public (Fauth et al., 1978; Krier and Ursin, 1977; Padnos and Selig, 1976; Quarles, 1977). In Los Angeles and Boston, bus and carpool priority lanes on expressways (“diamond lanes”) were discontinued because of fierce opposition (Altshuler, 1979; Brand et al., 1978; Remak and Rosenbloom, 1978). In Berkeley, California, and Madison, Wisconsin—two university cities with innovative local governments—UMTA’s plan to study the feasibility of area licensing aroused so much public opposition that local officials withdrew their support (Transportation Research Board, 1979). Even downtown pedestrian malls—auto restricted zones (ARZ)—have proved controversial in many places; those built are relatively small (Voorhees, 1977).

Our investigation of several policy initiatives in Boston during the 1970s (Fauth et al., 1978) revealed that, even though the city administration has proved more willing to promote auto restrictions than most other municipal governments, it has compiled a mixed record. Certain measures have been adopted (a freeze on construction of downtown parking space, a peak-hour parking ban on main streets, a small ARZ in the main shopping district, and more vigorous enforcement of parking regulations), but auto restrictions have generally proved controversial and sometimes unsuccessful. Keenly aware of political limits, the administration refused to endorse a large-scale ARZ and an area licensing demonstration proposed by UMTA; and it could not secure necessary City Council or state legislative authorisation for several other policies—an excise tax on parking, increased fines for illegal parking, and centralised administration of parking enforcement and collection of fines. Even the restrictions adopted were subject to controversy, delay, or incomplete implementation.

The record in Boston and elsewhere suggests an obvious question. Why do local policy-makers and the public so frequently oppose measures of auto restraint? Some advocates of auto restrictions explain the difficulties by arguing that neither policy-makers nor public understand the benefits of such measures. That conclusion is too simple. The public and decision-makers react not merely to the net benefits or costs of a policy option—the economist’s evaluative criterion—but also to the distribution and visibility of its impact. As a result, it is contended here, auto restraint policies are “fragile” policy initiatives particularly vulnerable to political opposition and institutional inertia.

A policy proposal must usually clear three hurdles: (1) building a coalition of public support, (2) securing necessary approval from authoritative decision-makers, and (3) being implemented by one or more public agencies. Auto restraint schemes are “fragile” initiatives, it will be argued, because they face unusually intense problems at each barrier. These obstacles, rooted in structural features of democratic government (especially in decentralised decision-making systems like that in the United States) and of transport policy-making specifically, cannot be overcome merely by wider dissemination of information and better salesmanship.

Coupling more penetrating analysis of the political and administrative feasibility of auto restriction schemes with cost/benefit analysis similar to that in the preceding paper (Gómez-Ibáñez and Fauth, 1980) will help transport planners to choose between

156
policy options by gauging whether expected benefits are likely to be realised. It will also help them to develop strategies that can at least partially overcome the political and institutional obstacles to adopting and implementing restraint measures.

POLICY ADOPTION: PATTERNS OF SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION

Actual or anticipated public reaction to proposals for area restraint is perhaps the single most important reason for their political fragility. In considering a policy option, government generally pays close attention to active support or opposition by individual citizens or interest groups; at least in part, the fate of any policy initiative depends on the balance of such public reaction.

When area restraint measures are proposed, this balance is usually unfavourable. Our Boston case studies (Fauth et al., 1978) and similar analyses show consistent patterns. Typically, neither citizens nor interest groups propose auto restraint measures; these policies receive serious consideration only when government agencies sponsor them. By the time planning is under way, opposition is likely to develop from interests that feel threatened and from agencies or legislators who believe the proposal will be unpalatable to their constituents. When the proposal receives significant publicity or is implemented, moreover, policy-makers receive complaints from citizens about the potential expense and inconvenience of the restrictions; in contrast, rarely do any supporters mobilise spontaneously. Consequently, officials who promote central area restraint schemes must sustain them in the face of political attack, with little help from a supportive constituency.

In the light of arguments that area restraint measures would produce significant net benefits, what accounts for this situation? To understand, we must recognise that public response is more sensitive to the distribution and visibility of the impact of policies than to the net benefits or costs. Several behavioural patterns are widely observed. First, citizens act defensively, responding more to threats than to opportunities; they are more likely to protest against sudden or large decreases in net benefits than to exert themselves to secure increased benefits (Altschuler et al., 1979; Wilson, 1974). Second, it is difficult to organise people to seek a "collective" or "public" good from which they would benefit regardless of their contribution to securing it. Citizens are more likely to take action for "selective" or "private" goods which are granted to or withheld from specific individuals or small groups (Olson, 1965; Frohlich and Oppenheimer, 1978). Third, citizens tend to be more sensitive to immediate or short-run costs or benefits than to the long-run impact. Finally, individuals are more likely to take political action when they perceive that policy effects are the direct consequence of specific government actions than when impacts are indirect (Altschuler et al., 1979). In the case of auto restraint schemes, the character of the benefits makes it difficult to rally political support, while the costs are quite likely to evoke both organised and individual opposition.

Motives for support

The most commonly cited benefits of auto restrictions are more efficient use of road space to reduce congestion, shorter travel time, better access for pedestrians,
increased tax revenues, improvements in air quality, and energy conservation. Such benefits are extremely weak inducements for political activity: they are "collective goods" which would produce relatively small benefits for any individual; some of their impacts would be felt over relatively long time periods; and the typical citizen might not recognise that the benefits are the direct consequences of restraint policies. As a result, the most direct beneficiaries—commuters and pedestrians—rarely organise politically; and environmental and energy conservation groups, usually consisting of a few activists and a larger number of passive sympathisers (Altshuler and Curry, 1975), have difficulty in rallying support for the issue.

What prevents the emergence of more active support for auto restraint policies is the almost total absence of individuals or firms that might receive immediate, direct, "selective" benefits. The few such beneficiaries—private taxi or transit firms, residents eager to exclude commuter parking and through traffic from their neighbourhoods—are not the base of a broad political coalition.

Motives for opposition

The costs of restraint measures are distributed in a fashion likely to evoke political activity, both organised and individual. Many people perceive substantial, personal costs in policies that limit auto access to the downtown business centre. Retail merchants, for example, fear that customers will be diverted to suburban shopping malls or that delivery schedules will be disrupted. Parking lot and gas station operators fear a decline in patronage if commuters or shoppers switch to transit. Employers are concerned that their personnel will be unhappy at having to take public transport or pay higher prices for using their cars. Residents of neighbourhoods adjacent to the restraint area worry about an influx of commuters searching for all-day parking.

Most of the cited groups can respond relatively easily to a perceived threat. In many instances organisations already exist to promote their interests—a Retail Trade Board, Chamber of Commerce, association of garage operators, and neighbourhood groups. Several have paid staff, financial resources, and easy access to the press. When such organisations do not exist, they can be quickly created, since there is usually already some informal interaction among those affected. In contrast to the potential beneficiaries of auto restraints, these groups will quickly perceive their interests and, having political contacts and experience, demand the right to participate in planning. Or decision-makers, anticipating their concern, will solicit their views. As a result, public participation in the planning process often has a conservative bias; participants are more sensitive to the inconvenience and disruptions that restraints might cause than to any potential benefits.

There is likely to be individual as well as group political reaction to restraint policies. Some potential costs are widely dispersed among the population. Individuals must find new ways to get to work, change their schedules, or pay more to travel by automobile. Although the diffusion of these costs reduces the probability of organised political action, it encourages some form of protest; for any particular person, costs may be moderately large, immediate, and readily perceived as the direct effect of the restraint scheme. When substantial publicity or the start of implementation increases public awareness of the policy, these citizens frequently protest to officials.
It is important to recognise that the imbalance between active support and opposition for auto restraint policies is a structural feature of this type of issue. Similar configurations of benefits and costs—and comparable political difficulties—can also be observed for current environmental and energy conservation proposals.

**POLICY ADOPTION: THE INSTITUTIONAL SETTING**

A second reason why auto restraint measures are fragile policies lies in the difficulty of securing the sequence of legislative and administrative approval necessary to institute them. In general, the difficulty of adopting a policy measure increases as the number of independent decision-makers rises. This is a pervasive problem in decentralised policy-making systems like that in the United States, but transport probably involves more autonomous participants than most other policy areas (Jones, 1976). For auto restrictions in particular, this problem is exacerbated because some key decision-makers have strong motives for opposition and there are few resources available to induce agreement.

**Diversity and autonomy of decision-makers**

In the United States, although the geographical area potentially affected by central area restraints usually falls entirely within the boundaries of a single city, legal authority to impose auto restrictions is shared among many independent or semi-independent institutions at several levels of the federal system. Even more participants become involved because they control essential financial resources, because a specific policy proposal affects their operating responsibilities, or because it falls within their area of expertise.

As often noted, municipalities in the United States are the "creatures" of state government, subject to tight regulation of many functions (Banfield and Wilson, 1963). For example, officials in Boston who wanted to promote auto restrictions needed to win enactment by the state legislature of Massachusetts of excise taxes on commercial or employer-provided parking, parking meter charges, fines for parking and traffic violations, towing and storage fees for impounded vehicles, bridge and expressway tolls, and the administrative organisation of parking and traffic law enforcement (Fauth et al., 1978).

Local officials must also deal with administrative agencies at other levels of government: for example, the federal Urban Mass Transportation Administration, part of the Department of Transportation, which offers demonstration grant funds for auto restrictions, or the federal Environmental Protection Agency, which regulates transport to improve air quality. State administrative agencies like the highway department also have legal authority over aspects of local transport, or control general-purpose federal grant funds essential for policy innovation.

The fragmentation of policy-making is increased by the prevalence of autonomous special-function transport agencies. Because of the regional interdependence of transport systems and the need for major capital investments, it is common to find the "authority" form of administrative organisation operating transit, commuter rail, airport, and municipal parking facilities. This makes agency heads at least partially
independent of elected officials, exempts them from many normal government personnel and procurement procedures, and often provides fiscal autonomy. Within city government itself, authority may be shared by the city council, the elected chief executive, and various administrative officials. Even participants who are formally part of the same bureaucratic hierarchy—for example, the mayor’s staff, the traffic department, and the planning agency—may operate with a great deal of autonomy. A specific agency may enjoy a high degree of independence from its nominal superior by virtue of its ties to powerful political constituencies; and, where it receives categorical grants-in-aid from either federal or state sources, it may become effectively autonomous. Moreover, while a chief executive may have the authority to impose a policy decision, he may prefer to let various agencies negotiate the point. He may prefer not to impose his own judgment because the issues are technically or politically “muddy”; he may be distracted by other matters; or he may be unwilling to use his limited political and administrative resources to resolve the differences.

Motivation

The problem of securing agreement on auto restraint is complicated by the fact that some key decision-makers have strong motives to oppose it. 

Elected officials. Given the way citizens respond to the distribution of costs and benefits, analysed above, many elected officials resist enacting auto restrictions. Fearing electoral repercussions, experienced politicians are wary of antagonising organised interests like the business community and of imposing inconveniences—driving restrictions and new or higher fees—on large numbers of voters. No active constituency supporting auto restrictions demands that these elected officials enact them.

Legislators are particularly sensitive to these considerations. Most representatives from the suburbs, and many from the city itself, expect no credit for the benefits but know that they will hear about—and perhaps be electorally punished for—the cost and inconvenience to their constituents. Legislators from outside the metropolitan area are likely to let the sentiments of that area’s representatives determine their votes; by the custom of legislative “reciprocity,” they expect the same deference when their own constituents’ interests are at stake.

The reaction of the mayor of a city is less predictable. First, with a longer term of office and greater public visibility than a legislator, a mayor may be willing to trade off the immediate political costs of auto restraint policies in return for an “image” as an innovator. Second, a mayor may find restraint measures attractive for reasons only loosely related to their impact on transport—for example, for giving him control of revenue from fees or intergovernmental grants-in-aid that can be spent to his political advantage. Third, since suburbanites suffer the major inconveniences of restrictions, a mayor can regard public discontent as an external political cost; suburbanites cannot vote in city elections. Nonetheless, in choosing political “investment” opportunities, a mayor is likely to be very cautious about promoting any policy that might antagonise both the downtown business community and the general public.

Professional values and bureaucratic interests. Some officials may oppose auto restrictions because of perceived conflicts with their professional values or agencies’ interests. Professionally, traffic engineers usually prefer to accommodate demand for
road space rather than attempt to change motorists' behaviour. Senior police officials typically lack enthusiasm for more intensive enforcement of traffic and parking laws, because this activity diverts the patrol force from "real" police work. Moreover, operating agencies are wary of controversial projects because they may be blamed by policy-makers or the public for problems of implementation.

An agency may even oppose a new measure that it agrees with in principle because, with limited political and administrative capacity to press for or cope with change, it cannot accept the direct or opportunity costs imposed. A transit agency, for example, may resist expanded service in an auto-restricted zone that will increase its operating deficit.

*Scarc resources to induce cooperation.* Since only a few of the necessary participants may be convinced of the desirability or urgency of action, favourable policy decisions depend on inducing the others to support specific restraint schemes. A policy advocate cannot take agreement for granted: he must assume that unless agencies or officials are given incentives to cooperate, they will not do so (Remak and Rosenbloom, 1978).

To shape legislative decisions when issues have potentially high visibility, a policy advocate must usually generate support from interest groups for his position or show that he can affect the opinion of legislator's constituents. Given the likely pattern of public support and opposition for auto restraint measures, though, it is extremely difficult to change the balance of incentives for legislators on these policies. When the number of affected legislators is small, however, it may be possible to make side payments (perhaps on another issue or in the form of patronage) to win their support or acquiescence.

Where administrative coordination demands that at least one agency act against its own interests or conception of good policy, that agency must be compelled to comply by bureaucratic superiors, convinced that its evaluation of policy impacts is faulty, or compensated for its loss by some form of side payment. For reasons already noted, however, the chief executive may be very reluctant to press for area restraints. Moreover, a common "lubricant" for administrative coordination, the commitment of discretionary programme funds through either routine budgetary processes or intergovernmental grants, may be unavailable or insufficient.

**POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

Even if auto restrictions are adopted, their effectiveness is not guaranteed. Scholars have begun to document and diagnose the general problems of policy implementation (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973; Bardach, 1977; Van Meter et al., 1975; Chase, 1979; Public Policy, 1978). Case studies of attempts to institute restraint measures show repeated examples of delayed, incomplete, or unsuccessful implementation (Fauth et al., 1978; Padnos and Selig, 1976; Quarles, 1977; Krier and Ursin, 1977; Remak and Rosenbloom, 1978; Altshuler et al., 1979; Brand et al., 1978; Transportation Research Board, 1979; Voorhees, 1977). Analysis of these experiences suggests another reason why auto restrictions are fragile public policies: the more ambitious schemes frequently present a high degree of difficulty in the work of implementation.
The difficulty of implementation varies according to two broad factors. The first is the amount of cooperation required of the implementing agencies. Most implementation processes can be factored into a set of discrete tasks for one or more officials or agencies. In general, as the degree of coordination required of these participants becomes more complex, the probability of effective implementation declines (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). In transport policy, the number and autonomy of participants make the implementation, as well as the adoption, of auto restraint measures doubtful.

The difficulty of implementation is also affected by the amount of organisational resources (such as money, personnel, equipment, administrative capacity, and public support) that each agency must commit. The probability of implementation declines as the need for resources increases.

Resource demands are shaped both by the required frequency of agency action and by the degree of change in normal activity. For auto restrictions, certain tasks are necessary only once (altering street geometrics, changing the zoning code, posting "no parking" signs, constructing physical restraints), while others require frequent or continuous activity (collecting tolls, issuing citations for parking violations, selling daily area licences). Tasks also vary in how much change in behaviour they demand from the implementing agency. Although some tasks are essentially indistinguishable from current functions, others may require extensive alteration of organisational behaviour either by introducing tasks of a different nature (marketing area licences) or by significantly increasing the rate of activity (intensively enforcing traffic laws).

Resource demands are troublesome to an agency in at least two respects. The first involves opportunity costs: since any implementation task consumes scarce organisational resources, these cannot be used for other agency objectives. The second involves organisational capacity: an agency may be asked to carry out a task for which it lacks sufficient or appropriate resources.

Implementation tasks which require an agency to perform only once an activity quite similar to its normal functions tend not to require reallocation of resources, and place little strain on the organisation's capabilities. More difficult implementation tasks—which, in contrast, require continuous activity that significantly departs from previous routine—tend to shift priorities, severely test the organisation's ability to adapt to new demands, and increase the chances of internal resistance or opposition from the agency's clientele.

Thus an additional reason why area restraint measures are fragile public policies is that the more ambitious schemes depend on implementation tasks that require substantial administrative coordination and commitments of agency resources. When restraint measures are initially being put into effect, they typically require a high degree of inter-agency coordination for planning, facility construction, fee collection, and enforcement. Once operational, the more ambitious restrictions depend on continued activity by those agencies responsible for collection and enforcement.

Enforcement, particularly, is essential but problematical. The benefits of restraint measures are contingent on conscientious observance of the restrictions by motorists. But the enforcement deterrent is often inadequate: citation of violators frequently depends on personnel who are uninterested in or overburdened by these responsibilities, while collection of fines by the courts is often spotty or too slow (Fauth et al., 1978).
VARIATIONS IN POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FEASIBILITY

We have argued that auto restraint proposals are fragile policy initiatives because of likely patterns of political support and opposition, the fragmented transport decision-making environment, and the difficulties of policy implementation. The degree to which these constraints are binding depends on the design of specific auto restraint schemes, the restrictions already in force, and the requirements of state and local law. Several factors create variation in the political and administrative feasibility of restraint proposals:

1. The smaller the geographical area affected by the restrictions, the fewer the persons likely to feel threatened economically or to have their travel habits disrupted. A small restraint area, therefore, is likely to evoke less political opposition than a large one. (But, since benefits are also roughly proportionate to the size of the restraint area, a smaller area will have less impact.)

2. Policies that extend existing restrictions seem less threatening than new types of restraints, and therefore tend to generate less opposition.

3. New policies that can be adopted and implemented incrementally, rather than all at once, are less visible and thus less likely to evoke opposition. Successful implementation of the first step, moreover, helps to allay public concern about potential impact of subsequent steps, which thus become easier to adopt and implement.

4. Schemes that do not require both local and state legislative approval, or that by administrative action avoid legislative consideration altogether, are less vulnerable to opposition.

5. Policies are more likely to be successful if they do not depend on regular amendment—e.g., alteration of fee schedules to find optimal rates—which requires new legislative or administrative authorisation.

6. Policies that generate intergovernmental grants-in-aid or other revenue tend to be more attractive to elected executives and administrators.

7. Policies that require less inter-agency coordination and commitment of fewer organisational resources by key agencies are more likely to be implemented successfully.

These factors help to explain why downtown pedestrian malls are the most common type of auto restriction put into effect. The restraint affects a small area, can frequently be enacted on municipal authority alone, does not depend on calibration of fee levels or other periodic alterations, has been subsidised by the U.S. Department of Transportation, and involves relatively simple physical construction and enforcement.

Comparing policy options

In planning more ambitious auto restrictions, decision-makers should carefully take account of political and administrative feasibility, as well as impacts on transport and net benefits or costs, in selecting a policy option. The feasibility of a particular measure will depend partly on restrictions already in force and specific legal requirements; but this type of analysis can be illustrated by comparing two policy options that are projected to yield approximately the same net benefits in Boston
(Gómez-Ibáñez and Fauth, 1980; Fauth et al., 1978). These options are higher parking charges and area licensing.

**Area licensing.** Whether area licensing was applied only to local streets or to main transport arteries as well, it would require both state and city authorisation. Either version would be controversial, but because the local-street-only version would affect fewer travellers, local transport policy-makers agree that it would spur less intense opposition.

Area licensing poses complex implementation problems. To market licences, it would be essential to establish a widespread network of distribution facilities (e.g., vending machines, retail stores, banks) so that commuters could easily buy a licence when necessary.\(^1\) Since any system would have to accommodate persons who wished to travel downtown only infrequently, daily licences would have to be provided, though many people might purchase monthly or annual licences. The system would require a large staff and a new administrative structure similar to that of state lotteries.

Another problem would arise in trying to adjust the licence fee to optimise the impact on travel. The legislature might delegate authority to do this to an administrative agency or reserve the function for itself. Whichever way was chosen, however, it would probably prove difficult to alter the fee.

To make the licensing scheme effective, strict enforcement would be essential; large numbers of violators would seriously undermine the legitimacy of the restraint. However, because only police officers are empowered to stop moving vehicles in Boston, enforcement would be the responsibility of an agency reluctant to use its manpower for that purpose. The inefficiency of Boston courts in collecting fines—which allows many motorists to escape punishment—would also undermine the deterrent effect of this sanction.

**Parking charges.** Increasing parking charges in Boston would require regulation of several different types of parking. (1) Rates for city-owned parking garages and lots are set in leases with private operators, which are for the most part renegotiated annually. Administrative decisions alone could thus alter the rate structure. (2) Rates for privately owned and operated commercial facilities can be influenced only by imposing an excise tax; this requires both state legislative and city council approval, unless the legislature makes action mandatory for two or more municipalities. (3) Imposing charges on free parking spaces presently provided by businesses for their employees or customers would need approval from the same authorities. (4) The City of Boston can place parking meters wherever administrators wish, but the meter rates must be within limits set by the state legislature.

Changing charges in city-owned facilities, and expanding the number of metered on-street spaces, appear to be the easiest measures to accomplish. It would be more difficult to increase the maximum meter rates, impose an excise tax on private commercial parking, or require charges for previously free business parking; each of these would require legislative permission. If local policymakers wanted to experiment with the rate structure, these difficulties would be intensified.

The implementation requirements of these measures also vary. Where the city

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\(^1\) Although this marketing system could be simplified by a variety of ingenious technological devices, none of these have been given demanding operational tests (Altshuler et al., 1979; Bhatt, 1974).
controls existing rates, i.e., for city-owned commercial facilities or for metered on-street spaces where fees are below the maximum, it would be relatively simple to increase the charges. For on-street spaces not presently metered, however, it would be necessary to install meters and alter collection routes. Since private commercial parking lots do not at present pay an excise tax and some department stores do not charge for customer parking, an administrative apparatus would have to be established to impose charges on them.

Diligent enforcement of on-street parking charges would be essential to create an effective disincentive for drivers. Boston’s meter maids, who primarily enforce existing parking regulations, are quite efficient, but it would probably be necessary to augment their number. The inefficiency of the courts in collecting fines, however, would greatly reduce the impact of strict enforcement.

Assessing the differences. While both area licensing and increased parking charges are likely to encounter the obstacles that generally confront restraint measures, it appears that, at least in Boston, parking restrictions are the more feasible option. Area licensing is a novel restraint method which must be implemented on an all-or-nothing basis within given geographical boundaries. Since it would be extremely visible to the public, area licensing is likely to generate considerable public opposition and hence to have difficulty in winning legislative approval. Once adopted, area licensing would require an extensive marketing system, perhaps involving creation of a new administrative entity. Its effectiveness, moreover, would depend on enforcement by the Police Department, which has been reluctant to devote resources to this task.

In contrast, increased charges for certain types of parking could be levied by administrative action only. Because the public is accustomed to such charges, it is less likely to protest vehemently. Parking fees would also affect fewer individuals than an area licensing scheme. Perhaps most significant, the policy could be partially adopted and thus secure a portion of the projected benefits; it is not an all-or-nothing scheme like area licensing.

Implementation of increased parking charges would also be simpler than an area licensing scheme, not only because a collection system already exists for certain charges, but also because it would be aimed in part at parking suppliers rather than individual motorists. Enforcement, moreover, would primarily be the responsibility of the meter maids, who are less likely to evade this duty than the police.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

To explain political and institutional resistance in Boston and other U.S. cities, this paper has argued that auto restraint proposals are “fragile” policy initiatives. The difficulties involved in adopting and implementing them stem from structural features of democratic government (especially in decentralised decision-making systems like that in the United States) and of transport policy-making specifically.

(1) Public reaction to auto restraint proposals is likely to be negative. The nature of the benefits and costs of auto restraint schemes makes it difficult to generate organised political support but relatively easy to develop both group and individual opposition. As a result, restraint proposals face political attack without a supportive constituency to rebut it.
(2) To secure adoption of a restraint measure in a fragmented transport decision-making environment, a policy advocate must persuade a number of government agencies and officials—most of whom are independent or semi-independent of each other—to act in concert. Many participants are likely to be opposed or indifferent to the proposals, and the resources to induce their support or acquiescence are scarce.

(3) The more ambitious restraint schemes hinge upon particularly problematic implementation tasks which require extensive inter-agency coordination and the commitment of significant amounts of organisational resources by key agencies.

While the problems cited afflict the whole class of auto restraint policies, the feasibility of specific measures varies between locations, depending on the particular policy design, the restrictions already in force, and particular legal requirements. In general, restrictions will tend to be the easier to adopt and implement the smaller the geographical area they cover; the more they extend existing restraints rather than introduce new forms of regulation; the less they depend on new legislative grants of authority, repeated calibration of fee schedules, and inter-agency coordination; and the more likely they are to generate intergovernmental grants-in-aid.

This analysis has an important implication for transport planners: in selecting a restraint option, they should systematically analyse political and administrative feasibility as well as the probable impact on transport and the net benefits or costs. Since under the best circumstances auto restraint proposals are fragile policy initiatives, this may make the difference between success and failure in adopting and implementing them.

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