

Preface and Acknowledgments

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It may sound dramatic to call this study a pioneering effort. But, to the extent that we found ourselves, at many points, being told that we were the first to attempt creating performance measures which incorporate the voices of the public, and, in particular, to measure the condition of city streets, we felt like pioneers. Strangely, one definition of “pioneer” -- albeit a military definition -- is “one of a body of foot soldiers detailed to make roads, dig entrenchments, etc. in advance of the main body.” (Random House.)

Many people and institutions, many “foot soldiers,” consultants, road engineers, technicians, analysts, researchers, present and past government officials, academicians and organizations were involved and made it possible for us to achieve our goal. Describing their contributions not only enables us to acknowledge their valuable assistance, but also provides insight into the way that this novel undertaking unfolded. This aspect of innovative work is rarely documented because once a project is completed, we often forget how many steps were taken to travel from the idea to its implementation and how significant individual contributions are.

Dr. Ralph E. Gomory, President of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation has truly been the first pioneer in this venture. It was he who raised piercing questions about the state of the art of performance measurement and monitoring of government services in the early 1990’s. He was looking for ways that the public could get better control over the way its government functions. We are pleased that we were able to help sort out some of the relevant issues by hosting a colloquium at the Fund four years ago on the current and desired state of performance measurement in government. Dr. Gomory later launched his foundation’s ambitious national Assessment of Government Performance program. We are honored to have been the recipient of the first grant under this program and to have received continuing support. Dr. Gomory observed some of the original focus group sessions. He continues to ask important questions that, in turn, stimulate us to continually ask ourselves if we are on the right track.

Harry Weiner, Professor at the W. Averell Harriman School at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, was the Program Officer at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation who initially identified a good match of interests between the Fund and the Sloan Foundation as this project was being formulated. He provided the tough thinking and firm support that launched our work and has helped keep us on course from time to time since. We are very appreciative of being the beneficiary of his keen analyses and assistance.

Dr. Ted Greenwood, our current Program Officer at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, has given us continuous encouragement, guidance and assistance from the first day he assumed that post. He has found time to attend our technical briefings and meetings with Department of Transportation and Mayor’s Office staff and maintained an interest in many aspects of our work. We appreciate his problem-solving efforts, advice,

guidance, and willingness to be available to us whenever we have needed his assistance. We are very grateful to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation for its support.

None of this work could have been done without the support of the Board of Directors of the Fund for the City of New York and its President, Dr. Mary McCormick. She creates the rare and special climate which encourages and stimulates creativity, and provides the freedom to explore uncharted territory. And she appreciates all that is involved in moving from idea to implementation. Her respect for and knowledge of government, her interest in applying new technology when it can help get things done, her international interests and perspective and her determination to make things work have been inspiring and essential to our success. Support and generous assistance from the Fund's "back office" and computer operations was a constant, as well.

It is to the credit of the city administration, the Mayor's Office of Operations and the New York City Department of Transportation that they saw that objective measures of the streets that reflect the people's point of view were needed and could be helpful to the city's operational decisions. Directors of the Mayors Office of Operations and commissioners of the Department of Transportation, along with deputies, assistants, analysts, engineers, managers and field operations staff attended many meetings with us and provided important insights and information. Suggestions from the focus groups have already found their way into agency operations. We hope that the survey results reported here help the city, now and in the future.

Daniel Yankelovich, a pioneer in social research himself, immediately saw the implications that this work could have for improving communication between the public and government. He envisioned that focus groups would tell us a great deal about how new performance measures should look and he was right. Madelyn Hochstein, President of DYG, Inc., brilliantly implemented Dan Yankelovich's vision and produced inventive and successful focus group research, even conducting some of the original groups herself. She also agreed with enthusiasm and pluck to undertake what she says is the most unusual assignment in her career in social science research: She rode in one of the vans while the focus group participants did their ratings of the streets' condition. We are also grateful to Geri Anderson, DYG's Vice President for Operations, for arranging all the complex logistical and methodological details that enabled the focus group sessions to take place, and to George Pettinico, DYG's Senior Project Manager, for enthusiastically preparing for and managing critical aspects of the focus group's road test and follow up work.

The ORTECH Corporation in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada and Greg Wallace were wonderful colleagues to us and enormously helpful to our thinking as we sorted out what we needed in order to conduct the survey of the city's streets.

Galaxy Scientific Corporation agreed to be part of our pioneering team and to bring their equipment and staff to New York for its first city road measurement survey. Chuck Teubert was the project manager of the entire operation from Galaxy's end. He

oversaw the demanding field schedule and operation, monitored maintenance of the delicate equipment, managed the highly complex data compilations, computations and analyses, was responsible for the data production that produced the findings in this report and operated the computer in the test car on several shifts. We know that he sacrificed many nights, weekends and holidays in serving our needs and interests. Mingyao Dong provided Chuck with the tough analytic and computer support needed to analyze the tremendous amount of data this project generated. Bill Deguenther successfully managed Galaxy's New York City operation for seven weeks, six days and nights a week.

Dr. Gordon Hayhoe, a pioneer in the field of pavement testing and vehicle dynamics, was at Galaxy when we started our project. He was the first to say "yes" when we asked if there was a reproducible way to measure city streets and he showed us how to do it. He also helped us find a way to provide data on bumps. Dr. Hayhoe is now with the Federal Aviation Administration, helping create their new pavement test machine that will set the standards for airports in the next century. We are especially grateful to the Federal Aviation Administration and Dr. Satish K. Agrawal, Manager of FAA's Airport Technology Research and Development, for being willing to cooperate with the Fund by allowing Dr. Hayhoe to spend some time on this project.

We consulted with many other experts and organizations and we are grateful for the time, suggestions, perspectives and advice they offered. They include Mo Shaheen at the U.S. Army Civil Engineering Research Lab; Michael Janoff; the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute (UMTRI); the cities of Birmingham and Westminster in England and many more. Of course they are not responsible for the decisions we ultimately made, but we think our decisions were better as a result of listening to their different points of view. The British Information Services and Consul General's Office in New York was extraordinarily helpful in connecting us with the people we needed to see in the U.K.

Dr. Martin Frankel, Professor of Statistics and Computer Information Systems at Baruch College of the City University of New York was our statistician and sampling consultant who went far beyond that role to make sure that the methods we employed would be ones that the public could trust. He set the highest of standards for the preliminary tests and subsequent field measurements to assure that the results could be replicated and future surveys could produce results that could be compared.

Craig Holt, President of Managing Total Performance and award-winning former official in the Oregon State Department of Transportation, was a colleague and sage adviser in this venture from the start. In addition to his encouragement, he brought his experiences to some of the sessions with New York City's Department of Transportation staff and also helped us create a model for working with government that allowed government and the Fund to maintain mutual independence while, at the same time, being able to inform and learn from one another.

Michael Hertz, who designed New York City's subway maps, and his associate,

Peter Joseph, produced the maps that appear in this report -- another first. We knew it was necessary to be able to communicate the highly complex measures in a way that all could understand. Mike and Peter had to exercise great patience and go through countless iterations with us until we got designs, colors and shadings that, we hope, tell the story clearly.

Planning the routes for the 676 miles of testing was no small feat. The city's data did not tell us about one-way streets. A fortuitous drive in a rented car that had NavTech's street database for New York City with one-way streets incorporated led to a solution to this problem. A conversation with NavTech, of Sunnyvale, California, led us to the Lightstone Group that provides routing software. They referred us to their licensee, Sadler and Associates. We know that Joseph Sadler needed to stretch his already innovative routing procedures to create the routes we needed for this survey and we appreciate the extra effort he extended on our behalf.

We had wonderful drivers who drove the test car safely and carefully all over the city and met our difficult schedule. We extend special thanks to Cano Paljevic who traveled more miles with us than anyone else and whose good humor and interest in this project made him a highly valued team member. William Whittrock and Konstantinos Petras also drove with great skill and care. We are grateful to them and to Dan Ross at Chauffeur's International for their essential assistance.

The staff of the Center has been extraordinary. We were very fortunate to re-connect with Charles Monheim just at the time that we needed a senior person to manage this project. Charlie worked at the Fund years ago on our first Scorecard project. As this project was starting, he had just left city government as Senior Vice President of New York's Transit Authority. His outstanding technical, analytic, management and leadership skills, along with his knowledge and experience in transportation made it possible to translate our idea of measuring the streets into reality. And he was in the car too, almost every day, usually starting well before 6 A.M.

As the Center's coordinator Verna Vasquez has not only kept us on track and provided order; she continually finds ways around seemingly insurmountable problems. Her terrific computer skills, attention to detail without losing the big picture, patience in working with the zillions of numbers and computer files, ability to stay on top of many projects at the same time, good sense of what is practical, and dedication have been essential to the success of this project and this report. Her prior government experience was at the state level, in California, where she created an electronic bulletin board system to assist in the state's recycling efforts.

Trevor Scotland was a supervising analyst in the Mayor's Office of Operations before joining our staff. Although he is primarily assigned to initiate and direct other aspects of the Center's work, he has been a full and very important member of this team from the day he arrived. He brought to us his knowledge of city government and transportation. We have also benefitted mightily from his abilities to do critical analyses

and help assure that our data are correct. He also served as navigator for some of our early field work and designed the logo that appears on the back cover of this report.

Alex Fried's contributions have been invaluable. He has responsibilities for other aspects of the Fund's government management programs, and in addition took care of the essential and very demanding office management operations for this project, including introducing project and contract management. He has also been a full member of the team, coming up with good solid solutions and suggestions on substantive matters, on presentations and on many other matters. He brings energy, commitment and team spirit to our work every day. He is also responsible for dubbing us "The Road Worriers."

In the early days of this project, Jeff Braca helped identify what we needed to measure in order to be responsive to the people's concerns and he did the initial research that led to our adopting the profilometry method that we ultimately employed. Helen Curtis, the Center's first coordinator, established order out of the proliferating sources of information on the subject of road measurement and was involved in the early discussions and decisions on this project.

Ned Steele, President of Ned Steele Communications, has throughout provided steady, sound advice on ways to present our findings and connect with the people of the City of New York. Theresa Lipo gave us the benefit of her excellent communication and presentation skills as she reviewed the final draft of the report.

As the Center's director and "chief road worrier," I warmly and enthusiastically thank all who worked with me, often tirelessly, on this project. If the work of the Center helps build not only smoother roads but ones that lead to better understanding between government and the public, I think we'll all feel that the worrying was worth it.

Barbara J. Cohn
Vice President
Director,
Center on Municipal Government Performance
September 1998